Chapter IV

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Depiction of mother daughter relationship is very common in novels, and this presentation is a case of interest because it is often an idealized relationship. In reality, the mother does not always offer sacrificial love and the daughter seldom cherishes gratitude. Of late, this relationship, as presented in literature, has received special attention, as the feminists have focused their attention on it. Interest in the subject of women’s experience as mothers and the unique relationship between mothers and daughters has increased today. This may be a consequence of the feminist movement questioning the traditional values and set assumptions that dominate people’s thought across cultures, for ages. Feminists have tried to probe this relationship from various angles. Notar and McDaniel have stated, "One of the earliest and most profound bonds women form with each other is that of mother and daughter"(11). As one delves deep into the psyche of women and study this bond one is able to see a love-hate relationship between mother and daughter that creates a lot of tension. As a woman journeys through this, she matures into a woman and gains a separate identity. The Bell Jar, Who Do You Think You Are? and The God of Small Things have mother daughter conflict as a central theme, and it is a worthwhile exercise to analyse how mother daughter relationship as experienced by Plath, Munro and Roy is reflected in their novels.
Theories of mother daughter relationship, as put forward by scholars, are varied. Biologically based theories perpetuate the view that motherhood is naturally rewarding. Like psychoanalysis, ethology also has been used to argue that the mother's care for the child is natural as in the case of a variety of species. But social research challenges this view. Though popular culture glorifies motherhood and projects mother daughter relationship as an intimate one, empirical researchers show that the mother’s role is often frustrating due to the restrictive way in which childcare is organized in our society. Sociology and social anthropology hold that the desire and the capacity of a woman to look after children are largely socially created, and argue that nature and quality of a mother’s role depend on the way this role is institutionalized and evaluated in a given society.

Traditionally, motherhood has been seen as a desirable and valued position for women and considered obligatory for any normal woman to be a good and sacrificing mother. Wife is expected to be “the angel of the house” as Virginia Woolf terms her. In her essay “Professions for Women”, Woolf presents the world’s expectation from a housewife.

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If here was chicken, she took the leg....she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the mind and wishes of others. Above all
she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty; her blushes her great grace. (A Room of One's Own 3)

With such expectations, the society lays a great burden on women whereas the same society shows little concern or respect towards childbearing and childrearing. Attributing a low status to childcare, society creates low self-esteem in many a mother. As mother’s role restricts a woman’s contacts and activities outside the home, the social isolation thus created has detrimental effects on a mother’s identity. Tremendous, exclusive, and constant responsibility entailed in the mother’s role, has a negative impact on women’s lives. This in turn affects the children. As Julianne White the feminist thinker has pointed out,

Instead of motherhood affording women purpose and empowerment, it makes them prison wardens, with their daughters as the prisoners sentenced to motherhood and to serve society. Without power in any other arena, women sometimes use the power of motherhood to abuse, to manipulate, and to control. (http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/WILLA/fall96/Julian)

Psychologists like Freud have said that sons separate themselves from their mothers and find their own identity easily whereas the daughters struggle to do so. Nancy Chodorow a recent feminist writer within the psychoanalytic school notes the importance of "the girl's relationship with her mother, their interdependence and continuity, their lack of separation and differentiation, [and]
their fluid and permeable ego boundaries” (qtd. Hirsch, http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/Willa/fall96/). This concept clearly distinguishes mother-daughter relationships from women's relationships with their husbands and sons, as well as from relationships between men.

When the focus is shifted from the mother to the daughter, we find that in popular culture, the daughter is projected as one requiring implicit obedience, reverence, modesty and thoughtfulness of others. While discussing the nineteenth century feminine writers in A Literature of Their Own, Elaine Showalter says, “A factor that recurs with remarkable frequency in the backgrounds of these women is identification with, and dependence upon the father; and either loss of or alienation from the mother” (61). She has made an observation that the Brontes, George Eliot, Geraldine Jewsbury, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Elizabeth Gaskell had all lost their mothers in early childhood, and even when the mother was present, she was cold and rejecting. In the fiction of these writers of the past, daughters have been presented as persons who must practice self-constraint and wait for a good marriage. In Jane Austen’s novels, as Ruth O’Saxton says in her introduction to The Girl, “Attention for the female protagonist, unlike the male, is turned from matters of quest, vocation, or money, to fashioning the self toward making a good marriage” (xv). In George Eliot’s novels, what matters for girls is emotional and spiritual development, and as such they need wise protection, particularly from the mother. But in The Mother / Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism Marianne Hirsch says, “In
conventional nineteenth-century plots of the European and American tradition, the fantasy that controls the female family romance is the desire for the heroine's singularity based on disidentification from the fate of other women, especially mothers" (10).

Nancy Friday speaks of the ambivalence between love on one side and hate, fear and envy on the other in a girl's relationship with the woman in whose image she is. "It is this essential ambivalence that characterizes the mother/daughter relationship more than any other relationship in human life"(vi). The experience becomes critical in adolescent girls who, as Carol Gilligan says, undergo a "crisis of relationship" in the years between 11 and 16. (qtd.Ruth O'Saxton xxii). In their conflict with their own mothers, they experience fierce battles within and bear emotional and psychological scars from which their mothers are not able to shield them. This reality is being portrayed in the novels of many women writers of the twentieth century. The daughters in these novels are different from the girls in earlier novels by women, and there is a new focus on the girls.

Ruth O'Saxton, while comparing the girls in the recent novels with their predecessors in older canonical novels, observes that these girls are not treated as mere objects in the marriage market. She continues,

These texts neither comply with the paternalistic plot that requires daughter to reject her mother, nor assume that marriage is synonymous with adulthood, nor imply that to become a mother
requires foreclosure of artistic achievement and self-fulfillment.

