MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY WOMEN'S FICTION

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Abstract

Twentieth century women's novels dramatize the daughter's conflicting desires to merge and to separate. Daughters are pulled between the passivity implied by attachment and autonomy they may construe as isolation. A psychoanalytic approach helps to illumine the struggles of daughters to reconcile the need for independence and the need for autonomy. In the struggle to define her own identity, a woman must learn to accept both her kinship with the mother and her separateness.

In twentieth century women's novels, heroines have been moving away from the typical Victorian solutions to female identity—marriage and self-sacrifice. In an early novel such as May Sinclair's *Mary Olivier*, the heroine sacrifices her chance for marriage and remains tied to her mother's side; spiritually, however, she escapes into a mystical detachment. In Edith Wharton's novels, heroines are often caught in a love triangle, unable to reconcile their needs for mother love and sexual love; usually they end up alone. In later novels such as Doris Lessing's, the heroine leaves home to discover her own identity, but because she remains so closely identified with the mother, rejection of the mother means self-rejection. She struggles, then, to accept ambivalence toward her mother and toward herself, finally gaining a vision of integration through fantasy. Finally, in three recent novels—*Lady Oracle*, *Jerusalem the Golden*, and *Earthly Possessions*—the daughters learn that they cannot deny their mothers and their past in order to create themselves anew; they must re-discover the bond with the mother, but this time as adults rather than children. In *Lady Oracle* and *Jerusalem the Golden*, daughters struggle with guilt and self-hatred before they learn to recognize their underlying love for the mother. In *Earthly Possessions*, the heroine moves through emotional recognition of the mother-bond to discover a capacity for both intimacy and separateness.
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Introduction

I, who was never quite sure
about being a girl, needed another
life, another image to remind me.
And this was my worst guilt; you
could not cure
nor soothe it. I made you to find me.

Anne Sexton, "The Double Image"

Mothers and daughters are part of each other's consciousness, in different degrees and in a different way, but still with the mutual sense of something which has always been there.

Edith Wharton, The Mother's Recompense, p. 194

Mothers and sons, fathers and sons. The drama of the son's struggle to establish selfhood is familiar to us as students of literature, of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Joyce, Lawrence. But another drama lies closer to the daughter's heart. Before she becomes a lover, a wife, or a mother, a daughter defines herself in relation to her mother. She learns her own ego boundaries by separating the me from the not-me of her mother. Like the male, she must leave home to discover a sense of self, but for her the task of individuation is particularly difficult. Our culture reinforces female dependency, teaches a daughter that to leave home is to sacrifice love. She learns that she will be cared for as long as she remains passive and compliant. A daughter who leaves must fight the pull back to an infantile passivity. She must also fight her own sense of guilt for being a bad daughter, leaving the mother to whom she is still
unconsciously tied. She tries to block off the past, to create herself anew, but when she rejects her origins, she rejects herself. She longs for autonomy; she longs for attachment. Between these two desires, to merge and to separate, she may battle throughout her life.

It is this conflict, as reflected in twentieth century women's fiction, that I will examine.

As women's literature receives an increasing amount of critical attention, the theme of mothers and daughters is beginning to emerge. A few pioneering pieces on this subject have recently appeared. In a warmly personal chapter from Of Woman Born, Adrienne Rich states that the "cathexis between mother and daughter--essential, distorted, misused--is the great unwritten story."¹ She places the mother/daughter relationship within the framework of the Demeter/Persephone myth, as does Grace Stewart in a more recent work, The New Mythos. This book considers female artistic development in light of the Demeter/Persephone myth, but covers too many works to examine any one in depth.² One dissertation treats the love and hostility between mothers and daughters in Canadian fiction;³ another one focuses on mothers and daughters in nineteenth and twentieth century novels from a sociological perspective.⁴ An eclectic volume of essays entitled The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature is the most comprehensive work on the subject so far; it includes discussions of mothers and daughters in the literature of regions ranging from the Near East to the American Southwest. The approaches vary greatly, and are sometimes more personal than scholarly. I use a concentrated approach, examining fiction by six North American and English writers from a specific methodological base. I compare works by different writers in order to show the
pervasiveness of certain mother/daughter patterns in twentieth century women's fiction, but this study is in no sense a survey. Since most of the criticism on literary mothers and daughters has so far been suggestive rather than thoroughgoing, I analyze the text of representative women's novels in detail. All the novels I discuss are by women writers for whom the issue of female self-definition, motherhood and daughterhood, is clearly paramount. In addition, all these post-Freudian novels have readily accessible psychological dimensions. In each chapter I highlight one feature of the mother/daughter drama which recurs repeatedly throughout women's fiction, but can be particularly well illustrated by the selections I have chosen. I have chosen novels that for me pass the test proposed by contemporary feminist criticism: the test of authenticity. I hope that my analysis will also help others to appreciate the artistry of these works, some of which have been unjustly neglected.

I begin with an analysis of May Sinclair's Mary Olivier—a heroine caught between the Victorian ethos of female self-sacrifice and contemporary ideas of self-fulfillment. Mary Olivier struggles to free herself from the mother she loves and hates, but her need for love keeps her docilely at home. Outwardly she conforms to her mother's expectations, but in the end she escapes into a spiritual freedom. From a contemporary perspective, this mystical resolution seems like an evasion of the very human conflicts outlined in the novel; Mary Olivier graphically illustrates the unhealthy consequences of an overly prolonged mother/daughter attachment.

Throughout Edith Wharton's fiction, the mother/daughter theme emerges with increasing insistence. Wharton's novels reveal how the daughter's struggle with sexuality can be traced to her relationship with her mother. In the
oedipal triangle of mother, father and daughter, the daughter must, according to traditional psychoanalysis, transfer her attachment from her mother to her father. Yet this transfer is never absolute, and the strength of an underlying mother attachment may keep a daughter hovering between mother love and father (male) love throughout her life. The resulting sexual competition and confusion is seen in love triangles that appear throughout Wharton's fiction. Beginning with a piercingly sad novelette "Bunner Sisters," and ending with her late novel The Mother's Recompense, I show how Wharton experimented with different solutions to this oedipal triangle throughout her life. Most commonly the mother figure gives up her claim on the male ("Bunner Sisters," House of Mirth, The Old Maid, The Mother's Recompense) so as not to jeopardize the attachment to the daughter; ironically, however, this sacrifice insures neither happiness for the daughter nor mother/daughter closeness. In Ethan Frome, the mother and daughter figures are locked into a miserable stalemate, with neither woman in possession of the male, neither woman letting go. In The Reef both women give up the male but do not find each other. None of these are happy solutions, but Wharton portrays with exquisite sensitivity this fundamental female conflict between male and female attachment.

Doris Lessing's fiction reveals the passionate ambivalence involved in the twentieth century woman's struggle to emancipate herself from her mother. The cost of separation is high, and may take the form of guilt or self-hatred. While the mother/daughter theme in Wharton's fiction becomes increasingly explicit, in Lessing's it becomes more covert. But the works I discuss--Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage, Four-Gated City, and Memoirs of a Survivor--all show how the daughter's search for identity is bound up with her conflicts with her
mother. Since critics have focused more on the social and philosophical implications of Lessing's fiction, I wish to call attention to psychological motifs that have been relatively overlooked.

Finally, I examine three recent novels by different writers where the daughter's quest for selfhood becomes a quest for the mother. In Jerusalem the Golden by Margaret Drabble, Lady Oracle by Margaret Atwood, and Earthly Possessions by Anne Tyler, the heroines attempt to escape their mothers, but find they must come to terms with her before they can accept themselves. Toward the end of each novel the daughter recognizes her kinship with the mother she has so strenuously rejected. Only in Earthly Possessions, however, does the heroine move beyond an emotional recognition of the mother-bond to become the mother herself—finding the capacity for self-nurturance, an acceptance of the limitations of love in herself and others. Before a woman can love others as separate beings, she must feel sufficiently self-defined that she need not fear drowning in another.

Throughout this study, my interpretation of mother/daughter dynamics is based upon a psychoanalytic dream approach. Since I am interested in exploring the underlying dynamics in women's conflicts, a psychoanalytic framework provides the most appropriate vantage point. I do not analyze reader response or the psycho-biography of the actual writers, but concentrate upon the characters in the texts themselves. I consider mother and daughter figures as aspects of a fundamental conflict in the female psyche. Since I view these novels as expressions of a single consciousness, where different characters act out aspects of a central conflict, I am particularly concerned with characters' interrelationships in each novel. Certainly there are, as Frederick Crews has
pointed out, dangers inherent in a psychoanalytic approach to literature. In my discussion of particular novels, I shall try to respect the integrity of the texts rather than impose a pre-conceived model upon them. I believe an awareness of psychological patterns can help us to a more sensitive reading of women's literature, and can also tell us much about the unconscious determinants of our own behaviour. As Frederic Crews has stated, "The real value of literary psychoanalysis is that it can embolden us to be alone with books, to recognize our own image in them, and from that recognition to begin comprehending their hold over us."^6

I. The Theory

The theory which I draw upon is based largely upon Freud's insights. At first Freud assumed that male and female psycho-sexual development was analagous, with the girl taking her father as first love object just as the boy takes his mother. Later, however, he observed that male and female psychology were not parallel. In "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925) he explored the consequences of the fact that, for both sexes, the first love object was the mother. In his 1931 essay, "Female Sexuality," Freud elaborated further on the importance of the girl's early mother attachment, or pre-Oedipus phase.

Our insight into this early, pre-Oedipus phase in the little girl's development comes to us as a surprise, comparable in another field with the effect of the discovery of the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization behind that of Greece. Everything connected with this first mother-attachment has in analysis seemed to me so elusive, lost in a past so dim and shadowy, so hard to resuscitate, that it seemed as if it had undergone some specially inexorable repression. 7

Again, in his 1933 essay "Femininity," Freud returned to the pre-Oedipus phase, showing how the daughter's love is only later transferred from her mother to her
father. In other words, the love which a daughter feels for her father grows out of her early mother attachment.

Almost everything that we find later in her relation to her father was already present in this earlier attachment and has been transferred on to her father. In short, we get an impression that we cannot understand women unless we appreciate this phase of the pre-Oedipus attachment to their mother. 8

Later psychologists like John Bowlby, Margaret Mahler, and D. W. Winnicott have built upon Freud's findings, focusing on the infant's early mother-attachment and her subsequent separation or individuation. My analysis of mother/daughter dynamics owes much to their research as well as to Freud's. In addition, I have learned a great deal about mother/daughter relations from Nancy Chodorow, whose book The Reproduction of Mothering places psychoanalytic findings within a social, cultural context. During the course of this study, then, I will draw upon Freud and workers who have followed in his wake.

Although Freud has frequently been criticized for his masculine bias, he nevertheless lays the groundwork, as Juliet Mitchell and Jean Strouse both point out, for our present psychoanalytic insight into female sexuality. In three separate essays, he discusses the difference between male and female sexual development. In the Oedipal phase, the boy retains his mother as primary love object, but must repress his incestuous attraction. The boy gives up his mother as sexual object because he fears castration at his father's hands; he learns to identify with his father, consoling himself with the idea that he will one day be like his father and possess a woman of his own. In contrast, the little girl, in her Oedipal phase, must transfer her attachment from her mother to her father. A number of factors induce the daughter to turn away from the figure once loved so exclusively--not the least of which is her resentment at being brought into the
world a girl. In Freud's view, the disappointing realization of her mother's phallic inferiority helps the daughter to turn from the mother to the father. (This rather notorious concept of penis envy is now generally explained as the result of society's devaluation of women; the girl envies the boy the superior power which his penis symbolizes.)

Other factors which contribute to the loosening of the mother bond could apply to both boys and girls. First and foremost, the child can never feel sufficiently loved. She is jealous of rivals for the mother's affections—the father or siblings. "Childish love knows no bounds, it demands exclusive possession, is satisfied with nothing less than all." No matter how much love she receives, the child craves love so much that she cannot be satisfied. She resents the mother for giving her too little milk—that is, too little love. She also resents the restrictions which the mother imposes, particularly sexual ones. The same figure who first excited sexuality through her caressing, tending actions later forbids sexual activities such as masturbation. In addition, the very intensity of the pre-oedipal attachment makes disappointment inevitable. "Perhaps the real fact is that the attachment to the mother must inevitably perish just because it is the first and most intense, similarly to what we so often find in the first marriages of young women, entered into when they were most passionately in love." Finally, the daughter turns from the mother after realizing that because she does not have a penis, she will never possess the mother sexually. Thus, frustration and hostility serve to detach a girl from her mother and turn her toward her father.

But Freud also notes with surprise the length and tenacity of the girl's pre-oedipal attachment. Since the father attachment is a "secondary formation" that succeeds the mother bond, it is not surprising that a particularly intense father attachment is preceded by an equally intense mother attachment, or that a woman may repeat her bad relations with her mother later
with her husband. "The mother-relation was the original one, upon which the
father-relation was built up; in married life the original basis emerges from
repression."

As a daughter commonly transfers her affective tie from her
mother to her father to her husband, her original mother attachment has
considerable implications for her relations with males. She may come to regard
her husband with the same ambivalence she felt toward her mother.

Paradoxically, the daughter's abandonment of her mother as love
object is made easier by the mechanism of identification. By taking the mother's
place, the daughter will feel her loss less keenly.

If one has lost a love-object, the most obvious reaction is to
identify oneself with it, to replace it from within, as it were, by
identification. This mechanism now comes to the little girl's
help. Identification with her mother can take the place of
attachment to her mother. The little daughter puts herself in
her mother's place, as she has always done in her games; she tries
to take her mother's place with her father, and begins to hate the
mother she used to love.

Through identification with the mother, the daughter can convert passive
experiences into active ones. In her play with dolls, for instance, she becomes the
mother, and the doll-baby her own childish self. She can do to the doll what has
been done to her. Thus her identification with the mother actually makes the
mother less necessary. As Freud's colleague Ruth Mack Brunswick states, "The
child plays the role of the mother not only toward itself but also toward other
children, animals, and toys, and ultimately and above all toward the mother
herself." Identification with the mother can help the daughter toward
independence.

However, identification, which Freud defines as the "earliest
expression of an emotional tie with another person," is by its nature ambivalent.
It can
turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first, oral phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such.

Identification is ambivalent because of its cannibalistic overtones; one devours the object of one's affections. Freud uses the example of a homosexual male who, rather than abandoning the love object at the appropriate time, transforms himself into her, and looks about for objects which can replace his ego for him, and on which he can bestow the love he received from his own mother. A girl, too, we can infer, mothers others in order to vicariously re-experience the love she once received from mother. But as she assumes the mother's identity, the girl eliminates the need for her actual mother. By assimilating the mother, the daughter metaphorically annihilates her. The intense pre-oedipal attachment must give way in order for the daughter to assume independence.

The child's early mother-attachment and subsequent separation have been further explored by contemporary psychologists such as John Bowlby, Margaret Mahler, and D.W. Winnicott. From the start, says Mahler, mother and infant are enclosed in a symbiotic relationship, "a close functional association of two organisms to their mutual advantage."

In the beginning the infant depends absolutely on the mother, fused with her in a state "in which the 'I' is not yet differentiated from the 'not-I,' and in which inside and outside are only gradually coming to be sensed as different" (p. 9). The infant experiences the mother, the breast, as an extension of the self. As the infant begins to experience actual physical separation from the mother, a kind of "hatching" from the symbiotic orbit gradually occurs. Frequently, however, the individuating child returns to the mother as reference point, renewing the feeling of safety from which she has begun to venture away. This "mirroring frame of reference" helps to reinforce a developing identity. The child can confirm her sense of self through mutual
reflection—"magnification and reduplication—a kind of echo phenomenon" (p. 19).

Winnicott develops this mirror/mother metaphor at length to show how a baby finds a reflection of herself in her mother. As a baby looks at her mother "what she looks like is related to what she sees there." Winnicott's observation that "in individual emotional development the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face" (p. 111) is particularly true for daughters, where the mother's mirroring role is more obvious than for sons due to same sex identification. Winnicott's suggestion can help us to better understand the use of mirrors in a number of women's novels; literary daughters frequently look to mirrors to confirm a sense of self. In Lady Oracle, the heroine goes into a mirror to seek her mother—that is, a confirmation of her own identity.

I stared at the candle in the mirror, the mirror candle. There was more than one candle, there were three, and I knew that if I moved the two sides of the mirror toward me there would be an infinite number of candles, extending in a line as far as I could see... The room seemed very dark, darker than it had before; the candle was very bright, I was holding it in my hand and walking along a corridor, I was descending, I turned a corner. I was going to find someone. I needed to find someone.

There was movement at the edge of the mirror. I gasped and turned around. Surely there had been a figure, standing behind me. But there was no one. Though Joan Foster does not consciously realize what she is seeking, she needs to find her mother in order to find herself.

Nancy Chodorow analyzes the difficulties Western daughters face in the development of identity. In our culture daughters have a harder time separating from their mothers than sons do. Both sexes experience a primary identification with their mothers during the pre-oedipal stage, but boys soon learn to define their ego boundaries in opposition to the mother's femininity. The boy will more likely be encouraged to venture out into the world, while the girl is encouraged in her attachment behavior. Because mothers tend to see their
daughters as extensions of themselves, they do not readily encourage them to separate. Furthermore, this situation tends to be reproduced throughout the generations. A mother with no firm ego boundaries feels too connected with her daughter to help her toward separation. In the experience of mothering, a woman re-experiences her own past. Identifying both with her own mother and the cared-for child, she relates to her daughter as her mother once related to her.

Daughters learn to define themselves in relationship while boys learn to define themselves as separate. Since girls retain an underlying mother-attachment in the oedipal phase, they come to experience themselves as continuous with others. Also, their identification with their mothers is reinforced through an ongoing, personal relationship; since the mother is so much present, the daughter identifies with her traits and values through everyday, gradual learning. Boys, in contrast, learn to repress their early feminine identification with their mothers during the oedipal phase and to identify with their fathers. But since a son commonly has minimal contact with his father in our culture, he identifies largely with a fantasized role. Masculinity comes to be defined largely through negative terms—through a denial of the relational, the feminine.

In the attempt to overcome the original identification with the mother, males may go to the unhealthy extreme of denying their need for attachment. On the other hand, an overly close mother/daughter relationship, where there are usually few other mediators, keeps daughters from developing a firm sense of self. The lack of clear ego boundaries can have certain negative consequences. Mothers and daughters may feel guilt and self-blame for the other's unhappiness. The lack of clear differentiation from the rest of the world makes women feel guilty when things go wrong, even things over which they have no control. Excessively close mother/daughter identification also means that the daughter cannot easily develop a strong self-image. When women represent
passivity and dependence, "feminine gender identification means identification with a devalued, passive mother."\textsuperscript{21} Yet a daughter who rejects this maternal identification unconsciously rejects herself. Resentment of the mother helps the daughter to separate, but this very resentment becomes self-hatred because of the continuing pre-oedipal attachment.

II. The Theory Applied

For purposes of demonstration, I will apply this psychoanalytic paradigm to a particularly accessible dramatization of mother/daughter symbiosis and separation. Edna O'Brien's story "A Rose in the Heart" contains many typical features of the mother/daughter relationship in concentrated form. The daughter in the story forms with her mother an intense pre-oedipal attachment that never entirely dissolves, though it is weakened by ambivalence which arises for reasons discussed by Freud in "Female Sexuality." In this story, the girl's love for her mother is so demanding that it cannot be satisfied. She is jealous of intruders into their self-sufficient relationship—the father and sister. When the mother she loves so much sends her away to school, this apparent betrayal drives her to seek a new love object. She transfers the passion she felt for her mother onto a nun at boarding school, rejecting the mother who has rejected her by sending her away. She marries a man her mother does not like; later she leaves him. As we will see in novels I will later discuss, daughters do not easily reconcile the mother-bond with the sexual bond. An allied feature which emerges both in this story and other works I will examine is the daughter's longing for reconciliation with the mother, an erasure of barriers that have come between them and a return to an earlier
state of fusion. However, in this story as in other examples of women's fiction, mother and daughter can never revive the earlier harmony. Though the daughter in Edna O'Brien's story longs to merge with the mother, she also wishes to preserve herself—both physically and psychically. She begins to fantasize about the mother's death as if this alone could free her. She cannot distinguish where she ends and mother begins; unconsciously she desires to kill the mother so that she can then discover her own ego boundaries. By "killing" the mother, she can save herself from dying in the "sepulchre" of her mother. Yet when the mother does finally die, the daughter feels an utter emptiness as if she herself no longer exists. After the funeral she wanders around the house as if looking for some secret, some vestige of her mother's identity in a room, a drawer. In searching for the remnants of her mother's past, for an acknowledgement of the bond between them, she searches for her own identity.

In this story we see how a daughter's rejection of her mother may actually be a rejection of female powerlessness. In their mutual identification, mother and daughter hate in each other what they also hate in themselves—a female passivity that results from lack of power. The daughter in this story eventually turns against her mother because she dislikes the image of woman as victim which her mother embodies. The terrible descriptions of the daughter's bloody birth at the beginning of the story show the mother as victim—not only of her bullying husband, but of her own body. "Her womb was sick unto death. Why be a woman?" (p. 40) In her loathing of the female condition, the mother projects her self-hatred onto her daughter. The first impression the mother receives of her new-born daughter is that she is lopsided and has club feet. She seems to hate the child of her own body. Although she later comes to idolize the child who at first seems repulsive to her, this original repulsion reveals a deep self-hatred.
Despite the intense attachment that develops between mother and daughter, the beginning of the story makes clear that their relationship is not idyllic. The imagery used in descriptions of their union suggests the ambivalent nature of the bond between them. Their unity is symbolized by the food they share—food which connotes the milk of maternal nurturance, but also something more ominous. To eat the mother's food is to feed off her in a sense.

The food was what united them—eating off the same plate, using the same spoon, watching one another's chews, feeling the food as it went down the other's neck. The child was slow to crawl and slower still to walk, but it knew everything, it perceived everything. When it ate blancmange or junket, it was eating part of the lovely substance of its mother (p. 42).

We recall Freud's comment on the cannibalistic nature of identification; the daughter later "feasts" on the sight of her mother (p. 43). In her need for nurturance, the daughter consumes, diminishes the mother.

To consume also implies the possibility of being consumed. As the child grows, the very intensity of her need makes her perceive her mother as a "sepulchre." Her mother represents the stillness and security that can be found only in death.

Her mother's knuckles were her knuckles, her mother's veins were her veins, her mother's lap was a second heaven, her mother's forehead a copybook onto which she traced A B C D, her mother's body was a recess that she would wander inside forever and ever, a sepulchre growing deeper and deeper. When she saw other people, especially her pretty sister, she would simply wave from that safe place, she would not budge, she would not be lured out (p. 42).

Her mother's body seems both a place of refuge and a place of burial. The daughter wants no one else to intrude into their warm union—not the pretty sister nor the brutish father, not even friends of her own.
As the daughter begins to separate from the mother, she still tries to stay within the maternal sphere. She follows the pattern of the infant who, according to Mahler, moves away from the mother only to keep returning, reassuring herself that the mother is still there. On the way to school, she keeps looking back "and as time went on she mastered the knack of walking backward, to be able to look all the longer, look at the aproned figure waving or holding up a potato pounder or a colander or whatever happened to be in her hand" (p. 43). Though she has begun to separate from the mother physically, she is still as emotionally tied as ever to the mother as nurturer.

When her mother leaves for a week, driven away by the husband's bullying, the daughter is devastated. In the mother's absence, she stays with two old people who reek of eucalyptus and with whom she cannot bear contact. She will not accept them as substitutes for the missing mother, refusing food and dreaming of being reunited with her mother in heaven. When she returns to look at her home, she hardly finds reassurance. As the father appears and she jumps to avoid him, she feels she has broken everything, broken herself into pieces like Humpty Dumpty. She feels literally shattered by the loss of her mother.

When her mother at last returns, there is now a slight fissure in their relationship. Her sense of security has been undermined; the closeness between mother and daughter is beginning to give way. As they mop up the water which has burst from the pipes in the cold weather, we are reminded of the pools of blood when the mother was "burst apart" (p. 40) by childbirth. A new stage in their relationship is beginning. Although the mother makes a cake which the daughter devours as hungrily as ever, they do not talk of the reasons for the mother's disappearance. A new reserve lies between them.
The daughter's separation is furthered by the appearance of rivals for the mother's affection. Although they continue to express their closeness by sharing food—they now share raisin-filled chocolates—the daughter trembles when the mother leaves their common bed and goes to the father "to stop him bucking" (p. 45). They are still closely united, but their concord is not absolute.

They liked the same things--applesauce and beetroot and tomato sausages and angelica. They cleaned the windows, one the inside, the other the outside, they sang duets, they put newspapers over the newly washed dark-red tiles so as to keep them safe from the muck and tramplations of the men. About everything they agreed, or almost everything (p. 45).

They take sanctuary from men in their union, but they are not protected from another kind of intruder--the pretty sister who comes back from school. The sister's usurpation constitutes a more potent threat than the father's; for the first time the mother gives herself to someone else with willing pleasure. Although the girl had first been excited by the sister's forthcoming visit, she feels jealous when she realizes that "her mother was being taken away from her, or, worse, was gladly giving her speech, her attention, her hands, and all of her gaze to this intruder" (p. 45). Although peace returns after the sister returns to school, their union no longer seems inviolable.

Under the influence of the mysterious bodily sensations of puberty, the girl begins to rebel against her mother in subtle, covert ways. "The growing girl began to say the word 'backside' to herself and knew that her mother would be appalled. The girl laughed at bullocks and the sport they had" (pp. 45-6). Under this small, shy independence, however, the old attachment continues its intensity.

Always at the end of every day, and at the end of every thought, and at the beginning of sleep, and at the precise moment of wakening it was of her mother and for her mother she existed, and her prayers and her good deeds and her ringlets and the ire on her legs--created by the serge on her gym frock--were for her
mother's special intention, and on and on. Only death could part them, and not even that, because she resolved that she would take her own life if some disease or some calamity snatched her mother away. Her mother's best three-quarter-length jacket she would don, sink her hands into the deep pockets, and say the name 'Delia,' her mother's, say it in different tones of voice, over and over again, always in a whisper and with a note of conspiracy (p. 46).

It is as if, through death, the unnamed daughter would assume her mother's name as well as her coat. She has no identity except what she shares with her mother. At this stage their intimacy seems excessive, even morbid. The overtones of masochism here—in both the prayers the daughter offers for her mother and the vision of suicide—imply that the daughter may feel the need to punish herself for her minor rebellions of thought. She has submerged herself so entirely in her mother that death for the mother means death for her.

The need for separation begins to press on the daughter. She fears being totally submerged in the mother, but she also fears leaving her, losing her. This fear makes her cling all the more.

The girl had no friends; she didn't need any. Her cup was full. Her mother was the cup, the cupboard, the press with all the things in it, the tabernacle with God in it—the lake with the wishing wells in it, the sea with the oyster and the corpses in it, her mother a gigantic sponge, a habitation in which she longed to sink and disappear forever and ever. Yet she was afraid to sink; caught in that hideous trap between fear of sinking and fear of swimming, she moved like a flounderer through this and that (p. 46).

Her mother is all things, but especially she is a container—a cup, a cupboard, a tabernacle, a lake, a bog. She holds things, absorbs them, swallows them up. She is a bog, a lake with corpses as well as oysters. The daughter is caught between the fear of sinking (drowning in the mother) and swimming (moving away from the mother).

When the daughter is sent away to school, her attachment to the mother weakens considerably. Anguished over what she cannot help perceiving as
her mother's betrayal and abandonment, the girl adopts a mother surrogate at the school—a nun who inherits the girl's passion for the mother. "The love of the nun dominated all her thoughts, and the nun's pale face got between her and the visible world she was supposed to be seeing" (p. 47). Sexual undertones in their relationship bring to mind Freud's emphasis on the sexual/seductive quality of mother love. The girl and the nun plan a rendezvous in the summerhouse—that traditional trysting place for lovers—but they each back out at the last minute. "They might have broken down or done anything; they might have kissed" (p. 47). Loving the nun (with whom there can be no outside threats from males), the daughter rejects the mother; as Freud states, "The turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate." When the girl returns home, she refuses the food (love) which the mother offers.

The daughter's next attachment—to a male this time—is also clearly rooted in her early love for her mother. Significantly, the new love object is a bakery man. The girl eats cakes with him as she once had with the mother; they devour each other's faces (p. 47). Yet their orgies (of food, not sex) do not satisfy because the hunger the girl tries in vain to fulfill is for her lost mother—the very figure she has turned her back upon.

...These orgies only increased her hunger, made it into something that could not be appeased. She would recall her mother from the very long ago, in the three-quarter-length jacket of salmon tweed, the brooch on the lapel, the smell of face powder, the lipstick hurriedly put on so that a little of it always smudged on the upper or the lower lip and appeared like some kind of birthmark. Recall that they even had the same mole on the back of the left hand, a mole that did not alter winter or summer and was made to seem paler when the fist was clenched. But she was recalling someone whom she wanted to banish (p. 47).

She wants to replace the mother, with whom she is so clearly identified, with the man, but because she is unable to form a sexual bond with him, he leaves. In
psychoanalytic terms, she cannot successfully make the oedipal transfer; she is still bound to the mother in love and hate.

Her continuing ambivalence toward the mother is seen in her reactions to the parcels which her mother sends--parcels containing, once again, food. The food is described in rather unappetizing language--chicken nearly putrid that must be cooked at once. The girl "hated those parcels, and yet they were most welcome" (p. 48). They reassure her of her mother's love, but they also remind her of the tie she is struggling to break.

Through marriage, the girl appears at first glance to move away from the mother. Though the two women remain tied by an unconscious identification, a silence yawns between them. The girl meets the mother away from the home of the husband. Mother and daughter talk but say "none of the things that they should have said" (p. 48).

Yet, while the girl appears to have moved away from the mother, she remains bound as much as ever. The girl cannot find a new, genuinely satisfying intimacy with a man. She does not find the tenderness or passion with her husband that she once had with her mother. She relates to him more as an authority figure than as a mate; she learns to "comply" with him, to "fold her clothes" (p. 48). In fact, the marriage seems more a gift to the mother than to herself. Even though the mother dislikes the husband, she takes some comfort in an identification that allows her to imagine that "her daughter's marriage might compensate for her own" (p. 51). Since the daughter does not reveal the emptiness of her marriage, the mother feels some vicarious satisfaction in it.

The break-up of the daughter's marriage stirs up unresolved feelings toward the mother. Once again the girl experiences the child's desolation at being abandoned. She flees to England, but is "still staggered by the assaults of
memory" (p. 51) which ambush her from her past. She fantasizes of death—not her husband's, but her mother's. This death fantasy occurs as she struggles to hold onto some inner sense of self. Trying "to wipe out the previous life" (p. 51), she unconsciously feels she must "kill" the mother. Her only defense against being utterly overwhelmed by the past, by the mother, is to eliminate them. In fantasy she sees the mother's death, but projects onto her father her unconscious desire to kill her mother. She envisions

...the figure of the mother who loomed over them all, and always the pending doom in which the mother would perhaps be struck with the rim of a bucket, or a sledgehammer, or some improvised weapon—struck by the near-crazed father (p. 51).

But as she is still so closely merged with the mother, to imagine the mother's death is to imagine her own. The mother looms as a kind of threat, figures in memories which assault the daughter violently. Yet the victim in this death fantasy is not the daughter herself, but the mother. The daughter unconsciously defends herself by projecting her fear of being killed upon the mother, and in so doing, "killing" the very figure who would "kill" her. But as she is still identified with the mother, this death threat soon begins to seem more and more diffuse; it is she who is killing, she who is being killed.

The oddest dream came along. Her mother was on her deathbed, having just given birth to her—the little tonsured head jutted above the sheet—and had a neck rash, and was busy trying to catch a little insect, trying to cup it in the palms of her hands and was saying that in the end 'all there is is yourself and this little insect that you're trying to kill.' The word 'kill' was everywhere—on the hoardings, in the evening air, on the tip of her thoughts (p. 51).

In this dream the birth of the daughter threatens the mother. She is the weak, helpless insect which the child catches, but she also has the power to crush that insect, that child. Mother and daughter are each other's potential victims.
Because the daughter's ego boundaries overlap so much with the mother's, it is unclear who is the victim, who the assassin.

She thought of choking or drowning. Certainly the envisaged murder had to do with suffocation, and she foresaw herself holding big suffocating pillows or a bolster, in the secrecy of the Blue Room where it had all begun. Her mother turned into the bursting red pipes, into the brown dishcloths, into swamps of black-brown bloodied water. Her mother turned into a streetwalker, and paraded. Her mother was taking down her knickers in public, squatting to do awful things, left little piddles, small as puppies' piddles; her mother was drifting down a well in a big bucket, crying for help and no help was forthcoming (p. 51).

The mother, whom the girl had once perceived as the lake with wishing wells, now seems to be drowning in a well herself. The image of drowning suggests that both women are suffocated in their insular relationship. To find air or freedom, the daughter would do what has been done to her. As always, however, she cannot "kill" the mother without also "killing" herself.

Identification with the mother allows her to project her own unacceptable impulses outward. The mother, who asked the daughter to have nothing to do with men after her marriage break-up, represents sexual taboo. The daughter can temporarily flaunt this taboo and avoid guilt by projecting certain impulses upon the mother. "Her mother turned into a streetwalker, and paraded. Her mother was taking down her knickers in public, squatting to do awful things, left little piddles, small as puppies' piddles" (p. 51). In the daughter's fantasy, the mother transgresses the old taboos she had once established. In a similar way, the daughter can temporarily rid herself of her childish dependence by projecting it upon the mother. She sees her mother as the helpless daughter self "drifting down a well in a big bucket, crying for help and no help was forthcoming" (p. 51). The bucket and the well recall the earlier images of mother as container, but now the mother is the one contained. Finally, the girl's desire to "kill" the mother reverses into the mother's desire to kill her. "The more the girl tried to kill, the more
potent the advances became" (p. 51). She tries to preserve identity through counterattack: kill so that she will not be killed. Paradoxically, though, this very attempt to save herself leaves her more vulnerable than ever. Her continuing identification with her mother means that the more she tries to kill, the more she is threatened.

Later, when the girl is rather happily involved with a married man, she envisions a reconciliation with the mother based on reciprocal adult confidences. Now that she has outgrown her childish dependence, she hopes to establish contact as one woman to another. The girl coaxes the mother into recollecting her youthful past, hoping to light upon some common experience that will allow her to feel at one with the mother again. When she hears of a long-ago passion, she feels a hopeful excitement at the thought they might at last break through their mutual reserve, being "true at last" (p. 59). But when the mother denies the possibility of sexual love, saying there is only the love of a mother for her child, a moment of hatred passes between them. It is as if the girl feels mother-love as blackmail, a claim she does not want to pay, and a negation of her sexual, womanly passion. She both pities and blames this woman from whom life has exacted so much suffering; food, once the symbol of their unity, "now seemed to taunt them" (p. 59). When the mother leaves the room in anger, the girl is left alone "remembering a woman she most bottomlessly loved, then unloved, and cut off from herself" (p. 60). Separation entails anger, guilt, and grief.

When the mother dies, the girl feels empty. The reconciliation she had planned never came about; now her sense of desolation comes from "not being able to be wholehearted again" (p. 62). Her mother's death seems to be a preview of her own, so close to her that she cannot even console the dead face. She
reflects on "the love that she had first so cravenly and so rampantly given and the love that she had so callously and so ruthlessly taken back" (p. 62). She wonders why people must withdraw from each other, not realizing the impossibility of perpetual symbiosis.

Reluctant to accept the finality of their separation, the girl looks for remnants of her mother's life in the house, but cannot find what she is looking for. No voice, no tender message, comes to her from the past. Even death cannot restore the old mother/daughter harmony.

A new wall had arisen, stronger and sturdier than before. Their life together and all those exchanges were like so many spilled feelings, and she looked to see some sign, or hear some murmur. Instead, a silence filled the room, and there was a vaster silence beyond, as if the house itself had died or had been carefully put down to sleep (p. 62).

The love story between mother and daughter ends on a note of sadness, not least because, as Freud pointed out, the very intensity of the attachment makes disappointment inevitable. It is the nature of love to be limited, the nature of the human need for love to be always a little unappeased. In any intimate relationship, the impulses toward autonomy and fusion conflict. In Edna O'Brien's story, we see the daughter's conflicting desires to merge and to separate thrown into high relief. The controlled focus of this story makes it possible to see clearly the kinds of challenges other daughters face, to some degree, as they struggle to discover a capacity to love without fear of annihilation.

The daughter's ambivalence in this story is portrayed in a way that is both highly evocative and deeply disturbing. We feel distanced from these rather anonymous characters as we feel distanced from the characters in our own dreams—or in a surrealistic film like Altman's Three Women. With its mingling of the mundane and the grotesque, the story has the oddly recognizable, unsettling quality of an actual dream. We can perhaps accept more easily the kind of dream-
like qualities in a work like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* because it seems closer to the realm of fantasy, farther removed from the flat terrain of our own dreams. In "A Rose in the Heart," as in other works I will be discussing, women writers turn to dreams and dream-like imagery to express the daughter's deeply buried conflicts.

In the twentieth century women's fiction I examine, the daughter's search for identity often takes the form of an interior journey. Repeatedly we see heroines who define themselves through relationships rather than external social roles; to develop as autonomous beings, they must fight hard against a conditioned passivity. In May Sinclair's *Mary Olivier* we see the psychic cost for the daughter who does not leave home; in other novels—*The Mother's Recompense*, *The Four-Gated City*, *Jerusalem the Golden*, *Lady Oracle*—we see the guilt and self-hatred which follows the daughters who escape. Heroines in these novels may dream of breaking through invisible barriers that arise between mothers and daughters, but they eventually realize that there can be no magical breakthrough. At best mothers and daughters can hope to recognize their underlying bond and their differentness. Only if they can develop an awareness of self as distinct from others can they love freely. If they stay in a limbo of pre-oedipal attachment, they deny their capacities for personal growth; if they try to convince themselves of their separateness through chronic rebellion and escape, they deny their capacity for loving intimacy. As my analysis will show, the portrayal of women's struggle to find a balance between the passivity of dependence and the isolation of rebellion forms a central theme in modern women's literature.


5 The feminist critic Marcia Holly, for instance, states: "To determine whether or not a person has written in bad faith, we must indeed know about her/his life. But to determine its psychological authenticity we need only have the work and an unbiased understanding of human needs, motivations, and emotions. Both positions require movement away from formalist criticism and insist that we judge by standards of authenticity." "Consciousness and Authenticity: Toward a Feminist Aesthetic" in *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory*, ed. Josephine Donovan, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), p. 40.


9 Jean Strouse, for instance, says, "On the conscious, social level...a patriarchal culture that values achievement, competition, material success, aggression, possession, and things visible over inwardness, receptivity, peacefulness, and the intangible, will place greater value on those attributes known in the Western world as 'male' than on the 'female'. The penis, as symbol of those attributes, represents to the girl everything she seems not to have--autonomy, independence, a freedom to move about in the world--and to the boy everything he has and doesn't want to lose." From *Women & Analysis*, p. 6.

10 "Female Sexuality," p. 259.

11 "Femininity," p.81.

12 "Female Sexuality," p. 262.

14 "Female Sexuality, p. 258.
18 Margaret Mahler and Manuel Furer, On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation (New York: International University Press, 1969), p. 7. Subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be cited by page number in the text.
22 Edna O'Brien, "A Rose in the Heart," The New Yorker, 1 May 1979, p. 42. Subsequent quotations from this story will be indicated by page number in the text.
23 "Femininity," p. 81.
The Daughter Who Stays Home

"The pleasure of feeling absolutely superior—which men feel in regard to women—can be enjoyed by women only in regard to her children, especially her daughters; she feels frustrated if she has to renounce her privilege, her authority. Whether a loving or a hostile mother, the independence of her child dashes her hopes. She is doubly jealous: of the world, which takes her daughter from her, and of her daughter, who in conquering a part of the world robs her of it." 1

It seems appropriate to begin discussion of the twentieth century heroine's divided self with a novel from the early part of this century—May Sinclair's *Mary Olivier*. In her desperate yearnings for love, her emotional confusions, her baffled struggle for selfhood, Mary Olivier stands as a prototypical modern daughter. Unlike most nineteenth century women's novels, the mother/daughter relationship in *Mary Olivier* is foreground rather than background. While partly caught by the Victorian ideal of female self-sacrifice, Mary Olivier is also engaged in a very contemporary struggle for independence. In later twentieth century novels daughters struggle to escape; in this novel we see why. In the face of her mother's gentle tyranny, Mary Olivier's need for maternal approval keeps her tied to her mother's side, unable to pursue a life of her own. Though she manages to preserve her essential "self" through a kind of mystical detachment, the life choices she makes illustrate the extent to which women internalize the constrictions imposed upon them by society.