Occasionally, this new Girl already is who she will become, her survival dependent, not on fitting into the culture, but on resisting its attempts to squeeze her into a generic mould. (xx)

As women writers of our generation talk candidly about their experiences and feelings, an analysis of their rendering of the crucial and profound relationship the girls have with their mothers will help to perceive this relationship in a realistic manner. True, the mother plays a critical role in the development of her daughter in particular, and this relationship perpetuates the role daughters play in their interpersonal relationships, as well as in the role women play in the society. In “The Mother – Daughter Relationship: Echoes Through Time. An Overview” Gerald H. Frenchel makes it clear that the mother daughter relationship is a unique and intense one that often determines the future development of the woman. He says,

Its specialness is characterized by the following features. (1) the mother remains the identification object for the girl, not the boy, (2) it is an intense and ambivalent relationship, (3) it is a relationship between same gender persons and (4) it requires fusion as well as separation for the proper developmental sequence to occur. (http://www.yorku.ca)

Carolyn G. Heilbrun terms the mother-daughter relationship as “the least explored and understood among all human relationships” (http://www.
and she writes of the guilt and pain suffered by women who take advantage of choices unavailable to their mothers and shed off their bond with their mothers. Luce Irigaray says,

Indeed I have never come across a woman who does not suffer from the problem of not being able to resolve in harmony in the present system, her relationship with her mother and with other women. Psychoanalysis has totally mythologized and ‘censored’ the positive value of these relationships.

Though psychoanalysis, ethology and sociology provide important insights into this experience of women, it will be worthwhile to analyse the women writers’ perspectives in order to know the subtlety and complexity of the experience as it is actually experienced. As such it will be significant to study how Plath, Munro and Roy have presented the experiences of mothers and daughters and the dilemma in their relationship. It will give an insight into real experiences and help to see if children, particularly daughters give lives of their mothers a purpose, a value and a meaning. If we study the connection between literary works of these writers and current psychological theories about female adolescents, and the social context in which they are presented, and analyse these creative writings in the light of the present day theories of feminism, it may open new vistas of understanding regarding the daughters as well as their mothers.

Friedan describes as “the problem that has no name?” what many American housewives and mothers, during the fifties, felt was their personal and
private problem. Upto the nineteen fifties, housewifery tasks were glorified, even in literature, as proof of a complete woman. There were no feminist writers before Plath to speak candidly about women’s true experiences as wife and mother. Elin Gyda Sjolie says,

There were few literary novels about female characters during the fifties, and this fact makes The Bell Jar a feminine text of its time. The Bell Jar was an attempt to write sympathetically about growing up in the United States of America during the forties and fifties, especially about being a woman. (http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/7327/boheme/plath-critique.html)

Being an early feminist novel, a study of mother daughter relationship in Plath's only novel The Bell Jar is a case of very special interest. The author had a very strange relationship with her mother, and this has its impact on the portrayal of the mother daughter relationship in the novel, through the characters. Plath was two and a half years old when her brother was born, and like many sensitive children of that age, she felt replaced by her brother and rejected by her mother. She had a very special attachment for her father who died when she was eight. This intensified her sense of loss and gave her a feeling, as she grew, that her mother was rejecting her. The sense of separation coupled with several traumatic experiences she had, resulted in nervous breakdown that she has used as the centre of her personal novel. Ted Hughes in an interview after her death said, “All her creative work tells just one story – her Oedipal love for her father, her
complex relationship with her mother, the attempt at suicide, the shock therapy, whatever she wrote before, were metaphors of parts of this story. (The Hindu 8 Nov, 1988.) So, one has to make a close analytical study of Plath's relationship with Aurelia Schober Plath, and look into even the letters written to the mother by Plath.

The relationship Plath had with her mother was intense, multifaceted and complicated. She wrote almost daily to her mother reporting her day-to-day experiences. But, comparing her letters with her poems that she wrote at the same time, it becomes questionable whether she confided her true feelings with her mother. The loss of mother-love haunts Plath's poetry and is the basic cause of her profound despair: "The mother of mouths didn't love me" ("Maenad"); "Mother of beetles, only unclench your hand" ("Witch Burning"). She asserts in "Medusa", "There is nothing between us". The mother in "The Disquieting Muse" is a demon who is ineffective in treating the child's fears. The daughter recognizes the mother as a complete fabricator and the mother's efforts to reach her daughter become eventually futile. In "Plath on Motherhood" Margaret D. Uroff says,

While her earlier poems about her mother were particularly resentful about the victimization of the child, her later poems about her children underscore the fact that all children are victims. She does not minimize her fears that, as a mother, she too will be a
victimizer. Her child will inherit hours of blackness from her.

(82,83)

One wonders whether this poet is the “dear sivvy” of Letters Home. In a letter to Warren she wrote about her mother:

She is an abnormally altruistic person and I have realized lately that we have to fight against her selflessness as we would fight against a deadly disease. My ambition is to earn enough so that she won’t have to work summers in the future and can rest, vacation, sun, relax, and be all prepared to go back to school in the fall. Hitherto, she’s always been rushed and tired and her frailty worried me.(112)

In Plath’s biography Bitter Fame, Anne Stevenson describes,

Her mother had a lousy life but sacrificed all so that her daughter could have an ideal one. Her daughter should marry for ‘love love love’, almost as though this were owed to her mother. But this daughter was brought up in a family full of women- ‘so many women, the house stank of them’ – had never known a father...her mother had come in to her one morning with tears...in her eyes and ‘told me he was gone for good. I hate her for that’. (145-6)

As in the case of the author, Esther’s emotional stability is anchored on the father. She is not able to forgive her mother for not taking her for her father’s funeral. As a grown up girl, Esther visits her father’s grave and weeps her heart
out. As she howls her loss, she remembers she has never before cried for her father’s death. “My mother hadn’t cried either. She had just smiled and said what a merciful thing it was for him he had died, because if he had lived he would have been crippled and an invalid for life, and he couldn’t have stood that”(177). With her personal experience at the back of her mind, the author was not able to present a selfless mother with sacrificial love and a thankful daughter who reciprocates this love.

Aurelia Schober Plath was shocked to see the rendering of the mother through Mrs. Greenwood, and went to the extent of denying in public many of the undercurrents in the novel. She considered the posthumous publication of her daughter as a document in ingratitude. Elaine Showalter in A Literature of Their Own refers to the distress of the Plath’s mother over the ingratitude of her daughter (303). As a traditional mother, Aurelia believed that she had been only protective, and was doing what a mother ought to do. Never did she dream till she read The Bell Jar that her daughter was nurturing ill will and hatred for the mother. But the daughter had portrayed the mother as a victimizer even in her poems. Defining “matrophobia” as the “fear not of one’s mother or of motherhood, but of becoming one’s mother” Rich feels that “The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr”(235-6).

Plath’s life was tumultuous and packed with psychological tensions. As a child, she was so attached to her father that she could not forget his death nor forgive his dying. It was rather due to the compulsion of the situation that Plath
had to be with her mother. All along she had a feeling that her mother was interfering with her life, and curbing her liberty. She did not approve of even her visits. But Aurelia Plath took it as her duty what Plath was harbouring in her heart as maternal domination

The very purpose of Aurelia publishing the Letters Home in 1975, was to prove to the world that she was not like the mother projected in Plath’s poems published after her suicide. In her biographical note on The Bell Jar, Lois Ames cites a letter that Aurelia Plath wrote to Harper & Row in 1970: “Practically every character in The Bell Jar represents someone - often in caricature - whom Sylvia loved; ... That was not the basis of Sylvia's personality”. Here Mrs. Plath unintentionally reveals that, precisely like the mother in the novel, she could only regard her daughter's mental illness as an insult to herself.

As complained by Aurelia Plath, Mrs. Greenwood has been depicted in the novel as one who does not acknowledge the growth of her daughter or her ability to take decisions. With her domineering love, she thinks that she has to plan everything for her daughter. While making the first reference to her mother, Esther says,

My own mother wasn't much help. My mother had taught shorthand and typing to support us ever since my father died, and secretly she hated it and hated him for dying and leaving no money because he didn't trust life insurance salesmen. She was always on
to me to learn shorthand after college, so I'd have a practical skill as well as a college degree. (40, 41)

The mother thinks that she is much wiser than the daughter, and expects her to fall in line with her. Esther's mother believes that the path she has chosen for herself is the ideal one for her daughter too. "By the end of supper, my mother had convinced me I should study shorthand in the evenings. Then I would be killing two birds with one stone, writing a novel and learning something practical as well. I would also be saving a whole lot of money" (128).

Mrs. Greenwood is oblivious of the fact that her daughter has a right over her world just as she has over hers. She is not able to understand the aspirations and feelings of Esther regarding her writing career. When Esther returns home as a neurotic after her traumatic experiences in the city, with blood marks on her face, her mother instead of trying to understand her, is blunt in pointing out her failure to make it to the writing course.

My mother climbed behind the wheel and tossed a few letters on my lap, then turned her back.

The car purred into life.

"I think I should tell you right away," she said and I could see bad news in the set of her neck, "you didn't make that writing course."

The air punched out of my stomach. (120)

Esther does not have high esteem for her mother. She takes her as one who serves as a hindrance to her attaining independence. The daughter, never
appreciates whatever the mother does out of love and believing it to be her duty. The image created of the mother is that of a rigid, strong-willed, loveless person. When her daughter becomes psychotic so that she can neither eat, sleep, nor wash herself, this mother reasons with her sweetly and blandly. But the daughter never takes the mother as lovable or venerable, but is able to perceive her only as a little woman. No wonder, Esther has a peculiar vision of the mother when she is taken to Dr. Gordon for her neurological disorder. "I watched my mother grow smaller and smaller until she disappeared into the door of Dr. Gordon’s office building. Then I watched her grow larger and larger as she came back to the car" (143).

All mothers have a lot of love for their daughters. But, is it a total selfless love, or is it to assert their authority over their daughters? Mrs. Greenwood comes to a breaking point when she hears that her daughter is a confirmed mentally sick person and is in need of electro shock therapy.

"Well? I could tell she had been crying. My mother didn’t look at me. She started the car.... "You should have some shock treatments at his private hospital in Walton." . . . "You tell me the truth," I said, "or I'll never speak to you again." "Don’t I always tell you the truth?" My mother said and burst into tears. (143)

It is true that mother is always in need of attention and recognition from the daughter. Mrs. Greenwood is not able to swallow the fact that Esther made an
attempt to commit suicide. It is clear that mother has expectations from the
daughter, but what the daughter has in store for her is hatred.

My mother came smiling round the foot of the bed….

‘They said you wanted to see me.’

My mother perched on the edge of the bed and laid a hand on my
leg. She looked loving and reproachful, and I wanted her to go
away.

‘I didn’t think I said anything.’

‘They said you called for me.’ She seemed
ready to cry. (182)

Even in such a bad condition in the hospital, Esther wants her mother to go away.

Though protection and comfort are kindly offered by the mother and desperately
needed by the daughter, they prove ill directed. When Mrs. Greenwood offers
Esther roses on her birthday, she dumps it in the wastebasket. The following
dialogue of Esther with Dr. Nolan is significant: “I hate her,’ I said, and waited
for the bow to fall. But Doctor Nolan only smiled at me as if something had
pleased her very, very much, and said, ‘I suppose you do’”. (215)

When Mrs. Greenwood comes to know that she too is responsible for all
the troubles of her daughter, what aggravates her agony is that others know that
her attitude to her daughter is responsible for bringing about the agonies. “My
mother was the worst. She never scolded me, but kept begging me, with a
sorrowful face, to tell her what she had done wrong. She said she was sure the
doctors thought she had done something wrong because they asked her a lot of questions” (215).