As a fictional exploration into feminine psychology, *Mary Olivier* is a particularly interesting novel for this study. An early exponent of psychoanalysis, May Sinclair used Freudian concepts such as repression, sublimation, and dreams in her novels. Walter Allen notes that she "must have been among the
earliest English novelists to have been aware of the work of Freud.\textsuperscript{2} But the quality of "authentic life"\textsuperscript{3} in \textit{Mary Olivier} arises not from a textbook demonstration of psychoanalytic concepts, but from what May Sinclair, perhaps unconsciously, reveals in her protagonist. Mary does not marry a man she loves because her mother, a deeply insecure woman who lives through her children, depends on her too much to let her go. The positive ending of the novel suggests that May Sinclair means to show the value of Mary's ability to sublimate her sexual desires into spiritual transcendence, but to me another message comes through more clearly. Mary Olivier's constricted life demonstrates the difficulties of woman's struggle for autonomy.

Though the name of May Sinclair has been all but forgotten, she was England's most prominent woman writer from 1910 to 1920, before the appearance of Virginia Woolf on the literary horizon. She was the first to apply William James' term "stream of consciousness" to a novel\textsuperscript{4} and was an important forerunner of this technique herself. As she wrote in an article that anticipates Virginia Woolf's essay on the modern novel, "Reality is too thick and deep, too thick and too deep, and at the same time too fluid to cut with any convenient carving knife."\textsuperscript{5} The novel \textit{Mary Olivier} hangs not on plot, but on the drama of Mary's subjective life. Reading it today, we can see how its inward focus pioneers a tradition that women writers are still developing. A direct line runs from an inwardly focused novel like \textit{Mary Olivier} to autobiographical \textit{bildungsromans} like \textit{Martha Quest} or \textit{The Bell Jar}.

At the time \textit{Mary Olivier} was published, reviewers were generally unsympathetic. Some criticized its experimental technique; Katherine Mansfield, for instance, wondered: "Is this...to be the novel of the future? And if so, whence has it sprung? Who are its ancestors, its parents, its relations, its distant
connections even?" Other reviewers criticized its erotic flavor; the critic in the Times Literary Supplement wrote: "The great majority of mankind are concerned primarily with preservation, but Miss Sinclair will have it that it is with generation that we are preoccupied"—an astonishing remark when we consider that the novel contains no explicit treatment of sexual passion. Today we can take the novel's direct rendering of impressions, and its reputed eroticism, more of less for granted, concentrating instead upon its psychological dynamics.

As one critic observes, the struggle in Mary Olivier is between "Mary's Self and her mother." The only daughter in a family of four, Mary struggles for her mother's approval, but can never compete with Mark, the eldest. Mrs. Olivier devotes herself so much to Mark that the husband, fiercely jealous, destroys himself though drinking, a pattern that his son Dan emulates. The boys Mark and Rodney leave home to soldier and to farm in Canada, respectively; Mary does not leave home physically, but escapes her mother's dominion, to some degree, through her reading of philosophy. Influenced by her reading of Spinoza, she becomes a Pantheist in rebellion against her family's conventional Christianity. Thus she finds her way to an inner, spiritual freedom while remaining duty-bound to her mother's side up through middle age. After the deaths of, first the father, and later the two boys, Rodney and Mark, Mrs. Olivier becomes increasingly dependent on Mary. When Mary falls in love with a well-known scholar, she cannot marry him because her mother needs her too much. After a period of waiting, he marries someone else. The mother dies; Mary is left alone, but finds compensation in a mystical detachment at the end.

Throughout her life Mary works to win her mother's love, but can never get enough. Mrs. Oliver cannot give Mary sufficient nurturance because she projects her own feelings of female inferiority onto her daughter. As a
member of a devalued sex, Mary cannot possibly count as much as the boys. The sons can possibly provide justification for the mother's existence, but the daughter can be little more than a helpmate. Mary can please her mother not by distinguishing herself, but only by conventional, feminine role behavior. "If you went on darning for ever—if you went on darning—Mamma would be pleased." 9

It is astonishing that Mary survives as well as she does, for her accomplishments are repeatedly negated, her natural talents stifled. A childhood incident shows how she learns to repudiate those efforts which do not win maternal praise. As her brothers build a snowman, Mary builds a tower with her brother's bricks. When she finally calls her mother over to look, her mother does not even turn her head; she is looking at the boys' snowman instead. Mary vents her frustration by knocking down the unworthy tower and "her violence made her feel light and small again and happy" (p. 10). Sidney Kaplan says:

The scene revelas how Mary learns to minimize, and in fact to turn against, her own accomplishments. She is at the stage where she must give up her active strivings (Freud would say that she must give up her mother—and in this case the tower is perfectly fitting as a symbol), but the giving up is accompanied by hostile feelings toward the mother. Mary has to accept that she is a girl and, since she is a girl, that she comes last in her mother's affections. 10

While it is true that Mary learns here to give up her active strivings, she does not, as Kaplan says, give up her mother. The tower which she destroys symbolizes not the mother, but what Freud would consider phallic, masculine, outer-directed activity. Since she cannot win her mother's favor through constructive activity, the only channel of expression open to her is denial and destruction of what she has done. From an early age, then, she is conditioned to depreciate her aspirations.

Later her interest in music, philosophy and literature is discouraged in a similar way. She must not play the piano too loudly or passionately; she must not try to learn Greek from her brother's books.
'Just because Mark learnt Greek, you think you must try. I thought you'd grown out of all that tiresome affectation. It was funny when you were a little thing, but it isn't funny now.'

Her mother sat down to show how tired she was.

'It's just silly vanity.'

Mary's heart made a queer and startling movement, as if it turned over and dashed itself against her ribs. There was a sudden swelling and aching in her throat....The person sitting on the yellow-painted bedroom chair was a stranger who wore, unaccountably, a brown dress and a gold watchchain with a gold tassel that she remembered. She had an odd feeling that this person had no right to wear her mother's dress and her chain.

The flash of queerness was accompanied by a sense of irreparable disaster. Everything had changed; she heard herself speaking, speaking steadily, with the voice of a changed and unfamiliar person.

'Mark doesn't think it's vanity. You only think it is because you want to.'

The mind of this unfamiliar self had a remorseless lucidity that seemed to her more shocking than anything she could imagine. It went on as if urged by some supreme necessity. 'You're afraid. Afraid' (p. 127).

Mary senses that her mother fears being superseded by a more accomplished daughter. If her daughter, her double, can learn Greek, then she will look bad in comparison. Mrs. Olivier also fears losing control over a daughter whose intellectual powers threaten to loosen her dependence. Although Mary wins the battle of the books, she feels a resentment against her mother that she must deny in order to retain her image of good, loving Mamma. She then turns this resentment against the books, and ultimately against herself. "She hated the books. She hated everything that separated her and made her different from her mother and from Mark" (p. 129). Part of the lesson she learns is that she is in the wrong simply by virtue of her sex. Though Mrs. Olivier can acknowledge Mark's right to go into the army, she cannot allow her daughter even small steps toward separation. Immediately after scolding Mary for trying to be like her brother, she blames her, in essence, for not being a boy. '"If you were like Mark—if you were only like him'' (p. 128). Whatever Mary attempts outside a rigidly defined female role is punished by the withdrawal of love.
Realizing that she can never get as much of her mother's love as Mark, Mary tries to get as close to him as she can. The closer she can get to him, the more she can feel herself to be him, the adored love object of her mother. She finds herself, however, in a double bind. The more she attempts to win her mother's love through an identification with her brother, the more she is punished for not being him—for being a girl instead.

In addition to identifying with Mark, the mother's beloved son, Mary also identifies with her mother in loving Mark. Like Maggie Tulliver, she idolizes the brother whom the mother adores. Mark's love takes on the value that her mother gives it. She seems relatively indifferent to the father, who himself is jealous of his wife's attachment to his sons. For both Mary and her mother, Mark is the object of oedipal attachment. The "faith-jump" that Mary takes with him as a child suggests her sexual feelings.

She let go the rail and drew herself up. A delicious thrill of danger went through her and out at her fingers. She flung herself into space and Mark caught her. His body felt hard and strong as it received her. They did it again and again (p. 58).

Kaplan explains how Mary partially transfers her attachment from her mother to her brother. The jealousy she might be expected to feel toward Mark is turned inside out and allows her to feel passionate feelings for the very person who has caused her the most grief. She falls in love with her brother Mark and thus identifies herself with her mother, who loves him more than anyone. Here Mary deviates from the classic Freudian pattern, where the love for the mother is turned to the father. 11

Finally, because Mary identifies the mutually devoted mother and son so closely, Mark's love takes on the soothing quality of maternal love. Since Mamma and Mark are almost one, being loved by Mark is almost like being loved by Mamma. As a little girl, she wants to be loved by them both. In her mind they form a composite mother figure.
Her underlip pouted and shook. She didn't want to sit by herself on Papa's knee. She wanted to sit in Mamma's lap beside Mark. She wanted Mark to make orange-peel flowers for her. She wanted Mamma to look down at her and smile (p. 3).

Father's attentions do not count, because Mamma does not value him as she values Mark. Thus the oedipal triangle of mother, daughter and father/husband here revolves around mother, daughter, and brother/son. Here it is the brother rather than the father whose love Mary must reluctantly forego; she can never come between her mother and Mark, but must remain outside their love.

In her insecurity, Mary turns to any available source for love. As her mother later reminds her, Mary wonders whether Mamma would love her more if she were still two years old (p. 307). With her nurse Jenny, who also favors the boys, we see how the desire for love can keep daughters "glassed into infancy."12

Mary loved old Jenny next to Mamma and Mark; and she loved the white donkey. She wondered why Jenny was always cross when you stroked her grey face and called her 'Donkey-Jenny.' It was not as if she minded being stroked; because when Mark or Dank did it her face woke up suddenly and smoothed out its creases. And when Roddy climbed up with his long legs into her lap she hugged him tight and rocked him, singing Mamma's song, and called him her baby.

He wasn't. She was the baby; and while you were the baby you could sit in people's laps. But old Jenny didn't want her to be the baby (p. 7).

Being the baby is equated with being loved. Jenny, like Mamma, resists Mary's demands for love, but Catty, the other servant, is more lavish with her affection.

'Catty--how much do you love me?'
'Armfuls and armfuls.'
'As much as your mother?'
'Very near as much.'
'As much as Amelia?'
'Every bit as much.'
'How much do you think Jenny loves me?'
'Ever so much.'
'No. Jenny loves Roddy best; then Mark; then Dank; then Mamma; then Papa; then me. That isn't ever so much.'

Catty was vexed. 'You didn't oughter go measuring people's love, Miss Mary.'
Still, that was what you did do. With Catty and Jenny you could measure till you knew exactly where you were.
Mamma was different (p. 68).

Because she cannot be sure where she stands in her mother's affections, she cannot assess her own value. She tries to ascertain how much she means to other people in order to discover a sense of inner worth.

She pleads for love from her mother who seems, from our point of view, to be cruelly withholding.

'Say it, Mamma. Say it like you used to.'
Mamma shook her head.
'I want to hear you say it.'
'Well, I'm not going to.'
'I love you. I ache with loving you. I love you so much that it hurts me to say it.'
'Why do you do it, then?'
'Because it hurts me more not to. Just once. "I love you." Just a weeny once.
'You're going to be like your father, tease, tease, tease, all day long, till I'm worn out' (p. 69).

The more she grows away from childhood, the less emotional reassurance she gets from her mother. Since the affection she offers falls on such stony ground, she will, throughout her life, remain unconvinced of the value of her own love.

Just as Maggie Tulliver has "rather a tenderness for deformed things"¹³ that will not reject her, Mary lavishes love on passive objects like pets or dolls. Yet even this avenue of gratification is often blocked. When her mother finds her putting her "children" or her dolls to bed, she scolds her for playing with baby-clothes (p. 85). When she sees Mark stroking his cat, she feels a stirring of what must be partly envy. She wants the cat because she wants to be the cat—stroked and caressed.

Mark stooped over her; his mouth smiled its small, firm smile; his eyes shone as he stroked her. Sarah raised her haunches under the caressing hand.
Mary's body was still. Something stirred and tightened in it when she looked at Sarah.
'I want Sarah,' she said.
'You can't have her,' said Jenny. 'She's Master Mark's cat.'
She wanted her more than Roddy's bricks and Dank's animal book
or Mark's soldiers. She trembled when she held her in her arms and
kissed her and smelt the warm, sweet, sleepy smell that came from
the top of her head.

'Little girls can't have everything they want,' said Jenny (p. 13).

When her mother comes in, she tells Mary not to want what does not belong to
her.

All the things which she cannot love directly--God, Mamma, Mark,
the cat, the garden flowers--seem "sacred and holy" because they are all
associated with Mamma and with inaccessibility. The garden flowers may be
beautiful, but they

wouldn't let you love them. They stood still in their beauty,
quiet, arrogant, reproachful. They put you in the wrong. When
you stroked them they shook and swayed from you; when you
held them tight their heads dropped, their backs broke, they
shrivelled up in your hands. All the flowers in the garden were
Mamma's; they were sacred and holy (p. 16).

She loves best the wild flowers which allow her to love them; in her great need for
love she transforms everything into personal terms.

It is as if she feels herself to have the opposite of the Midas touch.
Whatever she wants to love half shrinks away from her. She loves her toy lamb
passionately, but "its large, slanting eyes stared off over its ears into the far
corners of the room, so that it never looked at you. This made her feel sometimes
that the lamb didn't love her, and sometimes that it was frightened and wanted to
be comforted" (p. 18). Even with an inanimate toy, she cannot be sure that her
love is welcome. Later, when she receives the long anticipated present of a real
lamb, her love seems impotent, perhaps even poisonous. She has long fantasized
about a white, woolly lamb she can love, but her fantasies are cruelly disappoint-
ed. When she finally sees the lamb, "its body was drawn and knotted like an
enormous maggot" (p. 20). The lamb is dying, and she is not even allowed to nurse
it.
With people, too, Mary is conditioned for disappointment. When she responds to the interest young men show toward her, Mamma teaches her later that she has deceived herself. Mark's handsome friend Jimmy seems impressed when he sees that she is reading Locke's *On Human Understanding*, but Mamma tells her later than he was only laughing at her. "'Men,'" Mamma said, "'are not interested in little book-worms'" (p. 88). When a friend of Dan's, Lindley Vickers, unexpectedly disappears from the scene, Mamma states that "she had frightened Lindlay away" (p. 287). We do not know whether Mamma misreads the situation, or whether she consciously misrepresents it so as to keep her daughter close at home. In any case, the effect on Mary is to teach her to distrust her own instincts.

Over and over the fantasy of love leads to cold reproach. When she is suddenly sent home from school, she thinks that a miracle has happened—her mother misses her. However, her mother greets her harshly, saying she has been expelled for impiety: "'Is it likely I should want you when you hadn't been gone three weeks?"' (p. 145) This seems especially cruel, since Mary has ached with homesickness those three weeks. Only much later does Mary see the letter which was sent home from the school, the letter of praise which her mother had forbidden her to read at the time. By way of explanation the mother says at first that she wanted to keep Mary from getting conceited, but then she admits the truth. "'I was jealous of you, Mary, and I was afraid for my life you'd find it out'" (p. 325). Mrs. Olivier wants the boys to succeed because they can reflect glory to her, but her daughter's success would represent a judgement on her rather than a vicarious triumph. If Mary escapes to create a successful life on her own, Mrs. Olivier will be left behind.
Consequently, she attempts to short-circuit Mary's paths to separation. She inhibits Mary's growth at every turn—creatively, intellectually, emotionally. Mary loves playing the piano, but is not allowed time to practice because "at any minute her father's voice or her mother's eyes would stiffen her fingers and stop them" (p. 184); she begins writing poems largely because she can't be heard then. She also discovers a measure of independence through her reading of philosophy. She becomes intrigued by pantheism, partly, we suspect, because it is so diametrically opposed to the hierarchal, paternalistic religion of her upbringing. She feels "slightly elated" to think that she might be an Infidel (p. 98) and refuses to be confirmed because she cannot accept the tenets of her mother's faith. As she reflects on the grim doctrine of Original Sin, her mother tells her not to look as if her wits were wool-gathering.

Wool-gathering. Gathering wool. The room was full of wool; wool flying about; hanging in the air and choking you. Clogging your mind. Old grey wool out of pew cushions that people had sat on for centuries, full of dirt.

Wool, spun out, wound round you, woven in a net. You were tangled and strangled in a net of unclean wool. They caught you in it when you were a baby a month old. Mamma, Paper and Uncle Victor. You would have to cut and tug and kick and fight your way out. They were caught in it themselves, they couldn't get out. The wool stopped their minds working. They hated it when their minds worked, when anybody's mind worked (p. 113).

With this image of entrapment, Sinclair touches on a familiar theme in women's novels.

Through romance Mary attempts to escape the confines of her family and environment. The submerged but growing antagonism with her mother comes to a head over her relationship with Maurice Jordain, an older, rather unsavory figure who becomes her fiance. Her attraction to him seems rooted in masochism: "She was mainly aware of a surpassing tenderness and a desire to immolate herself, in some remarkable and noble fashion, for Maurice Jordain"
Here she continues the association between love and pain she had learned as a child. Being hurt, she had learned, was one way of getting loving attention ("The pain made her feel good and happy; and Mamma was calling her her darling and her little lamb") (p. 15). Even after Maurice attempts to break the engagement with her, Mary offers to work gladly for him all her life (p. 219). Helene Deutsch explains how women often renounce aggressive activity for the sake of being loved. "In this renunciation the aggressive forces that are not actively spent must find an outlet, and they do this by endowing the passive state of being loved with a masochistic character." Clearly Mary's attraction to Maurice stems from the fantasy of being loved. Yet ironically he, like Mamma, cared for her more when she was a dependent child.

As she enters adolescence, Mary becomes increasingly aware of her ambivalence toward her mother. Freud posits that the daughter turns from the mother partly because she resents being brought into the world a girl; when Mary is fourteen, we see her resentment against her mother as she learns the pain of menstrual cramps. Yet the focus of her anger seems to be less her female biology than her own ignorance of it. Her mother has withheld this knowledge from her.

They might at least have told you about the pain. The knives of pain. You had to clench your fists till the fingernails bit into the palms. Over the ear of the sofa cushions she could feel her hot eyes looking at her mother with resentment.

She thought: 'You had no business to have me. You had no business to have me.'


She feels too unsure of her mother's love to let her resentment take hold. Consciously she dismisses her traitorous thoughts, and when her mother comforts her, she cries out, "'Mamma, Mamma, you are adorable!'" (p. 124). Again, after an argument about Maurice, she feels the impulse to adore her mother following her brief defiance. When her mother admits that she would not
like her "only daughter to go away and leave me," Mary feels violently opposing emotions toward her.

She hated her mother. She adored and hated her. Mamma had married for her own pleasure, for her passion. She had brought you into the world to be unhappy. She had planned for you to do the things that she did. She cared for you only as long as you were doing them. When you left off and did other things she left off caring.

'I shall never go away and leave you,' she said.

She hated her mother and she adored her (p. 229).

Though she feels imprisoned by her mother's power, she cannot risk losing the conditional love she has.

Her brother Mark's vow to remain unmarried shows that he too cannot break his tie with his mother, but at least he can assert his manhood by going into the army. When he comes home on leave, Mary tells him, in one of her flashing insights, that he went away so as to keep his essential self from being crushed. For the first time she articulates the stakes of the fight she has long been engaged upon.

...Ever since I began to grow up I felt there was something about Mamma that would kill me if I let it. I've had to fight for every single thing I've ever wanted. It's awful fighting her, when she's so sweet and gentle. But it's either that or go under.'

'Minky—you talk as if she hated you.'

'She does hate me.'

'You lie.' He said it gently, without rancour.

'No. I found that out years ago. She doesn't know she hates me. She never knows that awful sort of thing. And of course she loved me when I was little. She'd love me now if I stayed little, so that she could do what she liked with me; if I'd sit in a corner and think as she thinks, and feel as she feels and do what she does' (p. 249).

Ironically, this statement is partially fulfilled; throughout her adulthood, Mary does figuratively sit in a corner, escaping from her mother only through her reading and writing.

One reason that Mary remains so closely tied to her mother is that she has no alternative role models to help her in the task of individuation. The two aunts she knows best have both been cowed by the family in different ways.
Aunt Lavinia, who once showed a spunky defiance of her brother's religious conservatism, has become a mouther of religious platitudes. Whereas Aunt Lavinia represents the effects of intellectual stifling, Aunt Charlotte shows the effects of emotional and sexual repression. Mary worries that she may turn out like aunt, who fantasizes that every man she meets—even the piano tuner—wants to marry her. She has been driven mad by lack of love. In her painfully undefended longings, Aunt Charlotte at times seems a version of Mary's self. After Aunt Charlotte gives her a tiny china doll, she dreams that this doll is her aunt.

That night she dreamed that she saw Aunt Charlotte standing at the foot of the kitchen stairs taking off her clothes and wrapping them in white paper; first, her black lace shawl; then her chemise. She stood up without anything on. Her body was polished and shining like an enormous white china doll. She lowered her head and pointed at you with her eyes (p. 37).

This pointing seems to be a kind of accusation; it is Mary's own naked desire for love that is so brutally exposed in Aunt Charlotte. Her worry that she will become like her aunt helps to keep Mary within safe bounds. But perhaps to offset potential guilt, the body she identifies with is a doll's body—white and smooth, non-menstrual, asexual.

Fear and guilt direct much of her behavior. Because she has so little sense of her own ego boundaries, she blames herself when anything goes wrong. As Nancy Chodorow explains, "A kind of guilt that Western women express seems to grow out of and to reflect lack of adequate self/other distinctions and a sense of inescapable embeddedness in relationships to others." When her father is stricken with apoplexy, Mary feels guilt for having "been playing on the Kendal's piano, conceited and happy, not caring" (p. 192). She hates herself for not caring more, hates the piano for reminding her of her callousness. The joy that she finds in writing poems, a joy that is "no good to Mamma, no good
to anybody but you, secret and selfish" (p. 234), is somehow sinful. The trouble
her mother starts having with her eyes seems somehow due to Mary's oblivious-
ness. "(You might have known—you might have known that something would
happen. While you were upstairs, writing, not thinking of her. You might have
known)" (p. 235). Again, she charges herself with responsibility for her sick
brother Rodney. When he dies after she has been away for a week, she blames
herself. "'If I'd been here it wouldn't have happened. I wouldn't have let him. I'd
no business to go away and leave him. I might have known'" (p. 271). No matter
how much she sacrifices for other people, she can never feel she has done enough.
Even giving up her entire life for her mother cannot prevent her from feeling
later she has been unkind, has not done enough (p. 376). Only when she exercises
her duty can she feel her existence to be justified.

Being needed is also a way of being loved. After the father dies, she
gradually begins to assume more and more a maternal role toward her own
mother. At first the role reversal feels awkward, uncomfortable. With her
husband gone, Mrs. Olivier sleeps with her daughter who wants to hold her, but
cannot. In bed they "turned their backs on each other...she had the feeling that
her mother shrank from her as from somebody who had omitted to wash herself
with prayer" (p. 190). But the misery of this alienation dissolves when Mary
finally does take her mother in her arms and "the small, stiff body yielded to her"
(p. 194). Mary feels as happy mothering her mother as being the dependent, cared
for child. "To be happy with her either you or she had to be broken, to be helpless
and little like a child" (p. 194). Later she also feels happy when she can serve her
mother—reading to her before her new glasses arrive (p. 236), caring for her after
she has a stroke (p. 368). Just as her mother loves her best when she is passive
and dependent, she can better love a child-like, dependent mother.
But if an infantile dependence facilitates love, it also requires the death of certain faculties. Mary intuits that her desire for love imprisons her.

The part that cared was not free. Not free. Prisoned in her mother's bedroom with the yellow furniture that remembered. Her mother's face that remembered. Always the same vexed, disapproving, remembering face. And her own heart, sinking at each beat, dragging remembrance. A dead child, remembering and returning (p. 170).

She can never realize her own potential for living when she cannot escape her mother's negative image of her. As Grace Stewart says, "Mary gives birth again and again to this dead child, this caring child who must negate her self-interest in order to win the approval of those she loves." After Mark dies, she dreams of trying to find him in the schoolroom but finding instead "a dead baby lying among the boots and shoes in the cat's cupboard" (p. 311). The dead baby is her own young, vibrant self.

Yet despite the poverty of her emotional life, she retains the capacity to be kindled into passion during middle age. When she first becomes the secretary of an important scholar, she finally feels justified in other people's eyes—especially her mother's (p. 344). But when he begins to love her, her joy is mixed with fear that the beautiful moment of communion will be spoiled if she attempts to hold him. She also worries about the reaction of her mother who watches him with "uneasy, frightened eyes" (p. 344). Though she refuses Richard's marriage proposal because she feels she must stay with her mother, the excitement still causes her mother to have a stroke. It seems a warning. When Mary later visits Richard in his flat and sleeps with him, this brief exercise of sexual freedom is also punished. Her mother is stricken ill just about the time that Mary began to sleep with Richard. "What had she been thinking of those five days? It was as though she knew" (p. 363). Like other twentieth century daughters, Mary unconsciously feels that her sexual independence has "killed" the
mother. Perhaps Mrs. Olivier, as retaliation for Mary's leaving and urgent plea for her return, unconsciously "chooses" the moment of Mary's absence for a stroke.

It might also be argued that the author herself unconsciously conspires to punish Mary in her steps toward liberation. Though she makes us sympathetic toward Mary's struggle for independence, she persistently undercuts it by punishing Mary when she forsakes the post of duty. Certainly the ending of the novel, which can be read either as a triumph or a failure for Mary, reflects the author's ambivalence.

With her mother dead and her former lover married, Mary finds a happiness she believes has nothing to do with personal attachments. The question of free will and determinism becomes irrelevant when she feels in accord with God, or the Thing-in-itself. "There could be no surrender...And yet there was. Not the surrender of your will, but of all the things that entangle and confuse it; that stand between it and you, between God and you" (p. 377). Kaplan considers this new life that is "without struggle, without ego" to be the "ultimate passivity." I would say that this mystical realization, however valid it may be in its own right, here seems an almost too convenient way of resolving Mary's inner conflicts. It means that Mary can at last reconcile her desires for freedom and passive harmony through her union with God, freed from an infantile dependence on other human beings. I find this resolution unsatisfying, however, because it sidesteps the psychological issues May Sinclair set before us.

This ending, which invites us to rationalize Mary's sacrifice as the painful but necessary preparation for a spiritual transcendence, comes dangerously close to glorifying the idea of female sacrifice. May Sinclair would say that Mary has sublimated rather than repressed her desire for earthly love, but I do not
see Mary's mysticism as justification for the emotional poverty of her life. It would be easy to extrapolate that hunger is good because it enables the sufferer to transcend hunger; George Eliot has shown, in the figure of Dorothea Brooke, where this kind of thinking leads women.

Mary is strong despite, not because of the constrictions on her life. Unlike her Aunt Charlotte, who takes refuge from lovelessness in a bland piety, Mary preserves her integrity in and out of love. A heroine who stands at the crossroads of the Victorian and modern age, Mary Olivier acts on the nineteenth century ethos of female self-sacrifice, but never allows her inner self to be crushed. In her ambivalence and conflicting desires, Mary Olivier has begun to articulate the twentieth century daughter's lonely struggle for selfhood.
Notes


7 Rev., Times Literary Supplement, June 12, 1919, p. 324.


9 May Sinclair, Mary Olivier: A Life (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press (New York: Macmillan, 1919; rpt. 1972), p. 110. Subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be indicated by page number in the text.

10 Kaplan, p. 61.

11 Kaplan, p. 61


14 It is interesting that she enjoys being Mamma's "little lamb" when we recall how the "little lamb" she would have cared for as a child was sick and dying.


18 Kaplan, p. 71.
"It is erroneous to say that the little girl gives up her first mother relation in favor of the father. She only gradually draws him into the alliance, develops from the mother-child exclusiveness toward the triangular parent-child relation and continues the latter, just as she does the former, although in a weaker and less elemental form, all her life. Only the principal part changes: now the mother, now the father plays it. The ineradicability of affective constellations manifests itself in later repetitions.

In her relation to her own child, woman repeats her own mother-child history, and seeks to continue the regular psychological process in a new triangle." 1

Edith Wharton, long categorized as a kind of watered down Henry James, is at last being examined in her own right. She is more than a technical experimenter with point of view, more than a novelist of manners documenting the old, arisocratic New York society. Cynthia Ozick's article entitled "Justice (Again) to Edith Wharton" points out how she has been critically slighted. "Not taken seriously by the dominant criticism, purposefully ignored by the radical separatist criticism of the new feminists--she represents an antagonism." 2

Ms. Ozick comments on the disservice done her by Edmund Wilson when he attributes Wharton's successes to severe emotional strain. Certainly, if we turn to Wilson's well known essay, we see how his condescending tone might color readers' attitudes.

When we look back on Mrs. Wharton's career, it seems that everything that is valuable in her work lies within a quite sharply delimited area—between The House of Mirth and The Age of Innocence. It is sometimes true of women writers--less often, I believe, of men--that a manifestation of something like genius may be stimulated by some exceptional emotional strain, but will disappear when the stimulus has passed. With a man, his professional, his artisan's life is likely to persist and evolve as a partially independent organism through the vicissitudes of his emotional experience. Henry James in a virtual vacuum continued to possess and develop his métier up to his very last years. But Mrs. Wharton had no métier in this sense. With her emergence from her life in the
United States, her settling down in the congenial society of Paris, she seems at last to become comfortably adjusted; and with her adjustment, the real intellectual force which she has exerted through a decade and a half evaporates almost completely. She no longer maims or massacres her characters. Her grimness melts rapidly into benignity. 

Leaving untouched Wilson's comments on male and female creativity, I would like to question the assertion that everything valuable in Wharton's canon lies between The House of Mirth and The Age of Innocence. Though the period from 1905 to 1920 was a highly fertile time for Wharton, throughout her career she dramatized women's conflicts with a rare blend of empathy and artistic detachment.

From the early bleakness of a tale like "Bunner Sisters" to the often overlooked late novel called The Mother's Recompense, Edith Wharton portrays the longings and loneliness of mother and daughter figures. Whether or not this sense of deprivation and yearning grows out of Wharton's relation with her own mother, as Cynthia Wolff suggests in a well researched, psychoanalytically oriented biography, over and over we view a female bereft--Ann Eliza in "Bunner Sisters," Lily Bart in The House of Mirth, Sophy Viner and Anna Leath in The Reef, Charlotte Lovell in The Old Maid, Kate Clephane in The Mother's Recompense. Renunciation--of life, of hope, of sexuality--is the rule. Despite their passionate longings for intimacy, many of these heroines choose an austere loneliness. To understand the reasons behind emotional or sexual exile, we will explore the emotional relations between key female characters in Wharton's fiction. Unlike her depictions of male/female relationships, which often assume a quality of remoteness or idealization, the relations between mother and daughter figures seem vivid and immediate. Throughout her works Wharton experiments with different solutions to the oedipal triangle--a situation wherein two females competing for a single male may also feel a strong kinship between themselves. This triangular configuration has a strong emotional resonance because it recalls the daughter's early relations with her parents.
Freud and subsequent psychoanalysts agree that the oedipal resolution has different consequences for boys and girls. For a little boy, the pre-oedipal and oedipal figure is the same; a little girl, however, transfers her attachment to her father, but retains an underlying attachment to the mother throughout life. Freud remarks that "The phase of exclusive attachment to the mother, which may be called the pre-Oedipus phase, is far more important in women than it can claim to be in men....The mother-relation was the original one, upon which the father-relation was built up." Though boys presumably resolve the oedipus complex by repressing their attachments to their mothers, they later find someone like their mothers in adult relationships. For girls, however, a bisexual relational triangle is created with the introduction of the father as substitute for the mother. Helene Deutsch's discussion of this triangle shows how a daughter will hover between father and mother attachment substitutes throughout life. Nancy Chodorow, in The Reproduction of Mothering, discusses the implications of this oedipal triangle for girls. When a girl turns to her father, she does not give up the mother as love object.

Psychoanalysts offer various interpretations of the girl's turn to her father, but all these accounts share an important argument. They all claim the oedipal situation is for a girl at least as much a mother-daughter concern as a father-daughter concern. A girl generally does turn to her father as a primary love object, and does feel hostile and rivalrous toward her mother in the process. This 'change of object' may be partly a broadening of innate sexual drives, and it is probably in part a reaction to her heterosexual father's behavior and feelings toward her and his preoccupation with her (hetero-) sexuality. The turn to the father, however, is embedded in a girl's external relationship to her mother and in her relation to her mother as internal object. It expresses hostility to her mother; it results from an attempt to win her mother's love; it is a reaction to powerlessness vis-a-vis maternal omnipotence and to primary identification. Every step of the way, as the analysts describe it, a girl develops her relationship to her father while looking back at her mother--to see if her mother is envious, to make sure she is in fact separate, to see if she can in this way win her mother, to see if she is really independent. Her turn to her father is both an attack on her mother and an expression of love for her.
Although a girl may seek to give up her mother completely in favor of the father, he is usually too physically and emotionally distant to be more than a partial oedipal object. The primary attachment to the mother continues even while the girl develops heterosexual relations with the male.

The incompleteness of the daughter's oedipal transfer helps to explain mother/daughter dynamics in Edith Wharton's fiction. The critic Adeline Trinter touches on "the strained relationship between mothers and daughters...in Wharton's late novels. Concealed within is the struggle for the father, a struggle that wounds their relationship." She draws on Wolff's biography to relate Wharton's preoccupation with incest to an unresolved oedipal crisis in her own life. I would like to take discussion of this oedipal configuration away from the speculative area of biographical criticism, and instead to examine this theme as it appears in Wharton's early, middle and late fiction. Certainly the unearthing of the "Beatrice Palmato" summary and fragment dramatically suggests the power of this conflict in Wharton's creative imagination. Along with an astoundingly explicit account of oral and genital sexuality between father and daughter (which, as Wolff remarks, seems more a "delightful erotic fantasy" than an incestuous horror), there is also a summary of an unwritten ghost story which takes this triangular situation as its subject. In this summary, first an eldest daughter mysteriously commits suicide; then the mother has a nervous break-down and is ordered away by doctors who forbid her to take the second daughter, little Beatrice, with her. When Mrs. Palmato returns, things seem to go well at first, but she suddenly has another nervous break-down, goes mad and tries to kill her husband. After she dies in an insane asylum a few months later, the father marries Beatrice's young governess, to whom Beatrice is devoted. Father and daughter continue to be very close until Beatrice marries at 18. Beatrice has two
children: a son, and a daughter whom her husband adores. Gradually Beatrice begins to show a morbid jealousy of this child, and one day when she sees her husband kissing his small daughter, she "stops on the threshold, screams out: 'Don't kiss my child. Put her down! How dare you kiss her?' and snatches the little girl from his arms." Husband and wife stare at each other in a moment of awful truth; shortly afterwards, Beatrice flies from the room, hurries upstairs, and shoots herself. This summary reveals both the daughter's fantasy of union with the father and the mother's sexual jealousy of her daughter. Mother and daughter cannot co-exist with the father/husband figure, though the daughter can, it appears, live harmoniously with the father and the idealized mother-figure—the young governess. Over and over, Wharton works variations on this oedipal triangle into her fiction.

From the early novella "Bunner Sisters" (written in 1892) to The Mother's Recompense (1924) Wharton attempts different solutions to the oedipal triangle. In "Bunner Sisters," The Old Maid, The Mother's Recompense, the mother figure relinquishes her claim to sexuality so that she can keep the daughter figure close to her; eventually, however, she loses the daughter to the male. In The Reef the younger woman, Sophy Viner, leaves so that Anna, the mother figure, can live with Darrow in peace. But Anna, seeing always the shadow of another woman between herself and her beloved, ultimately renounces this sexual love. In Ethan Frome, when the mother/crone Zeena refuses to make way for the nubile Mattie, competition ends in a dreadful stalemate—Mattie crippled in a sleigh ride crash, and neither woman in possession of Ethan's heart. Throughout the fiction we see women pulled between the male and the female, between sexual and maternal passions. Their self-division prevents them from realizing a bond with either a male or female; the typical Wharton heroine ends up alone.
1. "Bunner Sisters"

A compelling picture of female isolation appears in an early novellette, "Bunner Sisters." As Cynthia Wolff points out, "Bunner Sisters" is the first of many works where we find a double heroine. Though she suggests that "in this first piece of its kind, the women have very little to distinguish between them," the older and younger sisters here can easily be seen as mother and daughter figures. The older, Ann Eliza, plays a maternal role to her sister Evelina, even to the point of sacrificing her hopes of personal fulfillment so that her sister can marry. The sisters' lives, which revolve around their small, shabby millinary shop, are greatly changed when a most unlikely love object comes their way—the silent, cigar puffing Mr. Ramy who owns a dusty clock shop down the street. (Significantly, few of Wharton's male suitors seem worth the passion lavished upon them). Ironically, the altruism which Ann Eliza shows when she deflects Mr. Ramy's attention from herself to her younger sister becomes Evelina's undoing; when at the end Evelina returns to her, sick and disillusioned with her drug addict husband, the two women do not even have the meager solace of their lonely intimacy. They have been separated by Evelina's nightmarish experiences after her marriage. Evelina has borne a baby who died shortly afterwards and now fantasizes merging with this baby in heaven. Ann Eliza, who has projected all her blocked desires onto her younger sister, is ultimately cheated even of closeness to Evelina, "the one presence that was warmth and light to her." 

Though a mother figure such as Ann Eliza may step aside for a daughter figure, this work shows us that maternal self-denial does not come without struggle. Despite the "passionate motherliness" (p. 343) which Ann Eliza
feels toward her sister, her love is by no means unalloyed. At the beginning she apparently represses any thought of what life might have to offer her while she regards Evelina as intended "to marry and have a baby, to wear silk on Sundays" (p. 313). But when she meets Mr. Ramy while buying a clock for her sister, she begins to consider "her right to set up some lost opportunities of her own" (p. 313). When the clock stops one day, she fantasizes about seeing Mr. Ramy again, but about that time a dressmaker friend falls ill, and she plays nurse while the younger sister gets the clock repaired. Ann Eliza envies Evelina who is "handed every opportunity that came their way...But she was well-trained in the arts of renunciation" (p. 315) and does not dwell on her budding jealousy.

Mr. Ramy's subsequent visits highlight the "monotonous" and "colorless" tenor of their lives together. What had once seemed sufficient does so no longer. Before Mr. Ramy's first visit, Evelina grumbles about the smallness of their living space (p. 317). Ann Eliza, whose dormant desires for a life of her own have begun to stir, feels an "involuntary criticism" (p. 323) toward Evelina. When she observes Evelina's interest in Mr. Ramy, however, she characteristically gives up her own dreams. Her maternal self-sacrifice gives her the "chill joy of renunciation" (p. 323)--that cold bed partner which a number of Wharton's heroines will have.

Further renunciation is in store for Ann Eliza. When Mr. Ramy surprisingly proposes to her, she directs his attention from herself to Evelina--a rather easy task, it turns out, since he seems to be seeking more a work horse than a bride. Her life has been so vicarious that she is partly compensated for her sacrifice by her sister's joy (p. 341). Then, just as she is reconciling herself to the idea of occasional visits from the newly engaged couple, she learns that they are to leave the city and she will be left entirely alone. With Evelina gone, all her
stifled longings for personal fulfillment mutiny inside her; when Evelina is too far away for Ann Eliza to live through her vicariously, her own emotional hungers reveal themselves.