The cleavage in relationship of the mother and the daughter seems to be total as we read through the novel. The daughter, though it is true that she was mentally unsound, had only hatred for the mother. Her hurting retort to the mother regarding the roses, “Save them for my funeral”(125) is a testimony to this fact. Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* points out the fact that

> The little girl's ambivalence towards her mother brings about aggressive and sadistic impulses; the inadequate repression of these drives, or their conversion into their opposites, may constitute the seeds of a later paranoia to be investigated both as stemming from the inevitable frustrations, imposed by mother on the daughter- at the time of the discovery of woman's 'castration', for example, - and also from the little girl's aggressive 'reactions'. (47)

The basic reason for the difference of opinion is the mother’s lack of understanding of the daughter, and her unwillingness to sacrifice her authority. She is not able to give any allowance to the strange behaviour of the daughter in such a state of mind. “My mother’s mouth tightened. ‘You should have behaved better, then.’ ‘What?’ ‘You shouldn’t have broken that mirror’”(186).

The daughter has only unpleasant memories of her mother deeply imprinted in her heart, even when she is mentally upset. Luce Irigaray agrees with Freud that hysteria is “a privileged place for preserving- but ‘in latency,’ ‘in
sufferance' – that which does not speak. And in particular that which is not expressed in woman's relation to her mother, to herself, or other women"(136). Esther feels for her mother, yet hurts her. "My mother's face floated to mind, a pale, reproachful moon.... A daughter in an asylum! I had done that to her"(250). It is obvious that the mother takes the illness of the daughter as a personal insult and something that she should forget. "'We'll take up where we left off, Esther' she had said, with her sweet, martyr's smile. 'We'll act as if all this were a bad dream'"(250).

The novel presents a complicated and at the same time an ever fluctuating mother daughter relationship. Often, the daughter very bluntly turns down maternal love. Even after her suicide attempt, Esther thinks that mother has no place in her heart. To the daughter, mother is a source of irritation that she can never stand. There is an innate tendency to use force to stop the irritating presence of the mother. In Dislocating Masculinity, Comparative Ethnographics, Andree Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne have rightly said, "If a woman cannot express her relation to her mother, or to other women, she may become hysterical"(77). It happens to Esther.

My mother turned from a foggy log into a slumbering, middle-aged woman, her mouth slightly open and a more raveling from her throat. The piggish noise irritated me and for a while it seemed to me that the only way to stop it would be to take the column of skin
and sinew from which it rose and twist it to silence between my hands. (129,30)

Aversion for her mother being evident, Esther seeks her models in a bewildering variety of women: Dodo Conway, the Catholic mother of six or seven children, whose face is always bright with a "serene, almost religious smile" (122); Buddy Willard's mother, a professor's wife, whose words of wisdom are regularly quoted by her brainwashed and adoring son; Doreen, the Southern blonde sex kitten who always knows how to get her man; Betsy, innocently happy and uncomplicated Midwestern fashion model; Jody, a loyal friend; Philomena Guinea, best-selling novelist whose endowed scholarship Esther holds at college; and finally, Jay Cee, the successful editor who is Esther's boss in New York. Esther at one point wishes she has a mother like Jay Cee. Of Jay Cee, Esther says, "I liked her a lot.... She had brains, so her plug-ugly looks didn't seem to matter" (6). Just a little later, she admits that she can't imagine Jay Cee in bed with her husband.

There is a pattern that can be discerned in Esther's attitude to all these women. These women associated with some stereotype of womanhood, are unacceptable to Esther. No one can be a proper mother substitute, and a series of rejections of or separations from these women have nurtured some important aspect of her evolving identity. Just as she rejects her mother, later she rejects Jay Cee too. Though she loves Jay Cee, at a particular stage she says, "Jay Cee
wanted to teach me something, all the old ladies I ever knew wanted to teach me something, but I suddenly didn't think they had anything to teach me" (6).

To bloom into a full-fledged artist, Plath thought that a complete emancipation from the maternal clutches was essential. From what Plath had written in her novel, and how Aurelia Plath reacted, it is evident that theirs was not a relationship of sacrificial love responded by unquestionable loyalty, but one of mundane down to earth relationship of mutual jealousy, suspicion and hatred. This is what exactly is seen in the presentation of the bond between Mrs. Greenwood and Esther. The novel is narrated from the point of view of the daughter who has a lot of complaints about her mother. She accuses her mother either of total indifference or incessantly following her like a shadow dictating terms, believing that she is incapable of taking decisions on her own. But Mrs. Greenwood, is not able to bear when the doctors quiz her on her conduct. She feels guilty and at the same time terribly pained that the love she has showered and the sacrifices she has made are not understood or appreciated by others, let alone her daughter. Basically, Esther is one who can never tolerate fetters of any kind including the restrictions imposed by the mother.

While summarizing the research done by Lucy Fischer, Carol Boyd highlights Fischer's opinion that “Because mothers and daughters identify with each other, and because their individual boundaries are not always clear, daughters struggle all their lives to separate from their mothers”(292). The
struggle of the daughter in *The Bell Jar* is that of one endeavouring to emerge as an emancipated woman, separating herself from the domination of her mother.