Well, this was what happened to mothers. They bore it, Ann Eliza mused; so why not she? Ah, but they had their own chance first; she had had no chance at all. And now this life which she had made her own was going from her forever; had gone, already, in the inner and deeper sense, and was soon to vanish in even its outward nearness, its surface-communion of voice and eye. At that moment even the thought of Evelina's happiness refused her its consolatory ray; or its light, if she saw it, was too remote to warm her. The thirst for a personal inalienable tie, for pangs and problems of her own, was parching Ann Eliza's soul: it seemed to her that she could never again gather strength to look her loneliness in the face (pp. 344-45).

The intimacy she shared with her sister has been replaced by a mere "surface-communion" now that Mr. Ramy has come between them. Still, she makes further sacrifices for her sister's marriage; when Mr. Ramy decides that he cannot afford to take Evelina to St. Louis with him, Ann Eliza gives Evelina the sum total of her paltry savings.

When Evelina leaves, Ann Eliza's misery recalls not only the mother's grief at losing her daughter, but also the child's sense of abandonment when she first realizes that her mother is separate from her. It may surprise the reader that she feels such "misery and longing" (p. 363) for such an obviously shallow, self-centered sister, but Ann Eliza has effectively repressed possible criticisms of the one person who gives her life meaning and purpose. The loss of business in her shop now reflects her loss of energy and hope. When she stops getting letters from her sister, alarm drives her to seek news of her sister's whereabouts, even going back to Mrs. Hochmüller, a vaguely evil mother figure with some mysterious connection to Mr. Ramy. Though this woman too has disappeared, she finally learns from Mr. Ramy's former employer about Ramy's drug addiction, and she returns home with no other object in life except to await her sister.
The reunion of the two sisters is filled with tragic irony; as one critic points out, "Ann Eliza's self-sacrifice has purchased death for her sister, not life." Evelina, having been beaten and over-worked by her drug-addict husband, is now dying of consumption. The disillusionment is cruel when Ann Eliza, having given up her own pitiful dreams, hears her sister cry out, "'You don't know what life's like—you don't know anything about it—setting here safe all the while in this peaceful place'" (p. 367). Judith Saunders comments that this ending shows the "moral inadequacy of the policy of self-abnegation." While May Sinclair ultimately justifies Mary Olivier's self-sacrifice by means of a mystical resolution, "Bunner Sisters" shows how it can backfire on everyone involved. Instead of binding her sister closer through her altruistic gestures, Ann Eliza only alienates her. The longing for a "personal and inalienable tie" is totally frustrated. While Evelina was gone, Ann Eliza could unconsciously be sustained by the thought of her sister's need--she had imagined her sister calling her at night "faint with a nameless terror" (p. 363). But even in her sick and weakened state, Evelina does not turn to Ann Eliza in the warmth of need or gratitude. She refuses the special pie which Ann Eliza sets before her (p. 366); she refuses the call to loving intimacy. She has become a stranger through her marriage, the baby she has borne and lost, and the Catholicism she has acquired during her sickness. While Ann Eliza longs to become one with Evelina, Evelina herself dreams of merging with her baby in heaven (p. 375). Feeling "shut out of Evelina's heart, an exile from her closest affections" Ann Eliza must confront their essential separateness.

While Evelina can fantasize about merging with her dead baby (Lily Bart will have a similar fantasy in *House of Mirth*), Ann Eliza's loneliness at the end represents the typical female, even human plight in Edith Wharton—a free floating disconnectedness. It would seem that mother/daughter harmony can exist
only in fantasy; the ironic detachment of the narrative viewpoint throughout the story only emphasizes the discrepancy between the dream of closeness and the reality of separateness. It is clear to the reader, if not to Ann Eliza, that she and her sister have never had a reciprocal relationship; their "estrangement" (p. 375) grows out of the initial asymmetrical relationship. Evelina's solicitude had been as unquestioning as Ann Eliza's self-effacement. Both women's attraction to Mr. Ramy, although based partly in the impulse toward individuation, showed an equally strong impulse toward personal submergence. Wharton shows how the overmastering desire to submerge one's ego, though it may appear as virtuous self-sacrifice, can lead to blindness, self-delusion, even, in Evelina's case, death itself. Ann Eliza's attempt to lose herself in the daughter figure fails as miserably as Evelina's attempt to lose herself in marriage. Neither marriage nor motherhood can save women from themselves.

II. The House of Mirth

The House of Mirth, generally considered Wharton's first great novel, also deals, in part, with the failure of intimacy as solution to women's search for identity. In a society that judges human worth by material standards, it becomes increasingly clear that Lily Bart, in her search for the security of a husband, is doomed. Although she actually hungered for emotional security, she translates this hunger into the language she has learned, looking for material ease to give her peace of mind. Nevertheless, Lily's appeal is that she senses there must be something more. At times she looks toward Seldon with longing, idealizing him as some better part of herself. Yet the reader sees clearly that he is a mere dilettante, too reserved and cautious to be anyone's knight or savior,
Despite his lofty talk about a "republic of the spirit." The tragedy here, as in "Bunner Sisters," is that the dream itself is hollow at the center. Just as no one could save Ann Eliza or Evelina, no one can save Lily from herself. As her powers to survive in a brittle society erode, Lily turns blindly toward any suggestion of compassion or belief—toward Seldon, toward the vulgar Rosedale, toward Gus Trenor. The greatest warmth she finds, however, is not with men, but with her plain, unassuming cousin Gerty, and later, just before her death, with the baby of a woman she had once helped.

Lily's relationship with her cousin Gerty and with Seldon, though a relatively minor part of the novel, presents an interesting variation on the love triangle. Gerty too loves Seldon, but feels herself to be no match for Lily's beauty, and does not even try to compete. When Lily comes to her for comfort, she treats her as a daughter, subordinating her romantic impulses to maternal ones. She cannot betray the filial trust of a cousin who comes to her in distress. When Gerty realizes Seldon's feeling toward Lily, she is stricken at the irony of the situation. In defending Lily's character, she has helped Seldon fall in love with her.

And now she was thrust out [of Seldon's heart], and the door barred against her by Lily's hand! Lily, for whose admission there she herself had pleaded! The situation was lighted up by a dreary flash of irony. She knew Seldon—she saw how the force of her faith in Lily must have helped to dispel his hesitations. She remembered, too, how Lily had talked of him—she saw herself bringing the two together, making them known to each other. 13

Initially, she blames Lily; like the elder Bunner sister, Gerty does not find maternal renunciation easy: "She wanted happiness—wanted it as fiercely and unscrupulously as Lily did, but without Lily's power of obtaining it. And in her conscious impotence she lay shivering and hated her friend" (p. 171). But she puts her fury aside when Lily comes to her.
Lily, who has just received ugly insinuations from Gus Trenor about unpaid debts, can think of nowhere to go for shelter except to Gerty. Gerty rises to the occasion—warms Lily, comforts her, all the while confronting the spectacle of her rival's beauty. Finally, like Ann Eliza, she must struggle with temptation. When Lily asks her if Seldon could understand what she had done, Gerty says yes, but only after a terrible inner struggle when "she saw her chance of happiness surge past under a flash of lightning" (p. 175). Like Ann Eliza who turns down Mr. Ramy's marriage proposal after a moment of temptation, Gerty passes the test. In a scene that foreshadows Lily's final sleep with the imaginary baby in her arms, the two women lie in bed, mother and child.

'Hold me, Gerty, hold me, or I shall think of things,' she moaned; and Gerty silently slipped an arm under her, pillowing her head in its hollow as a mother makes a nest for a tossing child. In the warm hollow Lily lay still and her breathing grew low and regular. Her hand still clung to Gerty's as if to ward off evil dreams, but the hold of her fingers relaxed, her head sank deeper into its shelter, and Gerty felt that she slept (pp. 175-76).

In her utter loneliness, Lily craves sleep to release her from her troubles. Like Esther Greenwood in The Bell Jar, she would surrender passively to its sweet oblivion.

Her physical craving for sleep was her only sustained sensation. Her mind shrank from the glare of thought as instinctively as eyes contract in a blaze of light—darkness, darkness was what she must have at any cost (p. 334).

This infantile longing is hardly distinguishable from the longing for death. She has been exhausted by the struggle for survival; for all her luxury loving nature, the prospect of solitude terrifies her far more than the prospect of poverty. She sees herself unattached, "swept like a stray uprooted growth down the heedless current of the years" (p. 331). Just before her consciousness fades out at the end, fantasy allows her to return to a state of undifferentiated oneness with the all-loving mother. She herself desires the maternal comfort she lavishes on an imaginary baby.
By a logical reversal characteristic of dreams, Lily becomes the baby which she holds shortly before she dies. This baby belongs to Nettie, a poor woman whom Lily had helped once during one of her sporadic bursts of generosity. Nettie, who has married and built a life with a new family, now idolizes Lily as an ideal mother figure, a fairy godmother who gave her health and happiness with the magic wand of money. Ironically, impecunious Lily represents to Nettie the beneficent savior she has been looking for herself. Nettie, in turn, gives Lily the warmest comfort she is to know when she lays her baby in Lily's arms.

The child's confidence in its safety thrilled her with a sense of warmth and returning life, and she bent over, wondering at the rosy blur of the little face, the empty clearness of the eyes, the vague tendrilly motions of the folding and unfolding fingers. At first the burden in her arms seemed as light as a pink cloud or a heap of down, but as she continued to hold it, the weight increased, sinking deeper and penetrating her with a strange sense of weakness as though the child entered into her and became a part of herself (p. 328).

When Lily at last allows herself to become totally fused with another, it is a baby, not a man, who penetrates her, becomes one with her. The imagery here suggests both a sexual fusion and the primordial oneness of mother and child. Lily, whose own mother had bequeathed her little more than a distaste for "dinginess" and a desire to survive and triumph through the force of her beauty, can here imagine herself as the mother she does not have—comforting, accepting, at one with the daughter.

Her last thoughts, then, center more on the baby than on Seldon. Under the influence of the drug she has taken, she imagines a warmth lying in her arms that dissolves the loneliness.

It was odd, but Nettie Struther's child was lying on her arm; she felt the pressure of its little head against her shoulder. She did not know how it had come there, but she felt no great surprise at the fact, only a gentle penetrating thrill of warmth and pleasure. She settled herself into an easier position, hollowing her arm to pillow the round, downy head and holding her breath lest a sound should disturb the sleeping child (p. 335).
Just as Gerty had earlier held her, "pillowing her head in its hollow" (p. 175), she now holds the baby. In fantasy, the motherless Lily becomes her own mother, still identifying with the child she imagines in her arms, comforted by "the tender pressure of its body" (p. 336).

Though this novel ends on a tragic note, we do at least glimpse the possibility of peace, of resolution through fantasy. One reason Lily does not find a man to support her or to love her becomes clear enough here: she does not want a man so much as she wants to recreate that mother/infant bond. Though the outer world seems cold and comfortless, Lily can, by projecting her vulnerability onto the imaginary baby, vicariously experience herself as secure, protected child. Through fantasy she can stave off the terror of separation, the lonely struggle for survival. At last she can relax, reunited with the loving mother of pre-conscious memory. The yearning for the security and passivity of the cradled infant is finally fulfilled—but through death, not life.

III. Ethan Frome

Ethan Frome (1911) presents an even bleaker picture. Here we see no potential for fulfillment, through death or otherwise, only a purgatorial endurance. In this novel, as in "Bunner Sisters," the dream of communion becomes the nightmare of estrangement. For Ethan Frome, chained to the side of a sickly querulous witch-like wife, the young girl Mattie who comes to housekeep for them begins to symbolize romantic escape. Like Mr. Ramy or Seldon, Mattie is simply the nearby figure upon whom romantic fantasies can be draped. Ethan dreams alternately of going West with her and of dwelling with her in domestic harmony. When he takes Mattie downhill on a final, life-defying sled-ride, he is attempting
to reach a death dream of oneness and peace. The dream boomerangs, and they
do not die. After the crash, Mattie's crippling means that he has two witch-like
women captors in his household rather than one. By the end of the story the once
fresh Mattie seems to have merged with the figure of his wife; much worse than
the renunciation or loss of the dream is its perverse fulfillment. Ethan, Mattie,
and Zeena are locked in with each other, but balanced apart in isolation.

If we consider the situation from the women's point of view, we can
speculate how cruelly their romantic fantasies have been fulfilled. At a relatively
advanced age Zeena lands a husband—but he removes himself from her emotional-
ly and eventually falls in love with her pretty young cousin. Mattie, the poor
relation, finds an older man who loves her, but after responding to his love, she
ends up crippled, confined in his household, living with him but in a way very
different from what she might have wished. All the women who turn to Ethan for
emotional nourishment seem at some point to die inside. Ethan's mother, we
learn, had once been talkative, but had fallen silent, sickly, and ultimately died.
Zeena, who had come to nurse her, stays to take over her role in Ethan's life. At
first voluble, Zenia too falls silent after living with the inarticulate Ethan. Her
own sickliness soon entirely absorbs her energies; with no external affirmation of
her existence, she manifests her unhappiness through her body. She babies it,
turns it into an object of significance. When Mattie comes to help her with the
housework, she too shows ominous signs of frailty and sickliness. Though she
pleases Ethan with her sprightliness at first, after the accident she becomes as
gray and querulous as Zeena. The mother, Zeena, and Mattie all seem to be
deadened by the failure of love.

In the competition for Ethan's affections, neither Mattie nor Zeena
can claim victory. Neither woman is dislodged by the other; there is only a
terrible stalemate. Unlike Ann Eliza Bunner or Lily Bart, the mother figure—Zeena—does not yield gracefully, if pointlessly, to the daughter figure. Though Zeena has taken over the role of Ethan's mother, she will not allow Mattie to usurp her role. The dreadful tableau at the end of the story suggests that the coexistence of mother, daughter, and male figure is not a viable option. The relational triangle must be broken if the daughter is to live her own life successfully. She must metaphorically "kill" the mother before she can become the mother herself. Simone de Beauvoir comments on this paradox.

...In her daughter [the mother] finds a double. The double is a dubious personage, who assassinates his original, as we see in Poe's tales and in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, for example. Thus in becoming a woman the daughter condemns her mother to death. 15

Before the accident which cripples Mattie, Zeena announces that she has 'complications'—a code word for terminal illness—but Mattie's illness quite galvanizes Zeena. Though she has not been successful in her attempt to eliminate Mattie by sending her away, she has not been eliminated herself. When neither woman "dies," metaphorically or actually, neither can achieve a satisfying union with the male.

One reason Mattie does not "win" over Zeena is that she has unconsciously sabotaged her own success. When Zeena leaves for the doctor's, Mattie fixes a special supper for Ethan, retrieving a good pickle dish from the top shelf of the china-closet. Then, just as she and Ethan attempt to enjoy a tranquil evening, the cat backs into the pickle dish, breaking it into pieces. Its broken pieces, which symbolize an evening broken by guilty awareness of Zeena's presence, later become Zeena's pretext for getting rid of Mattie. It seems all too fitting that Mattie should be punished for wanting to usurp Zeena's place. She cannot play Zeena's wifely role with impunity; the pickle dish must break, Zeena's
presence must hover darkly in the room. When Mattie sits in Zeena's rocking chair, both she and Ethan are struck by a sense of wrongness.

As her young brown head detached itself against the patchwork cushion that habitually framed his wife's gaunt countenance, Ethan had a momentary shock. It was almost as if the other face, the face of the superseded woman, had obliterated that of the intruder. After a moment Mattie seemed to be affected by the same sense of constraint. She changed her position, leaning forward to bend her head above her work, so that he saw only the foreshortened top of her nose and the streak of red in her hair; then she slipped to her feet, saying 'I can't see to sew,' and went back to her chair by the lamp (p. 258 in The Edith Wharton Reader).

Curiously, the two of them seem as intensely aware of the absent Zeena as they are of each other; when Mattie mentions Zeena's name "the repetition of the name seemed to carry it to the farther corners of the room and send it back to them in long repercussions of sound" (p. 261). As an older man married to another woman, Ethan represents to Mattie the father figure she is not allowed—or will not allow herself—to possess.

The most obvious punishment for her presumption is, of course, the crippling. The disastrous sled ride satisfies a masochistic urge for self-punishment, but it also suggests a means of possessing the father figure. Mattie's resultant paralysis eliminates the sexual threat to Zeena. Thus the dangerous sled ride, which at first promises to be a kind of chaste consummation through a double suicide, ends up allowing the daughter to punish herself, to placate, and to defy the all powerful mother figure. She has not allowed Zeena to have Ethan all alone, she has not taken him for herself, she has not transferred her desire for attachment to another, more suitable young man who has been courting her. The static, nightmarish quality of the ending suggests that this may be the most dismal solution of all to the oedipal triangle. This ending is as chilling as a New England winter—not because it denies romantic possibility, but because it denies
the possibility of any intimacy. The bonds that tie the characters together are utterly sterile; Mattie and Zeena have none of the attachment of the Bunner sisters, or Lily and her cousin Gerty. The daughter who has not freed herself from the mother cannot form an adult bond with a male or female. Zeena and Mattie's mutual antagonism is a measure of their self-dislike. Each dislikes what she sees in the other, and what she sees in herself. The mother and daughter who cannot love each other cannot love the male either.

IV. The Reef

Throughout Wharton's fiction we feel an inexorable fate keeps people isolated from each other, despite their desperate yearnings for communion. In *The Reef* (1912) sexual rivalry between a mother and daughter figure results in the daughter's abdication from the scene, but Anna, the mother figure, is unable to erase the image of the other woman which comes between herself and her fiance. Once again the tantalizing vision of romantic love slips away; like Ethan, like Lily Bart, like the Bunner sisters, the heroines Sophy Viner and Anna Leath find no one to rescue them from themselves. Yet, although this novel portrays a painful female isolation, I do not agree with Cynthia Wolff that "There is something relentlessly barren at the heart of it." In this novel we glimpse at least the potential for genuine emotional connection developing from the woman's struggle to come to terms with her *alter ego*, and thus with herself. By learning how to understand Sophy Viner, Anna Leath learns to understand herself.

Perhaps the most interesting pair of heroines in Wharton's fiction, Anna and Sophy each represents the unfulfilled potential of the other. Recently widowed, Anna Leath has a French château, a charming daughter and stepson--a
backdrop of security that the impecunious Sophy might well envy. Until Sophy's former lover and Anna's fiancé, Darrow, appears at Givré, Sophy, presently the governess of Anna's daughter, seems quite willing to trade her freedom for marriage to Anna's stepson Owen, thus acquiring the security of Givré herself. Anna, in turn, has never known Sophy's youthful spontaneity and passion. As she gradually learns of the affair between Sophy and Darrow, her attempt to understand Sophy leads her to confront her own passional self, her values and prejudices. I agree with the critic James Gargano who, in his discussion of Anna's moral education, points out how Anna "with a courage and perception rare among Mrs. Wharton's women...peers into the covert, underground, and generally shabby areas of life." In contrast, Geoffrey Walton, who criticizes Anna's character as "lacking in human warmth," "narrow in sympathy" and "prudish," fails to appreciate Anna's progress toward self-knowledge. I would like to focus on the essential role that Sophy plays in teaching Anna both her capacity for passion and its limitations.

Though a romantic quadrangle appears in this novel, the central configuration is still the oedipal triangle. Anna Leath, as mother figure, and Sophy Viner, the younger daughter figure, are both in love with Darrow, a handsome, cultivated diplomat. Owen, Anna's stepson who is secretly engaged to Sophy, quite fades into the background when Darrow arrives at Givré. The brief affair which Sophy and Darrow enjoyed in Paris now haunts them both, for different reasons. Darrow, engaged to the young widow Anna whom he had courted before her marriage, struggles with his conscience as to whether he should tell Anna about the moral character of the governess she has engaged (the irony of his unquestioning acceptance of the double standard completely eludes him). Sophy, now engaged to Owen, struggles with her unextinguished passion
toward Darrow and worries that he will make it impossible for her to stay at Givré. After trying to repress her awareness of the tension between Darrow and Sophy, Anna finally guesses about their former liaison, and Sophy feels compelled to leave. Although she still loves Darrow and wants to marry him, Anna cannot stop thinking about his affair with Sophy. After wavering, she decides to give Darrow up and tries in vain to find Sophy to tell her of her decision. Once again, each character ends up alone.

But Anna's difficult loneliness is not barren. Unlike Lily Bart, who flees the sexual challenge presented by the man and takes comfort in an attachment to an imaginary baby before she dies, Anna gives up the man, but faces herself. At the end of the novel she no longer harbors romantic visions of a prince who will rescue her from her imprisonment at Givré but she has earned a valuable self-knowledge. The girl who had once been "a model of lady-like repression" has finally learned, through her identification with Sophy Viner, to acknowledge the springs of passion in herself.

Even before uncovering the affair in Paris, Anna dimly senses a threatening sexuality in Sophy. While eager to talk to her about her plans for her forthcoming marriage to Owen, Anna momentarily associates her with Kitty Mayne, a woman who had once been Darrow's mistress.

She could not have said what there was in the girl's manner and expression to give her this feeling of ignorance and inexperience, but she was reminded, as she looked at Sophy Viner, of the other girls she had known in her youth, the girls who seemed possessed of a secret she had missed. Yes, Sophy Viner had their look—almost the obscurely menacing look of Kitty Mayne...Anna, with an inward smile, brushed aside the image of this forgotten rival. But she had felt, deep down, a twinge of the old pain, and she was sorry that, even for the flash of a thought, Owen's betrothed should have reminded her of so different a woman (p. 237).
She is menaced not only by her fear of losing Darrow to another woman, but also by the possibility that there may be a world of passion into which she has not been initiated.

When she learns of the affair between Sophy and Darrow, she would like to thrust this terrible knowledge from her mind, but something in her keeps struggling to understand.

She was tormented by the desire to know more, to understand better, to feel herself less ignorant and inexpert in matters which made so much of the stuff of human experience. What did he mean by 'a moment's folly, a flash of madness'? How did people enter on such adventures, how pass out of them without more visible traces of their havoc? Her imagination recoiled from the vision of a sudden debasing familiarity: it seemed to her that her thoughts would never again be pure (p. 294).

She cannot return to her state of former naivety. Astonishingly, considering the hypocritical sexual mores represented in Darrow, we see her questioning the nature of passion in her early middle age—and not only other people's but her own.

...She was aware, in her own bosom, of sensations so separate from her romantic thoughts of Darrow that she saw her body and soul divided against themselves. She recalled having read somewhere that in ancient Rome the slaves were not allowed to wear a distinctive dress lest they should recognize each other and learn their powers and their number. So, in herself, she discerned for the first time instincts and desires, which, mute and unmarked, had gone to and fro in the dim passages of her mind, and now hailed each other with a cry of mutiny (pp. 316-317).

Toward the end of the novel Anna is hardly the prude or the rarified creature described by Geoffrey Walton. Talking to Darrow alone in his room, she is stirred by the suggestive intimacy, and wishes to be all to him that Sophy Viner had been. When he moves to bid her good night, she is even humiliated that "no other possibility had even brushed his mind" (p. 343). The "threshold" that she crosses that night signals her acceptance of her mute, hitherto unmarked desires. Unlike Lily Bart and Seldon, unlike Ethan Frome and Mattie, Anna acquires from Sophie's example courage to follow her sexual impulses.
Yet her worries afterwards typify the dilemma of the female caught in the double bind of the double standard. If she holds herself aloof, she cannot truly possess either the man or herself. If she does not, she risks the man's contempt or indifference, a particularly painful possibility when she has so much at stake. Darrow's indifference to Sophy is a warning rather than a consolation to Anna. If Darrow could be so detached after sharing such an intimacy in one case, then the same fate might lie in store for her.

Her fear of doing or saying what he disliked was tinged by a new instinct of subserviency against which her pride revolted. She thought to herself: 'He will see the change, and grow indifferent to me as he did to her...' and for a moment it seemed to her that she was reliving the experience of Sophy Viner (p. 347).

She worries that if Darrow perceives his relationship with Sophy as meaningless, then theirs may well be too. Paradoxically, she must give Darrow up in order to save him—or to save at least her love for him, her ideal of love. Her desire to "be to him all that Sophy Viner had been" (p. 343) has this ironic consequence: she now fears being nothing more.

The new slavish fear which has entered her love springs, in part, from jealousy. Wherever she goes with Darrow, she feels the ghostly presence of a third party hovering between them. When she suggests a place to dine, she imagines a shadow crossing Darrow's face and immediately concludes "It was there he went with her!" (p. 354). His suggestion to attend a play at the Athéneé theatre reminds her that it was there "that Owen had seen Darrow with Sophy Viner" (p. 356). Despite her conscious efforts to forget the past and enjoy their present love, she cannot help imagining what has gone before. Her lack of actual knowledge torments her, but she believes that full disclosure of the facts would be lethal to her love with Darrow.
Feeling trapped by her inability to forget the past or to forget Darrow, Anna decides that only Sophy Viner can free her from this jealous, uneasy love. "It was Sophy Viner only who could save her--Sophy Viner who could give her back her lost serenity. She would seek the girl out and tell her that she had given Darrow up; and that step once taken there would be no retracing it" (p. 361). She would make the way clear for Sophy and Darrow; she would seek a bond with Sophy herself. Like another maternal heroine such as Ann Eliza Bunner, she would renounce her own sexuality for a daughter figure.

But as in "Bunner Sisters," Wharton does not allow a comforting mother/daughter bond to replace the male-female one. Looking for Sophy, Anna meets instead her caricature—Sophy's fat blond courtesan sister, luxuriating on a pink bed. In the roseate penumbra of the bed-curtains she presented to Anna's startled gaze an odd chromo-like resemblance to Sophy Viner, or a suggestion, rather, of what Sophy Viner might, with the years and in spite of the powder-puff, become. Larger, blonder, heavier-featured, she yet had glances and movements that disturbingly suggested what was freshest and most engaging in the girl (p. 365).

In this disturbingly ambiguous scene, Wharton as narrator carefully abstains from remarking its significance. We are not sure whether to read this scene as an implied criticism of Sophy who is, after all, of the same stock as this vulgar sister, or to admire Sophy more for having risen above this tawdry milieu. We may respect Sophy's courage in leaving once again, or we may wonder at her return to the dreadful Mrs. Murrett. The narrator gives us no permission to judge Sophy here, but what we do learn is something about Anna.

If Anna has come to recognize her own kinship with Sophy, and Laura represents what Sophy "might become," then Anna must feel herself to be confronting a possible version of her future self. In her grotesque sexuality,
Sophy's sister personifies Anna's worst fears about the end result of passion. Learning not to categorize Sophy as a mere adventuress, Anna had broken through a screen of artificial innocence, a world of forms, gestures, and prejudices, but this scene shows that the old categories still have validity in Anna's imagination. Once she had observed that Sophy had powdered her face, and had disliked the idea that her future daughter-in-law might "present to the world a bedizened countenance" (p. 236). Now she sees "an immense powder-puff" trailing on Laura's bed; it is as if this vision of the sister represents a confirmation of Anna's early, flickering misgivings about Sophy—and consequently about herself. Clearly Sophy is of a different cut than her sister, but what Anna notices is a disturbing resemblance. As in a dream, Sophy seems to have turned into her self-indulgent, promiscuous sister; Anna's view of her here reflects a deep uneasiness about female sexuality.

For Anna, Sophy mirrors unconscious desires and fears. In loving Darrow, she acts upon Anna's own repressed impulses, and the indifference she receives afterwards is the punishment Anna fears for sexual freedom. Though Anna regards Sophy first as a daughter figure she would counsel, later Sophy unwittingly becomes a mother figure who teaches Anna the inadequacy of her former shuttered world. Through her example, she teaches acceptance of womanly passions, but she also teaches that passion is less important than personal integrity. The real mark of Sophy's self-possession is her ability to tell Darrow "'Don't imagine I'm the least bit sorry for anything'" (p. 149), to tell Anna "'I wanted it--I chose it'" (p. 287). All through her pain and disillusionment Anna feels a kind of faith in Sophy Viner.

All through these meditations ran the undercurrent of an absolute trust in Sophy Viner. She thought of the girl with a mingling of antipathy and confidence. It was humiliating to her pride to recognize kindred impulses in a character which she would have
liked to feel completely alien to her. But what indeed was the girl really like? She seemed to have no scruples and a thousand delicacies. She had given herself to Darrow, and concealed the episode from Owen Leath, with no more apparent sense of debasement than the vulgarest of adventuresses; yet she had instantly obeyed the voice of her heart when it bade her part from the one and serve the other (pp. 320-321).

Sophy teaches Anna the courage of renunciation so that when Anna gives up Darrow a second time, she acts not through default or evasion, but through a painful confrontation with herself. The romantic search for an impossible emotional fusion ends with the honest acceptance of human separation.

V. Late Fiction: The Old Maid and The Mother's Recompense

In two of Wharton's later works, The Old Maid and The Mother's Recompense, we again find mother figures who live in isolation after sacrificing their sexual claims for the sake of their daughters. These works vividly portray the female's anguished conflict between a self-effacing, maternal renunciation and a self-affirming, sexual autonomy. Both Charlotte Lovell and Kate Clephane choose to live through their daughters at the expense of their own sexuality—and end up bereft, warmed only by the flickering memory of a brief passion. In The Old Maid and The Mother's Recompense, Wharton continues to develop the dilemma of the love triangle, showing the only solution to be the acceptance of separateness. The sensitive and complex treatment of mother/daughter symbiosis and separation in these works makes it difficult to understand the critical disparagement which has often been applied to Wharton's late work.20

Like The Reef, The Old Maid reveals the "shuddering loneliness"21 of the feminine heart. In this novella Charlotte Lovell, whom everyone considers to be the archetypal 'old maid,' has actually, like Sophy Viner, like the mousy
middle-aged woman in Wharton's story "Autres Temps," loved another woman's suitor. When her cousin Delia Ralston had broken off her engagement with the poor but charming Clem Spender, Charlotte had enjoyed a brief passion with him. The result is Tina, a flashingly brilliant child who stays in a local orphanage. When the stolidly respectable Joe Ralston desires to marry Charlotte, he asks that she give up her attachment to the foundlings at this orphanage, not realizing that one foundling is Charlotte's daughter. Aware that she can count on her cousin's love for Clem, her daughter's father, Charlotte confides in Delia. Delia will help her keep her little girl, but she insists that she forfeit her fiancé in exchange. Delia then takes it upon herself to explain to Joe Ralston that Charlotte has had a recurrence of her old lung fever and thus would never be a fit mother. Ostensibly she is motivated by her sense of propriety to protect Joe Ralston; unconsciously she takes revenge upon Charlotte for loving Clem Spender. She persuades her husband to help care for the orphan, Tina. Charlotte has her daughter, but has missed her chance for marriage.

After Delia's husband dies at a relatively young age, Charlotte and Tina move in with her. Unaware that the prim, spinsterish "Aunt Chatty" is actually her mother, Tina turns her daughterly devotion toward the more indulgent Delia. When Tina begins seeing Lanning Halsey, a charming but poor man who could never marry her for social and financial reasons, Charlotte realizes, from bitter experience, the potential danger for the high spirited girl. When she tells Delia that she intends to take Tina away with her, Delia decides to adopt Tina as her own. Once again Charlotte must sacrifice her own interest for the daughter she cannot even acknowledge.

After Tina is adopted, the way is smoothed for her marriage to young Lanning. In the flush of wedding preparations, we see Delia vicariously
experiencing the lost opportunities of her own youth. "All these days she had been
living the girl's life, she had been Tina, and Tina had been her own girlish self, the
far-off Delia Lovell" (p. 184). When she had married into the staid Ralston
family, Delia had given up the Lovell name and the relative freedom it implied,
but through Tina it has been given back to her. Having prudently rejected the
impecunious Clem Spender though she loved him, Delia is dazzled by the light of
"bliss accepted" (p. 165). In Tina's love she sees all the "visions, cravings and
imaginings of her own stifled youth" (p. 166). Having chosen security over
romance, she can now enjoy, at one remove, all she had missed. For both her and
Charlotte, who is determined that Tina should avoid the starved fate of an 'old
maid,' Tina's marriage compensates for unsatisfied longings.

Though we see both Charlotte's and Delia's hunger for fuller lives, it
is Delia, the plump, comely mother of two, whose vague yearnings seem more
real. We pity Charlotte, but we identify more with Delia who seems to have had
so much—but can never quite ignore a "secret questioning which sometimes beat
in her like wings" (p. 11). Her marriage, like Anna Leath's, has kept her from
certain kinds of self-discovery, and we like her for her inability to settle
completely into complacency. In her decision to adopt Tina, she risks the
disapproval of her children; even harder, she must confront and question her own
life choices.

Once only had she been not a Ralston but herself; once only had it
seemed worth while. And now perhaps the same challenge had
sounded again; again, for a moment, it might be worth while to
live........not for Clement Spender, hardly for Charlotte or even for
Tina; but for her own sake, hers, Delia Ralston's, for the sake of her
one missed vision, her forfeited reality (p. 130).

After she adopts Tina, Delia gains a vicarious satisfaction by observing Tina's
lively romance. Yet watching Tina also brings home to her a sense of missed
opportunities. "Never had she kept a moonlight watch with a lover's arms to
warm her" (p. 133). As a surrogate daughter, Tina lives out Delia's fantasies, but also makes Delia face the poignancy of her own lost youth.

For Tina, Delia is the ideal fantasy mother while Charlotte is the old maid aunt. Dressed in the rags of her illegitimacy, Tina receives a magical gift from Delia—a legitimate name and a modest fortune on which to found her future. Ironically, Tina thinks that Charlotte has never been young, but it is Charlotte who, as a girl, acted upon the fire in her blood, Delia who chose a bland, prudent course to follow.

The real conflict in the story, like that in the film The Turning Point, involves the struggle for possession of the daughter. Feminine rivalry for a male has been converted into rivalry for a daughter. The question Charlotte asks on Tina's wedding eve: "Which of us is her mother?" reverberates through the novel. Delia acts the mother, but Charlotte is the mother. Tina turns to Delia for late night intimacies, but her eyes are on Charlotte's. While Ethan Frome and The Reef focus on female rivalry for a man, the contest here centers not on Clem, but on the daughter figure herself. And as in Ethan Frome, where both women have the man--and yet don't--both women here merge into a single mother image--and yet lose Tina in the end to the male. The daughter, like the mother, cannot be exclusively possessed. The desire to live through the daughter inevitably conflicts with the desire to live with her; however reluctant to let the daughter go, the mother nevertheless must facilitate her leavetaking. In order to live the rich and complete life that her mother on one level desires for her, the daughter must leave to forge a new bond, a separate identity.

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In the often dismissed novel The Mother's Recompense (1925) we find Wharton's most explicit treatment of mother/daughter symbiosis and separa-
tion. This novel, which Walton says "does not deserve detailed discussion,"22 searchingly explores one woman's conflicting desires for autonomy and attachment. Never simplistic, Wharton does not simply portray a woman casting off the shackles of marriage in a rigid, old New York family in order to find a fuller, richer, freer self. She shows a woman whose freedom has since worn thin, returning after her former husband's death as prodigal daughter to the family fold. Reunited with her now grown-up daughter, Kate Clephane finds a sense of peace and completeness. She is hardly allowed to bask in her bliss as reinstated mother, however, before once again the male intervenes. Wharton here portrays a more explicit version of the oedipal triangle than in The Reef, for the man her daughter loves is Chris Fenno, the very man who had sexually awakened her a few years back.

The harmony between Kate and Anne, so newly restored to each other, soon gives way to struggle. When Anne chooses to marry Chris, knowing of her mother's resistance but never learning that he was her mother's lover, there seems a tragic justice in her willingness to sacrifice her mother for a man as her mother had once sacrificed her. When Kate Clephane left her three-year-old daughter to escape with a man and his yacht, she may have been as anguished as Anna Karenina over the desertion of her child, but she chose freedom. Now, however much Anne longs for her mother's approval, she is willing to forego whatever jeopardizes her attachment to Chris Fenno. "I want you both!" Anne had said; but she wanted Chris Fenno infinitely the more.23 With the apparent ruthlessness of youth and love, Anne is prepared to purchase freedom, identity--sex--at the price of her union with Kate. Despite their mutual need, mother and daughter each have a self-will stronger than their dependency on the other. When the daughter marries, the mother's second leavetaking can be understood not only
as a defense against the pain of separation, but also as a sign of the renewed impulse toward autonomy. Like Anna Leath in *The Reef*, she cannot give in to her need just because it is so overwhelming.

The struggle which Kate has with her daughter, then, is actually a struggle with herself. Just as the daughter must learn to accept the mother/father bond which pulls mother from the symbiotic orbit, so Kate must learn to accept the loss of her daughter to the male. But here we have the daughter's oedipal drama playing backwards, as it were; Kate cannot transfer her attachment to a father figure (Chris) for the simple reason she is not the daughter, but the mother, and the incestuous overtones of having loved her daughter's fiancé are appallingly clear to her adult mind. A logical solution might be to love the comfortable, middle-aged, slow moving Fred Landers, and though she is tempted, he is too undisguisedly a father figure to hold any sexual attraction for her. She can feel attracted only to a younger man, but this attachment was doomed from the beginning. She cannot form a satisfying romantic attachment; she cannot keep her daughter close to her. Consequently, she decides she will have no one, a decision that involves not only a second, numbing loss of the daughter, but also the painful realization of her own aging. While her absorption in her daughter had displaced her continued passion for Chris Fenno, the final break with Anne leaves her nothing to compensate for her sense of sexual obsolescence.

From the beginning, Kate Clephane feels a conflict between maternal and sexual roles. Kate somehow feels that the mother of a grown-up daughter should not be concerned with her attractiveness to men. She should immerse herself in motherhood. Chodorow points out how "On the level of the relational triangle...there can be a contradiction between women's interest in children and in men."24 When Kate receives the summons from her daughter to return to New
York, she is both pleased and disturbed at this reminder of her own maturity. As if anxious to impress upon herself the fact of her forty-five years, she holds imaginary conservations with others. "'My daughter...my daughter Anne...Oh, you don't know my little girl? She has changed, hasn't she? Growing up is a way the children have...Yes, it is ageing for a poor mother to trot about such a young giantess...Oh, I'm going gray already, you know--here, on the temples'" (p. 15). In her trip to the dressmaker that day, she orders more sober clothes to replace her usual youthful frock. As she thinks of meeting her old friend Fred Landers, she repeatedly imagines pointing out her gray hair to him. It is as if the return to Anne means that she must assume a more dignified, matronly image, denying the passions that have animated her imagination so recently.

Her close identification with her daughter makes it possible for her to deny, at least for a while, her own separate yearnings. Like Charlotte and Delia, who have the bittersweet pleasure of watching Tina live out their unlived fantasies, Kate imagines that Anne can live out the "other half of her life, the half she had dreamed of and never lived" (p. 76). Ironically, of course, when Anne begins to live out Kate's fantasies literally through her romance with Chris Fenno, all the old clamoring instincts of self-will rise up. But at first she submerges herself entirely in Anne, remembering that "it was Anne who mattered, not Anne's mother" when she feels awkward and exposed in the glittering society of opera night. She looks to her daughter for the love and security she had once sought with Chris. Anne never appears "without instantly filling up every crevice of the present, and overflowing into the past and the future, so that, even in the mother's rare lapses into despondency, life without Anne, like life before Anne, had become unthinkable" (pp. 104-105).
By returning to her daughter Anne, Kate unconsciously hopes to re-join the old, good mother who will take care of her and complete her. Though Cynthia Wolff says that Wharton examines the fate of the mother in this novel, as "the problems of infancy and dependence have been left behind--treated else-where and banished from the fiction," in fact it is easy to see that Kate Clephane's maternal role thinly disguises her own childish dependence. Having struggled on her own for so long, she would luxuriate completely now in a sweet passivity with her daughter. At last she can enjoy an intimate and secure relationship--with Chris she had always had to worry about his losing interest. But with her daughter she seems to return to the passivity and security of infanthood. She does not need to do; it is enough to simply be. Lying in bed at night, she feels soothed, mothered.