*Who Do You Think You Are?* is an intensely personal novel, and Alice Munro’s life experience can be traced through this novel. Munro had a sick mother. As a victim of Parkinson’s disease, there were limitations in her functioning as a mother. The daughter could read and understand the dreams and aspirations of her mother, and realized that she was yearning for love and company. The mother’s life and death became powerful subjects in Munro’s fiction. In an interview with Geoffrey Hancock, Munro said,

Mother daughter relationship interests me a great deal. It probably obsesses me, the way fathers obsess some male writers.... Probably because I had a very intense relationship with my own mother. She became ill when I was very young. The incurable illness of a parent makes a relationship – its stresses become more evident that way. And so her illness and death and the whole tension between us – she had a Parkinson’s disease – was very important. The first real story I ever wrote was about her. The first story I think of as a real story was “Peace of Ultrecht”. It was about the death of a mother, and the “Ottawa Valley” which I like a lot is about her. It’s one story which is autobiographical.(43)

While her mother was alive, the narrator of “The Peace Of Ultrecht”, like the author herself, failed to reciprocate the mother’s love. Later, she is tormented by
guilt. When the first stages of her palsy were in evidence, the narrator was frightened by the prospect of having to look after an invalid mother some day. Looking back on this time of her life, the narrator is made remorseful. Thomas E. Tausky says,

In this story, Munro dealt with a very personal subject, her own mother's illness (Mrs. Laidlaw had contracted Parkinson's Disease when her daughter was twelve). Munro came to this material hesitantly and involuntarily rather than through straightforward choice. She now feels, however, that the self-understanding she thereby acquired brought an artistic breakthrough. (http://www.ucalgary.ca/library/specColl/Munrobioc.html)

"The Ottawa Valley" in Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You is a story involving mothers and daughters. The first sentence of the story is, "I think of my mother sometimes in the department stores"(227). The young narrator in "The Ottawa Valley" wants to understand her mother, and through her mother, herself.

The problem, the only problem, is my mother. And she is the one of course I am trying to get; it is to reach her that this whole journey has been undertaken. With what purpose? To mark her off, to describe, to illumine, to get rid of her, and it did not work... I could go on, and on, applying what skills I have, using what tricks I know, and it would always be the same.(Something 246)
The title story in *Friend of my Youth* refers to the mother, who was a friend of the narrator before her illness decapacitated her and altered the emotions of her daughter. In this story the narrator concludes that she never understood her mother.

The mother figure is central in several short stories and in *Lives of Girls and Women*, Munro portrays Del’s mother as a woman who supports the family and one who occupies the centre stage in the whole drama of Del’s life. The father character takes the backstage in the story. Munro must have got this idea from her own life because the parents mentioned here more or less resemble her own parents. Thomas E. Tausky in his analysis of Munro’s in “Biocritical Essay” writes: “Robert Laidlaw (Munro’s father) found little success as a breeder of silver foxes. His wife, previously a school teacher, at one time sold the furs at a Muskoka resort to help the family survive.” In “Princess Ida” we find Del’s mother selling encyclopedias – which is highly criticized by her aunts and despised by the daughter. “I hated her selling encyclopedias and making speeches and wearing that hat. I hated her writing letters to the newspapers …that made the roots of my teeth ache with shame”(*Lives* 89). In “Baptizing”, Del says, “I did not want to be like my mother”(*Lives* 197). When the mother advises Del to face Uncle Craig’s funeral, Del says, “I did not like the way she said this. Her briskness and zeal seemed false and vulgar. I did not trust her”(*Lives* 52). While in sick bed, the mother demands attention and affection from the daughter, but the daughter is indifferent and irritated. “Her hair was
getting quite thin. The exposed white skin of the temple had an unhealthy suffering look that I disliked. I preferred to be by myself" (Lives 200). Tausky talks of Del’s “tangled, ambivalent feelings about her mother”. He says, “As Del herself comes to realize, she is in perpetual conflict with her mother because she is so much like her”. As she grows into womanhood, Del begins to understand her mother, like Erica Jong who writes, “As I grow more confident of my identity, I fault my mother less and less. As I grow older, my mother grows mellower along with me” (http://www.yorku.ca).

The interlocking stories in Who Do You Think You Are? which could together be considered Munro’s autobiographical fiction presents the complexities of mother daughter relationship. The mother is a source of tremendous guilt and confusion for Munro’s narrator in Who Do You Think You Are? It is clear that much of Mrs. Laidlaw – Alice relationship has its shadow on Flo-Rose relationship. With her strange, unpredictable and outrageous behaviour, the mother causes shame and anxiety to Rose who is growing up in a conformity-minded community. At the same time, with her pathetic behaviour, she evokes her daughter’s sympathy. The daughter loves the mother, and also hates her. Such an emotional tension continues until Rose discovers herself and finds her identity. Mary Elizabeth Marlow rightly comments about such a relationship.

The Dragon Fight is the age-old conflict in establishing our own identities. The dragon is the symbol for our parents. The Dragon Fight begins early in life and can be life long. At the heart of the
fight is the issue of our own individualities, our struggle to be authentic. The Dragon Fight is the struggle we have with ourselves when we rebel against our parents or strive to emulate them. Either way there is a fight. The Dragon Fight ends when we are willing to accept our parents the way they are, and complete the job of parenting ourselves.(35)

The basic sentiment that binds the stepmother and the daughter Rose is love, but at the same time there is an undercurrent of hatred and scorn. Flo is capable of expressing her love and concern, which Rose reciprocates. Some of the odd behaviours of Flo can be traced to this love and concern she has for her stepdaughter. Flo boils up when she hears that a senior boy in school grabbed Rose and tore the sleeve of her raincoat at the armhole. Her love for the daughter is so great that she becomes totally violent, and behaves in an unruly way that no other mother in the locality would have done.

Mothers were strongly partisan in fights, would hang over their gates, and yell; some would even rush out to tug hair and flail shingles, themselves. They would abuse the teacher behind her back and send their children off to school with Instructions not to take any lip from her. But they never would have behaved as Flo did, never have set foot on school property, never have carried complaint to that level.... Flo said the teacher did not know her business. (34)
It is this excessive love that makes Flo get involved in the activities of Rose, very often to the embarrassment of the daughter. Flo does not understand or approve of the love and admiration Rose has for an older girl Cora. When she comes to know that Rose had stolen the candy and given to Cora, Flo is dumbfounded. She is not so much against the stealing as she is against her daughter demeaning herself in front of a honey dumper's daughter.