The late and early roar of Fifth Avenue [seemed] to rock her like the great reiterations of the sea.

'This is peace...this must be peace,' she repeated to herself, like a botanist arrested by an unknown flower, and at once guessing it to be the rare exquisite thing he has spent half his life in seeking (pp. 74-75).

The water imagery which Kate repeatedly associates with Anne suggests an infant's amniotic bliss. When, after their first meeting, Anne asks Kate not to worry, Kate is only too grateful to let her take charge, "sinking down into a very Bethesda-pool of forgetfulness and peace" (p. 57). Kate wants nothing besides this deep, satisfying interdependence with her daughter. "To be the background, the atmosphere, of her daughter's life; to depend on Anne, to feel that Anne depended on her; it was the one perfect companionship she had ever known, the only close tie unmarred by dissimulation and distrust. The mere restfulness of it made her contracted soul expand as if it were sinking into a deep warm bath" (p. 86). Kate unconsciously perceives Anne as the kind, loving mother of earliest infancy.
Mother and daughter repeatedly emphasize the harmony between them; Anne says there will be "only two latch-keys--yours and mine" (p. 102). Kate and Anne will "be the two most perfect pals that ever were" (p. 139). But from the beginning there is something a little disturbing about the idyllic quality of their relationship. Kate's passion for her daughter seems almost fevered. At times it "took on a morbid intensity from the fact of having no common memories, no shared associations, to feed on. Kate was frightened sometimes, by its likeness to that other isolated and devouring emotion which her love for Chris had been" (p. 104). She does not cultivate outside interests or friends, afraid of anything which might impinge on their consummate mother/daughter union. This intensity carries the seeds of its own destruction, for the complete submergence of identity can trigger the alarm of self-preservation. Even in the bliss of their initial reunion, there is something about Anne--a certain grimness of her brows, a finality in her voice--that makes Anne associate her with the old Mrs. Clephane, the bad mother Kate had run away from. For Kate's flight long ago had been from this stern mother-in-law, who embodied all the rigid authority of New York society, as much as it had been from the husband. Now Kate feels momentarily disturbed when she notices traces of the grandmother's manner in her own daughter. When Anne sends her to bed after her trip, Kate feels a "hint of finality in her solicitude that made Kate, as she sank into the lavender-scented pillows, feel--perhaps evoked by the familiar scent of cared-for linen--the closing-in on her of all the old bounds" (p. 59). This sense of entrapment, however quickly denied, is what she had once run away from. Even if Chris had not re-entered her life, we can infer that Kate would not have allowed her identity to remain indefinitely suspended in her daughter's.
Even before Kate learns that her daughter's suitor is Chris Fenno, she feels threatened by the possibility that a man may draw her daughter away from her. Although she tells herself that she wants for the daughter "only the common human round, no more, but certainly no less" (p. 86), she is terrified when she divines that her daughter has a romantic interest. "Her sense of security, of permanence, was gone. She understood now that it had been based on the idea that her life would henceforth go on just as it had for the two months since her return; that she and Anne would always remain side by side" (p. 86). Kate unconsciously realizes that they cannot continue in this warm, happy stasis, but she fears losing her daughter to the male, as Demeter lost Persephone to Pluto.

Kate's attempt to ignore the threatening issue of sexuality, both in herself and her daughter, explains her attitude toward Lilla Gates, the slangy, vulgar daughter of the prim Enid Drover. With her dyed lashes and sultry ways, Lilla epitomizes the cheapness and shallowness which Wharton observed in American society after the war, but she also represents, most importantly, the ever present threat of sexuality. If Anne seems pure and rather remote, Lilla seems grotesquely sexual, a painful reminder to Kate of her flighty past, of the frailty of her new bond with Anne. In her disregard of convention, Lilla is a caricatured version of Kate's younger self, just as Anne is an idealized version of this same self. When Kate sees Lilla in the neighbourhood of Chris Fenno, she remembers her own youth.

The sight of Lilla lingering in that deserted path called up old associations. She remembered meetings of the same kind—-but was it her own young figure she saw fading down those far-off perspectives? Well--if it were, let it go! She owned no kinship with that unhappy ghost. Serene, middle-aged, respected and respectable, she walked on again out of that vanishing past (p. 106).
She denies her still active passions in an attempt to be "serene, middle-aged, respected and respectable" and projects those passions onto Lilla. Unable to consider the possibility of romance between Chris Fenno and her daughter, she wrongly infers a liaison between Chris and Lilla. She fears Lilla's contaminating influence on her daughter; she cannot even bear to think of the two girls in close physical proximity. As Lilla stands against the piano, her earrings glitter, reminding Kate of the "poisonous antennae of some giant insect" (p. 100). She even winces "as Anne's lips touched her cousin's mauve cheek" (p. 99) as if Lilla has some dreadful, inarticulate power. Lilla, who sums up in her person all the sexuality which Kate tries to ignore in herself and her daughter, becomes a menacing bad daughter figure.

Kate has reasons for her uneasiness. As close as they seem to be, mother and daughter do not really know each other. Their closeness is based more on fantasy than on shared trust. Neither knows the other's major secret--for Kate, her former passion for Chris Fenno; for Anne, her current passion for the same man. Kate's discovery of her daughter's engagement signals the breakup of mother/daughter harmony. It is especially ironic that neither woman can confide in the other about Chris, since each had imagined the other to be the all-understanding one to whom the deepest fears and joys could be entrusted. After first seeing Chris on the streets of New York, Kate had thought to confide her anxieties to Anne: "Was there anyone on earth but Anne who would understand her?" (p. 118). Anne, too, before announcing her engagement, hopes for an intimate talk with her mother. "There's so much to say, isn't there? Always, I mean--now that you and I are together. You don't know the difference it makes, coming home to you!" (p. 156). Both, however, fail to find that ideal, non-judgemental mother, repository of wide understanding.
As much as they desire closeness, the male comes between them. Anne's engagement to Chris Fenno means that Kate feels not only the anguish of losing her daughter, but also the pain of a fierce, inappropriate jealousy. When, just before the wedding she sees the two lovers embracing, her intense identification with her daughter makes it even harder to bear the knowledge that Anne and not she is in Chris' arms.

In every cell of her body she felt that same embrace, felt the very texture of her lover's cheek against her own, burned with the heat of his palm as it clasped Anne's chin to press her closer. 'Oh, not that—not that—not that!' Mrs. Clephane imagined she had shrieked it out at them (p. 278).

As Simone de Beauvoir says, a mother is normally jealous of her daughter's independence—"doubly jealous: of the world, which takes her daughter from her, and of her daughter, who in conquering a part of the world robs her of it." Here the pain of jealousy is greatly exaggerated by the situation: Kate is not simply losing her daughter; she is also losing her self, the passional self which Chris Fenno had awakened. The love between Chris and Anne makes Kate feel superfluous in more ways than one; no longer is she the necessary other partner in a closed, self-sufficient relationship with her lover or her daughter. Such a love triangle recalls the daughter's early realization that she does not possess the mother exclusively and must share her with the male. "I want you both!" Anne tells Kate, but what she really wants—a symbiotic love with the mother and a sexual love with the husband—is unattainable. Though Kate at first decides to stay with Anne after the marriage, her will fails her once she becomes almost overwhelmed by sexual jealousy of her daughter. Despite their mutual desire to be completed by the other, Kate and Anne cannot maintain an exclusive relationship. As Nancy Chodorow says, "Women oscillate psychologically between a preoedipal and oedipal stance,"—in other words, between an infantile
attachment to the mother and a heterosexual attachment to the father or father substitute. Kate's comments to Anne express a child's sense of abandonment: "When you are married you won't need me" (p. 283). Now it is Anne, not she, who is the deserter. "You've chosen ... you've chosen to be married," (p. 284) she tells Anne. Anne's betrayal pains her more than Chris' defection.

Mothers and daughters may each long for oneness with the other, but separate needs invariably assert themselves. Anne's statement "Mothers oughtn't ever to leave their daughters" (p. 235) reflects a fantasy wish rather than a real possibility. When they are apart, they both long for reconciliation; Kate goes "in agony of soul, to seek her daughter, to have speech with her at all costs" (p. 231) and is grieved that Anne, who is away playing tennis, seems to be carrying on as blithely as before. Their reunion, which shows how much Anne too desired a restoration of their harmony, fulfills a fantasy, but only for a moment. As for Anna Leath and Darrow, briefly reunited toward the end of The Reef, facts cannot be altered; innocence cannot be regained. Though Kate feels as if she is one with her daughter, "as if her whole self had passed into the young body pressed pleadingly against her" (p. 235), the fact of their separateness has just been underscored by their quarrel. Also, their separation has a precedent, as Anne recalls.

'Suddenly, the great gulf opened again, and there I was on one side of it, and you on the other, just as it was in all those dreary years when I was without you; and it seemed as it was you who had chosen again that we should be divided' (p. 236).

They cannot sustain their sense of emotional fusion for long.

Oppressed with the burden of her secret history, Kate cannot satisfy her dream of perfect oneness with Anne. To tell the daughter of her past would destroy the dream that she and Anne exist for each other. She would be revealed as something other than a mother—as her daughter's sexual competitor. Tortured
by loneliness, separated from her daughter by the barrier of an inadmissible past, Kate turns elsewhere for warm sympathy. She imagines she glimpses a silent understanding in male figures—in the rector Dr. Arklow, in Anne's guardian Fred Landers, even perhaps in an anonymous confessor/priest. But when she turns to Dr. Arklow for counsel, she fictionalizes her story, unable to confide in him directly. Afterwards she wonders if she might find relief confessing to an unknown priest. "What a help it must be to turn to somebody who could tell one firmly, positively what to do—to be able to lay down one's moral torture like a heavy load at the end of the day" (p. 271). Again, however, she decides not to take the plunge. Finally she gropes blindly toward Fred Landers, imagining that he understands and pities her. She feels the child's longing to be understood and forgiven without having to explain. Yet, when she does explain, she relieves her sense of guilt by sharing it, but also realizes she has imposed on him a strain perhaps "more than he could bear" (p. 324). Despite his pain, he continues to offer her a steady love. When she sees that he is still prepared to love her, she begins to tremble in amazement.

Her very lids trembled, and the lids of her dazzled eyes. He was still looking at her, and she saw the dawn of the old kindness in his. He seemed to have come out on the other side of a great darkness (pp. 325-6).

But she at once denies her joyous response, putting him from her. She can allow herself to respond only to his protective warmth, not to him as a man. She draws back, asking Fred to leave, and at the same time appealing to him "almost like a child who asks to be taken up and carried" (p. 316).

Kate is afraid to test his love by accepting it. For once someone has seen her in the unflattering light of reality and has continued to extend love. She is grateful for his unstinting acceptance of her, touched by his pity, but she feels, oddly, that her refusal is the "most precious thing" (pp. 341-2) she has to
offer him. Perhaps she has internalized society's old condemnation of her so that she feels her refusal is more valuable a gift than her love: as she had told Fred, "For nearly twenty years no one had thought much of me--I hadn't thought much of myself. I'd never really forgiven myself for leaving Anne" (p. 321). Or she may feel that she can possess Fred's love more surely in the world of imagination than in reality.

Nothing on earth would ever again help her--help to blot out the old horrors and the new loneliness--as much as the fact of being able to take her stand on that resolve, of being able to say to herself, whenever she began to drift toward new uncertainties and fresh concessions, that once at least she had stood fast, shutting away in a little space of peace and light the best thing that had ever happened to her (p. 342).

Perhaps renunciation seems noble for Kate, as for Anna Leath, because it leaves most room for the imagination to play: an untested dream stays alive. We may question the practical value of abstinence, rejection, renunciation, but there can be little doubt that for Kate, the dream itself is its own justification. For her, as for other of Wharton's heroines, the dream of perfect communion between mother and daughter, man and woman, remains only "a little space of peace and light" in the imagination.

Throughout Wharton's novels, the relational triangle of mother, daughter, and male figures insures frustration. The daughter figure seeks exclusive love with the mother, but she also wants to separate from mother by means of a male figure--with whom she unconsciously tries to re-create the original mother-bond. Having incompletely separated from mother, a daughter figure wavers back and forth between mother and father love. She wants mother for herself, and she wants father for herself; she can never quite reconcile these conflicting desires. Maternal renunciation seems a way out of this double bind; if
she can completely identify with the daughter figure, then the mother can feel this sense of emotional fusion while vicariously enjoying the daughter's romantic attachment. But, of course, this solution never works, for the daughter's sexual impulses draw her out of the maternal orbit. The mother then re-experiences herself as abandoned daughter, just as when her own mother had at times preferred her father to her.

But when Wharton's protagonists do attempt to realize the dream of romantic love, the dream recoils upon them. Evelina in "Bunner Sisters" escapes with the male, but his interest in her turns out to be completely exploitative. The other Bunner sister, who attempts to submerge her own erotic desires in a vicarious identification with her sister, fares just as badly. Having sacrificed her chance for marriage, she looks to Evelina for a sense of completeness, but the sister does not look back at her. When Evelina finally returns from a nightmare marriage, Ann Eliza finds that her maternal renunciations are partly responsible for the rift between them now. Though disappointed in marriage, Ann Eliza now dreams of fusing with her dead baby in heaven. The dream of romantic love also recoils upon Ethan Frome, who gives in briefly to a mad impulse to merge with his beloved through death, but ends up the double prisoner of his wife and his now crippled, embittered cousin-in-law. Zeena and Mattie, in turn, have no satisfying love with him or each other. As daughter figure, Mattie is punished for trying to take the father figure away by the withdrawal of Ethan's love.

If romantic love is no answer, maternal self-sacrifice is not either. In The House of Mirth, Gerty renounces her chance for Seldon's love when Lily appeals to her, but this renunciation is in vain. Lily does not fuse with Seldon, but only with an imaginary baby. In The Reef neither Sophy nor Anna can take the man from the other; each feels the other has a prior claim on Darrow. Anna
Leath averts her eyes from the dazzling vision of romantic love because she feels too strongly the other woman's presence. Sophy has left a clear field for Anna and Darrow, but Anna cannot forget that Sophy has lain first in Darrow's arms. In The Old Maid Charlotte sacrifices her chance for marriage in order to retain her attachment to the daughter; ironically, however, the daughter turns from her to her cousin and former sexual rival for mothering. Finally, in The Mother's Recompense the mother renounces her own sexuality in order to merge with her daughter; yet when Anne turns from her to Chris Fenno, Kate re-experiences herself as abandoned daughter. She cannot stop being sexually jealous of Anne, and she cannot stop yearning for a blissful mother/daughter oneness. Unable to submerge herself in the daughter any longer, unable to marry the man who has long loved her, she returns to her old, empty life on the Continent, consoled only by the idea of a love she has not spoiled by accepting.

Wharton's heroines never resolve the oedipal triangle in a satisfactory way, but are caught between sexual competition with the mother and a striving for her love. They search in vain for a balance between attachment to the mother and attachment to the male. Because they define themselves so much through an other—whether this other is a parent, child, or lover—they cannot allow such an all-important relationship to be diluted. Over and over we see how difficult it is for women to form intimate bonds when they have not learned to like themselves. The more they experience a need for intimacy, the more threatened they are when it comes close. They cannot love freely when their identity seems so much at stake. They cannot reconcile their desires for sexual love and mother love because in both cases they want a total love, one immune from outside threats. None of the protagonists finds answers to this dilemma except the "sterile pain" of empty renunciation. In Wharton's fiction, we see that
the typical Victorian resolutions--marriage or female self-sacrifice--are no longer viable answers to the problem of female identity. In the end Wharton's characters have little to shield them from the terror of an utter existential loneliness.
NOTES


2 Cynthia Ozick, "Justice (Again) to Edith Wharton," Commentary, 62, No. 4 (1976), 49.


8 Wolff. The complete plot summary is printed on pp. 301-303, followed by the text of the unpublishable fragment.

9 Wolff, p. 67.

10 Edith Wharton, "Bunner Sisters" in The Edith Wharton Reader, ed. Louis Auchincloss (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 365. Subsequent quotations from this novella will be indicated by page number in the text.


12 Saunders, 244.


16 Wolff, p. 208.
James W. Gargano, "Edith Wharton's The Reef: The Genteel Woman's Quest for Knowledge," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 10 (Fall 1976), 44.


Edith Wharton, The Reef (Toronto: McLeod & Allen, 1912), p. 86. Subsequent quotations from this novel will be indicated by page number in the text.

Louis Auchincloss, for instance, says "The vulgarity on which she had declared war ended by overwhelming her novels. Taste, the chosen guide of her later years, went back on her....The very titles of the later books betray the drop of her standards; they are flat and ugly" ("Edith Wharton and Her New Yorks," p. 39). Alfred Kazin says, "After 1920, when she had fulfilled her debt to the past with The Age of Innocence, she lost even that interest in the craft of fiction which had singed her out over the years, and with mechanical energy poured out a series of cheap novels which, with their tired and forlorn courtesy, their smooth rendering of the smooth problems of women's magazine fiction, suggest that Edith Wharton exhausted herself periodically, and then finally, because she had so quickly exhausted the need that drove her to literature" ("Edith Wharton," p. 94). Both essays in Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays.

Edith Wharton, Old New York: The Old Maid (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1924), p. 94. Subsequent quotations from this novel will be indicated by page number in the text.

Walton, p. 140.

Edith Wharton, The Mother's Recompense (Toronto: George J. McLeod, Ltd., 1925), p. 248. Subsequent quotations from this novel will be indicated by page number in the text.


Wolff, p. 358.

The Second Sex, p. 519.

The Reproduction of Mothering, p. 203.
Mother/Daughter Ambivalence in Four Doris Lessing Novels

There lives within the very flame of love  
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it.  
\textit{Hamlet}, Act IV, vii

In his essay on "Female Sexuality," Freud suggests that the very intensity of the early mother/child bond leads to ambivalence, just as first marriages entered into during the heat of passion often prove disappointing.\textsuperscript{1} The axiom that love and hate are close kin becomes especially clear in the emotionally charged mother/daughter relationships in Doris Lessing's fiction. From early works such as \textit{Martha Quest} and \textit{A Proper Marriage}, to later ones such as \textit{Four-Gated City} and \textit{Memoirs of a Survivor}, relationships between adults and children, men and women, mothers and daughters, alternate between love and hate, guilt and pity. At the same time as Martha Quest seeks passive enclosure through symbiotic relationships, she also resists those self-created bonds. Because she has not, even as an adult woman in \textit{Four-Gated City}, adequately differentiated herself from her mother, she carries into relationships with others unresolved conflicts from the past. With the mother so deeply internalized, antagonism she feels toward her or from her translates into self-hatred. The "hard accusing voice"\textsuperscript{2} which the narrator hears in \textit{Memoirs of a Survivor} is the same self-hater Martha encounters in \textit{Four-Gated City}--"the monster of negative feelings in her unconscious self that Martha traces back...to her mother."\textsuperscript{3} By isolating the mother/daughter theme in two early Lessing novels and two later ones, we can more clearly view the growing sophistication of Lessing's art; we can also see how the twentieth-century heroine now articulates the issue of mother and daughterhood, has become conscious of her own inner battles for self-acceptance.
Perhaps because of Doris Lessing's well-known experiences with Jungian therapy and her expressed reservations about what she terms the "Freudian landscape," psychological criticism of the Lessing canon has tended to focus on Jungian notions of the individual's relation to the collective mind. Certainly, Lessing's political background as well as her stated distrust of the "personal" provides impetus for such an orientation. Elaine Showalter observes that Lessing's fiction evolves "from the individual to the collective, from the personal to the communal, from the female to the global...a systematic, willed process of escape from a very painful encounter with the self, with the anguish of feminine fragmentation." Although it is true that the exploration of the "personal" in later works like Memoirs of a Survivor is relatively oblique, we need not accept Lessing's statement at face value that she has, since writing The Golden Notebook, "floated away from the personal." While Lessing remains concerned with the individual's relation to society, the amount of critical attention paid to the novels' social dimension has led many critics to overlook the significance of the private, female struggle for selfhood. Four-Gated City and Memoirs of a Survivor richly portray female fragmentation, subsuming the very personal concerns of earlier volumes. As Roberta Rubenstein states, "Each of Doris Lessing's novels is both a movement forward and a return to the concerns of the earlier fiction at deeper levels of meaning and complexity." Yet while the young Martha Quest seeks freedom and autonomy largely outside herself, the heroines of Four-Gated City and Memoirs of a Survivor explore their innermost conflicts through intrapsychic journeys. When, in Four-Gated City, Martha voluntarily courts madness with Lynda, or when the narrator of Memoirs goes behind a symbolic wall, they are seeking to confront—not flee—their most inner, personal selves—in Freudian terms, the unconscious.
Throughout the *Children of Violence* series, Martha Quest struggles for freedom, a freedom she construes largely as separation from her mother. Yet, however she tries to divest herself of the maternal influence, it follows her--literally as well as psychologically--to the town she escapes to at age seventeen, to the Coldridge house in England many years later. Even in *Four-Gated City*, Martha still feels her survival depends on the outcome of her bitter conflict with her mother. She goes to a psychiatrist, with the deceptively mild name of Dr. Lamb, hoping to learn how "when her mother came, to pity her, to love her, to cherish her, and not be destroyed." She is still too closely identified with her mother to accept the ambivalence between them. She is still the small girl, resentful of the mother's criticisms, of her disappointingly inadequate love.

I. Martha Quest

In a brief article, Rebecca Lukens discusses *Martha Quest* as centering on the conflict "between the realities of her mother's life and Martha's expectations for her own." As emblem of the past, of narrow, prejudicial views and biological entrapment, May Quest provides a frightening image of what Martha does not want to become. While growing up on a South African farm, Martha has no clear role models except the defeated Mrs. Quest and the unquestioning domestic Mrs. Van Rensberg, her mother's friend and rival. Unhappy in the present, nostalgic for a romanticized England, Mrs. Quest can offer Martha no guidance in her search for self except the vague suggestion that men do not marry women they do not respect. Martha rejects this view of sexuality with contempt, but is unable to replace it with a more affirmative one.
Martha's main method of establishing autonomy is to rebel against the conventions embodied by her mother. Literature, politics, and particularly sex help her to define herself in opposition to Mrs. Quest. By asserting her sexuality, she becomes someone quite different from the child her mother envisions. When we first see her, she begins reading a book on sex by Havelock Ellis; this act of defiance loses its point, however, when her mother does not pay attention. When Mrs. Quest later tries to dress her in childish clothes, Martha's refusal to wear a pink, frilly dress to her first dance helps her to see herself as a sexual, autonomous being.

'I'm not wearing this kind of dress any more,' said Martha, trying to sound calm, but succeeding only in her usual sullen defiance. 'But, my dear, you've ruined it, and you know how badly off we are,' said Mrs. Quest, in alarm at the mature appearance of her daughter's breasts and hips. She glanced at her husband, then came quickly across the room, and laid her hands on either side of the girl's waist, as if trying to press her back into girlhood. Suddenly Martha moved backwards, and involuntarily raised her hand; she was shuddering with disgust at the touch of her own mother, and had been going to slap her across the face. She dropped her hand, amazed at her own violence; and Mrs. Quest coloured and said ineffectually, 'My dear...'

'I'm sixteen,' said Martha, between set teeth, in a stifled voice (p. 24).

The emotional violence of this scene attests to the strength of Martha's will toward selfhood. Her ego boundaries are threatened by her mother's attempts to control her. Mrs. Quest, in turn, feels threatened by Martha's emerging sexuality, which suggests both her own expendability and the prospective loss of her daughter through marriage. The battle of the clothes, which has "nothing to do with clothes, or even with niceness" (pp. 23-24), is really a battle for self-possession. Since clothes are one of the earliest ways that a girl expresses her sense of style and attractiveness, they are an obvious battleground between mother and daughter.
Yet, while the daughter works toward separation from the mother, on another level she wishes to remain tied to her. While she may overtly rebel against her mother's expectations, she may also unconsciously obey them. When Martha makes an evening dress to wear to the dance, she shows the power her mother's unexpressed wishes have over her at the same time she declares her independence. For on her way to the dance in her handmade, white, rustling gown, she imagines that her mother "must hold in her mind (as she certainly cherished a vision of Martha in bridal gown and veil) another picture of an expectant maiden in dedicated white" (p. 80). The choice of the white, bridal-like dress shows Martha to be unconsciously ruled by her mother's fantasies. As in her later marriage, when Martha seems to be stepping away from maternal control, she unconsciously conforms to her mother's image of her. Even though her mother states she wants Martha to have a career, Martha realizes that "she'd love it if I married young," (p. 19) and vindicates Mrs. Quest's values by following her example. In spite of Martha's avowed intention to the contrary, by the end of the first novel we see her headed toward marriage and motherhood.

Martha's ambivalence about marriage, men, and work can be traced to her mother's double messages. While it is clear that Mrs. Quest's marriage to her hypochondriacal, war-obsessed husband has been anything but fulfilling, nevertheless her daughter's choice of another life would negate her own. She encourages Martha toward a career, but undermines this encouragement in subtle ways. Because she is unable to see Martha as a separate person, the career she envisions for her would be nothing more than a vicarious self-justification. In conversation with Mrs. Van Rensberg she "used the word 'career' not in terms of something that Martha might actually do, such as doctoring, or the law, but as a kind of stick to beat the world with, as if she were saying, 'My daughter will be
somebody, whereas yours will only be married" (p. 10). Her attitude denigrates marriage, but does not seriously regard a career as a viable alternative. Although Mrs. Quest ostensibly wants Martha to have a career, she encourages her to stay at home and miss an important qualifying examination when Martha is indisposed with what might or might not be "pink eye." "Curious that Mrs. Quest, whose will for years had been directed toward Martha distinguishing herself--curious that she should accept those damaged eyes so easily, even insist that they were permanently injured when Martha began to vacillate" (p. 29). Caught between the desire to gain the mother's approval and to rebel against her, Martha can choose neither work nor marriage whole-heartedly.

However ambivalent the bond between Martha and her mother, neither of them is prepared to break it. As much as she consciously wants to escape, Martha cannot resist the pull back toward an infantile passivity.

...She was having terrible nightmares of being tied hand and foot under the wheels of a locomotive, or struggling waist-deep in quicksand, or eternally climbing a staircase that moved backwards under her. She felt as if some kind of spell had been put on her..............
Sleep, sleep, the house was saturated by it; and Mrs. Quest's voice murmured like the spells of a witch, 'You must be tired, darling; don't overtire yourself, dear.' And when these remarks were directed at Martha, she felt herself claimed by the nightmare, as if she were standing beside her father; and, in fact, at the word 'tired' she felt herself tired and had to shake herself.
'I will not be tired,' she snapped to her mother, 'it's no good trying to make me tired': extraordinary words; and even more extraordinary that Mrs. Quest did not question them. Her face fell in patient and sorrowful lines, the eternal mother, holding sleep and death in her twin hands like a sweet and poisonous cloud of forgetfulness--that was how Martha saw her, like a baneful figure in the nightmare in which she herself was caught (pp. 30-32).

Still tied to her mother, Martha cannot summon the initiative to free herself. Like a sleeping beauty, she waits for a man to release her from her spell. After her father proves too ineffectual to give her any concrete suggestions about leaving, she turns to Joss and Soll, her intellectual Jewish friends.
But even after Joss informs her of a job opening as a secretary in a law firm, making it possible for Martha to leave home, she cannot easily escape her mother's influence. She is barely ensconced in a room in town when her parents suddenly show up without warning, apparently not needing the elaborate preparation that is their customary ritual for a trip to town. When her mother remarks, "You look tired, you must sleep, you must go to bed early" (p. 103), Martha feels a familiar lethargy steal over her. Standing up to her mother requires such an effort of will that it is overwhelmingly tempting to sink into paralysis.

After Mrs. Quest leaves, Martha tries to reassert her autonomy by rearranging the room as if it has just been contaminated. Although she apparently wants to expunge all traces of her mother's presence, immediately upon her mother's departure she accepts maternal warmth from another female—the landlady, Mrs. Gunn.

'If you want anything, just come to me. I know young things don't want to be nagged at, but think of me like a mother.'
'Thank you, Mrs. Van R - Mrs. Gunn,' said Martha gratefully (p. 104).

She associates Mrs. Gunn with another mother surrogate, Mrs. Van Rensberg; she can more easily allow herself to depend on females with whom there is already a safeguard of distance. Earlier, she had accepted Mrs. Van Rensberg's maternal comfort after she had ruined her dress at her first dance.

Mrs. Van Rensberg came fussing in, pleasant and maternal, saying she would ring Mrs. Quest. It seemed that Martha ruining her dress while making love to her son was the most natural thing in the world. She kissed Martha, and said she hoped she would sleep well, and she mustn't worry, everything was all right. The warm and comfortable words made Martha want to cry, and she embraced Mrs. Van Rensberg like a child, and like a child allowed herself to be led to her room, and left alone (p. 89).
Because she need not fight an overly close identification with Mrs. Gunn and Mrs. Van Rensberg, Martha can be far more tolerant with them than with her own mother. She despises Mrs. Quest when she speaks of keeping men's respect (p. 12), but can forgive Mrs. Gunn for expressing similar sentiments (p. 104). When her friends' mother, Mrs. Cohen, appears inconsistent in her attitude toward kosher cooking, Martha is charmed, though "if her own parents had been guilty of unreasonable behavior, how irritably she would have argued with them" (p. 49).

She is sufficiently removed from other people's mothers so that she does not feel the same fierce ambivalence toward them as toward her own mother. Because she can accept them as separate people, she can usually welcome their maternal solicitude.

Nevertheless, Rebecca Lukens' statement that "a mother can mother another's child without ambivalence" is not always true. Although Mrs. Gunn is more understanding about Martha's relationships with men than Mrs. Quest, tensions do flare over Martha's right to entertain males. When Mrs. Gunn complains about Donovan's presence in her room, Martha is angered at first, but after she tells her that there is no need to worry about Donovan, the two women laugh together. But as Martha stays longer in the city and gets closer to the day of sexual initiation, resistance strengthens toward Mrs. Gunn, a stand-in for the mother. The morning after a new boy, Perry, brings her home one night, Martha answers Mrs. Gunn's delicate questions with cold defiance.

...[Mrs. Gunn] was looking furtively around the room—for evidence, thought Martha with angry scorn. 'I heard voices,' said Mrs. Gunn delicately, 'Did you have visitors?'

'A young man brought me home,' said Martha, 'and he's only just gone.' Make what you like of that, she thought, staring at Mrs. Gunn, who sighed, evaded her eyes, and said it looked like rain again, look at that sky! She added that Martha hadn't been sleeping in her bed much lately, and...She glanced at Martha, who returned a calm look of defiance (p. 193).
In order to emphasize her independence from Mrs. Gunn's wishes, Martha deceives Mrs. Gunn when she claims that Perry had spent the night. Even this generally positive mother figure comes in for her share of ambivalence when she acts in a supervisory role.

Martha's ambivalence toward older females such as Mrs. Gunn also derives from what they tell her about female biological destiny. The consequences of maternity horrify her. She does not want her body marred by pregnancy, her freedom curtailed by children. She shudders with anger at the memory of "swollen bodies of pregnant women she had seen...as at the sight of a cage designed for herself" (p. 66). She notices Mrs. Van Rensberg's legs with repugnance, thinking they "are like that because she has had so many children" (p. 9). At a political meeting, she watches mothers scolding and fussing at their children with "fierce horror; she said to herself, Never, never, I'd rather die" (p. 130). During a bath she falls into a narcissistic contemplation of her smooth, unmarred body, comparing it with the bodies of those older females who have borne children.

Martha thought of Mrs. Gunn's groaning sweating body, and was fiercely grateful for her own; she thought of the ugly scar across her mother's stomach, and swore protectively to her own that it would never, never be so marred; she thought of Mrs. Van Rensberg's legs, and with tender reassurance passed her hands over her own smooth brown legs, murmuring that it was all right, all right, nothing would harm them (p. 162).

Like the American writer Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing reveals female ambivalence toward pregnancy and babies, the inevitable restrictions of motherhood.

Yet, Martha's attitude toward this female world is not all negative. Although she bristles when Mrs. Gunn warns her about having male visitors to her room, a short time later, safe in an all female world with Mrs. Gunn, her daughter, and that daughter's infant, she happily accepts a motherly embrace.
Protected from the threatening outside world of rain and thunder, the three women share an intimacy that is physical and female. They drink tea together; Mrs. Gunn embraces Martha while her daughter nurses her baby.

Mrs. Gunn and her daughter were drinking tea, their faces bright and soft and smiling. Martha stood by the table in her red dressing gown and drank tea with them, and they talked and watched the rain drive in gleaming spears beyond the faded green mosquito gauze, and the irritable tension of the early afternoon was so far away there was no need to apologize for it. Mrs. Gunn put her arm around Martha's hips and said she was her girl, she was her daughter, now that her own had left her; and the young woman at the other end of the table laughed, and they all laughed, and the rain fell endlessly, everything rushed and gurgled and swam, and they laughed again when the thunder came crashing dangerously over the roof like armies, so loud that they could hear no sound of voices, though they were shrieking at each other like grinning maniacs. With a pantomime of laughing regret, Martha indicated she must go and dress; and was sorry to leave them. She could not understand how she had so disliked Mrs. Gunn earlier; and Mrs. Gunn's daughter, who had a new baby, and was therefore usually an object of repulsion to Martha, seemed delightfully simple and womanly as she sat there beside her mother, nursing the dribbling, mouthing infant (p. 162).

For once Martha can accept the image of maternity embodied in both Mrs. Gunn and her daughter, though even in this scene of harmony, we are reminded of a potential for ambivalence—the irritable tensions of the afternoon are far way, but will presumably return. This tea drinking incident is one of the few times Lessing shows Martha accepting, even reveling in a female world, but we sense the precariousness of this peaceful harmony. This temporarily united, enclosed female world can easily be threatened by masculine violence, by thunder crashing dangerously close "like armies." Martha can accept this all-female domesticity only when she does not feel it to be a trap slowly closing around her.

Martha's ambivalence is also brought out in her relationships with men when her identity seems threatened. With her first boyfriend, Donovan, she alternates between girlish pliancy and rebellious self-assertion. Donovan's attempts to dominate her personality finally ignite her instinct for self-preserva-
tion. Like her mother, Donovan tries to live through Martha. To compensate for the narrowness of her own existence, Mrs. Quest partly desires that Martha have a career. Similarly, Donovan would express his stifled desires through Martha: she will become the languid, elegant lady he would have liked to be. Both Mrs. Quest and Donovan try to dress her in their image, regarding her as their creation rather than as a separate individual. When Mrs. Quest visits, "she went across to Martha, who stood stiffly in nervous hostility, and began patting her shoulders, her hair, her arms, in a series of fussy little pushes, as a bad sculptor might ineffectually push and pat a botched piece of work" (p. 103). Donovan, too, regards her as a rather unsatisfactory piece of work.

'...You don't know how to make the best of yourself--Let your shoulders forward a little--you should learn to stand with your bottom tucked in, and your hips forward, and your shoulders slightly curved, but held so that your breasts stand out. Like that, Matty.'

He rose to his feet in front of her, and with one hand pressed in her buttocks, and with the other pressed down her shoulders so that her breasts came forward, almost against his. His frowning eyes met her antagonistic ones, and he dropped his hands, and his handsome face slowly went a sullen red. 'I know what you're thinking,' he said, with an attempt at grace. 'Well, I promise I'll make love to you, Matty, I will, really, but not now' (p. 161).

Like her mother, Donovan denies her sexuality and her identity. When Martha walks through the mud in her gold shoes, she signals her refusal to be his mannequin. The battle of the clothes she had fought with her mother is repeated now with Donovan.

Yet, the more overtly defiant Martha acts, the less free she actually is. She does not so much act as react. With her next boyfriend, Adolph, her sexual initiation grows not out of genuine desire, but out of pity, contempt, and rebellion. As an Eastern European Jew, Adolph would be as unacceptable to Mrs. Quest as he is to the Sports Club crowd with whom Martha associates. Martha sleeps with him as a gesture of independence, as a political gesture. She
persuades herself that she loves him, repressing her feelings of dislike until their affair is broken off by members of the Sports Club set. However rebellious the act of sleeping with Adolph may be, with him she is as passive as she had at first been with Donovan.

Again, with Douglas, the fiancé with whom she will embark on a hasty, ill advised marriage, she is essentially passive at the beginning of their relationship. Douglas has sufficiently unconventional views on politics—especially in comparison to other members of the Sports Club set—so that she can imagine them to be kindred spirits. Marrying Douglas, she can salve her political conscience which demands someone more broad-minded than her mother. Still, Douglas is a wholesome young man her mother might have chosen for her. Through marriage to Douglas she obeys her mother's unconscious fantasies rather than her own desires. After a disagreement she looks at him and thinks "he looked vulgar and ugly, puffed out and red with temper, his neck swelling over his collar. She said to herself that now she could free herself, she need not marry him; at the same time, she knew quite well she would marry him; she could not help it; she was being dragged toward it, whether she liked it or not" (p. 266). Already she is fighting the impulse toward passive surrender with Douglas, as she had once done with her mother.

Martha takes Douglas to the family farm to get her parents' stamp of approval, but then asserts her autonomy by making love on the family premises. Mrs. Quest's mixed feelings toward her daughter's fiancé are an index of Martha's own ambivalence.

Mrs. Quest could not take her eyes off her daughter's young man. She talked to him like a reproachful but eager girl, there was an arch and rather charming smile on her face, even while the gaze was persistent, tinged with guilt (p. 261).
Because Mrs. Quest identifies so closely with Martha, she experiences herself partly as a bride getting married (hence the arch and charming smile). As a mother being robbed of her daughter, she is also reproachful toward the usurper, and feels guilty about her reluctance to let go. At the actual ceremony she overcompensates for this reluctance by participating as directly as she can. "At the crucial moment when the ring must be put on she grasped Martha's elbow and pushed forward her arm, so that everyone was able to see how Martha turned around and said in a loud, angry whisper, 'Who's getting married, me or you?"' (p. 269). Clearly, marriage is not enough to resolve the separation problem between mother and daughter.

II. A Proper Marriage

Martha's ambivalence toward marriage and maternity continues into the next novel, ironically entitled A Proper Marriage. Since she has married partly as a means of breaking the bond with her mother, it is inevitable that she should begin to feel ambivalent toward this new bond, with its similar emotional claims. Although the beginning of Martha Quest found her fiercely set against a way of life comprised of "servants, children, cooking" (p. 7), the beginning of the second Children of Violence novel finds her living the life she had earlier repudiated. Even before discovering she is pregnant, Martha is terrified at the familiarity of the script she seems to be following.

...If she had remained in the colony when she had wanted to leave it, got married when she wanted to be free and adventurous, always did the contrary of what she wanted most, it followed that there was no reason why at fifty she should not be just such another woman as Mrs. Quest, narrow, conventional, intolerant, insensitive. She was cold and trembling with fear. 13
Adrienne Rich cites Martha's fear of becoming her mother as an example of matrophobia, defined as "a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mother's bondage, to become individuated and free."  

Since Martha is so frightened of becoming, like her mother, trapped in the confines of her society and her womanhood, the discovery that she is pregnant horrifies her. After struggling toward a sense of individuation, she is appalled by the impersonality of the pregnancy process.

She was essentially divided. One part of herself was sunk in the development of the creature, appallingly slow, frighteningly inevitable, a process which she could not alter or hasten, and which dragged her back into the impersonal blind urges of creation; with the other part she watched it; her mind was like a lighthouse, anxious and watchful that she, the free spirit, should not be implicated; and engaged in daydreams of the exciting activities that could begin when she was liberated (p. 127).

When her mother claims that "the deepest satisfaction in life was maternity and that Martha must sacrifice herself for her children" (p. 127), Martha resolves that she will not let herself be submerged. She is fiercely unwilling to be limited to the role of mother. Against the pull of her unborn child and her mother, she must preserve her will intact.

Yet when she does briefly abandon herself to the impersonal forces of nature, she enjoys a momentary bliss. As in *Martha Quest*, a rainstorm occasions harmony with the female world, full acceptance of maternity--this time, her own. With her pregnant friend Alice, she runs naked into the tall wet grass during a thunderstorm in joyous defiance of the self-important masculine world. Alone in the warm, muddy water of a pothole, Martha is at one with herself, with the child in her belly, with nature.