What were you doing with it? What were you giving it to her for?
Are you in love with her or something?
She meant that as an insult and a joke.... 'You are so,' said Flo.
‘You make me sick.’ It wasn’t future homosexuality Flo was talking about, ... It was the enslavement, the self-abasement, the self-deception. That struck her.(43,44)

Flo is anxious and very much concerned about her daughter’s relationship with boys. What Flo expresses is not merely a concern but also a fear that Rose would be a victim of the sexual escapades of boys. The fact that three boys used Ruby Carruthers, chills her, and the mother in her makes use of the opportunity to warn her adolescent daughter and to ensure that nothing bad happens to her. “'If you ever got up to any of that with a boy it would be the end of you.,’ she said, ‘I mean it”’ (51). Similar warning comes from Del's mother too: “...degradation was possible, if ever you were persuaded to go with boys”(Lives 47).

Vivien Nice quotes Gilbert and Webster: "Each mother has to transmit the rules of femininity to her daughter to help them survive in the world as she
knows it"(83). It is this sentiment of the mother that is seen when Flo in her old age sees Rose appearing bare breasted in a television play. She is not able to see her daughter being projected on the television screen to a world that is deteriorating in values and morals.

Flo took to pen and paper over that, forced her swollen fingers, crippled almost out of use with arthritis, to write the word *Shame*. She wrote that if Rose’s father had not been dead long ago, he would now wish that he was. That was true. Rose read the letter, or part of it, out loud to some friends .... *Shame on a bare breast.*

(230,31)

Margaret Nortar and Susan McDaniel while describing the mother daughter relationship, refer to two studies by Flax in 1978 and Fisher in 1981 that report that “Adolescent daughters hold the most negative attitudes toward their mothers” and that “The daughter's quest for autonomy, often manifested sexually, is not commended by the mother”(13). The mother in Flo does not accept that Rose is growing up and is capable of taking care of herself. She thinks that the daughter for a travel alone to Toronto needs her advice and help. As the daughter ventures out alone, Flo is reminded of many of her own experiences, and gives minute instructions.

Flo said to watch out for White Slavers.... Flo took ten dollars and put it in a little cloth bag which she sewed to the strap of Rose's slip. Another thing likely to happen was that Rose would get her
purse stolen. Watch out, Flo said as well, for people dressed up as ministers. They were the worst. (67, 68)

Flo believes that Rose is in need of a person like the mother to guide her and support her. In the bus, she thinks that she would need the help of the conductor, in the absence of the mother. “This time Flo started the trip off by saying, ‘Keep an eye on her, she’s never been away from home before!’ to the conductor”(70). It is quite significant that whereas the mother is anxious, the daughter seeking independence is “soon extraordinarily happy. She felt Flo receding, West Hanratty flying away from her, her own wearying self discarded as easily as everything else”(71). Perhaps, Rose is like Sally Mitchell’s idea of a new girl who “ moved into spheres where her mother had no advice to give, she did things her mother had not done, and faced issues her mother did not face – if not in reality, at least in fancy”(xxiv).

It is beyond dispute that Rose loves the mother. As Nona Balakian who analyses Rose’s childhood, says, “Rose’s childhood is not without its traps of easy contentment and insulation from the outside world; the cozy evenings of family ‘togetherness,’ listening to Flo’s endless stories of other people’s disasters, fill the girl with a current of happiness”(http://www.nytimes.com). The story telling is mutual. Rose takes Flo not only as her mother but also as her confidant. She runs home from school to share with her mother all that happened during the day. This is an occasion for both to be together and listen to each other.
“Everyday when Rose got home she would tell Flo about what went on in school” (49).

For Rose, the thoughts are very often centred on the mother – whether she is physically close to her or not. Away in Toronto, Rose thinks of Flo and is concerned about her especially her varicose vein. “Rose collected in her mind the things she had to look for in Toronto. First, things for Flo. Special stockings for her varicose vein. A special kind of cement for sticking handles on pots. And a full set of dominoes” (71). It may be significant to compare this kind of love with the love Mary Coleridge had for her mother. Thresa Whistler in her introduction to The Collected Poems of Mary Coleridge says, “Mamma moved in the background…. She was indifferent to what she wore or ate, more conventional. But Mary loved her dearly” (qtd. Showalter 62)). Like this, though Flo is narrow minded and conventional, Rose loves her.

It is the same love that Rose expresses even when Flo is old and senile. She is aware that the relationship of Flo with Brian is rather matter of fact, and that she alone can take up the role of a dutiful daughter offering sincere love and affectionate care.

It wasn’t that Rose had entirely forgotten Flo in those two years. She had fits of worry about her.... One time the fit had come over her in the middle of a January storm, she had driven two hundred miles through blizzards, past ditched cars, and finally when she parked on Flo’s street, finally tramped up the walk Flo had not
been able to shovel, she was full of relief for herself and concern for Flo, a general turmoil of feelings both anxious and pleasurable.

(221)

Rose is not only a loving daughter, but also a responsible one. Flo gets crankiness associated with senility, and the family comes to the conclusion that she should be taken care of in the Wawanash County Home. It is Rose and not Brian who visits the home to make all preparations. France Nadeau is right in saying, “The mothers' emotional dependence often requires that the daughters assume the role of ‘mother’ in that they make decisions and assume responsibility”(http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/). Flo does not ask Rose to come, due to her “fierce unwillingness to be the object of anybody’s rescue”(179). Rose learns in a letter from an acquaintance that Flo “has got past where she can look after herself”(177). It is ironical that it is Rose, Flo’s step daughter, who responds, not Phoebe and Brian (Flo’s son), though they receive the same sort of letter, and live in Toronto, much nearer to Flo. Phoebe has contended herself with phoning Flo every Sunday night; “Flo had little to say but she had never talked to Phoebe anyway”(178). Brian had already made enquiries about “getting his mother in the County House. Or his secretary had” (180). Rose's concern for Flo is real, and is expressed practically by occasional visits. Now, she goes to Hanratty to make arrangements to get Flo into the Wawanash County Home. She pictures herself going over to Hanratty and looking after her, living with her, taking care of her as long as is necessary. The crankier Flo gets, the milder and more patient
Rose would become, and prove herself worthy of a dutiful daughter. But there are several occasions when the mother and the daughter clash and create sensational scenes.