She almost ran into a gulf that opened under her feet. It was a pothole, gaping like a mouth, its red crumbling sides swimming with red water. Above it the long heavy grass almost met.
Martha hesitated, then jumped straight in. A moment of repugnance, then she loosened deliciously in the warm rocking of the water (p. 134).

Full acceptance of the infant she carries also means full acceptance of her own infantile impulses. The images of the gulf, the pothole, the water red like blood suggest the birthing process in which she is both child and mother. The warm, rocking water recalls the prenatal bliss of unconscious memory which her unborn daughter now experiences. By surrendering herself to her child, she momentarily becomes a child herself.

After her daughter is born, Martha treats her much as she had been treated by her mother. The pattern of mother/daughter ambivalence seems firmly established when we see Martha depriving her baby of milk—although for the best intentioned reasons—as she had once been deprived.

Then Sister Doll weighed the child and found that she had achieved half an ounce of flesh less than was proper. Martha was quite frantic, and began drinking milk herself, pints of it, and horrid preparations of baked flour which were supposed to assist the process. And still Caroline cried, and Martha's nerves vibrated in extraordinary response, as if the child were connected to her flesh by innumerable invisible fibres. That energetic, angry wail seemed to scrape direct on her backbone like a sharp fiddle on a bone. She would hang over the crib, hands locked behind her back to prevent them from reaching out to the child, watching the scarlet little face moving openmouthed from side to side to find the breast, while her heart beat with anxious pity (p. 157).

In obedience to current theories about child development, Martha regulates her daughter's feeding habits with a discipline that seems like cruelty. We can better understand Martha's ambivalence toward her own mother when we discover that she too had been denied food as a baby. "I suppose you've been starving her as I starved you," (p. 158) says Mrs. Quest. Even now the deprived child in her still flares with resentment as her mother reveals:

'First I didn't have enough milk, though I didn't know it; and then I gave you a mixture, and didn't know until the doctor told me that it was only half the right strength. So in one way or another
I half starved you for the first nine months of your life.' Mrs. Quest laughed ruefully, and said, 'No wonder you never stopped crying day or night' (p. 97).

Freud cited the infant's inability to get enough milk as one reason for her ambivalence toward her mother.\(^1\) Signe Hammer suggests further that the rigid feeding schedules common until 1945 or 1950 can increase a daughter's difficulties in separating from her mother. She speculates that little girls may be particularly susceptible to the bodily invasion represented by forced feeding. Because they have a sense of inner space due to the openness of the vagina, they internalize more deeply than boys the lesson contained in arbitrary or forced feeding. Such external impositions teach a child that "she does not own her body: her mother remains in command."\(^1\)

As her daughter gets older, Martha has a battle of wills with her over her food. Once she gives up on the utterly frustrating task of force feeding her daughter, her false, determined indifference to Caroline's eating habits is equally destructive.

And now what contests of wills followed! Caroline had been used to a forceful pillar of a mother standing over her with a glinting hard spoon full of stuff that she must eat, no matter how she tightened her lips and turned away her face; now she saw this same woman--and from one day to the next--sitting away from her on the other side of the room, not listening to her cries of rage and shrieks of defiance. Caroline picked up the bowl of porridge and flung it on the floor so that the greyish mess splashed everywhere; Martha turned a page and did not look. Caroline sparked her black eyes at Martha, let our short sharp cries of anger to make her look; then she picked up a mug of milk and poured it all over herself. Martha remained indifferent in her chair; but there was a tight-lipped tension about her that Caroline knew. She paddled her hands in a lake of soiled milk and rubbed them in her hair, singing out her defiance. And suddenly Martha became a whirlwind of exasperation. She jumped up and said desparingly, 'Oh, Caroline! You are a naughty, naughty girl!' (pp. 202-203).

Whether force-feeding or ignoring Caroline, Martha is not respecting her as a separate person. Martha, whose own mother was unable to accept her autonomy, now cannot accept her daughter's.
The battle of food leaves Martha suffused with anger—and guilt over her inadequate mothering. "She could have wept with annoyance. She was saying to herself, as she wiped off milk and grey pulp, Oh, Lord, how I do hate this business, I do loathe it so. She was saying she hated her daughter; and she knew it. Soon, the hot anger died; guilt unfailingly succeeded" (p. 203). When she feels most keenly the burden of motherhood, Martha also feels most guilty, which paradoxically increases her sense of oppression.

Martha's sense of personal responsibility for her daughter fills her with ambivalence. When her husband Douglas suggests that Caroline might be sick, Martha feels stricken.

What was wrong with Caroline was that she, Martha, did not feel the right way about her. Do I love her? she asked herself sternly, looking with a steady criticism at the little girl. The emotion of love vanished as she examined it. At this moment she felt nothing but the bond of responsibility. Then she saw Caroline's black eyes turn towards her, and the little face opened in a warm, confiding smile. Martha's heart went soft with tenderness. At this, the other thought came driving in: It would be much better for her if I didn't. I must be careful not to be too much interested in what she does (pp. 265-6).

Though she resents the burden of motherhood, she cannot help a rush of protective tenderness toward her daughter.

She warns herself against her love for her daughter, just as she warns herself against pity for her mother. If she lets go of her steely resistance, she can easily be overwhelmed. When Mrs. Quest gives her unwanted advice about how to raise her daughter, Martha cannot help lashing out at her. Yet, when she sees her mother's vulnerability and hurt, anger gives way to guilt and pity—which necessarily succeed to anger.

Mrs. Quest, that handsome matron with her broad downright face, had collapsed into a small girl. Yes, a pathetic frightened little girl sat there, looking at Martha with small sad blue eyes which slowly filled with tears.
Pity filled Martha. She at once remembered her mother’s hard and disappointing life; she said to herself that, while she, Martha, was of a generation dedicated above all to self-knowledge, Mrs. Quest knew no such obligations. She was appalled at her own cruelty. She said helplessly, ‘Oh, damn it all, Mother!’ She got up, sat on the arm of Mrs. Quest’s chair, and put her arm around the collapsed and shrinking shoulders. It was very unpleasant to touch her mother, particularly as she felt those shoulders straighten and gain strength under the contact (pp. 260-1).

Martha feels that resistance to pity is necessary for self-preservation. As she recognizes years later, in Four-Gated City, "Pity, a long time ago, had been an enemy. Pity could have destroyed."  

We can better understand Martha’s resistance to her mother when we see what happens to a daughter who lets herself be dominated. The intimacy between Elaine Talbot and her mother, another mother/daughter pair in the novel, shows why the ambivalence between Martha and Mrs. Quest is so necessary. Elaine, pallid and self-effacing, has been swallowed in her mother’s personality. She is a mere shadow of her mother with no identity of her own.

Elaine was like her mother, a slight, graceful creature, but the oval face, the large grey eyes, showed signs of strain and ill-health. The skin was pale, flawed, there were faint blue shadows under the eyes. Martha looked from one to the other, noting the looks of affectionate reassurance that continually passed between them, and thought only that for a girl of eighteen to be so close to her mother must in itself be perverse....She had heard a great deal about Mrs. Talbot during the past weeks, but it was always 'Mrs. Talbot and Elaine,' 'Elaine and Mrs. Talbot'—that was how the world spoke of the Talbot family. Together they enveloped Martha in caressing affection, and together they rose, after a long, smiling, intimate look at her which—even in this small matter of agreeing that it was time to release Martha—overflowed into a glance of understanding between them (pp. 46-47).

Clearly the prolonged symbiosis between Elaine and her mother is unhealthy. Rebellion appears to be necessary for a daughter’s individuation. Elaine is so deferential to her mother than Martha looks for a consciousness of exploitation (p. 80); she tidies her mother’s room, runs the bath for her, paints water colors so
that her mother can obtain "her meed of admiration" (p. 80). Most important, she lives out her mother's sentimental fantasies, getting engaged to a young man just before he goes off to war---exactly as had Mrs. Talbot, exactly, in fact, as had Mrs. Quest. When Elaine says good-bye to her fiance' at the railway station, Mrs. Talbot weeps openly (p. 124), reliving her lost youth through her daughter. Elaine, caught in what Martha perceives as "the nightmare repetition" (p. 77), seems compelled to follow her mother's pattern.

As representative of the ancient role of mother, Mrs. Talbot is triumphant when she realizes Martha's pregnancy, just as she had appeared personally delighted at Martha's marriage. Martha's continuation of the female cycle vindicates her. Martha, in turn, is angered when Mrs. Talbot tells her she is pregnant, angry at "the utterly impersonal triumphant gleam of the aged female" (p. 79). Still, part of her does want to satisfy Mrs. Talbot. "She was almost ready to aver that she wanted nothing more than to be happy with the dear boy Douglas, for Mrs. Talbot; to have a dozen children, for Mrs. Talbot" (p. 79). She wants this mother surrogate's approval at the same time she rejects what Mrs. Talbot has to say.

When Martha decides to leave Douglas, both Mrs. Talbot and her husband's mother, Mrs. Knowell, react to her decision with anguish. Martha's leaving challenges their sense of proportion, disappoints their dreams. Just as Mrs. Quest had projected her thwarted maternal desires onto Martha's unborn child, imagining that Martha's child would be the son she didn't have (p. 107), Mrs. Knowell sees in young Caroline "the daughter who had died of malaria that swampy, hot rainy season" (p. 336). She perceives Martha's decision to leave Douglas as a rejection not only of him, but of everything which her life has been. "Mrs. Knowell lay awake night after night, looking into the darkness, crying
steadily, tears soaking down a set, unmoving face; she felt betrayed by Martha" (p. 336). It is as if she is the child being deserted by her mother.

Martha decides to leave Caroline and Douglas for much the same reason that she left her mother's home. Her husband and child impinge on the identity she is still struggling to create. When she begins a romance with a political friend, Douglas forbids her to see him; rebelling against him then becomes an act of self-definition. Douglas has become the antagonist her mother once was. The similarity between them strikes her when she returns home. Having fantasized a consoling embrace, she receives cold disapproval. "Martha thought that her mother was rather like Douglas just then, there was the swollen reddened look about the face, the accusing eyes" (p. 338). Neither Mrs. Quest nor the other mother figures can empathize with Martha when she deserts the maternal role. They are threatened by the implication that motherhood is not enough to give meaning to a woman's existence.

Against the criticism of the adult females, Martha imagines her daughter's perfect understanding. When she tells Caroline why she is leaving, she feels "that there was only one person who understood her, and that was Caroline. She felt a deep bond between them, of sympathy and understanding" (p. 339). Martha leaves her daughter in order to break what seems a Sophoclean pattern of mother/daughter conflict. Though she says she is setting her daughter free, in fact this leavetaking does not solve the separation problem for her or for Caroline. Physical separation is not enough to dissolve such deeply internalized imagoes as mother and daughter. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that Mrs. Quest, who during Martha's pregnancy had seen in the unborn child a vindication for her unfulfilled wishes, should be any wiser with her granddaughter than with Martha. While it is true that biological motherhood makes the
identification that much more intense, a woman who has not established her ego boundaries cannot easily help others to develop a firm sense of self. While Martha in _The Four-Gated City_ can mother children who are not related to her, she takes care to keep sufficient distance that she will not be tempted to see them as self-extensions; as we have seen in Martha's relationships with Mrs. Gunn and Mrs. Talbot, the more closely a woman conforms to the role of actual mother by attempting to direct and advise the daughter figure, the more potential there is for ambivalence.

III. _The Four-Gated City_

_The Four-Gated City_, a far denser novel that the earlier volumes, providing a socio-historical view of post-war London up through a post cataclysmic era of the 1990's, returns, in part, to the mother/daughter conflict. Having examined the relatively obvious portrayal of this theme in two earlier _Children of Violence_ volumes, we can better understand its significance in this, the final volume. While _The Four-Gated City_ is clearly concerned with the mirror relationship between social and individual fragmentation, symbolized by the newspaper pastiche on Mark Coldridge's wall, it is also another, though more sophisticated, _bildungsroman_. Focus on the mother/daughter theme can reveal how the unity of this novel, like that of the earlier ones, lies in the female consciousness at its center, still struggling toward self-definition. Martha's journeys of self-discovery--with Jack, with Mark, with Lynda, and finally with herself alone--help teach her the boundaries of her own identity. By temporarily surrendering her ego on a voluntary basis, Martha can better learn the dividing line between self and other. Unlike her mad double Lynda, Martha can descend
into the world of the basement--that is, the world of the irrational--without becoming trapped. Particularly through her willing identification with Lynda during one of her bouts of madness, and later in a private psychic journey where she encounters what she calls the self-hater, Martha struggles to come to terms with the mother she had long ago internalized. Although even the promise of a visit from her mother to London almost completely destroys her ability to cope with the demands of ordinary life, she no longer attempts to resolve her ambivalence through flight or repression. She goes to a psychiatrist so that she can learn, "when her mother came, to pity her, to love, to cherish her, and not be destroyed" (p. 232). Though the visit proves a failure, Martha can continue to work on the problem of unresolved separation even after her mother returns to South Africa.

Reading The Four-Gated City, one is struck above all not only by the fluid relationships between the three central characters--Martha, Mark, and Lynda--but by the fluidity of relationships and identities throughout. Characters who have affective relationships often mirror each other's identities; emotional connection, as between Martha and Mark, can also entail at least a temporary identification. The critic Dagmas Barnouw's suggestion that we look on the protagonist of the novel as "Martha, Mark and Lynda together" could be extended to include other characters as well. Figures who function on a realistic novel can also be seen, on a psychological level, as aspects of the Martha self at the center of the novel. Of the psychological novel in particular Freud remarks that "it probably owes its peculiarities to the tendency of modern writers to split up their ego by self-observation into many component egos, and in this way to personify the conflicting trends in their own mental life in many heroes." Freud's hint is helpful for understanding how various figures in The Four-Gated
City, with their overlapping identities, represent aspects of a splintered central female consciousness. These characters enact the struggles of mothers and daughters, caught between pulls toward attachment, on one hand, and separation, on the other. To highlight this basis for female ambivalence, I shall focus on prominent features of the mother/daughter conflict as they relate to Martha.

The characters who most obviously represent aspects of the Martha/protagonist are Mark and Lynda. Mark Coldridge, the writer for whom Martha acts as secretary, seems at times to be her past, outgrown self while Lynda, his mad wife, represents the future self she is growing into. In his ardent conversion to communism, Mark assumes Martha's old political persona, the one she had called the Defender. "She looked, when she looked at him, at herself of the past: hot-eyed, angry, violent, unable to listen" (p. 183). Lynda, in contrast, is a kind of Vergil for Martha's journey into the world of telepathy. Besides sharing extrasensory powers, Martha and Lynda have a number of other connections: they both occupy peripheral roles in the household, they both turn at one point to Mark for emotional rescue and are ultimately disappointed, they both have a detached observer self who watches inside them, they both are unable to mother their own children although they can mother other people's. Lynda, who during one of her "bad times" gives free rein to her irrational and anti-social impulses, embodies an aspect of Martha far removed from the calm persona she usually wears.

Other female characters in particular can be seen as aspects of this Martha/Mark/Lynda protagonist. Martha, Lynda, Dorothy, Sally-Sarah, Margaret, Phoebe, Patty and Mrs. Quest all have emotional breakdowns of one sort or another, many of which can be related to the problem of undefined ego boundaries. Just as Martha's nickname "Matty" describes a wholly different self,
an amiable clown called upon in certain social circumstances, Sally/Sarah has two names which reflect a sense of self-division; she kills herself partly because she does not know who she is. Her excessively close relationship with her child Paul reflects her lack of clear selfhood. Like many of the other female characters, including Martha herself, she shows at times regressive childish passivity, symbolized by an inability to leave her bed; Martha finds her "curled up under an eiderdown, thumb in her mouth, like a child" (p. 118). Similarly, Dorothy, locked in an unhealthy passivity with Lynda in the basement, forms with her "a defensive unit, which excluded everybody" (p. 178); she collapses once they are separated and "stayed in the basement, for the most part in bed" (p. 313). Lynda, too, takes refuge under the bedcovers when Paul, whom she had formerly mothered, entreats her attention; his demands come to her at a time when she is mothering her own son, Frances, and does not have the ego strength to give herself to two. Her sense of self is so fragile that other people's emotional claims drain her disproportionately; even her intolerance of physical closeness can be seen as resistance to intrusions into her uncertain sense of private space. She tells Mark that he is killing her (p. 190) because his very gentleness threatens to overwhelm her. Though she had once begged him to "save her," she resists him later because she is fighting against a dissolution of her sense of self. She, Martha, and Patty all ask Mark to save them because love can provide at least temporary identity, yet love can easily turn to ambivalence when boundaries between self and other are so tentative that they threaten to dissolve entirely.

In her contradictory impulses toward freedom and attachment, Martha epitomizes the twentieth century female's double bind. On one hand she seeks to define and fix her identity through a sense of belonging; on the other hand, as these self-created bonds threaten to overwhelm her, she pulls against
them, as against a trap. But she cannot long maintain her existential freedom. However exhilarated Martha may be by her freedom in London at the beginning of the novel, "it was always her heart that first fought off the pain of not belonging here, nor belonging anywhere" (p. 37). Unencumbered by anything except a light suitcase, she seems to have freed herself from the responsibilities of the past without having yet taken on new commitments. Like the archetypal adolescent, Holden Caulfield, she can give false names to people she meets casually and can briefly enjoy a fictionalized role, jointly created by herself and her listener. Yet, as much as she is elated by this freedom from a fixed identity, she knows that the impulse to bond herself to others will soon overpower her.

What difference did it make to her, the sense of identity, like a silent statement 'I am here,' if she were called Phyllis or Alice, or Martha or Matty; or if her history were this or that? But for a while only. Because she knew that ringing up Phoebe was not only because now she must earn money, and become responsible to her fellow human beings. Something (a sense of self-preservation?) could not tolerate much longer her walking and riding and talking the time away under this name or that, this disguise or that; calling strange identities into being with a switch of clothes or a change of voice—until one felt like an empty space without boundaries and it did not matter what name one gave a stranger who asked: What is your name? Who are you? (p. 18).

With no firm, underlying sense of self, this easy shuffling of identities eventually becomes frightening. As with her mother, she feels herself in danger of being overwhelmed, "an empty space without boundaries."

After her arrival in London, Martha had relished the freedom conferred on her by anonymity; for weeks she had drifted "without boundaries, without definition, like a balloon drifting and bobbing" (p. 4). But when she moves into a cafe, the friendly interest of the cafe owners, Jimmy and Iris, begins to oppress her. Like a mother, Iris has certain expectations of her. She envisions that Martha should marry Stanley, her cousin. Unlike Stella, the gipsy-like woman
with whom Martha had first stayed, she unconsciously forces Martha into acting a role distasteful to her—that of "Matty"—"a foolish but lovable puppy" (p. 5). Even the minimal obligation Martha has toward Iris makes her feel that leaving her is an act of betrayal (p. 12). Overriding the impulse to apologize for her departure, Martha reasserts her autonomy by leaving.

The opposing poles of freedom and responsibility are next represented by two men she contacts—a free floating spirit named Jack, and a conventional lawyer named Henry. Rejecting Henry's offer of a job in a firm, Martha rejects his inflexible, middle class world, the world she associates with her mother. Failing to communicate with him, she is nagged by "the half-memory of a previous failure—what, who, when? Yes, as a child, when her mother had laid down this attitude, this dogmatism, this 'It's right, it's wrong,' and Martha, reacting, had examined, criticised, taken a stand, brought back a stand to the challenger—who had lost interest, was no longer there" (p. 23). In order to prove to herself her freedom from his world, she betrays what she feels to be his expectations, already felt as a net closing round her (p. 32). Still, the sense of guilty obligation cannot easily be shaken. Even with Jack, who pays no rent, works no regular hours, and feels no responsibility to the various women he loves, Martha cannot experience complete freedom; inevitably she will have to leave his unruled, unpressured world.

Ah, but not yet, please not yet; she could spend time with him, in his area, just a short time, before moving on to responsibility? Responsibility, that is, to the normal, the usual—she had debts to pay, that was it. One could not move on before all debts were paid, the accounts made up. Terror struck, thinking of the debts she did have to pay: Caroline invaded her mind, the two men she had married so absurdly—her mother. Debts. They had to be paid (p. 40).

The memory of those ambivalent ties still plagues her; guilt is the price that must be paid for escaping into this airy freedom. The apparently nonsensical refrain
jingling through her mind—"Mother, must I go on dancing?"—is answered in the affirmative: "Yes, my darling daughter" (p. 42). The contradictory urges to create and then escape from human commitments will keep her dancing between that world represented by Jack, and the one peopled by Iris, Henry, Phoebe—and her mother.

The basis for Martha's ambivalence toward commitment is brought out when she receives a letter from her mother, announcing her intention to come to England. Unable either to resist or yield to the mother's claims on her, she falls into a heavy torpor similar to the fatigue she had fought off as a young girl in her mother's home.

Putting down that letter, Martha understood she was shaking from head to foot. She sat there, the letter in her hand, calm. But she trembled. A week later, when a second letter arrived announcing a date, Martha understood she had been in bed, not getting up at all except for the nightly sessions with Mark—for a week. She had not been able to get up. She lay in a half-dark, in a kind of half-sleep, like a thing waterlogged. Yet she could not say she was unhappy. She was calm. But she could not get out of bed (p. 214).

Despite her escape to a new continent, old debts are catching up with her. Under her adult calm lie the little girl's anger, guilt, and fear. She resents the mother's criticism, feels guilty about her own traitorous thoughts, fears the state of powerlessness her mother's presence reduces her to. The letters from her mother, beginning "My darling girl" and ending with "Your loving mother," have "in between...pages of reproof, reproach, hatred" (p. 215). Martha cannot arm herself against a hatred couched in terms of love.

Her mother's letters give Martha the impetus to begin an introspective foraging into her own past. Though her escape to England has been just one more attempt to block off her past, she now attempts to recover what she has previously denied. Behind the memory of her marriages, her daughter, her father, lies the painful memory of her mother.
Her father's long illness; her mother--ah yes, here it was, and she knew it. She had been blocking off the pain, and had blocked off half of her life with it. Her memory had gone. Well, almost (p. 216).

Martha now forces herself to read back letters from her mother which she had only skimmed before. Reading them, she tests the limits of her strength. Confronting this painful area of her past is like dipping one's hand in hot water to test it: "In with the hand--quick, no, it's too hot, withdraw it; a pause; in again...no, no, I can't bear it. Don't be a coward, go on, stick it out" (p. 218).

While she can hardly bear the process of uncovering repressed feelings, it seems to her necessary for psychic survival. First on her own, and then with a psychiatrist named Dr. Lamb, she works toward accepting the ambivalence in her relationship with her mother.

Somewhere a long way back, beyond where she could reach with memory, an angry fighting resentful Martha had been born. It was a result of a battle against pity. Pity, a long time ago, had been an enemy. Pity could have destroyed.

What Dr. Lamb must do for her was to give her back pity, the strength to hold it, and not be destroyed by it (p. 232).

Rather than seeing Mrs. Quest only as the bad mother she must fight--and thus feeling herself to be a bad daughter--Martha wants to see her whole. More complete acceptance of the mother can also mean greater self-acceptance. She must learn to accept failures of love with her mother without necessarily rejecting the entire relationship.

The strength of the daughter's ambivalence is an index to her dependence. She greatly fears the mother's power to deny love. As Martha, at thirty-four, lies on the bed, "a small girl, inwardly weeping Mama, Mama, why are you so cold, so unkind" (p. 220), she envies and fears the apparent self-containment of another mother figure, Mrs. Mellendip. When this fortune-telling friend of Lynda's comes up from the basement and dispenses bromides to her,
Martha is at first strengthened. Then the thought of Mrs. Mellendip's fallibility frightens her.

Mrs. Mellendip sometimes lay, a small girl, all helpless envy of the strong?

Panic flooded Martha. She understood that it was because she did not want to think of Mrs. Mellendip as anything but infallible (p. 220).

The daughter does not want to know how easily the mother can become dependent herself, her nurturance becoming a demand for support. From feeling comforted Martha changes to feeling threatened. She realizes her own capacity for ambivalence.

...Rosa Mellendip became surrounded by a light first ridiculous, then menacing. She became something to be destroyed, like a witch in the Middle Ages. Sweep it under the carpet! Sweep it out of sight! Save poor Lynda, save poor Dorothy, save all the weak-minded fools from the power-loving fateful woman (p. 221).

Rosa Mellendip's sinister power derives from her connection with the mother. Her power to destroy the daughter--Martha/Lynda/Dorothy--becomes something to be destroyed. Martha does not want to face the connection between them; she balks at acknowledging the daughter in the mother--and the mother in her. "The competent middle-aged woman" is her "old antagonist" (p. 219); she cannot get out of bed partly because she realizes that she herself is becoming "that person who once she hated and feared more than any other --the matron" (p. 350). Mrs. Quest's prospective visit once more brings out the extent of her identification with the mother.

For both Mrs. Quest and Martha, the other is a source of pain. But while Martha forces herself to confront and hold the image of her mother as she explores her past (p. 230), Mrs. Quest shies away from the thought of Martha. Children have power over the mother (p. 250) just as mothers have power over children. As Martha realizes later, the reproaches in her mother's letters grow out of a feeling of rejection.
Mrs. Quest, as terrified of this visit as Martha, had put it off to give herself time to face the pain which she knew (somewhere or other inside her) was coming. But Mrs. Quest had not admitted to herself that this was what she was doing. The hidden fear of pain, the foreknowledge of it, twisted and became a flood of reproaches against Martha, who was unkind and uncaring (p. 229).

Earlier Martha had inwardly wept "Mama, mama, why are you so cold, so unkind" (p. 220); neither can give the other enough love. On the ship over, Mrs. Quest thinks of England rather than of her daughter for "pain was approaching so fast, with the approach of Martha, that she had to return to the old supports" (p. 268). Because they are so closely identified still, the other's criticism or rejection devastates. There seems to be no point at which a woman emerges from the cocoon of daughterhood, her craving for love and approval stilled. When Mrs. Quest thinks of love, "her mouth had the thin peaked look of the mouth of an unloved little girl" (p. 252). The small section in the novel in which we leave Martha's viewpoint for Mrs. Quest's helps us to appreciate the mother's pathos and vulnerability.

In her desires to be loved and understood, Mrs. Quest romanticizes a daughter figure, Olive Prentiss, whom she meets on the boat to England. Though they never talk except for a morning greeting, she imagines a mute understanding between them, a kind of rapport she does not share with her real daughter. One night when Mrs. Quest is alone on deck, the girl comes out and, not seeing her, furtively removes a tampax which she tosses into the sea. Mrs. Quest is outraged at what she later calls the girl's carelessness, but in fact what she feels is resentful envy of the young girl's relatively greater freedom, options she had never known and now never will.

Mrs. Quest seethed, raged, suffered. When she was a girl...but she could not, suddenly, bear to remember what now seemed like a long story of humiliation and furtiveness, great soaking bloody clouts that rubbed and smelled, and which one was always secretly washing, or concealing, or trying to burn...(pp. 267-268).
Mrs. Quest, who had never known Olive Prentiss' easy attitude toward her own female body, resents having the needlessness of her former suffering pointed up to her. Olive Prentiss' casual action reveals the foreignness of her world, the foolishness of the fantasy that Olive might come to her for advice.

Another mother figure, Phoebe, also feels ambivalence toward the younger generation. Though a relatively modern, progressive mother, Phoebe too has conflicts with her daughters. Phoebe's fights with her two girls, Jill and Gwen, suggest the universality of mother/daughter tensions; the narrator remarks "People were reminded how precarious was the peace between mother and daughter" (p. 364). Like Mrs. Quest, Phoebe cannot help resenting that these younger women possess options that were never available to her. "When she was young there hadn't been pretty clothes and make-up and she hadn't kissed a man till she was twenty. She was genuinely glad for the girls now that they had such a good time, and that they could be pretty and free. But she resented it too" (p. 391). Though Jill and Gwen had adored their mother when they were young, rivalry between them eventually breaks into open warfare, as they grow older. First the girls rob their mother of a serious suitor by flirting with him. Phoebe, the real mother, cannot be as detached as Martha, the occasional mother surrogate, about making way for the younger generation. When the girls borrow Martha's clothes and accessories, she lends them first out of duty, then in gratitude: "The rejuvenation a young girl gives her mother or an older woman is a setting-free into impersonality, a setting-free, also, from her personal past" (p. 387). Phoebe, however, resents her daughter's use of her youthful charms to bewitch her present suitor. Also, although she had devoted much of her young womanhood to her daughters, Jill begins to accuse her of neglect. After Jill begins to leave her diary around, which "open at key passages, told her she was
selfish and neurotic and cold: 'a failure as a woman and as a mother,'" (p. 391), Phoebe verges toward a breakdown. Jill gets pregnant by a black musician to defy her mother; when Phoebe decides to stand by Jill in her pregnancy because it is too late to have an abortion, Jill finally arranges an abortion. Phoebe and her daughters, like Martha and her mother, find it impossible to co-exist.

Martha and her mother prove unable to live together because of their overly close identification; each projects what she most dislikes in herself onto the other. Mrs. Quest's visit revives Martha's fears about potential loss of self so that she can no longer bear the intimacy she has with Mark. During Mrs. Quest's visit, Mark had acted the role of good, comforting mother, providing a soft, protective cave for her (p. 284). Yet Mark's association with the mother figure also arouses ambivalence. At the same time she wants his comfort, "also, she didn't want it; she had to stop being this helpless creature who clung and needed" (p. 287). Alone with him, she can feel herself to be in a safe, protected womb. Yet, though she had earlier asked him to "save" her (p. 238), his very willingness to merge with her begins to seem an encroachment on her self. She falls into a passivity reminiscent of the will-less state she had once fought off with her mother. Because she feels "sunk fathoms deep in sleep and lethargy and sloth" she finds it necessary to turn Mark "out of her heart for the sake of survival" (p. 300). She cannot allow herself to be immersed in Mark's love, for in Martha love arouses the small child's oral cravings.

If one is with a man, 'in love,' or in the condition of loving, then there comes to life that hungry, never-to-be-fed, never-at-peace woman who needs and wants and must have....For the unappeasable hungers and the cravings are part, not of the casual affair, or of friendly sex, but of marriage and the 'serious' love (p. 301).

Love threatens Martha because it brings out the needy daughter who can never get enough affection.
Shying away from Mark and from the whole idea of marriage, Martha descends to the basement world to test out the boundaries of her identity with Lynda. Martha at once feels a part of Lynda (p. 491) and views her as a daughter figure. As a daughter figure—with Mark, with Dorothy, and with Martha herself—Lynda represents the vulnerable aspect of Martha. Martha's identification with Lynda allows her to express her desire to be a cared for child. One of her early experiences of telepathy enables her to "hear" Mark's thoughts so clearly she believes the thoughts to be her own.

This unknown person in Martha adored Lynda, worshipped her, wished to wrap her long soft hair around her hands, said, Poor little child, poor little girl, why don't you let me look after you? (p. 369).

The wish to mother Lynda, which she projects onto Mark, is also a wish to be mothered. A part of her would like to receive the kind of tender, unconditional love Mark gives Lynda. In her identification with Lynda, she can vicariously enjoy the solicitous attention which Lynda receives from Mark, Dorothy, and even herself. Yet the inevitable ambivalence is there as well. Lynda protests to Mark that he is killing her because she cannot be what he wants (p. 190); the very gentleness of Mark's love burdens Lynda with a sense of inadequacy. It would seem that both Lynda and Martha feel unbearably pressured by love which they receive. They want it so much that they cannot risk losing it by being themselves. They feel that in order to retain love, they must fit someone's else's image of them since their real selves are not loveable.

Ambivalence also appears in Lynda's relationships with Dorothy and Mark. When intimacy with Dorothy becomes oppressive, Lynda can distance herself from Dorothy by turning to Mark. Conversely, she can unite with Dorothy in a "defensive unit" which "keeps her from having to be Mark's wife" (p. 178). When Mark comes to visit, he is the male interloper who disturbs their privacy.
Just as Martha tells Dr. Lamb that she uses men as a weapon to defy her mother (p. 241), we see Lynda using Dorothy as a means of defying Mark. Dorothy, a mother figure who tells Lynda when to go to bed and when to take her pills (p. 178), helps keep Mark at bay. But Lynda can also use Mark to assert her power over Dorothy. When the two women have conflicts, Lynda calls Mark into the basement and then, as Dorothy sits apart watching her with sad anxiety, "would slide her small defiant guilty looks, like a girl who has won a victory over her parents" (p. 189). This expression of hostility, however, produces in Lynda the anxious desire to placate Dorothy; she would agree to Mark's suggestion to open the window, symbolically exposing their safe, enclosed world to danger, yet "with a hasty glance towards Dorothy, to reassure her that they would soon be alone again" (p. 190). When Lynda agrees to go away with Mark for the week-end, a terrible scene ensues with Dorothy; Lynda then pacifies the mother figure by staying home with her, and her defiance turns toward Mark. She repudiates his expectations of her to be his young, beautiful bride again by smashing his photograph of her younger self (p. 195). It is as if Dorothy and Mark directly compete for Lynda, who cannot unite herself to Mark when she is so closely tied to the mother figure Dorothy.

When Martha voluntarily descends with Lynda into madness, they each play the roles of mother and daughter toward the other. Lynda's ambivalence toward Martha as mother figure centers, once again, on food. As symbol of maternal nurturance, food can be the locus for both conflict (as when Lynda flings away the food Martha brings her, just as Caroline had done) and reconciliation (as when they both drink milk, symbolically becoming each other's daughters). Each woman tests the limits of her autonomy by defying the other. When Lynda lays out her pills as if to take them, she measures Martha's reaction: "Her desire to
challenge Martha into starting up and forbidding her to take them was so strong that Martha had really to fight to keep quiet" (p. 489). Similarly, Martha later challenges Lynda to stop her taking the pills. When she goes to the bathroom and reaches for Lynda's drugs, Lynda grips her from behind: "But she had half expected Lynda to follow her; had even invited it, relied on it: as a child provokes a parent into showing attention" (p. 503). And just as Martha imitates Lynda--by drinking milk from a piece of broken crockery, by acting as if she will take the pills--Lynda imitates Martha. When Martha goes upstairs to bathe, Lynda takes a bath downstairs. Like Mrs. Quest, who also plays the roles alternately of mother and daughter, Lynda mutters obscenities to herself and then emerges. When she comes out of the bathroom, she is "like a good clean child" (p. 491). As daughter figures, Lynda and Martha show their ambivalence by alternately imitating and defying each other.

As Lynda moves around the walls of the room, testing their solidness, it is as if she is testing the edges of her own identity. As a symbol of the dividing line between conscious and unconscious, inner and outer, walls are to assume increasing significance in Memoirs of a Survivor; here they represent self-enclosure that is at once a refuge and a prison. Martha understands that when Lynda "pressed, assessed, gauged those walls, it was the walls of her own mind that she was exploring. She was asking: Why can't I get out?" (p. 494). Yet when Martha tells her there is a door and that she can in fact leave, Lynda reacts with a display of anger. However claustrophobic the basement world may be, however potentially beautiful the outer world, it is also too terrible to bear, as Martha discovers when she ventures forth. Horrified at the outer world's ugliness, Martha returns to the safety of the basement world, thinking she would stay with Lynda. "She and Lynda would live down here and Mark would hand them food supplied
through the door, which was like a trapdoor into a submarine or a lower part of a ship" (p. 509).

Yet the inner world also has its terrors. As Martha discovers later when she goes on a private inner odyssey, induced by not eating or sleeping for a period of time, the inner enemy, the self-hater, lies in ambush for the journeyer. She had been aware of this self-hater before. With Jack it was a silly enemy at first, "a jiggling fool or idiot" (p. 39), but it later became the basis of a masochistic relationship with him. Lynda too had had a self-hater, which Martha realized while listening to Lynda's thoughts. "The words or the atmosphere pervading them were not of Lynda now, but of a girl. A young girl. A young girl inside this smelly bedraggled female argued with--the antagonist" (p. 520). "Antagonist" is a word earlier associated with the mother figure; with Mrs. Mellendip Martha "lay and regarded her old antagonist, the competent middle-aged woman" (p. 219). With Lynda, then, as with Martha, the inner antagonist is tracable to the mother figure. Lynda had picked up her stepmother's hatred of her but had been forced to deny this knowledge, had in fact been considered crazy because of it. The hatred had then been turned inwards until Lynda had become defeated by it. Though Martha is eventually able to control her self-hater, Lynda's plight shows the potentially ruinous effects of ambivalence denied.

As Martha writes in her notebook during her encounter with the self-hater, "Every attitude, emotion, thought, has its opposite held in balance out of sight but there all the time. Push any one of them to an extreme, and boomps-a-daisy, over you go into its opposite" (p. 550). Thus it is not surprising that in the midst of apocalyptic horrors which Martha envisions, she also sees a vision of utter and elusive loveliness. With Jack and Lynda, the two characters who also have self-haters, she senses a beautiful image of fulfillment just the other side of
horrors. With Jack she imagines a vision that points ahead to a similar one in *Memoirs of a Survivor*.

She saw in front of her eyelids a picture of a man and a woman, walking in a high place under a blue sky holding children by the hand, and with them all kinds of wild animals, but they were not wild at all: a lion, a leopard, a tiger, deer, lambs, all as tame as housepets, walking with the man and the woman and the lovely children, and she wanted to cry out with loss; but it was a loss there was no focus to, there was no holding it (p. 62).

This picture of an idyllic, harmonious family with all its potential fierceness gentled evokes a nostalgic sense of a lost utopia. Later, as she and Lynda later work at attenuating their sense, they hope to realize a vision faintly remembered from a long time ago.

It was as if the far-off sweetness experienced in a dream, that unearthly impossible sweetness, less the thing itself than the need or hunger for it, a question and answer sounding together on the same fine high note—as if that sweetness known all one's life, tantalisingly intangible, had come closer, a little closer, so that one continually sharply turned one's head after something just glimpsed out of the corner of an eye, or tried to sharpen one's senses to catch something just beyond them...(p. 374).

The question and answer sounding together suggests the infant's hunger—and immediate fulfillment, the earliest stage before the "me" who wants becomes differentiated from the mother who gives. Again, Martha's letter in the appendix of the novel shows the continuing hold this dream of bliss has on her imagination. In the wake of the catastrophe which has devastated the world, Martha and others become aware "of a sweet high loveliness somewhere, like a flute played only just within hearing....It was as if the world's horror could be turned around to show the face of an angel" (p. 643). The ambivalence which Martha has felt all along toward people, beginning with her mother, is now being projected upon the world at large. The "face of an angel" is in direct opposition to the devil which Martha had earlier found inside herself, yet in psychoanalytic terms, they both have the same origin in the unconscious. It is the mother who, with her power to grant or
deny love/food/bliss, is at once angel and devil. After the failure of reconciliation with the mother, the failure of sexual and romantic love, after the terrifying encounter with the self-hater, Martha dreams of an Edenic time without ambivalence, without boundaries and divisions and enclosures, when "the veil between this world and another had worn so thin that earth people and people from the sun could walk together and be companions" (p. 643). This vision of elusive sweetness suggests a oneness, a harmony, within the context of bright, airy freedom. It is a vision that also tantalizes the narrator of Memoirs of a Survivor, where it is more explicitly connected with the mother.

IV. Memoirs of a Survivor

In Memoirs of a Survivor, Lessing continues to develop the mother/daughter theme with greater richness and complexity. Ostensibly an apocalyptic view of industrial society at the breaking point, Memoirs of a Survivor also portrays a dream-textured inner world, represented by rooms behind a wall which the unnamed narrator visits. These two worlds, at first clearly separated, become increasingly blurred until the wall between them completely dissolves at the end. The critic Betsy Draine describes her difficulties in accepting the shifts between the two kinds of frames, a realistic frame and a "mystic or mythic dimension in which the laws of time and space are suspended."21 She thinks that the end of the novel fails because the reader cannot accept the merging of the two worlds.

Suddenly in the last paragraphs of the book the narrator attempts a shift in the hierarchy of the worlds. She says that the characters from the 'real' world have approached the border of her inner world, the patterned wall, and have climbed through it. With that action, the initial frame of the novel is broken, and in this case, the house of fiction falls with it. The reader, unable to accept the new frame as primary and unable to retreat into the old one (which has just disappeared), is forced to step outside
both frames and disengage himself from the act of participating in the novel as world. 22

I would argue, however, that the two worlds in this novel are not as "radically incompatible" as they may at first appear; their overlapping becomes increasingly obvious. Just as the thin facade of normality breaks down in society as the city begins to empty out, so the walls separating the narrator's conscious and unconscious selves also begin to dissolve. In both the world behind the wall and the external society disintegration and decay foster new growth; in the inner world a forest pushes up through the floor while in the outer world gardens flourish atop extinguished apartment buildings. The narrator tells us toward the end that "a wind blew from one place to the other; the air of one place was the air of the other" (p. 162). As the outer world comes to appear as the articulation of a private, inner one, we see the most significant common denominator of both worlds to be the female struggle for selfhood—or the daughter's struggle to accept the mother whole. The dramatic conflict in the novel centers partly around the tensions between the decadent old consumer society and the alternative societies being developed by the children. Yet in the husk of this drama is an inner one common to both worlds—the tensions between mother and daughter figures. During the narrator's forays into the inner world, it becomes increasingly evident that the young girl Emily who appeared without warning in her living room one day is actually her younger self. Aspects of the mother/daughter relationship are played out between the narrator and Emily; Emily and her mother in the rooms behind the wall; Emily and the young girl June whom she meets in the outer world.

Betsy Draine's article on Memoirs of a Survivor states that the half of the novel which deals with the Catastrophe continues in a "realist mode." While this part of the novel is certainly more conventional than the part which
deals with the rooms behind the wall, both worlds partake of a dream-like atmosphere. Events happen which have no logical explanation in the conscious, ordinary world: Emily appears, for instance, most suddenly, and the narrator accepts her young charge in the unquestioning manner typical of a dream. Things, people disappear, and no one knows where they have gone. Identities melt and diffuse so that the narrator seems at times to become Emily or Emily's mother. Time and space are also fluid; the past is woven indistinguishably into the fabric of the present. Perhaps the most strikingly dream-like feature is a tone of emotional flatness, what Betsy Draine calls the "cardboard qualities of the goddess and her world." Yet this tonelessness is characteristic of dreams, as becomes clear when we consider other works in what we might call a dream mode: Kafka's stories, for instance. In an interview at Stony Brook, Lessing acknowledges the significant role that dreams have for her writing. "I dream a great deal and I scrutinize my dreams. The more I scrutinize the more I dream. When I'm stuck in a book I deliberately dream.".

It is not surprising, then, that Memoirs has its own compressed dream logic, a meaning that eludes even an experienced reader like Malcolm Cowley who describes the novel as "confusing to this reader, especially since he suspected a meaning that he kept failing to grasp, almost as if he were groping through a dark room in which he felt the presence of an intruder--but who? and come there for what purpose?". This dimly sensed presence, "the rightful inhabitant of the rooms behind the wall" (p. 14), is the mother. Like Martha who senses a far-off sweetness in Four-Gated City, the narrator/protagonist of this novel is haunted by the vague memory, promise of a sweetness that precedes conscious recollection, one that suggests the infant's blissful oneness with the mother.
As In Four-Gated City, Memoirs of a Survivor shows a lack of clear boundary definition between characters' identities. The narrator, Emily, Emily's mother and June all appear as aspects of one psychological entity, in the roles of now the mother, now the daughter, alternately passive and dependent or active and powerful. By projecting her own conflicts onto Emily, the narrator can distance herself from her own pain. Her sense of self seems so amorphous that she sometimes identifies what seem to be her own memories as Emily's. An occasional ambiguity of pronoun reference, an easy sliding from third to first person, implies that Emily is an aspect of the narrator's self. While watching the child Emily in one of the "personal" scenes behind the wall, the narrator reveals that Emily's self-hatred, the maternal criticism she has internalized, is really her own. Though she presumably refers to Emily, the pronoun reference changes unobtrusively. "Often in my ordinary life I would hear the sound of a voice, a bitter and low complaint just the other side of sense..." (p. 71). By splitting off part of herself into Emily, the narrator can freely express her own vulnerability, much as Martha in Four-Gated City could externalize painful emotions through Lynda. In both books we see a blurring of the line between inner and outer, self and other, that reflects the protagonists' difficulties in establishing clear ego boundaries.

The narrator of Memoirs, who comes across as a tight lipped, graying guardian, entirely projects her own sexuality onto the daughter figure Emily. As Emily enters puberty, she begins trying on various women's costumes in the safety of the apartment. The narrator watches while Emily prepares to move beyond her control, to become a woman in her own right, a mother figure herself. Though Emily is in a sense supplanting the narrator, she feels a kind of liberation when the daughter figure appropriates some of her clothes (which obviously
represent herself). Just as Martha had felt relief when Phoebe's daughters began borrowing her clothes, the narrator here seems almost pleased to step aside for the younger generation.

This is more mine than yours, says the act of the theft; more mine because I need it more; it fits my stage of life better than it does yours; you have outgrown it. And perhaps the exhilaration it releases is even a hint of an event still in the future, that moment when the person sees in the eyes of people the statement—still unconscious, perhaps: You can hand over your life now; you don't need it any longer; we will live it for you; please go (p. 59).

It might be reassuring to feel part of a cyclic continuity in this way, but the threat to the mother figure's existence is hard to overlook. The presence of a daughter figure makes it necessary for a woman to realize her own expendability.

At the same time as care for the daughter can give the mother a sense of purpose, she may also feel consumed by the maternal role. The narrator feels the threat to her identity quite early: "I almost felt myself not to exist, in my own right. I was a continuation, for her, of parents, or a parent" (p. 27). The mother feels some natural resentment at this monopoly on her time and attention, but also feels guilty about being an inadequate mother (daughter?), for not fulfilling the daughter's (mother's?) demands. The narrator feels that Emily fills her life like "water soaking a sponge" (p. 47), but reminds herself that she has no right to complain. She longs briefly to escape the burden of motherhood, "simply to walk through the wall and never come back" (p. 24), but feels guilty about this impulse. The narrator's guilt anticipates the guilt of Emily's mother, who seems even more overwhelmed by the pressures of motherhood.

'No one has any idea, do they, until they have children, what it means. It's all I can do just to keep up with the rush of things, the meals one after another, the food, let alone giving the children the attention they should have. I know that Emily is ready for more than I have time to give her, but she is such a demanding child, so difficult, she always has taken a lot out of me...' (p. 69).
As the mother feels guilty about her own irritation, the daughter feels guilty about being a demanding—therefore bad—little girl. Emily herself feels guilty as she struggles in vain to be a proper mother to June, to the children at the house, and to her dog Hugo. The narrator imagines her complaining about the impossibility of fulfilling all the demands upon her.

'Everything was so difficult, such an effort, such a burden, all those children in the house, not one of them would do a thing to help unless I got at them all the time, they turned me into a tyrant and laughed at me, but there was no need for that, they could have had something equal and easy if they had done their parts but no, I always had to overlook everything...' (p. 154).

The image of the sorcerer's apprentice's pointless sweeping (p. 154) sums up the mother's frustration at what seems endless, unreciprocated giving. By projecting her shrillest complaints about the chafing restrictions of motherhood onto Emily and her mother, the narrator can avoid acknowledging the full extent of her own ambivalence.

Another reason for maternal ambivalence is the mother's view of the daughter as an extension of herself. Because the narrator feels Emily to be "as close to me as my own memories" (p. 47), she feels that much closer to Emily—but also that much more critical. The mother figure feels all the more irritated by her daughter's faults which were once her own. She is bothered, for instance, by Emily's habit of criticizing her acquaintances partly because it is a habit she once had. "She depressed me—oh, for many reasons; my own past being one of them" (p. 30). When Emily goes on an eating binge, the narrator is wildly irritated, "yet she could remember doing it her self" (p. 48).

For the daughter, ambivalence toward the mother figure arises from the conflict between her desire to be loved, approved, protected, and her desire to be free. At one moment Emily is "infinitely obliging and obedient" (p. 25), and the next she is protesting against the narrator's hovering protectiveness; now it is she
who feels the need for autonomy. "Why do you think I can't look after myself?" she cried, in a rage of irritation, though of course—being Emily and so instructed in the need to please, to placate—she smiled and tried to hide it: the real irritation, her real emotions" (p. 52). She cannot stand to be worried over, yet she also resorts to her little girl status when the outside world seems threatening. The narrator realizes that when she sulks, "She was making use of me to check her impulse to step forward away from childhood into being a girl" (p. 47). As she enters adolescence, she needs to test herself against the mother figure without losing her love.

In his essay on "Female Sexuality," Freud shows how the little girl's ambivalence toward and rejection of the mother develops from her early attachment. In the scenes from Emily's past which the narrator views, we see the reasons for the daughter's ambivalence clearly demonstrated. Among other things, Emily's biological mother, burdened and irritated, had been unable to give her daughter the love and comfort she craved. When she begged to be cuddled, her mother had responded out of duty, but without warmth.

Between the little girl's hot needful yearning body, which wanted to be quieted with a caress, with warmth; wanted to lie near the large strong wall of a body, a safe body which would not tickle and torment and squeeze; wanted safety and reassurance - between her and the mother's regularly breathing, calm body, all self-sufficiency and duty, was a blankness, an unawareness; there was no contact, no mutual comfort (p. 93).

The mother's failure to respond accounts for Emily's later defensiveness, for the misery the narrator hears at times in the crying child.

Through the novel we see a hunger for love translated into a hunger for food. Just as Martha Quest and her daughter did not receive enough milk as infants, Emily and her mother are also deprived of maternal nurturance. In the "personal" world the narrator sees a baby who could be Emily or her mother crying with hunger.
The baby was desperate with hunger. Need clawed in her belly; she was being eaten alive by the need for food....she twisted her head to find a breast, a bottle, anything; she wanted liquid, warmth, food, comfort (p. 152).

The narrator too feels a still unsatisfied hunger which is the basis for her vision of an inexpressibly sweet, welcoming face, "needing no more to use as a host or as a mirror than the emotion of sweet longing, which hunger was its proper air" (p. 14). She shares with Emily an idyllic vision of life in a farmhouse where food, real soups and stews, is plentiful, and where mother and daughter figures "walk hand and hand" (p. 34). Emily responds out of "hunger, a need, a pure thing....She was a passion of longing" (p. 34). This Edenic vision surfaces in subsequent garden imagery: the garden which Emily creates with the children, the imaginary gardens built one on top of another which give the narrator an indescribable feeling of "comfort and security" (p. 160). Her sense of security comes not only from the rich availability of food, but from the sensed nearness of that "person whose presence was strong in this place, as pervasive as the rose-scent" (p. 160).

The profusion of vegetables in this garden reflects the daughter's need for an unstinting, infinitely capacious maternal love.

Yet if food (love) can nourish, it can also drain. To consume, to feed off something, implies the possibility of being consumed. When the narrator first returns from her visits to the inner world, she feels both nourished and threatened. "I would know that I had been there, from the emotions that sustained, or were draining, me: I had been fed there from some capacious murmuring source all comfort and sweetness; I had been frightened and threatened" (p. 189). The daughter's dependence on the mother for comfort and sweetness means that the mother has power to withhold as well as bestow love. Love which is greedily claimed can also be unsatisfying. During adolescence, Emily's incessant eating makes it seem that "her mouth was always in movement,
chewing, tasting, absorbed in itself, so that she seemed all mouth, and everything else in her was subordinated to that" (p. 53). Yet she is bloated, not satisfied, by the starchy food she eats. Similarly, the narrator envisions a sugar house which she and other daughter figures, Emily and June, eat compulsively but without satisfaction. "It was compulsively edible, because it was unsatisfying, cloying: one could eat and eat and never be filled with this white insipidity" (p. 145). The young girl June drinks cups of sugary tea and nibbles listlessly at other foods as if she does not even expect to be nourished. The other side of the lush garden image is the non-nutritious sugar house. Food, like love, can be inexpressibly satisfying or non-fulfilling.

Because the daughter needs love so much, she cannot bear the competition of rivals. Freud remarks that "Childish love knows no bounds, it demands exclusive possession, is satisfied with nothing less than all." This predictable sibling rivalry is exacerbated in the case of a daughter who sees her brother treated preferentially. Just as Martha Quest's mother had apparently preferred her son to her daughter, so we see Emily's mother and nurse (another mother symbol) giving the lion's share of love to the male child.

The little girl's look as she watched the loving nurse bending over the brother was enough; it said everything. But there was more: another figure, immensely tall, large, and powerful, came into the room; it was a personage all ruthless energy, and she, too, bent over the baby, and the two females joined in a ceremony of loving while the baby wriggled and cooed. And the little girl watched (p. 43).

The small child, feeling left out, perceives the mother as "immensely tall, large, and powerful" partly because of her utter dependence on her mother's love. The love given to her brother feels like an explicit denial of her. But while Emily's mother appears to be cold, an inadequate comforter and lover, it is important to remember that we are seeing her through the child's eyes; the child's need for a total and exclusive love makes any denial appear disproportionately threatening.
Another source of ambivalence toward the mother is her prohibition against sexuality—masturbation at first, later adult sexuality. At the same time that "the prohibition of masturbation may...act as an incentive of giving the habit up...it may also operate as a motive for rebellion against the person who forbids, i.e. the mother." This prohibition creates acute conflict for it is the mother who first aroused the daughter's sensuality by tending and caressing the infant. The mother seems, then, a kind of seductress who also forbids sexual pleasure. Emily's mother communicates dislike of the human body and sexual expression of any kind (when in bed with her husband, she perceives sex as a duty to be avoided if possible). Having been taught distrust of her own body, she takes care not to let her hands stray lower than her hips and stomach as she scratches herself. Her daughter, in turn, has internalized a dictate against touching her own genitals: "her unoccupied hand touching her cheek, her hair, her shoulders, feeling her flesh, everywhere, lower and lower down, near to her cunt, her 'private parts'—but from there the hand was quickly withdrawn, as if that area had barbed wire around it" (p. 81). Emily's actions fit with Freud's theory that while the daughter will attempt to "free herself...from a gratification which has been made distasteful to her....Resentment at being prevented from free sexual activity has much to do with her detachment from her mother."  

The movement away from the mother can be a movement toward sexual autonomy. As Emily leaves the narrator to go out onto the street, she first asserts her new independence sexually. Just as Martha Quest had first shown her autonomy by making a woman's dress to wear to a dance, now Emily makes new, sexually alluring clothes for herself, trying them on in the haven of her apartment, wearing, as it were, her new sexuality before attempting to act it out. Later, in another personal scene, the narrator sees Emily standing before her
mother in a scarlet evening dress, acting out a vulgar burlesque of lasciviousness, creating, oddly, a non-sexual impression. This vision reveals the daughter's desire both to rebel against the mother and placate her. While the daughter appears to defy the mother by flaunting her sexuality, she also, paradoxically, obeys the mother's internalized dictates against sexuality—for this monstrosity of a dress, in its rigid binding of breasts and buttocks, actually suffocates sexuality rather than allowing it to breathe (p. 187). Through her very excesses she denies sexuality, but in another sense she also acts out a grotesque seduction of the mother—one that is responded to with disgust. When the mother appears, the daughter shrinks smaller and smaller until she is a "tiny scarlet doll, with its pouting bosom, its bosom outlined from waist to knees" (p. 188). As Emily shrinks smaller, the mother grows larger—suggesting that the mother has actually absorbed Emily, annihilated the naughty daughter. The daughter, in turn, has defied the mother, even sticking out her tongue, a gesture both provocative and contemptuous. That Emily here represents a kind of archetypal daughter figure is clear from the style of dress she wears, popular not in her lifetime but in the narrator's and mother's youth.

The daughter resents the mother's attempt to check her sexual impulses, but she also feels guilty about these same impulses and guilty about her resentment. Her mother's disapproval and criticism fill her with guilt—hatred turned inwards. When the mother complains about the trouble she causes, she internalizes a self-dislike she will not be able to shake.

The hard accusing voice went on and on, would always go on; nothing could stop it, could end these emotions, this pain, this guilt at even having been born at all, born to cause such pain and annoyance and difficulty. The voice would nag there forever, could never be turned off, and even when the sound was turned low in memory, there must be a permanent pressure of dislike, resentment (p. 71).
Since the mother, at this stage, is her whole world, her mother's rejection devastates her. "Her face was shadowed and bleak because of the pressure of criticism on her, her existence" (p. 69).

One way the daughter can overcome her feeling of helpless dependence is to become the mother herself. Through others' dependence on her, she can both insure love and can vicariously enjoy the pleasure of being mothered. If she is the mother, then she can be the active, powerful one. Freud remarks how children in their play convert passive experiences into active ones, acting out what has been done to them. With the mother a child "either contents itself with independence (i.e. with successfully performing itself what was previously done to it) or with actively repeating in play its passive experiences, or else it does really make the mother the object in relation to which it assumes the role of the active subject." As children receive an impression from someone bigger and more powerful than they are, they tend to repeat this impression with a younger child, a doll, toy, or animal—with one important variation: they are then the active, powerful figure. We see these dynamics at work with Emily in her relation to the young girl June, the small children at the house, the narrator herself, and even her dog Hugo.

Emily enacts a relationship with June, a slightly younger girl, similar to the one she has with the narrator. Just as the narrator worries over Emily and is in turn treated with relative indifference, so Emily worries over June and is taken for granted. Like Emily when she first appears in the narrator's apartment, June is on the threshold of womanhood when we first meet her. "But her breasts were stubby little points, and her body altogether in the chrysalis stage" (p. 102). As the narrator had brought food for Emily, so Emily brings food for June. And as the narrator feels lonely and abandoned when Emily leaves the
apartment, so we see Emily desolate when June leaves her—first for Gerald, and later for one of the nomadic groups. In the first case, it is June's, not Gerald's betrayal which reduces Emily to deep, wracking tears. June's leavetaking results in a scene of violent misery reminiscent of the child's realization that her mother is gone. The narrator reflects on the depth of anguish in women's tears.

"What in the name of God can you possibly have expected of me, of life that you can now cry like that? Can't you see that it is impossible, you are impossible, no one could even have been promised enough to make such tears even feasible...can't you see that?" (p. 172).

The grief is founded on that primal betrayal, that initial realization that the mother is not possessed, can withhold love and nurturance as well as give it. The mother's dependence on the daughter re-enacts the daughter's dependence on the mother.

A nearly complete reversal of roles comes about by the end of the novel, with Emily as mother to the narrator. As resourceful "survivor" in this new society, Emily helps protect the naive narrator. When they visit the market which has been set up in their apartment building, Emily steers the narrator carefully, educating her selectively. "I could see...she was working out what would be best for me: precisely, what would be good for me!" (p. 115). A little later when June invites her to visit Gerald's house, the narrator consults Emily with her eyes before she agrees. Emily "was smiling: it was the smile of a mother or guardian" (p. 126). As the city becomes more empty and more dangerous, the narrator exposes herself to risks whose foolishness she understands only after Emily alerts her. Emily returns to the apartment "this time, or so it seemed, to look after me, not the other way around" (p. 168). By this time the role reversal seems almost complete. Emily has accepted responsibility toward the narrator; the narrator in turn has accepted her dependence upon Emily.
We see how completely Emily has assumed the maternal role with the children whom she and Gerald care for. With the first group of children, Emily feels frustrations associated with a traditional parental role. A child grimaces when she tells him the right way to pick spinach; despite herself, she has come to represent authority. When she questions why a hierarchal system seems inevitable, the narrator tells her that she learned the meaning of authority a long time ago.

'It starts when you are born...."She's a good girl. She's a bad girl. Oh, she so good, such a good child." ...Don't you remember?' (p. 132).

As we saw in the *Children of Violence* novels, the individual can easily become subsumed by the role. Yet, though this may be frustrating, the lack of traditional role definition can be terrifying. With the second group of children whom she and Gerald try to "rescue" from the Underground, social norms have completely broken down. Rather than representing authority to these children, Gerald serves them. Though individually charming, the children can be lethal as a group, turning on their surrogate parents, pelting them with rocks. Their savagery reveals the ambivalence of parenthood carried to its nightmare conclusion. If we view these children as aspects of the narrator self, their unrestrained savagery appears as a terrifying externalization of emotional violence beneath the controlled exterior of the narrator. They completely resist any attempt to be made into "good little children"; their complete repudiation of social rules suggests a deep anger toward authority. These motherless children retaliate against the society which has abandoned them from their earliest days.

Another form of abandonment is seen with Emily's dog Hugo. At first Emily is emotionally dependent on this most human animal, fiercely united to him a symbiotic relationship of mutual comfort and attachment. As she begins to
venture into the outside world, however, she becomes more and more neglectful of the dog. In her absence Hugo shows pain, jealousy, and a sense of complete abandonment. "He was whimpering...no, the right word is crying. He was crying, in desolation, as a human does" (p. 189). Though Emily returns to comfort him, her love now has in it, as her mother's did, an element of guilt. Before leaving him for her real life on the pavement, she gives the narrator a "small, guilty, even amused smile" and "kissed Hugo in a little private ceremony that was like a pact or promise" (p. 97). Without her, Hugo seems like a lost child.

The most striking image of vulnerability in the novel is the sound of the crying child which haunts the narrator throughout. This sound at first seems to come from "very far off....nothing clear" (p. 12), but becomes increasingly more noticeable as the narrator familiarizes herself with the rooms behind the wall. "But the interminable low sobbing, the miserable child was driving me frantic, was depriving me of ordinary sense" (p. 150). Like the heroine of Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle—who tracks a mysterious, crying lady into the recesses of her unconscious, the narrator takes a long time to realize that the one crying, in need of comfort, is actually the remote, seemingly self-sufficient mother. The baby whom the narrator longs to comfort is the dependent child in herself. Emily's mother is also Emily, the narrator, the narrator's mother—the eternal daughter, torn asunder by that first realization of the mother's abandonment, separation, dislike.

The sound of misery which the narrator hears has been pushed into the background of the daughter's conscious mind; Emily cannot even hear it (p. 149). Though a vision of a brilliant white egg seems to suggest freedom, light, and pleasure (p. 146), behind it the narrator continues to hear the sound of crying. Behind the clean white healthy egg is an unhappy child, fouled by her own
excrement, an object of repulsion to the mother. Throughout the novel white has been associated with sterility, "the nightmare colour of Emily's deprivation" (p. 152); as healthy, light and smooth as this egg appears, it is the black, pockmarked, iron egg which will give birth to a vision of fulfillment at the end of the novel.

This promise of fulfillment has been present from the beginning in the image of a chick hatching from an egg. The wall reminds the narrator of an egg.

The warm smooth shape of one's palm is throbbing. Behind the fragile lime, which, although it can be crushed between two fingers, is inviolable because of the necessities of the chick's time--the precise and accurate time it needs to get itself out of the dark prison--it is as if a weight redistributes itself, as when a child shifts position in the womb. There is the faintest jar. Another. The chick, head unders its wing, is pecking its way out, and already the minutest fragments of lime are collecting on the shell where in a moment the first starry hole will appear. I even found I was putting my ear to the wall, as one would to a fertile egg, listening (p. 12).

The "eggshell wall" (p. 100) must dissolve completely so that a vision of the mother/the self can be born from the unconscious. The narrator's earlier self-imposed task of painting the walls white had left her feeling as though she stood inside a "cleaned out egg-shell" (p. 66). Though this image seems superficially attractive, "cleaned out" also has the connotations of emptiness. But the egg which bursts open at the end to give birth to the vision of oneness is neither white nor smooth nor empty. It is a black, homely egg which signals the acceptance of ambivalence, of the "invisible destructive force" as well as the "other beneficent presence" (p. 66).

When the egg breaks apart, the narrator is at last able to see the shining elusive presence she has sensed throughout, that "soft strong presence, an intimate, whose face would be known to me, had always been known to me"
(p. 100). Even here, however, the good, loving mother of unconscious memory cannot be described. Like a goddess, her beauty is ineffable.

No, I am not able to say clearly what she was like. She was beautiful: it is a word that will do. I only saw her for a moment, in a time like the fading of a spark on dark air--a glimpse: she turned her face just once to me, and all I can say is...nothing at all (p. 216).

The elusiveness of this vision recalls Freud's comments on the shadowy nature of the mother attachment "so hard to resuscitate, that it seemed as it had undergone some specially inexorable repression."\(^{33}\)

The narrator at the end seems rather unembodied, as if she has completely projected her desire for dependence upon the children who follows this beautiful woman. Her impulse toward passivity had been brought out earlier; in a vision of the forest pushing up through the private rooms, the narrator had felt: "I was being taken, was being led, was being shown, was held always in the hollow of a great hand which enclosed my life" (p. 101). The new order is clearly hierarchal, led by the shining woman, but also having other dependencies inside it--Hugo's on Emily, the children's on Gerald. Though authority has been a largely negative force throughout the novel, the dream-like nature of this Edenic vision at the end makes it possible for the narrator to imagine a sweet, delicious passivity, the regaining of an impossibly absolute trust in a powerful maternal figure. Just as society must collapse utterly before it can give birth to new order, so the walls separating the unconscious and conscious must dissolve utterly for inner and outer, the house and the forest to become one. As the two worlds of the novel merge, the primal figures of mother and daughter are blissfully reunited. The vision of the goddess/mother of pre-conscious memory at last comes into focus. The daughter figure who has blocked off the memory of her mother because of the pain of guilt, betrayal, and self-hatred finds her again in a vision that recalls that "sweet high loveliness somewhere" from *Four-Gated City*. 
Through fantasy Lessing's protagonist discovers a means of integrating, of resolving what Adrienne Rich refers to as the "mother daughter schism." Though *Memoirs of a Survivor* and *Four-Gated City* show much greater imaginative play than the relatively realistic *Martha Quest* and *Proper Marriage*, Lessing still seems as much concerned with psychological discovery as with "sociological analysis." Examination of the mother/daughter theme in these earlier and later novels helps to illumine the direction of Doris Lessing's artistic development. Though we might expect this theme to become increasingly overt as it did in Wharton, in fact we find that it is articulated in a more oblique but more richly textured way. As Lessing ventures away from realism toward a more dream-like mode, she continues to explore this theme, but with a more allusive, more densely symbolic approach. Her continuing concern with the mother/daughter conflict also attests to its centrality for the twentieth century female attempting to locate herself in relation to her mother and her daughter, to learn the universality of certain generational patterns, to accept ambivalence so that she can become the mother while retaining a sense of self.
NOTES


4. "Doris Lessing at Stony Brook," *A Small Personal Voice: Doris Lessing*, ed. Paul Schlueter (New York: Basic Books, 1974). "There are difficulties about the Freudian landscape. The Freudians describe the conscious as a small lit area, all white, and the unconscious as a great dark marsh full of monsters. In their view, the monsters reach up, grab you by the ankles, and try to drag you down. But the unconscious can be what you make of it" (p. 67).

5. "Doris Lessing at Stony Brook." "Since writing *The Golden Notebook* I've become less personal. I've floated away from the personal. I've stopped saying, 'This is mine, this is my experience'" (p. 68).


7. "Interview at Stony Brook," p. 68.


11. Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest* (Frogmore, AL: Panther Books Ltd. 1966), p. 12. Subsequent quotations which are from this book will be indicated by page number in the text.


15. "Female Sexuality." "It is as our children remained for even unappeased, as if they had never been suckled long enough" (p. 262).

17 Four-Gated City, p. 232.


19 I am indebted to an unpublished suggestion by Dr. K. Stockholder that we look on various characters in a literary work as different aspects of a single dreamer self.


22 Draine, p. 57.

23 Draine, pp. 52-53.

24 Lessing, The Memoirs of a Survivor, p. 101. Subsequent quotations from this novel will be indicated by page number in the text.

25 Draine, p. 54.

26 Draine, p. 59.


29 "Female Sexuality, p. 259.

30 "Female Sexuality, p. 260.

31 "Female Sexuality, p. 260.

32 "Female Sexuality, p. 265. We can see this principle at work in George Eliot's Mill on the Floss when Maggie Tulliver retreats to the attic to fiercely pummel her doll or "fetish"--thus administering the punishment she has just suffered mentally.

33 "Female Sexuality," p. 254.


35 Draine, p. 54.
The Daughter as Escape Artist

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, V

Unlike earlier heroines, the heroines of contemporary women's novels are discovering that they cannot be freed by rejecting the mother and creating themselves anew. Like Martha Quest, they seek escape from the mother and the constricting life she represents. They rebel against the mother's way of life, often violating her taboos through sexual activity or leaving home physically "in hope that emotional separation will follow."¹ They do not go far, however, before they realize not that they cannot go home again, but that they have never left. In novels by Margaret Atwood, Margaret Drabble, and Anne Tyler, the heroines' escape from the mother becomes a quest for her that is also a quest for the self. In Lady Oracle, Jerusalem the Golden, and Earthly Possessions, journeys symbolize flight from the mother—into the arms of a man with whom separation and attachment conflicts are re-experienced. Before they can become individuals with a capacity for mature dependence,² these heroines face the awesome task of emerging from an overly close identification with their mothers. They have begun to accept their own ambivalence, recognizing both their underlying bond with the mother and their differentness.

As Phyllis Chesler observes, daughters, generally less favored than sons in our society, may be "glassed into infancy, and perhaps into some form of
madness, by an unmet need for maternal nurturance." Daughters crave the maternal nurturance denied them by mothers who appear cold and unloving. In Lady Oracle, Jerusalem the Golden, and Earthly Possessions, the heroines continually seek self-affirmation, yet fear exposing inner selves they do not feel, at bottom, to be loveable. Joan Foster fears that her husband will discover her "true self" embodied in her past; Clara relies on men to give her value in other people's eyes; Charlotte longs to escape a husband's "judging gaze ... that widened at learning who I really was." These heroines hunger for love, but their sense of self is so nebulous and unsure they cannot trust the love that comes.

They can, however, learn a measure of self-love through surrogate mothers upon whom they model themselves. Joan Foster, Clara Maugham, and Charlotte Emory find mothers they can idealize. They are attracted to qualities they find lacking in their own mothers—personal autonomy, tolerance, warmth. Signe Hammer explains how alternate models of womanhood can help a daughter to separate.

The search for an ideal mother is part of the search for an ideal self, one who has already 'arrived.' It is a fantasy of a ready-made, grown-up self who no longer has to be a daughter to her mother, but can be a friend. Trying out an ideal self, or various ideal selves, is a way of reaching out toward adulthood, another way of separating. Only with separation is it possible to 'return' to one's mother, to come to terms with the fact that growing up is a slow process, one in which a daughter has to learn that coming to terms with herself also means coming to terms with her mother and ultimately with her mother's imperfections and her own. In looking for ideal mothers elsewhere, and in trying to construct ideal selves, daughters are testing reality. By rejecting their mothers and idealizing other people's, they eventually will be able to reconcile themselves to reality.

These surrogate mothers are usually distanced enough from the daughter not to see her as a self-extension. Unlike most real mothers, they can encourage the daughter without taking her successes and failures too personally. Even when
they are primarily fantasy figures, as in *Earthly Possessions*, they can suggest a range of possibilities.

The real mother who has not adequately defined her own ego boundaries projects her insecurities onto her daughter. In a society which reinforces women's sense of inferiority, a mother cannot teach her daughter what she has never known. Adrienne Rich says that a mother "like the traditional foot-bound Chinese woman ... passes on her own affliction. The mother's self-hatred and low expectations are the binding-rags for the psyche of the daughter." Nancy Chodorow describes the daughter's double bind: "feminine gender identification means identification with a devalued, passive mother whose own self-esteem is low. Conscious rejection of her oedipal maternal identification remains an unconscious rejection and devaluation of herself, because of her continuing preoedipal identification and boundary confusion with her mother." In the three novels under discussion, where the father is conspicuously weak or absent, the scarcity of other mediators in the mother/daughter relationship produces excessively close mutual identification. Nancy Chodorow explains how the problem of unresolved separation tends to be perpetuated.

The situation reinforces itself in circular fashion. A mother, on the one hand, grows up without establishing adequate ego boundaries or a firm sense of self. She tends to experience boundary confusion with her daughter, and does not provide experiences of differentiating ego development for her daughter to encourage the breaking of her daughter's dependence. The daughter, for her part, makes a rather unsatisfactory and artificial attempt to establish boundaries: she projects what she defines as bad within her onto her mother and tries to take what is good into herself.

Joan Foster, Clara Maughan, and Charlotte Emory all violently reject their mothers, but in their journeys—to Europe, to London and Paris, to the American South—these heroines discover that they cannot escape the mother who is so
deeply internalized. They must come to terms with her before they can know themselves. The structure of the novels, which interweave past and present, mirrors the theme: the past and present are inextricable. All three protagonists eventually trace their way back home, not to the omnipotent mother of infancy, but to a figure of pathos and vulnerability—in other words, a daughter, a self. In confronting their mothers' death, they can at last see the mother as a separate person with whom they share, nevertheless, a deep-rooted connection. In exploring the roots of the twentieth century daughter's desire for "liberation," all three authors point toward possible avenues of feminine growth, self-understanding, and integration.

I. **Lady Oracle**

Ostensibly a comic story of a fat girl who discovers her own thinness, her own sexuality, and an avocation writing Gothic romances, Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* actually centers on a daughter's struggle to see her mother whole. Like other Canadian writers such as Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood explores the consequences of an overly intense mother/daughter identification. Joan Foster is haunted by the figure of the mother with whom she must come to terms before she can accept herself. One critic notes the novel's "split between the world of fantasy and the unconscious, and the world of conscious reality," but attributes this split to "an acceptance of schizophrenia ... as an aspect of modern life." The worlds of fantasy and conscious reality which the heroine inhabits, however, involve a particular response to a significant central figure, not simply a fragmented modern society. Her schizophrenic response, if you will, results from conflicting desires to be at one with the mother
and to separate from her. Consciously she defies the mother, longing to escape the pull that seems "a vortex, a dark vacuum," but when her conscious constraints are loosened, as in her dreams or automatic writing, we see the primal longing for the mother.

Joan's deep ambivalence toward her mother results from conflicting desires to be her mother's loved little daughter, and to be free, separate, unencumbered. Like Martha Quest, she hates her mother in defense against an overly strong identification. As Adrienne Rich explains:

... Where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her, a dread that if one relaxes one's guard one will identify with her completely. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery.

In her escape to Europe where she attempts to cancel her past completely, Joan tries to free herself from the mother's image of her, from the pain of their mutual guilt and betrayal. Yet no matter where she turns, even after her marriage, she carries her mother "like a rotting albatross" (p. 215). In the figure who emerges in Joan's writing--Lady Oracle who cries dark tears--Joan finally confronts both her mother and her own vulnerable child self.

After her escape to Europe, Joan repeatedly envisions her mother crying dark tears (pp. 173, 224, 330), tears which recall an episode of maternal betrayal from her childhood. Joan had been looking forward eagerly to acting the graceful role of a butterfly in a dancing school recital, but her mother's intervention had caused her to act the role of a mothball instead. However ludicrous the image of a fat child lumbering onto the dance floor in a teddy-bear suit might appear from an adult perspective, to the young Joan it was an occasion for tears, not laughter, and when she looked into the bathroom mirror later, her
"made-up face had run, there were black streaks down my cheeks like sooty tears" (p. 46). Later, when her mother's astral body appears to her in Europe, she sees "mascara ... running from her eyes in black tears" (p. 173). This image, when linked with the earlier one, suggests a daughter's vulnerability now projected onto the mother. The daughter abandoned by the mother, and the mother abandoned, in turn, by the daughter, become images of each other. Joan's reaction to learning of her mother's death is "a wave of guilt" for having left, but also the feeling that she had "been deserted, I was convinced of it now" (p. 183). Although it is unclear whether she feels deserted by her mother or her lover Arthur, it is her mother's death which triggers the sense of loss. She cries at night, sells mascara by day but is "unable to continue because crying too much made her eyes puffy" (p. 183). Once again the suggestion of black tears hearkens back to that childhood disappointment. With the fusion of identities between mother and daughter, the guilt for having left blends with the pain of having been left.

The daughter's sense of abandonment is brought out in an early dream. Because the child depends so much upon the mother, she experiences maternal unconcern as denial of her very existence.

One of the bad dreams I used to have about my mother was this. I would be walking across the bridge and she would be standing in the sunlight on the other side of it, talking to someone else, a man whose face I couldn't see. When I was halfway across, the bridge would start to collapse, as I'd always feared it would. Its rotten planks buckled and split, it tilted over sideways and began to topple slowly into the ravine. I would try to run but it would be too late, I would throw myself down and grab onto the far edge as it rose up, trying to slide me off. I called out to my mother, who could still have saved me, she could have run across quickly and reached out her hand, she could have pulled me back with her to firm ground--But she didn't do this, she went on with her conversation, she didn't notice that anything unusual was happening. She didn't even hear me (p. 62).

As the mother talks to this nameless man (the father?) the daughter perceives her abstraction as withholding of support. Since the mother has power to save the
daughter, her inattention seems like indifference. Joan longs for a bridge to the mother that will restore her old sense of security, but the bridge she envisions is rotten and unreliable. Without the mother's support, she seems to be falling into an abyss.

With such enormous power to save or damn her daughter, the mother appears, to Joan's imagination, to be both monstrous and goddess-like. This figure, who can devastate simply by withholding love, is represented as Joan's "three-headed mother, menacing and cold" (p. 215) but also as a figure "enormously powerful, almost like a goddess" (p. 224) which Joan encounters in her automatic writing. The three-headed goddess which Joan notices on a museum pillar in England (p. 142) first appears in a childhood dream. In this dream, Joan watches her mother apply make-up before the triple mirror of her vanity table. At first she admires her mother's great beauty, and then suddenly realizes that "instead of three reflections she had three actual heads, which rose from her toweled shoulders on three separate necks" (p. 64). The mother's disproportionate power to negate or affirm her daughter's existence makes her seem grotesque.

Furthermore, since she and her mother are so undifferentiated, the perception of her mother as monster translates as self-hatred. In the early dream Joan worries that a man would come in, learn the truth about her mother and "something terrible would happen" (p. 64). Later she seems equally frightened that her husband will find out the truth about her--her fat, unattractive girlhood or the gothic novels she writes under a pseudonym. Though she at times feels tempted to confess the truth about herself to Arthur, she resists this confessional impulse because she feels "my early and innermost self would have appalled him. It would be like asking for a steak and getting a slaughtered cow" (p. 217). Joan feels her true self to be unloveable, freakish, the Fat Lady in the circus. Even as
an adolescent, winning friendship had been a matter of keeping her true feelings to herself; acting as the non-threatening confidante of other girls, Joan had felt herself to be a "duplicitous monster" (p. 93). She cannot escape her mother's image of her as a "huge edgeless cloud of inchoate matter which refused to be shaped into anything for which she could get a prize" (p. 65); this lack of pliability seems both her distinction and her curse. The daughter reflects and internalizes the self-dislike of a mother who views her as "the embodiment of her own failure and depression" (p. 65). Her identification with the mother means that she is trapped in the mother's negative self-image.

Joan's excessive eating as a girl both contributes to her self-hatred and consoles her for it; it is both an aggressive means of overtly defying the mother and a regressive way of getting back to her. In *Psychology of Woman*, Helene Deutsch explains how a daughter's over-eating can be simultaneously a form of rebellion and a retreat to childishness.

On the one hand, the child energetically resists her childishness; on the other, she is trying to reach it again by detours. Moved by this longing, she is inclined once more to leave to her mother the care of her body. The intensification of many oral tendencies, above all gluttony, serves as an aggressive gratification of the appetite .... The girl struggles against the 'interference' of the mother; she senses in every one of the latter's gestures an attack on her adulthood--the mother is the embodiment of the strongest tie with the past. 12

For Joan, food substitutes for the maternal nurturance she unconsciously desires; however, it also helps her to rebel. "I was eating steadily, doggedly, stubbornly, anything I could get; the disputed territory was my body" (p. 67). When the mother focuses her energy on forcing Joan to reduce, Joan responds by eating more and even choosing clothes that accentuate her unfortunate shape (p. 85). When her mother discovers her on an eating binge, Joan is elated to see that she has won a kind of victory: "I had defeated her; I wouldn't ever let her make me
over in her image, thin and beautiful" (p. 86). Joan eats partly to assure herself of her separate existence. "I was afraid I wasn't really there; I'd heard her call me an accident. Did I want to become solid, solid as a stone so she wouldn't be able to get rid of me?" (p. 76).