The love-hate relationship between them is a strange one. When Rose is a little girl and Flo has to do all the household work alone, she pities herself and gives vent to her scorn for the daughter. She contrasts the daughter with the son Brian, and regrets that she sacrificed her life, and with an intention of taking care of the child in the cradle, married Rose’s father.

Flo speaks of Rose’s smart-aleck behaviour, rudeness and sloppiness and conceit.... She mentions Brian’s innocence, Rose’s corruption. Oh, don’t you think you are somebody, says Flo, and a moment later, Who do you think you are? Rose contradicts and objects with such poisonous reasonableness and mildness, displays theatrical unconcern. Flo goes beyond her ordinary scorn and self-possession and becomes amazingly theatrical herself, saying it was for Rose that she sacrificed her life. (16)

It is out of this scorn she complains to her husband about how Rose conducts herself. “‘She humiliates me,’ she says, straightening up. There it is, the explanation. ‘She humiliates me,’ she repeats with satisfaction. ‘She has no respect’”(19). Simone de Beauvoir comments,

The mother is secretly hostile to her daughter’s liberation, and she takes to bullying her more or less deliberately; but the boy’s effort
to become a man is respected, and he is granted much liberty....
The self control that is imposed on women and becomes second
nature in the well bred young girl kills her spontaneity; her lively
exuberance is beaten down. The result is tension and ennui.(358)

Flo is not able to tolerate or even understand the way in which she is treated by
her daughter leaving her to do all work at home alone. But such is maternal
feeling that she is upset and she calls her husband to intervene.

She is sorry to have called him from his work. Would never have
done it, if Rose was not driving her to distraction. How to
distraction? With her back-talk and impudence and her terrible
tongue. The things Rose has said to Flo are such that, if Flo had
said them to her mother, she knows her father would have thrashed
her into the ground. (17, 18)

Looking closely at the sentiments nurtured by Rose, we understand that
Rose also has scorn for her mother. When Rose is getting an award, she sends an
invitation to Flo hoping and wishing that she doesn’t come. But secretly, she has
a vicious dream to intimidate her mother. What we see here is the ambition of
the daughter to get freedom from the mother’s control. “She did, secretly, want
Flo to come, wanted to come, wanted to show Flo, intimidate her, finally remove
herself from Flo’s shade”(231). Sigmund Freud, in his famous 1914 essay “On
Narcissism,” indicated, “If a daughter cannot clearly distinguish herself from her
mother, no clear sense of self develops in women. Without a clear sense of self,
women never fully develop into mature, moral beings. Lack of self directly results from the female child's lack of separation from her mother" (qtd. Julianne White).

Patricia Waugh states that most psychoanalytic theories show that subjecthood is understood as the achievement of separation. Maturity is seen to be reached when the dependent infant comes to regard its primary caretaker as a route to define its own identity and position in the world. Instead of relationship and connection, separation and objectivity become the indication for identity. Freudian theory has been used to support this view, and Patricia Waugh makes this clear:

In psychoanalytic terms, if subjectivity is defined as separateness, its acquisition will involve radical disidentification with women in a society where women are normally the exclusive caretakers of children. This will be true even for girls who, at the level of gender, will also seek to identify with the mother. (133, 34)

Munro also presents mother daughter relationship through Rose and her daughter Anna. Who Do You Think You Are? was written after Munro moved back to Western Ontario from British Columbia. Her marriage with James Munro had dissolved, and she married Gerald Fremlin. By then she had three children - Sheila (b. 1953), Jenny (b. 1957), and Andrea (b. 1966), and they must have experienced the trauma children usually feel in a broken family. In Anna, we see a young girl in a broken family, torn between love for the mother and love for the
father. Anna is an example of a girl who wants love from the father and the mother, a girl who never wants to sacrifice either of the parents for the other.

'Do you want to come with me, do you want to stay with daddy?'

... Anna had refused to answer, saying instead, 'I don't want you to go.'... 'Which do you want?' she said softly to Anna. Instead of answering, Anna called out for Patrick. When he came, she sat up and pulled them both down on the bed, one on each side of her.

She held on to them, and began to sob and shake. (165,66)

True, Anna wants both the parents together, but when she is left with the mother she does not relish the "poor, picturesque, gypsying" childhood. Though Rose "wanted to come home to Anna, fill her life with Anna" (187), Anna runs back to her father Patrick. This shows how Anna the daughter frees herself from the love of the mother, to find her childhood. It is about such children that Simone de Beauvoir comments in The Second Sex:

The rebellion is the more violent when, as often happens, the mother has lost her prestige ... as a victim, she is looked down on; as a shrew, detested; ... she becomes obstacles and negation. Her daughter wishes not to be like her, worshipping women who have escaped from feminine servitude: actresses, writers, teachers; she engages avidly in sports and in study, she climbs trees, tears her clothes, tries to rival the boy.... Usually she has a best father in whom she confides.(321)
Beauvoir comments that such girls “seek to break their ties with mother.... They would like to monopolize father’s love” (324).

As we understand from Munro’s interview with Kem Murch, in her personal life, her children in their childhood resented her falling in and out of love, and not getting a normal mother. As she herself says, “It happens at an early age, say 7 to 10 or 12. But I’ve found that when they become teenagers, there’s been total acceptance of me, and it’s just a marvelous thing – the friendship I have with the two girls” (70). She adds, “Probably, taking the relationship between most girls of my generation and their mothers, my relationship with my daughters ... I feel really good about the whole mother part of my life” (70).