Ironically, however, even in her ostensible rebellion, Joan unconsciously obeys unspoken messages. The mother senses that Joan's eating is somehow connected to her. "'What have I done to make you behave like this?' ... She was taking all the credit for herself; surely I was behaving like this not because of anything she had done but because I wanted to" (p. 86). A grossly overweight daughter is not sexually threatening; Joan's overeating keeps her dependent. Like Doris Lessing's Mrs. Quest, who urges her daughter to leave home and make something of herself while trying, subtly, to keep her close, Joan's mother gives her double messages. Though she has long nagged Joan about her weight, she seems secretly pleased when she catches Joan in the ritual of gorging herself. When Joan finally sets about reducing, Mrs. Foster becomes more and more distraught, even leaving tempting pies and cakes around the house. She begins drinking heavily and, when Joan reveals that she has just eighteen more pounds to lose before she moves out, Mrs. Foster hysterically threatens her with a paring knife. The mother both wants and does not want Joan to separate; each experiences the other as a source of security and claustrophobia.

This conflict drives the daughter constantly to seek security and long for freedom. With her husband and lovers Joan feels the same impulse to escape that she once did with her mother. When she escapes to Italy she arranges her own apparent death in the hope that "no shreds of the past would cling to me, no clutching fingers" (p. 334). Invariably, however, lonely freedom propels her to seek attachment that soon threatens, once again, entrapment. Having left one
marriage behind, Joan fantasizes another, but also sees, farther down the road, the same pattern of escape.

Why did every one of my fantasies turn into a trap? In this one I saw myself climbing out a window, in my bibbed apron and bun, oblivious to the cries of children and grandchildren behind me. I might as well face it, I thought, I was an artist, an escape artist. I'd sometimes talked about love and commitment, but the real romance of my life was that between Houdini and his ropes and locked trunk; entering the embrace of bondage, slithering out again (p. 335).

Here Joan sees that the pressure of children, like the pressure of the mother-tie, would threaten too much her tenuous sense of self. As much as she longs for attachment, she must always back away from it. The dilemma for the daughter is what Walker Percy described in The Moviegoer as "this miserable trick the romantic plays upon himself: of setting just beyond his reach the very thing he prizes." A union which represents loss of the self is both the charm—and the danger.

Though the daughter on one level desires to escape the past and all its ties, she unconsciously yearns to recover that childhood maternal haven. In May Sarton's novel, Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing, a seventy-year-old protagonist expresses the daughter's longing for a breakthrough, a restoration of that impossible, perfect union with the mother.

'I suppose what I had to accept when my mother died was the hardest thing; you quoted the Graves lines "Whom I desired above all things to know." The other side of the coin, I suppose, is the longing to be known, to be accepted as one is. Up to the very end, I waited for the miracle, for that epiphany which would open a final door between myself and my mother.'

Adrienne Rich speaks of having once had fantasies "the unhealed child's fantasies, I think--of some infinitely healing conversation with her, in which we could show all our wounds, transcend the pain we have shared as mother and daughter, say everything at last." For Joan Foster, the dream of a blissful, healing love surfaces in the books she writes. "I longed for happy endings, I needed the feeling
of release when everything turned out right and I could scatter joy like rice all over my characters and dismiss them into bliss" (p. 321). With the heroines of her own books Joan can play fairy godmother, transforming them "from pumpkins to pure gold" (pp. 31-32)--or, we can infer, from mothball to butterfly. At times she envisions herself as heroine in one of her own romances, rescued, delivered from herself. Separated from Arthur, she dreams of his coming to Italy to save her. "Everything would be all right; as soon as he got the postcard Arthur would fly across the ocean, we would embrace, I'd tell him everything, he would forgive me, I would forgive him, and we could start all over again" (p. 183). Yet this dream of absolute acceptance could never be realized, for when she is with Arthur, she keeps her true self hidden for fear of losing his love. Ironically, as she discovers during their courtship, they not only remain very separate individuals, but he reaches out to her for the maternal love she desires from him. "Sometimes during these nights I would wake up to find Arthur clinging to me as if the bed was an ocean full of sharks and I was a big rubber raft" (p. 197). Clearly Joan cannot find the unconditional support she is looking for through men.

The daughter's fantasy of perfect love can also form around a surrogate mother figure distanced enough to prevent normal mother/daughter tensions from developing. As a girl, Joan looks to her Aunt Lou as the good, non-demanding mother. Most importantly, Aunt Lou, unlike Joan's mother, is physically warm and affectionate (p. 87). She cries, like Joan; she is fat too; she has a messy apartment; she is everything that Joan's real mother is not. With Aunt Lou it is acceptable for Joan to be herself. Rather than placing demands and restrictions, she gives Joan permission, largely through her example, to do what she wants to do. Joan sees the disorder of Aunt Lou's apartment as meaning "you could do what you like. I imitated it in my own bedroom, scattering clothes
and books and chocolate-bar wrappers over the surfaces so carefully planned by my mother" (p. 80). Aunt Lou, who refuses to see Joan's life as a disaster (p. 331), helps her toward a more positive self-image.

With her real mother a barrier always exists. Even during her marriage she dreams of being a helpless child again, trapped, cut off from her mother.

In the worst dream I couldn't see her at all. I would be hiding behind a door, or standing in front of one, it wasn't clear which. It was a white door, like a bathroom door or perhaps a cupboard. I'd been locked in, or out, but on the other side I could hear voices. Sometimes there were a lot of voices, sometimes only two; they were talking about me, discussing me, and as I listened I would realize that something very bad was going to happen. I felt helpless, there was nothing I could do (p. 215).

The horror of this dream arises not only from her sense of helplessness, but from the sense of separation. The door between mother and daughter is shut.

The locked door opens momentarily in a dream she has later in Italy. By moonlight she sees the apparition of her mother, crying, separated from her by a glass barrier.

... She was crying soundlessly, she pressed her face against the glass like a child, mascara ran from her eyes in black tears.

"What do you want?" I said, but she didn't answer. She stretched out her arms to me, she wanted me to come with her; she wanted us to be together.

I began to walk towards the door. She was smiling at me now, with her smudged face, could she see I loved her? I loved her but the glass was between us, I would have to go through it. I longed to console her. Together we would go down the corridor into the darkness. I would do what she wanted.

The door was locked. I shook at it and shook until it came open (p. 330).

The glass barrier suggests that mother and daughter, like husband and wife, can come only so close. The crying child whom Joan longs to console is actually herself; she would mother her own mother, vicariously experiencing herself as a loved child. Yet the price of this maternal love--doing what the mother wants, yielding one's autonomy--is impossible for Joan to pay in real life.
Her automatic writing, in which she gives up conscious control, reveals the strength of her continuing preoedipal attachment to the mother. Holding a candle in front of a mirror, Joan ventures down an imaginary corridor toward a tantalizing presence.

There was the sense of going along a narrow passage that led downward, the certainly that if I could only turn the next corner or the next--for these journeys became longer--I would find the thing, the truth or word or person that was mine, that was waiting for me (p. 223).

As in *Memoirs of a Survivor*, the elusive presence which the heroine tracks into her subconscious comes slowly into focus until her identity is finally revealed as the mother's. The woman Joan discovers lives "under the earth somewhere, or inside something, a cave or a huge building .... She was enormously powerful, almost like a goddess" (p. 224). Sherril Grace suggests that the woman who dwells in this cave is associated with the earth mother; W.F. Jackson Knight, whose work Atwood knows, says, "The start in the sanctity of caves is the belief that men come from the earth, and return to the earth, as to a mother. Access to her is by caves." Furthermore, Knight discusses the connection between caves, Mother Earth, and mazes. "Mazes guarded the entrance to caves because the cave was the way into Mother Earth, the sacred entrance to death, rebirth, wisdom and descent into the underworld." When Joan Foster enters her mirror with the aid of her candle, she enters a maze. Like the maze which her heroine Felicia enters in *Stalked by Love*, this maze holds a secret which both frightens and compels; one evening she goes in and loses her sense of direction, afraid to turn around for fear of getting further lost (p. 225). Knight says that the plan of labyrinths such as the famous one in Crete can "make escape difficult, from the inside to the outside of any place." For both Joan Foster and her heroines, the maze is difficult to enter, difficult to leave. It poses danger because it can so quickly become a prison.
Different critics have pointed out how Joan's life mirrors her gothic romance, particularly at the end, where her actual life fuses with her imaginary one.

The more we learn about the novel, the more apparent it is that the intrepid heroine Charlotte and the passionate evil wife Felicia, who has long red hair, green eyes, and small teeth, are reflections of Joan herself. Furthermore, as Joan's story reaches its climax, with Joan pursued by threatening males, executing daring escapes, and terrified by approaching footsteps, it becomes fused (or confused) with *Stalked by Love*. 19

As Joan learns to view her mother with greater empathy, she finds she cannot delineate her heroines and anti-heroines, heroes and villains, as sharply. The simplistic gothic formula no longer suffices. In Joan's novel *Stalked by Love*, the dark heroine Felicia gradually becomes a woman of increasing depth and complexity.

Similarly, in the larger novel *Lady Oracle*, Joan comes to realize that her own mother is not dark and alien. She sees that the woman in the mirror, "the one waiting around each turn" (p. 331), is actually her mother who is also a version of Joan herself. She sees that she cannot live freely unless she can separate from the woman who "had been my reflection too long" (p. 331). But she still wonders about the possibility of some magical, external solvent that would free them both. "What was the charm, what would set her free?" (p. 331). For her, as for her heroines, penetration to the secret of the maze does not guarantee solutions. Before her heroine Charlotte enters the maze, she, like Joan herself, has mixed feelings. "Her feelings were ambiguous: did the maze mean certain death, or did it contain the answer to a riddle, an answer she must learn in order to live?" (p. 332). As Charlotte gets close to the center of the maze, she begins to panic, trying to run but becoming entangled by a ball of knitting wool. She hears the mocking laugh of Felicia, the bad mother figure who should be
discarded, according to conventional gothic formula, so that she can win the hero. This solution no longer feels right to Joan, however; in her fiction Joan has begun to confront the fact that men do not rescue women from themselves. The woman who has failed to find salvation through the men in her life, neither her father, husband, nor lovers finds that she can no longer save her heroines by some Byronic deliverance. The dark heroine Felicia enters the maze only to discover its central secret to be a meeting with her predecessors (the former Lady Redmonds, ghostly mother figures) who are also the different aspects not only of Felicia, but of Joan Foster.

Suddenly she found herself in the central plot. A stone bench ran along one side, and on it were seated four women. Two of them looked a lot like her, with red hair and green eyes and small white teeth. The third was middle-aged, dressed in a strange garment that ended halfway up her calves, with a ratty piece of fur around her neck. The last was enormously fat. She was wearing a pair of pink tights and a short pink skirt covered with spangles. From her head sprouted two antennae, like a butterfly's, and a pair of obviously false wings pinned to her back (p. 341).

These women all suggest Joan's various selves from the past, the present, and the future. We recall her childhood fantasies of being a butterfly or a Fat Lady in the circus; the woman with the ratty piece of fur represents Aunt Lou with her fox stole; the two red-haired women seem much like Joan's present self, in her roles as Joan Foster wife and Louisa Delacourt writer. The hero of Stalked by Love is not allowed to rescue Felicia any more than Joan had been rescued by the various men in her life.

His face grew a white gauze mask, then a pair of mauve-tinted spectacles, then a red beard and moustache, which faded, giving place to burning eyes and icicle teeth. This his cloak vanished and he stood looking at her sadly; he was wearing a turtle-necked sweater.... (pp. 342-3).

As one article brings out, Redmond here "becomes the various hero-villains to whom Joan has turned for help but who have provided no real support: her
father, her first lover, her final lover, her fantasy lover, and her husband.Heroes cannot rescue damsels from themselves after all; this deviation from Gothic plot hints that Joan has begun to accept the fact of "no happy endings, no true love" (p. 234).

Thus *Stalked by Love*, like *Lady Oracle*, contains no neat conclusions. In an interview Margaret Atwood has stated, "My characters are not role models. I don't try to resolve the problems of living, deal out the answers." It would seem that daughters cannot reconcile their desires for freedom and emotional security. Even as a girl, Joan had identified with her heroine's dilemma in a film called *The Red Shoes*: "I wanted those things too, I wanted to dance and be married to a handsome orchestra conductor" (p. 79). In Italy later, Joan reflects on the impossibility of achieving both freedom and love. In her ecstasy of dancing, at last becoming the butterfly, Joan dances right through the glass until she is stopped by bleeding feet.

You could dance, or you could have the love of a good man. But you were afraid to dance, because you had this unnatural fear that if you danced they'd cut your feet off so you wouldn't be able to dance. Finally you overcome your fear and danced, and they cut your feet off. The good man went away too, because you wanted to dance (p. 336).

The freedom of the dance entices, but the broken glass suggests that this freedom is illusory. As a child in the dance recital and later as an adult, Joan finds that attempts to be free are invariably punished. The promised harbor of love proves a disappointment, as Joan has learned in her marriage and romances. When emotionally secure, the daughter longs to escape into freedom, but once free, she longs to be rescued by love.

It is not clear how much Joan has learned by the end of *Lady Oracle*. She emerges from her reverie about *Stalked by Love* when she hears real footsteps coming up her walk. She hits this intruder, whom she confuses with her hero-
villain of her novel, with a Cinzano bottle. One article states that this aggressive, decisive action is significant because Joan "discovers a new aspect of her personality, one neither she nor the men in her life had previously seen. She has accepted herself and with that her own potential to do harm, to affect her world." Margaret Atwood herself says that Joan has made some small advance:

"Before she said I will hide who I am because nobody will like who I am. They will not accept me. They will think I'm ridiculous. If I can conceal myself, then I will be safe. So far she's gotten as far as saying I am who I am, take it or leave it, and the reason that she feels better with the fellow she's hit over the head with the bottle than with anyone else is that at least she know, at least the new relationship will be on some kind of honest basis, if there is one."

I, however, agree with Sherill Grace that "there is no way for the reader to be certain that anything has changed by the end of Joan's narration. Quite possibly she will begin to spin another plot, this time around the new man in her life." At first glance Joan seems prepared to return to Arthur, to reality, to the consequences of her actions. She decides that she will stop writing Costume Gothics, but will perhaps try science fiction instead. She says vaguely "I keep thinking I should learn some lesson from all this" (p. 345), yet she does not articulate what knowledge she has gained. She does not necessarily seem ready to relinquish her pattern of evasive behavior, to substitute honest confrontation for romantic mystification. For the present she chooses the easy course of action--staying in Rome--and has begun to fantasize about a man she knows nothing about. Though it is true that she has revealed to him her aggressive potential, she is attracted to him partly because "there is something interesting about a man in a bandage" (p. 345). If he is hidden by a bandage, she can attribute whatever qualities she likes to him. Furthermore, her turn from Costume Gothics to science fiction is not necessarily a step forward. Arnold and Cathy Davidson say that "science fiction, though still fantasy, looks forward and implies at least
survival." It does not seem to me, however, that science fiction is inherently less escapist than the gothic mode.

I agree with the Davidsons that "the ending is muted" but not that Joan "has begun to confront her present only in her life, not in her art." Before one can confront the present, it is necessary to work through the conflicts of the past, and that is what Joan has been doing in her writing. In Joan's outer life she has not much changed, but in her inner world of dream and fantasy she has confronted those conflicts which alarm her more rational self. In her fiction she articulates repressed knowledge. The heroines she had previously directed begin to take on a life of their own; the cold, unsympathetic Felicia becomes, in the writing dictated from her subconscious, a lady who cries dark tears. Though we do not know whether she can apply the insights which her writing reflects, she has confronted her inner conflicts squarely in the visionary world of her imagination. In the inner world of her unconscious, Joan at least meets the figure in the mirror, the daughter in the mother, the mother in herself.

II. Jerusalem the Golden

Another recent novel which dramatizes the daughter's struggle to emancipate herself from her past--and her mother--is Jerusalem the Golden. Written by the popular British writer Margaret Drabble, described by Elaine Showalter as "the novelist of maternity," this novel too shows a heroine who denies her past in an attempt to find selfhood. After escaping the grimy industrial town of Northam, England on a scholarship, Clara Maugham becomes friends with the gifted Clelia Denham, and through her, with the large, interconnected Denham family. Clara, whose own mother is cold and unloving, finds
warmth and nurturance in Clelia and her mother; through them she begins to appreciate the charm and value of things she had previously despised. When Clara meets Clelia's handsome, married brother Gabriel, she falls in love with him at once; her subsequent affair seems a way of getting close to the good mother (Clelia/Candida Denham) and a means of claiming autonomy. The issue of separation which Clara has never resolved with her mother echoes through her relationship with Gabriel. On an adulterous holiday with him in Paris she at one point dreams of marriage that would fix and define her forever, yet she finally leaves Gabriel behind when she returns to England, presumably because he left her at a party. She returns from Paris to find her mother dying of cancer, and, like Joan Foster, feels she has killed the mother by leaving; she is punished by guilt for her illicit honeymoon. As her mother lies in the hospital, she searches through her mother's bedroom for some unknown vestige of departed life. In some old keepsakes of her mother's she finds the connection with the mother she has unconsciously been seeking. Realizing her underlying connection and separateness from the mother, she finally seems able to accept her past and herself. The end of the novel tentatively suggests that Clara may be able to act upon the awareness she has gained and discover a capacity for adult love.

Like other daughter figures such as Martha Quest and Joan Foster, Clara is long haunted by the impulse to escape. Even after she manages to leave Northam through the power of her will, she lives in terror that her will may fail her and she would find herself once more in her mother's house.

... She hated her home town with such violence that when she returned each vacation from university, she would shake and tremble with an ashamed and feverish fear. She hated it, and she was afraid of it, because she doubted her power to escape; even after two years in London, she still thought that her brain might go or that her nerve might snap, and that she would be compelled to return, feebly, defeated, to her mother's house. She was so constantly braced, her will so stiff from desire, that she could not
sleep at nights; she feared that if she fell asleep she might lose her
determination and her faith, might wake up alone in her narrow bed,
in the small bedroom overlooking the small square garden, backing
onto the next small square garden, where for so many years she had
lain and dreamed her subversive dreams. She was frightened of this;
and also she was frightened of her mother. 28

Because she is still so unseparated from her mother, she must constantly fight the
pull back to an infantile passivity. When she goes home from school for vacations,
she fears becoming the child who must escape all over again.

... These visits managed to reduce her to exactly the same stage of
trembling, silent, frustrated anxiety that she had endured through­
out her childhood; she felt, each time, that she had gone back, right
back to the start, and that every step forward must be painfully
retraced. It was not so, at the beginning of each new term she
found it was not so, but it seemed to be so, and the same mixture of
guilt and hate and sorrow would strike her anew, each time as
forcefully, each time she got off the train at Northam Station
(p. 97).

As much as she would like to escape Northam forever, she feels constrained by
duty to return home for vacations; once there she feels terror that she may lose
her will, her autonomy, her self. This is the same terror that lurks behind the
question she later puts to Gabriel: "'What will happen if I should ever lose my
nerve?'" (p. 193).

It is not enough to tell herself consciously she is free; she fears the
maternal authority which can so easily cancel the pleasure of her efforts and
successes. When she decides to study French, she dreads telling her mother.

She did not know why she should feel such fear, because she felt for
her mother not respect, but contempt: and why should she lack
courage before someone whose attitudes were to her so transparent­
ly, pettily contemptible? (p. 53).

However she may affect to despise the mother's judgements, they carry the power
to deflate her sense of worth. The mother's coldness blights potential joys--when
Clara brings good reports home from school, Mrs. Maugham flips through them,
grim-faced, resentful. We can see that because she herself had been forced to
stifle her intelligence, she cannot give the encouragement she has been denied. The small daughter, however, does not have the comfort of this rational explanation. From childhood on, Clara is taught the futility of overtures so that when she later visits her dying mother in the hospital, she brings no flowers because the child in her is still "afraid of rejection, afraid of that sour smile with which so many years ago her mother had received her small offerings of needle cases and cross stitch pin cushions and laboriously gummed and assembled calendars" (p. 230). One reviewer considers Mrs. Maugham so unrelentingly cold, "so heavily caricatured that she never exists, even for a minute, except as an object of bitter resentment in Clara's rebellious but curiously self-satisfied mind." I would agree more with the critic who calls her "a brilliant creation." Since the point of view is largely restricted third person, we can infer from the selection of details that Mrs. Maugham's negativism, however overwhelming, accurately reflects the daughter's subjective view of her. Like Joan Foster, the needy daughter notices the lack of what she most desires. When Clara returns to Northam at the end of the novel, she herself recognizes that her view of Northam and its people has been distorted.

In her longing for warmth and color and freedom, Clara seeks any possible avenue of escape from the bleak world circumscribed by her mother. As a girl she finds the traditional escape route of fictional heroines from Maggie Tulliver to Joan Foster: the world of the imagination. She can be thrilled by the poetry in hymns, particularly one about a heavenly city called Jerusalem the Golden. Reading fiction, spinning romances, even watching advertisements enable her to glimpse other worlds. But school, more than anything else, provides fresh territory where she can define herself anew.
At grammar school she first tastes the sense of power conferred by being desired. Finally her scholastic ability wins her admiration rather than disapproval. The middle-aged science teacher, Mrs. Hill, and the young French teacher, Miss Haines, contend for her allegiance. Clara likes science partly for "the power which she rapidly acquired over Mrs. Hill; the first power of her life" (p. 44). She enjoys being the obvious object of maternal affection; the French teacher also favors her, but attempts to conceal her partiality. When Clara realizes that the two teachers "had actually been fighting over her," she feels "an inexplicably profound satisfaction" (p. 47). Although she knows all along that she will choose to pursue studies in French, she enjoys dawdling with a flirtation. For once she can be the one with the power to reject the mother figure rather than the other way around. Just as she later enjoys "the collecting of admirers" (p. 57) if not the boys themselves, she here is elated by the sense of being wanted. Rather than looking for love that is not forthcoming, she can decide herself whether to yield or withhold favor. Perhaps the security she enjoys in this kind of power is the basis for her later inability to give rather than receive: she is always the guest rather than the hostess, the sexual recipient rather than the giver.

Clara finds at an early age that her sexuality, like her intelligence, is a source of power. Though she feels little sincere attraction to boys, her precocious sexual development wins her a gratifying share of attention. "By the time she was fifteen, her stock in the school rose enormously by virtue of the fact that she was a constant recipient of billet-doux from the boys of the neighbouring brother grammar school" (p. 55). Interestingly, what pleases her most seems to be not the male attention per se, but the elevated status she consequently acquires among the girls. The popularity she achieves with them helps to compensate for her mother's indifference.
At home she so much expects a blank, stony indifference that she is deeply shaken when it shows "hidden chinks and faults" (p. 66). When Mrs. Maugham unexpectedly grants Clara permission to go on a school trip to Paris, Clara is dismayed. If she can see her mother as uniformly cold, she can better brace herself against the current of her mother's will.

Because the truth was that this evidence of care and tenderness was harder to bear than any neglect, for it threw into question the whole basis of their lives together. Perhaps there was hope, perhaps all was not harsh antipathy, perhaps a better daughter might have found a way to soften such a mother. And if all were not lost, what effort, what strain, what retraced miles, what recriminations, what intolerable forgivenss were not be be undergone? And who, having heard impartially this interchange, would have believed in Clara's cause? Clara's one solace had been the cold, tight, dignity of her case, and this had been stolen from her, robbed from her by an elderly woman's few words of casual humanity.......... Bitterly she thought, it is all spoiled, spoiled by consent, spoiled by refusal, it does not matter if I go or stay. By letting me go, she is merely increasing her power, for she is outmartyring my martyrdom. I die from loss, or I die from guilt, and either way I die (pp. 69-70).

It is easier to perceive the mother in strictly negative terms than to accept the limitations of a necessarily flawed love.

Paris, land of sweet, forbidden fruit, loses much of its symbolic value with Mrs. Maugham's surprising concession. If Paris is permissible, Clara must find some other testing ground for her independence. Montmartre, because forbidden, becomes her Paris to which she determines to escape alone at night. She feels heady with her own daring when she consents to go to the cinema with a man she meets there. The adolescent sexual experimentation she allows serves to fix this adventure as a gesture of rebellion. Unconsciously she expects punishment, and is exhilarated to realize that "she had dared, and she had not been struck dead for it" (p. 83). The successful violation of taboo helps her to feel separate from the mother.
Even as a young woman in London, she continually needs to reaffirm her separateness. The large Denham family attracts her because it represents the antithesis of her own--open, affectionate, tolerant rather than closed, cold, and rigid. Repeatedly she contrasts this surrogate family with her own, speculating on what her mother would think.

Clara often found herself wondering what her mother would think. Such wonder never prevented her from any course of action--on the contrary, she sometimes feared it impelled her--but nevertheless, when drunk or naked, thoughts of her mother would fill her mind. And with the Denhams, these thoughts pressed upon her intolerably (p. 145).

Like drinking and sex, the Denham family runs counter to Mrs. Maugham's whole value system. Being with them is another way to resist her mother's narrowness. The qualities she admires in the Denhams are those which draw her farther from her mother and her lower middle class background; thus there is a sense in which her attachment to the Denhams is a betrayal of her origins, flavored with guilt.

The maternal nurturance lacking at home is lavishly supplied at the Denhams. Clelia and her mother, whom she so much resembles, together compose an idealized mother figure; states Martin, the man whose baby the two women care for: "The maternal impulse in your family tends to run riot" (p. 118).

Although Clara herself displays no apparent interest in babies, she is charmed when she first hears Clelia mention the baby she must get back to (p. 26). As Gabriel reflects later, Clelia's arms seem "more ready to receive the child than the man" (p. 176). Clelia's maternal impulses are also shown toward her mother, about whom she worries having to "run around making bottles and changing nappies" (p. 120). Mrs. Denham is also maternal at the same time that she has her own life as a writer. Mrs. Denham, who tells Clara "I would have called Clelia Clara if I'd thought of it" (p. 112) seems the mother Clara should have had--Clelia the person she should have become. Drabble considers it natural for
daughters to seek such surrogates. In replying to Nancy Hardin's observation that her characters often "commit themselves to a search for 'chosen' or 'extended' families (friends, lovers, or perhaps children) with whom they work through their identities," she replies that perhaps "one has to escape from one's own family and find substitute families or substitute patterns of living." As Clara tells Gabriel later, she consciously models herself on Clelia.

Clara's love affair with Gabriel seems largely a way of securing her attachment to the good mother figure--Candida/Clelia. In a family so close that its incestuous undertones are more than once remarked upon, Gabriel is closely linked with both his mother and sister. Clara is first attracted to Gabriel when she sees him in a family picture as a small boy by his mother's side (pp. 129-30). She also remarks his similarity to Clelia (p. 128) just as he later notices hers. After learning that Gabriel's boss is attracted to him, Clara reflects on his adrogynous qualities, including his name which she had once assumed to be a girl's name (p. 142). Even before having met him, Clara is prepared to fall in love with this male version of Clelia.

Paradoxically, an attachment to Gabriel promises not only a way of gaining the good mother, but also a way of separating from the bad one. For Gabriel is, after all, married, and Clara's liaison with him can be seen as a way, once again, to transgress maternal prohibitions. Gabriel's wife Phillipa even shares certain qualities with Mrs. Maugham--physical coldness, utter disappointment of her vague expectations after marriage. When, toward the end of the novel, Clara cries before Gabriel for all the "empty, rolling, joyless years" stretching before her mother, Gabriel is moved because "they were his own wife's years unrolling there in Clara's eyes" (p. 201). The implicit parallel between Phillipa and Mrs. Maugham makes Gabriel seem like a father figure whom Clara is stealing.
For Clara, the illicit nature of their relationship adds immensely to its appeal. She has always disliked relationships with the smell of permanence, and "had fancied the idea of a complicated, illicit and disastrous love" (p. 134). From the outset their romance thrives on surreptitiousness and deception; Clara does not even tell Cleila about their affair. Whether her silence is tactful or deceitful, she does not analyze. As soon as she sleeps with Gabriel, the first thing she does is ring Cleila:

Not to tell her, but to talk to her. And as she talked, the consciousness of practicing deception did not distress her, for on the contrary she felt that the possession of a secret gave her an extra dimension, an extra asset. They had all for years had their complications, and now she had hers: It even seemed that Gabriel was another bond between them. It did not for a moment occur to her that Clelia might, in a simple sense, object. She imagined herself to be in a world where such considerations did not exist. And yet she knew that it would be better to say nothing (p. 186).

In light of the closeness between Clara and Clelia, this reticence seems surprising unless we consider the degree to which Clara views Clelia as a mother figure. She enjoys secretly violating taboo—so much that she almost wonders at times "whether she did not find more pleasure in the situation than in the man" (p. 188).

In the trip she takes to Paris with Gabriel, Clara is once again the defiant daughter flouting the mother. She is thrilled by her own daring just as she had been years ago in her nighttime foray to Montmartre. When she excuses herself from school by making up a lie that her mother is ill, she feels a faintly guilty pleasure in her own wickedness. She can better enjoy a Parisian holiday that seems like forbidden fruit.

She felt faintly guilty about taking her mother's name in vain this way, but she could not think of any other valid excuse for her absence, and felt, in her heart, a faintly pleasurable, guilty revenge, as though she were plucking her pleasures directly from the thorny tree itself (p. 190).
Throughout their trip the thought of her mother is never far from her mind. At the airport she asks plaintively, "'Why hurry? Only people like my mother hurry to get to hotels, why bother about hotels?'" (p. 191). She wants to be as unlike her mother as possible.

But whatever pleasure she takes in her own audacity is heavily counterbalanced by guilt. Earlier we learned that Clara often thinks of her mother when drunk or naked; in Paris she is both. Try as she might, Clara cannot shut out the consciousness of a mother she has so much internalized. When she and Gabriel make love in the hotel, a thin-faced woman in an oil painting at the edge of the bed stares coldly down at them (p. 193). For a moment fear of retribution catches hold of her; she tells Gabriel: "'I am chased, I am pursued, I run and run, but I will never get away, the apple does not fall from from the tree'" (p. 193). The suggestion here of original sin conveys her sense of indelible guilt. She realized that she is still her mother's daughter; she cannot run far enough away to escape.

Clara's reckless drinking during this trip almost seems a form of self-punishment. At the beginning of the trip she gets sick from drinking neat gin. She tells Gabriel afterwards "'You're so marvelous I can't take you'" (p. 195), but what she actually seems unable to take is her own sense of guilt. On the last day of their trip, they unexpectedly meet Gabriel's brother Magnus and, after spending a brief, pleasant time in his company, Clara suggests that they meet again in the evening. This meeting turns into a general party after Clara impulsively invites a couple of other males along. As the evening wears on, Clara begins to sense that she should perhaps stop drinking, but feels driven by a passion "stronger than curiosity" (p. 212). With her drinking and her rather flirtatious behavior, it is almost as if she unconsciously wants to drive Gabriel away from
Yet when she realizes he has left the party without her, she is stricken with panic and shame.

I thought it was beautiful but it was nothing. I cannot do it, I was not made that way, and all that I have done is to make a fool of myself, and Gabriel knows it, he has found me out, he has recognized that I cannot do it, I am no use to him (p. 215).

Curiously, she seems more ashamed of her failure to carry out the image of liberated woman than of her behavior per se. If on the early trip to Paris she had dared to be free and succeeded, on this one she has dared and failed.

Clara has so little conviction of her inner worth that she judges herself according to Gabriel's lights—or what she imagines those lights to be. She constantly looks at herself from the outside. She cannot even relax in her love for Gabriel, but uses it to win external approval, to confirm her sense of self. "She wished to see in the eyes of others the dim, narrowing, receding vistas, the arches and long corridors through which she had travelled. She wished to set, through him, a value on herself" (p. 197). Unsure of her own taste, views, identity, she feels that marriage to Gabriel would define her, yet the impulse to lose herself in him raises the instinct of psychic self-preservation. In Paris she thinks:

... It was not Gabriel himself after all that she wanted, but marriage to Gabriel: as Gabriel's wife she would have been irrevocably attached, safe, strapped, labelled, bound and fixed, never to be lost again, and where after all should she find better than Gabriel himself? Nowhere, nowhere, she knew; there was nothing more to look for; he was what she had wanted, and she had him, and he did not belong to her, and she did not want him to belong to her. She did not know what she wanted (p. 198).

The fusion she half-wants with Gabriel would completely overwhelm her tenuous ego boundaries. Like other fictional heroines, she is caught between the conflicting impulses to merge and separate.

She decides to leave Gabriel in the Paris hotel partly because she fears the strength of her own need for him.
I am not leaving him because I don't want him, but because I do, and because it will prove that I do, because he will know that I want him so much that for his sake I have made myself able to leave this room, for him I have left him, and what I want, I prepare myself most endlessly to leave. For to renounce is to value (p. 218).

This theme of feminine renunciation, so familiar to us from Edith Wharton's heroines, suggests an appalling degree of self-hatred. Clara feels that to refrain from love is a measure of love; she would protect Gabriel from herself.

Clara's self-hatred is also revealed in her pervasive sense of guilt. An engrained puritanism makes her feel that rebellious pleasures must be paid for. Once her mother had told her a dreadful story about her own childhood—springing up one Christmas morning to look in a Christmas stocking hanging by her bed and finding only ashes, the result of a brother's prank. This story, told as a warning to naughty children (p. 66), seems to have left reverberations in Clara's psyche. Riding out to the airport in Paris, Clara feels nausea and reflects that "the night would be in one sense at least paid for" (p. 218). But when she gets back to England, the real payment comes in a shattering sense of guilt. Her mother, whose illness Clara had fabricated, is dying. Clara receives just punishment for lying about her mother's illness.

...Her first thought was, I have killed my mother. By taking her name in vain, I have killed her. She thought, let them tell me no more that we are free, we cannot draw a breath without guilt, for my freedom she dies. And she felt closing in upon her, relentlessly, the hard and narrow clutch of retribution, those iron fingers which she had tried, so wilfully, so desperately to elude; a whole system was after her, and she the final victim, the last sacrifice, the shuddering product merely of her past (p. 22).

The guilt which Clara felt chasing her in Paris has finally caught her. Through the logic of the unconscious, she has killed the mother through her defiant act of vacationing with a married man. Like Joan Foster, she feels guiltily responsible for the mother's death. Abandoning the mother is a crime. *In My Mother My Self.* Nancy Friday states that a daughter's sense of guilt after her mother's death is due to unresolved separation.
Grief is not whole-hearted because the ambivalent rage at the bad mother of infancy has not been resolved. Sorrow cannot be fully expressed and so gotten out. Old feelings of infantile omnipotence come to plague the daughter: her unconscious accuses her of murder. 34

Where there is guilt there is also anger; the child in Clara undoubtedly feels unexpressed rage at the cold, withholding mother. But in the face of her mother's imminent death, Clara wishes to get beyond this anger, to see her mother as a person, to discover the opportunity for love. Finding herself alone in her mother's house, feeling her mother to be already dead, Clara can at last begin to view her with some objectivity. As she wanders around the house, looking at the "much-hated objects of her infancy" (p. 226), she feels frightened "to think how much violence she had wasted upon such harmless things" (p. 226). Going into her mother's bedroom, she feels she faces it "for the first time, no longer averting her eyes from her own shame before it, no longer blind with vicarious grief, no longer clouded by the menace of her own lack of love" (p. 226). At last her sense of self-reproach for being a bad daughter is lightening; no longer does she feel the anguish of "vicarious grief" brought on by her identification with her unhappy mother. She begins to realize that to find herself she must find the daughter, the woman, the human being in her mother. She looks at herself in her mother's drawers, "searching, looking anxiously for she knew not what, for some small white powdery bones, for some ghost of departed life" (p. 227).

In some old exercise books and photographs she finds what she is looking for. Two old pictures of her mother, one where she smiles with radiant intimacy at the unseen hands holding the camera, give Clara quite a different view of her mother. In her mother's old exercise books are stilted verses expressing hope for something beyond the narrow confines of her life--the very same hopes which had filled Clara herself. The discovery of this kinship with her
mother both dismays and gladdens her. She sees how cruelly life can disappoint ardent young hopes like her own, but also feels "glad to have found her place of birth ... glad that she had however miserably preexisted, she felt, for the first time, the satisfaction of her true descent" (p. 228).

This glimpse of her mother as a woman in her own right, a woman like herself, does not, however, prefigure a magical reconciliation. When she visits her mother in the hospital, she is reduced to lying when her mother demands why she did not come earlier. The mother's bitterness masks her sense of rejection, but what comes out, as usual, is venom.

"If I were on my deathbed, it would be all the same to you lot. What do you care? I work my fingers to the bone, and what do you care? If I were on my deathbed, you wouldn't care. If I dropped dead, you'd walk over my dead body' (p. 231).

Despite the recent insight into their underlying bond, Clara still cannot achieve a moment of honest closeness with her dying mother.

Though there is a difference, then, between having knowledge and acting on that knowledge, by the end of the novel Clara is moving away from her blinding subjectivity. The more clearly she can view her mother, the more she can accept herself, her past, Northam itself. Shopping in a department store, Clara overhears two women talking about their grandchildren; she can see in them a love she might have missed before.

At the next table there were two women, two middle aged women, both grey haired, and they were talking to each other with competitive pride about their grandchildren; each looked as though she might have been her mother, and yet from them seemed to pour such fountains of innocent, lovely, generous solicitude that Clara, overhearing them, suddenly wondered if her whole vision of Northam might not after all have been a nightmare, and that the whole city might have been filled with warm preoccupations, a whole kind city shut to her alone, distorted in her eyes alone. And she felt once more charitably towards herself, that she had had no wish to hate; she had merely wanted to live (p. 234).
She had needed to hate Northam violently so that she could escape, but now that she sees she will never be trapped there, she can afford to see it—and thus her mother and herself—in a more charitable light.

If Clara cannot express love to her mother, she can at least pity the pathos of her wasted life. Her awareness of her mother's frustrations is brought out in a dream toward the end of the novel.

She dreamed that it was she herself that was dying, that she had been given a week to live, and she was crying in her dreams in despair, but I can't die, there are so many things I wanted, there is so much I wanted to do, things that I can't do now, I can't do them this week, I wanted to do them later, you don't understand, my plans were long term plans (p. 234).

The unconscious identification revealed in this dream suggests that Clara, in the experiences she accumulates so greedily, may be partly impelled by the desire to make up for her mother's missed opportunities.

She is awakened from this dream by Gabriel's phone call; the explanations they embark upon, revolving around the issue of separation and betrayal, might even be said to echo the silent recriminations of mothers and daughters toward each other.

'You left me,' she said. 'It wasn't me that left you, it was you that left me. How can you not remember?' (p. 235).

Though Clara tells him she is finished with him, what she least wants is separation. She yearns for a sense of infinite security, oceanic oneness. When they hang up the phone, she fantasizes:

...a tender blurred world where Clelia and Gabriel and she herself in shifting and ideal conjunction met and drifted and met once more like the constellations in the heavens: a bright and peopled world, thick with starry inhabitants, where there was no ending, no parting, but an eternal vast incessant rearrangement (p. 239).

This fantasy of loving both the mother figure (Clelia) and the male whose image replaces and blurs with Clelia's provides a way for Clara to reconcile conflicting
desires. She could keep both the mother and the man; she need not ever be alone again, but could still drift about, easily and painlessly. For both her and Gabriel, who had earlier suggested that he, Clara and Clelia go live together in the country, the vision of this *menage a trois* ideally fulfills conflicting impulses. In the interconnected Denham family, swirling with incestuous undercurrents, the impossible conjunction of maternal and sexual love seems possible.

In this novel, as in *Lady Oracle*, resolution of the daughter's conflicts comes through fantasy. Like Joan Foster, Clara does not seem prepared to change her outer life significantly. Nevertheless, she has begun to articulate the self-knowledge she has gained. Though she is reluctant to have Gabriel see her Northam home, she can explain frankly the reasons for her reservations. "I don't feel free of it. It's a part of me forever, I don't want it to be a part of anyone else. I can't be free, but there's no reason why I shouldn't be thought to be free, is there?" (p. 237). After he presses her, she agrees to let him come after all, thus showing her first willingness to let her past meet her present. Now that she has seen the groundlessness of her terror of entrapment, she can perhaps feel less compelled to keep escaping and denying it.

The conclusion of the novel is ambiguous. "Her mother was dying, but she herself would survive it, she would survive because she had willed herself to survive, because she did not have it in her to die" (p. 239). One critic says that here Clara "sacrifices the recognized truth to a truly fatal, willed rejection of her past." 35 Certainly, it is true that Clara has favored will at the expense of love, as she herself realizes when she tells Gabriel, "I am too full of will to love" (p. 193). But while too strong a will can crowd out the possibility of love, as Clara herself begins to see, she has needed one to counteract the pull toward an infantile passivity. What she needs now is balance between love and will. Her
will to survive at the end of the novel does not seem to be a rejection of her past, but rather an important realization of her separateness from it. She can accept the past, and her mother, as part of her only when she can feel that they are not the whole of her. The idea that she can live despite her mother's death is set against her initial panic on learning of her mother's illness. "A whole system was after her, and she the final victim, the last sacrifice, the shuddering product merely of her past" (p. 222). She needs her strong will to be more than a mere product of her past, but she cannot allow this will to block her capacity for love. Drabble has said in an interview that she rather dreads Clara's future, but it seems to me that Clara is finally ready to integrate her conflicting needs for love and will. Now that she has worked through various needs with her surrogate family, has obtained the nurture that she did not receive at home, she can be better prepared for a loving acceptance of others and herself.

III. Earthly Possessions

A less equivocal resolution of the daughter's conflicting impulses appears in Earthly Possessions, written by the American novelist Anne Tyler. Like Clara Maugham and Joan Foster, Charlotte Emory dreams of escaping from her mother's house. But while both Clara and Joan still seem highly ambivalent at the end of their respective novels, Charlotte arrives at a more definite self-acceptance. Jerusalem the Golden ends with Clara's vision of another journey; Earthly Possessions ends with the heroine's conscious refusal of a journey, a recognition that personal growth is not a matter of geography: "We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried."
Like the novels by Atwood and Drabble, *Earthly Possessions* uses a contrapuntal technique that suggests the theme; the narrative of the heroine's present adventures is interwoven with the story of her past. Since childhood Charlotte Emory has been driven by the impulse to escape, to divest herself of "earthly possessions" which come to stand for excess emotional baggage. Though she longs to leave her mother, the usual routes to separation fail with her: her college experience ends after one day, and her marriage keeps her still in her mother's house. Her unresolved separation conflicts are later projected onto her husband and family. Ironically, when she goes to the bank to withdraw funds with which to leave her husband, she is taken hostage by bankrobber/demolition derby driver Jake Simms. During their trip South, Charlotte sees her own restlessness mirrored in Jake; he has a terror of domesticity and a wish to be "free and unencumbered" (p. 95). Gradually he begins to accept his ties to his young, pregnant girlfriend they pick up along the way; by the end of the novel Charlotte too seems better prepared to accept her emotional connections rather than trying to shrug them off. Reviewers have not been sensitive to the connection between the retrospective chapters and those dealing with the get-away; the critic in the *New York Review of Books*, for instance, admires the story Charlotte and Jake, but criticizes the alternating chapters as awkward. Another reviewer criticizes such coincidences as the "mother's photograph that replicates Charlotte's childhood's own"; yet this apparently coincidental link between Charlotte and her mother seems to be very much the point. What Charlotte wishes to escape is what she also travels toward: a genuine acceptance of her bond with her mother. She can finally stop seeking the good fantasy mother when she realizes that she herself has become this mother; she can stop trying to run from her mother (or Saul, her representative) when she starts learning to forgive herself.
For most of her life Charlotte denies her bond with her mother. Her mother's talk of the hospital confusion surrounding Charlotte's birth helps her to acquire the fixed idea that this embarrassingly fat woman is not her real mother. Thinking that she is not her mother's true daughter enables her to look at Mrs. Emory as a stand-in for a more satisfactory mother who somewhere longs for her. Yet, while this fantasy provides the comforting possibility of escape someday, it also suggests a deep insecurity. Charlotte worries what will happen to her if her mother's true daughter is ever found. "Somewhere out in the world her little blond daughter was growing up with a false name, a false identity, a set of false, larcenous parents. But my mother just had to live with that, she said" (p. 14). She likes thinking of another identity which waits for her to claim it, yet this very possibility makes her anxious.

These were my two main worries when I was a child; one was that I was not their true daughter, and would be sent away. The other was that I was their true daughter and would never, ever manage to escape to the outside world (p. 15).

Like other heroines I have discussed, Charlotte both wants and fears to separate from her mother.

Her fantasy of having another real mother somewhere is reinforced when she is kidnapped as a child by a dark, gypsyish woman. After winning a child's Beauty Contest, Charlotte had stayed in the Farm Products Building for three hours a day. The dark, intense woman who comes to the fair to stare at her finally takes her home to her trailer. There she tells the child a story of refugee days, traveling an endless journey, eating grasses, talking to Charlotte as if she had been there too. Imagining that she has finally met up with her true mother, Charlotte internalizes this story, and an image of her future forms in her mind.
In this picture, I am walking down a dusty road that I have been walking for months. The sky is deep gray, almost black. The air is greenish. From time to time a warm and watery wind blows up. I am carrying nothing, not even a bit to eat or a change of clothes. The soles of my feet hurt and I am stringy-haired, worn down to bone and muscle. There is not house or landmark in sight, no sign of life. Though sometimes I have an impression of other, anonymous people traveling in the same direction (p. 36).

This picture takes such a hold on her imagination that she sees herself throughout her life as preparing for this journey—"casting off encumbrances, paring down to the bare essentials" (p. 37). In her desire to cast off such encumbrances as possessions, husband, children, Charlotte shows that she is still the undifferentiated daughter trying to leave home.

Charlotte is also attracted to the gypsyish qualities in another woman she idealizes as role model. Even more than the ex-refugee woman, her neighbor Alberta seems to epitomize a richly romantic life quite the opposite of her mother's. Alberta, with her house full of sons, approaches life with a happy carelessness; Charlotte wishes that "she would adopt me. I longed for her teeming house and remarkable troubles. For on Alberta, troubles sat like riches" (p. 64). When Alberta runs off with her rather seedy father-in-law, Charlotte feels personally abandoned.

Like Clara Maugham, Charlotte falls in love with the son of her idealized role model. When Saul moves into their household as a boarder, Charlotte's attraction to him can be seen as a way of getting close to Alberta, of, in fact, becoming her. During her engagement to Saul, Charlotte is happy because she seems to be separating from the bad, denying mother and gaining the good, permissive mother. Her passive contentment with Saul suggests an infantile bliss.

Sitting with Saul in the evenings, I sheltered under his arm and listened to him plot our lives. He wanted six children. I assumed I couldn't have any (having inherited, in some illogical way, my mother's non-pregnancy and untrue baby) but I nodded, even so. I imagined six dark, unreadable little boys with Saul's dark nose,
hanging onto my skirts. I imagined myself suddenly as colorful, rich, and warm as Alberta, my narrow, parched life opening like a flower. All I had to do was give myself up. Easy. I let him lead me. I agreed to everything. It was such a pleasure that I felt soothed and sleepy, like a cat in sunshine (p. 79).

It is as if she has become a baby again, sheltered, led, soothed. Marrying Saul seems almost a fulfillment of her wish that Alberta would adopt her.

Marriage fails to fulfill its promise of helping her to separate from her own mother while acquiring an ideal mother-in-law and sexual love. Her mother is not prepared to let her go, and Saul is not prepared to take her away. Watching the courtship from the sidelines, the mother appears frightened, diminished.

My mother started condensing somehow, shrinking and drying. She was scared. I saw how she watched Saul with her bright, webbed eyes. The kinder he was to her, the more carefully she watched him. When he asked her a question it took her a long time to answer; she had to rise up through so many layers of fear. At night, when I helped her into bed, she clutched my wrist hard and peered into my face and moved her lips but said nothing (p. 68).

The mother's extreme dependence on Charlotte makes her fear her daughter's marriage as she would fear loss of self. She cannot even bring herself to finish Charlotte's wedding dress until Charlotte finally says "Look here, Mama, it's all the same to me if I get married in my black lace slip. I mean, not having the dress won't stop the wedding" (p. 82).

Ironically, however, Mrs. Emory need not have worried about losing her daughter, for the newly married couple continues to live in the same house. Charlotte's envisioned escape route is blocked; Saul tells her he has been called to preach.

The only place more closed-in than this house was a church. The only person odder than my mother was a hellfire preacher. It was very clear: they were tearing down the rest of the world completely. They were leaving no place standing but my mother's. They were keeping me here forever, all the long, slow days of my life (p. 85).
The same claustrophobia she has experienced with her mother is now projected onto her husband; Freud points out how a woman may repeat "with her husband her bad relations with her mother."\(^{41}\) Because her ego boundaries are so weak, marital intimacy seems threatening. She does not know who she is, and does not like what little she knows. Charlotte is still her mother's unseparated daughter. She had hoped to be released by marriage into a whole new identity like that of her fantasy mother Alberta's, but because she still defines herself externally, marriage cannot free her from herself. It only holds the mirror up to her insecurities. Like Joan Foster, she cannot bear the merciless exposure of intimacy that seems to entrap her further within her self-dislike.

The flirtation she has with Saul's brother again reveals her wish to be delivered from herself. With Amos she can perhaps begin again, a Sleeping Beauty awakened to a new, loveable self. Amos feeds this fantasy:

'People will ask me, "Where'd you get her? How'd you find her?" "She's been sleeping," I'll tell them. "She's been waiting. My brother was keeping her for me" (p. 176).

Since her desire to become Alberta has not been fulfilled through Saul, she briefly imagines that it may be through his brother.

Charlotte's lack of a firm sense of self is also reflected in her relationship with her daughter. Though still very young, Selinda is already replaying Charlotte's battle for separation. She has chosen a new name to replace her given name Catherine, saving to her parents, in effect: I will be self-created. At seven, she chooses to participate in church-related activities while her mother stays home. Charlotte misses her, knowing all too well what this small declaration of independence means. "Sometimes it seemed to me that my own seven-year-old self was still looking out of its grown-up hull, wary but unblinking. I asked Selinda, 'Will you remember to pay me a visit now and then?'" (p. 135).
Selinda often stays away from home just as Charlotte did when she was young. Charlotte's resultant sense of loss prompts her decision to have another child. When she acquires a foster son shortly afterwards, she is at first reluctant to accept him as her own, but gradually comes to love him dearly. Toward Jiggs Charlotte develops some of the same mixed feelings she has toward Selinda, her "excess baggage, loved and burdensome" (p. 113). With both her children, Charlotte's maternal love conflicts with her need for autonomy.

In the counterpointing story of the get-away, Charlotte sees her own separation/attachment conflicts mirrored in her fellow passengers. Jake too fears entrapment, but wants the security of love. After he picks up his young, pregnant girlfriend from a home for unwed mothers, he seems to be constantly fighting shy of the marital noose, of the doom represented by gold, avocado and patricia curtains. But Mindy, in her childish wisdom, seems to understand his need for her, just as Saul understands Charlotte's need for him. Jake explains his feelings about Mindy:

'...Worse than love, harder to break. Like we had to wear each other through, work something out, I don't know. I swear, she like to drove me crazy. I'd say to myself, I'd say, "Why, she ain't nothing but a hindrance. I don't need to put up with this." Then we would part. But like always, she'd go smiling. And then later she'd keep coming around and coming around, and somehow I'd end up in the same old situation again. You understand?' (p. 90).

A detached onlooker, Charlotte is now audience to a replay of her own struggle between freedom and attachment.

With Jake Charlotte gradually assumes a maternal role. At first she rather enjoys her passive dependence upon him, feeling aggrieved when he asks her for money. "I'd enjoyed having somebody buy me things, to tell the truth" (p. 76). She feels comforted when he stirs sugar and cream in her tea. "All I had to do was lift the cup, which was warm and heavy and solid. Everything else had
been seen to. I was so well taken care of" (p. 77). Before long, however, their roles reverse, so that by the end of their adventures, he depends on her, particularly for help with Mindy.

With Mindy too Charlotte plays a maternal role. Soon after they meet, Mindy turns to Charlotte as a daughter would, asking for help to fix her hair in ponytails. Looking into the mirror, Charlotte sees herself as a mother by Mindy's side; Mindy looks "about twelve years old, younger than my daughter even, with her two perky ponytails and her blue, trusting gaze. In the mirror beside her I was suddenly dimmed: an older woman, flat-haired, wearing a raincoat that had clearly been slept in" (p. 120). Later, when they have to stop the car so that Mindy can walk off her foot cramps, Charlotte feels that she and Jake "were like two parents exercising a child in the park" (p. 121). Just as she had earlier identified with Selinda, Charlotte now so empathizes with Mindy she feels that "Mindy's pale hand pressed to her backache could have been my own" (p. 154). Ironically, the maternal concerns Charlotte had been half-wanting to escape are now projected onto Jake and Mindy.

Though Charlotte cannot see herself as mother figure, the reader does. Still envisioning herself as the daughter, Charlotte has difficulties accepting news of Alberta's death.

Underneath I had always expected her back. I wanted her approval; she was so much braver, freer, stronger than I had turned out to be. There were a thousand things I had planned on holding up to her to pass judgment on. Now it seemed that these things had no point any more, and I thought of them all--even the children--with a certain flat dislike (p. 140).

Having unconsciously molded her life on Alberta's, Charlotte seems unaware that this role model has served its purpose. She still craves Alberta's approval, does not realize that she has herself become Alberta. Not only does she have a houseful of Alberta's sons, but she seems to have acquired Alberta's happy
nonchalance, her ability to take things in stride. She has also become the dark refugee woman who kidnapped her long ago. This woman, who had been "pretty in a stark, high-cheek-boned kind of way" (p. 30) now faces her in the mirror as "someone stark and high-cheekboned, familiar in an unexpected way" (p. 189). Charlotte has all along been travelling that dusty, anonymous road—only to arrive where she started—and find that she is her own "true mother."

In the process of becoming the mother figure she has previously idealized, Charlotte prepares to accept more completely her real mother. When her mother develops cancer, Charlotte waits on her, thinks about her, attempts to discover some elusive secret.

Then I had my mother to myself. For I couldn't let loose of her yet. She was like some unsolvable math problem you keep straining at, worrying the edges of, chafing and cursing. She had used me up, worn me out, and now was dying without answering any really important questions or telling me a single truth that mattered. A mound of the bed, opaque, intact. I was furious (pp. 179-180).

The secret she finally learns concerns her underlying connection to this mother she had long ago rejected.

When the bedridden Mrs. Emory asks Charlotte to burn a photo of a smiling blond girl she has never seen before, Charlotte imagines that at last she sees a picture of her mother's true daughter. She feels vaguely connected to this little girl, and speculates that this little girl is living the footloose life that should have been hers while she lives this girl's life—"married to her true husband, caring for her true children, burdened by her true mother" (p. 173). She begins to sleep with this little girl's photo, to dream of entering "her sleazy, joyful world" (p. 173). Somehow this fantasy frees her to look at her mother more objectively. "It seemed that the other girl's photo had released me in some way, let me step back to a reasonable distance and finally take an unhampered view of my mother" (pp. 173-4). Charlotte's eventual discovery that the little girl in the photo is actually
her mother stuns her, but frees a buried love. She begins to understand how subjective her view of her mother has been—when she sees how narrow her mother's coffin is, she wonders if she had made up her mother's fatness too.

The mother's death does not, however, magically solve her ambivalence about leaving and staying. Certainly, the recognition of her kinship with the mother allows her to see more easily her connections with other people. When Saul's brother Amos asks her to go away with him, she says she can't because "I'm so tangled with other people here. More connected than I thought" (p. 184). But when he tells her she is too passive, he speaks to her inner fears. Charlotte finally decides she will clear furniture and people out of her life, people who seem to be "using up such chunks of my life with their questions, comments, gossip, inquiries after my health" (p. 186). The death of her mother has not released her; she will leave at last. Yet her decision to leave seems almost a matter of principle now: "I closed the door and passed back through the house, touching the worn, smudged woodwork, listening to absent voices, inhaling the smell of school past and hymnals. It didn't look as if I'd be able to go through with this after all" (p. 189). Despite her ambivalence, a tin message from a cereal box—"Keep on truckin'"—provides the necessary push.

Being taken hostage on a trip to Florida allows her to satisfy two conflicting impulses: to leave and to stay. She has escaped, but not through her own will. She has made a gesture toward separation, but can still count on love and approval at home. For once, a daughter can leave home with impunity. When Joan Foster and Clara Maugham return to their mothers' homes, they are punished by guilt. They have left; the mother has died; the cause and effect seems clear in their unconscious logic.
But because Charlotte's departure is forced, she can feel free of guilt while she works through her separation/attachment conflicts at a sanitized distance. Having seen her own restlessness mirrored in Jake, she begins to learn the impossibility of ever escaping from one's self. Through the process of recounting the story of her past, she has gained a more objective view of her relations to her mother and family. When she returns home, she can better accept human limitations—her own and other people's. Life continues much as it did before, but her view is different: she no longer dreams of escape. Finally she can love her husband in his very separateness.

Sometimes, when Saul can't sleep, he turns his head on the pillow and asks if I'm awake. We may have had a hard time that day: disagreed, misunderstood, come to one more invisible parting or tiny, jarring rearrangement of ourselves. He lies on his back in the old sleigh bed and starts to wonder: will everything work out?

Is he all right, am I all right, are we happy, at least in some limited way? Maybe we ought to take a trip, he says. Didn't I use to want to?

But I tell him no. I don't see the need, I say. We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried (p. 200).

She has finally learned that traveling is not just a physical thing, selfhood not a matter of geography. Despite the people and possessions still crowding the edges of her life, she can experience herself as a separate person. More than any of the other heroines I have discussed, she has come to a practical integration of her conflicting desires. She has realized both her connectedness with others and her separateness. No longer is she the perpetually rebellious daughter, caught between desires to flee and to stay. Having mothered others, she can finally mother herself.

From our analysis of these three women's novels, we see different ways that women can attempt to overcome a dependence deeply engrained. The
more child-like and unsure of themselves they feel, the more they deny their past, particularly their maternal ties. Only when they can begin to accept their mothers can they accept themselves. Leaving home physically, as we also saw in *Martha Quest*, does not insure emotional freedom for the unseparated daughter. The daughter who leaves voluntarily, as in *Lady Oracle* and *Jerusalem the Golden*, may take with her the shadow of guilt; her continuing preoedipal attachment to her mother makes leavetaking unconsciously seem like betrayal. At the same time she too feels betrayed; the mother, once her whole world, has at some point withdrawn love; the daughter's craving for maternal nurturance makes her view the mother as disproportionately cold. She may then turn elsewhere for role models whom she contrasts with her biological mother.

In her journey away from the mother, the daughter finds that the search for selfhood cannot bypass the mother for it leads directly back to her. She may confront this discovery only on an unconscious level, as Joan Foster does; she may attempt to understand it intellectually, as Clara Maugham does to some extent; or she may begin to integrate it into her life, as Charlotte Emory does. Perhaps Charlotte is better able to accept her tie with the mother because she does not have the same burden of guilt as the other two heroines. Unlike them, Charlotte does not need to fear that her leaving has "killed" the mother. She has not left home physically, and because she is present when her mother dies, she can more easily come to terms with a death she does not feel responsible for. When she finally does journey away from home, she has already begun to work through her own deep ambivalence. In addition, the apparently forced nature of her journey conveniently assuages any potential guilt; she can leave home without feeling guilty for leaving. Yet it seems clear to the reader that she accompanies Jack as a willing hostage. When she returns to her husband, she is in a very real
sense returning to her mother's home; she has almost literally replaced her mother (and father too, since she is operating his photography studio). She is helped in the task of individuation by her fantasy role models--Alberta and the gypsy woman who kidnapped her as a child--just as Clara is helped by Clelia and Candida Denham. Joan Foster, on the other hand, does not have very strong maternal role models--Aunt Lou gives her uncritical, unstinting love, but she hardly represents an ideal to strive for. Joan does, however, have her writing. Her insight into her connection with the mother registers primarily in the realm of imagination; for Clara, we have hopes at the end of the novel that she may be able to apply her gain in self-knowledge; but Anne Tyler's heroine achieves the most complete resolution of her conflicting desires to merge and to separate; she alone stops traveling while seeing that "We have been traveling for years...we are traveling still." Though none of these authors give prescriptive answers for the twentieth century daughter's conflicts, they outline the problem very well. To escape, the daughter needs encouragement (Joan Foster), will (Clara Maugham), imagination (Charlotte Emory), but to return home "and know the place for the first time," she needs love.
NOTES


2 Nancy Chodorow quotes Harry Guntrip (from Personality Structure and Human Interaction [New York, 1961], p. 291) in "Family Structure and Feminine Personality" from Women, Culture and Society, ed. Michelle Simbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford U Press, 1974), p. 62. "Mature dependence is characterized by full differentiation of ego and object (emergence from primary identification) and therewith a capacity for valuing the object for its own sake and for giving as well as receiving; a condition which should be described not as independence but as mature dependence."


5 Hammer, p. 99.


7 Chodorow, p. 65.

8 Chodorow, p. 59.


10 Margaret Atwood, Lady Oracle (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart-Bantam, Ltd., 1977), p. 331. Subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be indicated by page number in the text.

11 Rich, p. 236.


17 Summarized by Sherrill Grace in *Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980), p. 120.

18 Knight, p. 191.


20 Arnold and Cathy Davidson, p. 175.


22 Arnold and Cathy Davidson, p. 176.


24 Sherrill Grace, p. 127.

25 The Davidsons, p. 176.


27 The critic Valerie Grosvenor Myer notes how when Clara returns to her dying mother's house, she wants to make Ovaltine, but there is no milk in the house. "Neither Clara's mother nor her home have given her any spiritual or intellectual nourishment and Mrs. Maugham has been deficient in the 'milk of human kindness.'" In *Margaret Drabble: Puritanism and Permissiveness* (London: Vision Press, 1974), p. 85.


29 Rev. of *Jerusalem the Golden* by Margaret Drabble, *New Yorker*, 8 July 1967, pp. 74-75.

30 Valerie Grosvenor Myer, p. 58.

31 Sexually Clara lets things happen to her. She reads while her first boyfriend, Walter Ashy, tries to kiss her, reads while lying on top of one of her lovers. Gabriel's brother Magnus tells her to give him a kiss because "It is better to give than to receive" (p. 214). Realizing that she has "merely allowed herself to be kissed," Clara kisses Magnus. But since she is drunk at the time, it is difficult to say whether this kiss is a first step toward overcoming passivity.
32 Nancy Hardin, "An Interview with Margaret Drabble," Contemporary Literature, 14 (Summer 1973), 277-278.

33 Clara, for instance, tells Gabriel, "All your family...always seem to me to be in love with all the rest of your family. If you see what I mean: it always seems to be life with incest, don't you think?" (p. 198). Gabriel says that his wife agrees.


35 Marion Vlastos Libby, "Fate and Feminism in the Novels of Margaret Drabble," Contemporary Literature, 16 (Spring 1975), 179.

36 Nancy Hardin, p. 278.

37 Anne Tyler, Earthly Possessions (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 200. Subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be indicated by page number in the text.


39 Nicholas Delbanco, New Republic, 28 May 1977, p. 36.

40 Freud comments on how a child who feels slighted by [her] parents may fantasize that [she] has been adopted. "The child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom [she] now has such a low opinion and of replacing them by others... [She] will make use in this connection of any opportune coincidences from [her] actual experience." "Family Romances, Collected Papers V, ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 76.

Conclusion

"I'm all Hilary has. That's where it all leads one. Mother and daughter. How it starts, how it ends." 1

In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter suggests that discussion of women writers has been "inaccurate, fragmented, and partisan" for two reasons. First, criticism of women writers has focused so much on the few women writers generally agreed to be great--Jane Austen, the Brontes, George Eliot, and Virginia Woolf—that it has suffered from a kind of "residual Great Traditionalism." Minor writers, "who were the links in the chain that bound one generation to the next," have been relatively overlooked. Second, critics have had difficulties examining women's literature theoretically because of culture-bound stereotypes of femininity.

Given the difficulties of steering a precarious course between the Scylla of insufficient information and the Charybdis of abundant prejudice, it is not surprising that formalist-structuralist critics have evaded the issue of sexual identity altogether, or dismissed it as irrelevant and subjective. Finding it difficult to think intelligently about women writers, academic criticism has compensated by desexing them. 2

All criticism is subjective because it "is not a reactive reading for literal understanding, but an active, interpretive, assertive reading that itself creates meaning." 3 As critics, we necessarily bring our own values and assumptions to bear on a text; the dangers of distortion come when we do not recognize this is what we are doing. Feminist criticism, which makes its own values explicit, is a necessary counterbalance to a critical tradition that has often
confused masculine with universal, feminine with peripheral. The values of society are mirrored in literary criticism. As Virginia Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own*,

...Since a novel has this correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life. But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are 'important'; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial.' And those values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop—everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists.

I hope this study has contributed to the growing body of feminist criticism that has begun to fill the gaps in traditional literary criticism.

In the past our literary tastes have been defined almost exclusively by male academics and reviewers. Even when they take special pains to disavow interest in a writer's gender, critics and reviewers cannot help but bring to a work the social values they have internalized. Consider, for example, this lead-in to a 1925 review of six novels including *The Mother's Recompense* and *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The word 'poetess,' which should never have been born, is dead; and the double-barrelled 'woman-novelist' is candidate for the same grave. Of the six books before me, all are by women. They happen to be by women—that is all. They cover an extraordinary range of technique, of accomplishment—from the traditional Henry-Jacobean method of Mrs. Wharton to the neo-Georgian whimsicality of Mrs. Woolf. And all are good. But neither in their variety nor in their similarity can I detect any peculiar quality which I should dare to call feminine. It may be there; but, if so, I do not know what it is.

The reviewer does Wharton and the other women writers a disservice when he denies the "feminine" quality of their writing. For by pretending that it is purely incidental that these novels happen to be by women writers, he does not consciously acknowledge his underlying assumptions. These novels are good, he
implies, despite the fact they are written by women. These novels are good because we cannot recognize that they are written by women. Then, after protesting rather overmuch about the essentially neuter quality of the novels under discussion, this reviewer criticizes The Mother's Recompense in a way that reflects his unconscious awareness of Wharton as a woman writer.

Mrs. Wharton is not at her best in The Mother's Recompense. Her tone has become almost arch; she indicates her nuances; she underlines her delicacies of artistic perception. And she presents as of enormous importance issues which somehow seem essentially trivial. 6

When he states that the issues in The Mother's Recompense are "essentially trivial," he shows his own inability to empathize with the feminine concerns of the novel.

Traditional criticism has also stereotyped women writers in a way that takes attention from their work. Edmund Wilson, for instance, concludes an ostensible tribute to Edith Wharton: "As the light of Edith Wharton's art grows dim and at last goes out, she leaves us, to linger on our retina, the large dark eyes of the clever spinster, the serious and attentive governess...." 7 Since Wharton was neither a spinster nor a governess, this remark reveals more about Wilson's preconceptions of women writers than it does about Wharton. It is hard to imagine a male writer of Wharton's stature being patronized as a "clever bachelor" or an "attentive schoolmaster."

Another kind of stereotyping has caused women writers to be lumped together as a group. Certainly, looking at many women writers together can be useful, enabling us to discover coherent patterns and evolving traditions. Frequently, however, critics and reviewers have grouped women writers together without taking note of nuances and distinctions. Like other minority writers, women writers have suffered from easy labelling that leads to easy dismissal.
One reviewer of *Earthly Possessions*, for example, describes it as "just another one of those slightly stale, wry books that so many women writers seem to be turning out."³

Male critics may overlook aspects of female experience in the same way that male novelists often have. As Virginia Woolf remarks, male writers do not usually show the complexity of women's relationships with each other.

So much has been left out, unattempted....They are now and then mothers and daughters. But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that; and how little can a man know even of that when he observes it through the black or rosy spectacles which sex puts upon his nose. ⁹

In the past critics and reviewers have often missed the feminine dimensions of a work. Malcolm Cowley senses that the meaning of *Memoirs of a Survivor* has eluded him.¹⁰ Another reviewer does not "know quite what Anne Tyler's trying to tell us." He concedes that the "problem of maternity" is "clever enough" but that "the true achievement of the novel resides elsewhere."¹¹ An approach such as the one I have outlined encourages writers and critics alike to explore areas of women's experience that have previously been eclipsed from view.

Another contribution which feminist criticism has made is the movement to re-integrate the personal, subjective response into literary criticism. Many feminist critics are reacting against the bloodlessness of formalist-structuralist criticism. They view abstract theories with suspicion. As Elaine Showalter states, "For some radical feminists, methodology itself is an intellectual instrument of patriarchy, a tyrannical Methodolatry which sets implicit limits to what can be questioned and discussed."¹² In this scientific age, formal, objective sounding criticism has more prestige than criticism that focuses upon the authenticity of experience. Showalter even suggests that we are moving
toward a "two-tiered system of 'higher' and 'lower' criticism, the higher concerned with the 'scientific' problems of form and structure, the 'lower' concerned with the 'humanistic' problems of content and interpretation."\textsuperscript{13} I consider the move to restore the intimate relation between reader and novel, teaching and criticism, as healthy. Simon O. Lesser describes how our reading enjoyment depends upon our direct emotional involvement in a story.

Unconsciously and sometimes even consciously...we search for fiction which has some personal relevance for us. We ferret out stories which shed light on our external problems or give form to our internal ones—in Eliot's famous phrase, provide an 'objective correlative' for certain of our feelings.\textsuperscript{14}

By deepening a reader's empathic response toward women's literature, an approach such as the one used here can help to enhance reading enjoyment.

Elaine Showalter discusses the way in which women, unified by common experience, constitute a literary subculture within the larger society. Like any literary subculture such as black, Jewish, or Canadian, women have passed through three major stages. First, there is a stage of imitation during which a subculture copies the dominant mode and internalizes its standards; Showalter locates this phrase for women from the 1840s to 1880, a time when women writers commonly used male pseudonyms. Second, a subculture goes through a phase of protest and advocacy of its own standards and values, a phase that lasted for women writers from 1880 to 1920, or the winning of the vote. "Finally, there is a stage of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition.\textsuperscript{15} Showalter calls this third stage of women's literature the "female" phase and places it from around 1920 to the present. It is roughly this stage of women's writing that I have concerned myself with here.

Many of the novels I have examined are some form of bildungsroman, and all of them deal with the question of female identity. As an
increasing number of options have become available to women, they have turned away from the typical Victorian solutions to female identity—marriage and self-sacrifice. The ethos of submerging one's ego in another has been increasingly called into question. In their struggle to discover genuine autonomy, women have begun to engage in intrapsychic journeys. But as heirs of both the Victorian ethos of self-sacrifice and the romantic tradition of individualism, they find themselves caught in a double bind. Like males, they long to discover their capacities and limits by testing themselves in the world at large. But because this testing often requires a rejection of dependent female roles they have internalized, they feel divided against themselves. They want to know themselves as human beings; they want to be loved as feminine women. For a woman, leaving home—that is, leaving mother—at some deep level seems to cast doubt upon her femininity. If she does not want to copy the dependent, passive role usually represented by her mother, she has few role models to follow.

While leaving home can also be difficult for a male, it at least does not challenge his sense of masculinity. It is, in fact, regarded as a prerequisite for manhood. In a male bildungsroman such as Great Expectations, Pip goes to the city partly to acquire a new definition of himself. By turning his back on his humble past, he betrays his origins in a sense; his guilt is externalized, projected onto Magwitch and onto his environment. However, this betrayal does not induce the same degree of self-doubt about his sexual identity as it would for a woman. Boys are, after all, expected to pass some rite of passage into manhood by going to the city, or running off to sea, or floating down the Mississippi. For males there is a clearly established tradition of escape and rebellion, of seeking their identities "on the road," in London or Paris or New York. Though this tradition may exert its own kind of pressures, males are not subjected to the same double
messages as modern women. The message which women are receiving today is to remain passively dependent, infantile, but also to strike out, making their mark in the world.

While Dorothea Brooke could perhaps submerge her personal ambitions in a man, self-sacrifice is not enough for most twentieth century heroines. In *Mary Olivier* and many of Wharton's works we have seen the effects of a woman's attempt to submerge herself in another. Whether this "other" is a mother figure (*Mary Olivier*), a daughter figure (*The Old Maid*, *The Mother's Recompense*) or a man (*The Reef*), women are limited, stunted, by this attempt to lose themselves. As in *Mary Olivier*, their growth may, like that of a plant with insufficient soil or light, take ingenious turns. But they do not know the joy of living, loving, freely. In later novels by Lessing, Drabble, Atwood, and Tyler, self-abnegation has less appeal for the heroines. But in their drives for personal and sexual autonomy, they must deny a deeply internalized mother-attachment. They may even flee to another country in the attempt to separate, but they cannot escape the furies of guilt and self-hatred. In *Four-Gated City*, *Memoirs of a Survivor*, *Jerusalem the Golden*, *Lady Oracle*, and *Earthly Possessions*, the daughter eventually realizes that the mother is inside her. Yet we do not necessarily see these heroines integrating this knowledge into their daily lives. *Four-Gated City* and *Memoirs of a Survivor* end with a vision; *Jerusalem the Golden* and *Lady Oracle* end rather ambiguously. Of the novels I have discussed, only *Earthly Possessions* shows a daughter who not only traces her way back to the place of her origins, but clearly discovers a capacity for intimacy along with the recognition of separateness.

In the works I have examined, the mother/daughter conflict generally emerges only partly into the heroine's conscious awareness. Because this
relationship is so deeply rooted in ambivalence and pre-conscious experience, it often expresses itself through dream imagery rather than straightforward realism. Some of the works I have discussed ("A Rose in the Heart," Four-Gated City, Memoirs of a Survivor) invite a dream reading because the entire story has the dense, compressed texture of a dream. In these stories, characters' identities seem fluid; time does not always follow a linear pattern; images often have the many layered associations of images in a dream (Freud would say they are overdetermined). In "A Rose in the Heart," for instance, artificial roses are associated with the blood of menstruation and birth and the speared heart of Christ. In the surrealistic Memoirs of a Survivor, we see a narrator/dreamer whose identity often blends with that of Emily, the young girl whom she mothers. Through her identification with Emily, she can protect herself from the implications of her own sexuality. In the world behind the wall where she explores her own unconscious, she can meet the mother in various guises: as vulnerable daughter, as cold, rejecting mother, and finally, as shining pre-oedipal mother. This novel uses the same raw material as the early Martha Quest novels, but goes beyond the literal rendering of a young woman's struggle with identity and attempts to provide a vision of integration at the end. Other novels such as Mary Oliver, Lady Oracle, and Jerusalem the Golden use actual dreams to express the daughter's longing for the mother, her fear of abandonment, her underlying identification with the mother. Because of the repressed nature of the mother/daughter bond, it is not surprising that the most dream-textured parts of these works often deal with the mother. In the same way that dreams can articulate and sometimes even "solve" the problems of our waking life, the controlled fantasy of art enables the narrator/dreamer to transform her deepest conflicts into something rich and strange.
Since the discussion of modern women's fiction centers so much on issues of identity, sexuality, and intrapsychic conflicts, criticism cannot afford to ignore the findings of psychoanalysis. Many people who have never read Freud dismiss him as a culture-bound misogynist. While I would agree that it is important to recognize Freud's masculine bias where it occurs, we should also appreciate his contribution to our present understanding of female psychology. As Jean Strouse says, Freud's "observations about female sexuality document the discontinuities which our civilization fosters on its female children, and they provide the most comprehensive, suggestive, and useful groundwork for the development of thinking about women that has yet been imagined." Particularly if we place Freud's insights in a socio-cultural context, as Nancy Chodorow does in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, they can help us to understanding the female battle for selfhood dramatized in our literature.

As Freud and Chodorow both discuss, the daughter does turn away from the mother in hostility when she realizes that mother is devalued by virtue of her sex. Chodorow carries this observation a step further than Freud, asking what social conditions feed that hostility. Daughters seek to transfer their attachment to the father or father substitute who represents power and prestige. They reject the mother who seems to represent dependence, passivity, narrowness. But daughters cannot help internalizing those very limitations they see in their mothers. Because of a continuing identification with the mother, the daughter rejects herself in rejecting her mother. Both mothers and daughters see in each other the mutual reflection of cultural, rather than biological inferiority. Before she can accept herself, the daughter must learn to accept her mother.

In the novels I have discussed, we have seen the difficulties of the daughter's journey toward self-acceptance. To accept herself, the daughter must
recognize her ambivalence toward her mother. To see her mother as a person, she must let go of her child's desire to see her mother as all good or all bad. As we saw in Jerusalem the Golden, the daughter who can see the mother as entirely bad can stop struggling for the mother's love. Since she interprets being a good daughter as being passive and dependent, the daughter who entirely rejects her mother can more easily brace herself against the pull toward an infantile passivity. She can retain the image of good, preoedipal mother for whom she can look in mother surrogates and male figures. But whenever she seeks to lose herself in someone else, ambivalence will re-surface. When her ego boundaries are threatened, she may withdraw into isolation.

Women must find a balance between the passivity implied by attachment and the self-will of autonomy. They cannot exist in isolation any more than they can continue to define themselves exclusively through relationships. In searching for a middle ground between separateness and what Nancy Chodorow would call exclusive "embeddedness" in relationships with others, these literary daughters can tell us much about female conflicts in our society. The ambiguity in the endings of Lady Oracle and Jerusalem the Golden suggests that recognition of the mother-bond alone cannot free the daughter from compulsive attempts to separate and to merge. She must learn not only to see the vulnerable daughter self in the mother, but also to stop searching for others to fulfill infantile needs. At the end of their respective novels, both Clara and Jean show a certain evasiveness in their attitude toward men that suggests they have not yet resolved the issue of separation and attachment.

Only in Earthly Possessions do we see a daughter who has reconciled her need for intimacy and her need for autonomy. It is not simply that she returns to her husband, but that this return is an active, conscious choice. Unlike her
marriage or her journey South, her return home involves full acceptance of responsibility for her decision. She has all along been less burdened by guilt than the other heroines, for because her mother dies while she is still at home, she need not fear that her leaving has "killed" the mother. Thus when she is taken by Jake as a hostage on a trip South, she has already begun the necessary task of re-discovering her bond with the mother. While Clara Maugham is so driven by will that her capacity to love is blocked, Charlotte does not summon enough self-will until the end, when she finally makes the conscious decision to leave Jake and return to her family.

The works I have studied here represent only a portion of those I might have considered. Within the boundaries I have established—post-Freudian North American and British fiction—most psychological novels by women at least touch upon this theme. The fiction of Katherine Anne Porter, Willa Cather, Sylvia Plath, Joyce Carol Oates, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Katherine Mansfield, Fay Weldon—and, of course, Virginia Woolf—all contain fascinating treatments of mother/daughter relationships. I have, however, chosen to limit myself to those works where this theme is relatively overt. I have also attempted to give some sense of the evolution in the twentieth century heroine's struggle toward selfhood. For as women begin to locate themselves in relation to their own mothers, they are more and more finding their own voices. And as woman writers and readers discover the mothers of their literary tradition, they can continue to work toward more fully integrated visions of themselves in the world. In literature and in life, women are finding the mothers they have lost, denied, or never known. In the end the story of mothers and daughters leads back to where it began—the vision of unity which underlies separateness.
NOTES


9 A *Room of One's Own*, pp. 142-43.


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### III. Interdisciplinary Background