Munro is an artist concerned about projecting an intensely felt vision of life as it is really lived. Nona Balakian asserts, “With its precise and colorful regional details, Miss Munro’s ‘world’ appears securely fixed in reality. Rose and her stepmother, Flo, are products of prewar West Hanratty, Ontario” (http://www.nytimes.com). D.J.R Bruckner comments that one personal concern that is never far from Munro is the life and death of her own mother. "That is central to me," she said, ‘and my mother keeps cropping up in my stories.’” She has presented the thoughts and feelings of mothers as well as daughters undisguisedly in different stories, at various stages of her life. Bruckner quotes her as having said, "You keep revising your attitude toward your parents, you know. You keep finding out new things about them as you grow older" (http://www.nytimes.com).
Mother daughter relationship in *The God of Small Things* - be it that of Mammachi and Ammu, or Ammu and Rahel is set against a caste ridden central Kerala social background notorious for gender apartheid. Attempting to study the novel from a feminist perspective, Mohit Kumar Ray says, it is “the sad tale of a hapless woman seen through the eyes of her daughter”(50). Arundhati Roy’s mother Mary Roy married a Bengali Hindu, and after divorcing him returned to her parental home in Kerala and faced several problems, including the one related to her right over family property. The central issue that is social as well as economic in the novel is the legal right of a daughter over parental property. Mary Roy is hailed as the greatest feminist of modern Kerala who single handedly fought against the Travancore Cochin Christian Succession Act of 1960. The indomitable courage of this crusader has had its impact on her daughter. In an interview with David Barsamian, Roy said, “We are both women who are unconventional in their terms” (http://www.progressive.org/intv0401.html).

The tension that prevails between a middle-aged mother and an adolescent girl is clearly brought out in *The God of Small Things*. It is at the turn of eighteen that Ammu grows desperate and dreams of escaping from Ayemenem, as she wants to free herself from “the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, longsuffering mother”(39). It is out of this despair that Ammu decides to fall in love. One gets a feeling that it is not a bond of mutual love but rather mutual mistrust and lack of sympathy and understanding that causes a
cleavage in relationship at this stage. We see the traditional romanticized angelic mother in Mammachi when she accepts the “manless” Ammu into the Ayemenem house over which neither of them have any legal right. But one perceives partiality and a kind of sexual jealousy when the mother understands the sexual escapades of Chacko as “man’s needs”, and considers Ammu’s association with Velutha as disgrace. She totally fails to understand the desires, emotions and requirements of her daughter.

Naturally, the daughter feels insecure even under the protection of the mother in the parental home. Divorced Ammu stays as an alien in the Ayemenem house. Mammachi, in no way, serves as a refuge even when her daughter Ammu passes through desperate conditions. When Mammachi and Ammu stay in Ayemenem house as “Man-less” women, their relationship is rather strange as both relate with each other in a vacuum as it were, where they have no sense of belonging. Mohit Kumar Ray says, “Although Mammachi- Ammu relationship is mother daughter relationship and both are women, their relationship, as the incidents after Ammu’s return to Ayemenem as a divorcee clearly reveal, is the function of the dominantly patriarchal society”(56).

Motherliness, as Betty Friedan observes in The Feminine Mystique, “enables a woman to express her total self with the tender feelings, the protective attitudes and the encompassing love”(58). But patriarchy abuses motherliness as an instrument to subordinate women. In the Introduction to Knowing women – Feminism and Knowing, Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit observe,
It is women’s mothering and nurturing activities and the social beliefs which support them, which are crucial to the maintenance of women’s general subordination and economic dependence. While the virtues of maternal loving and caring are obvious, they have never been materially valued but applauded only with the hypocrisy of cheap sentiment. (33)

In 1991, Sophie Freud, granddaughter of Sigmund Freud, explained that the narcissistic mother has a great investment in her daughters. “In order to develop into a woman [the narcissist mother believes] a daughter needs sufficient libidinal resources to identify with her female partner [mother]” (qtd. Frenchel, http://www.yorku.ca). From Ammu - Rahel bond we perceive that the narcissistic relationship is strong during the daughter’s childhood. To the daughter, the mother is the closest person to be observed, experienced, loved and cherished. In spite of the anger expressed by the mother, and the taunting remark: “You are a stupid, silly girl”(71), Rahel comes close to her mother. Rahel sees that Ammu has “a film of perspiration on her forehead and upper lip, and that her eyes had become hard, like marbles”(71). This close observation is not transient, but it has a long lingering effect on the little girl.

Years later, on a crisp fall morning in upstate New York, on a Sunday train, it suddenly came back to Rahel. That expression on Ammu’s face. Like a rogue piece in a puzzle. Like a question
mark that drifted through the pages of a book and never settled at the end of a sentence.

That hard marble look in Ammu’s eyes. The glisten of perspiration on her upper lip. And the chill of that sudden, hurt silence. (72)

Equally strong are the memories of the mother’s anger towards the father that culminates in the mother transferring that anger to the daughter. Like her brother, Rahel remembers “being pushed around a room once from Ammu to Baba like billiard balls (84)”. The little girl found it hard when she experienced a fluctuation in her mother’s love. “The moth on Rahel’s heart lifted a downy leg. Then put it back. Its little leg was cold. A little less her mother loved her” (136).

Mother has an authoritarian attitude and she expects implicit obedience from the daughter. Ammu is no exception to this rule. She feels that if her daughter (the son, as well) disobeys her in public, “everybody gets the wrong impression” (149).

“If you ever,” Ammu said, “and I mean this, EVER, ever again disobey me in Public,
I will see to it that you are sent away to somewhere where you will jolly well learn to behave. Is that clear?
When Ammu was really angry, she said Jolly Well....
Frightened eyes and a fountain looked back at Ammu.
Yes. It’s. Clear. (148)
This kind of authoritarian approach causes an insecure feeling as it interrupts proper communication. Ammu loves her children, but their “wide-eyed vulnerability”, and their behaviour “exasperated her and sometimes made her want to hurt them – just as an education, a protection.... Her watchfulness stretched her, made her taut and tense. She was quick to reprimand her children, but even quicker to take offence on their behalf”(43). Talking of the power relations between mother and child, Adrienne Rich states, “They are often simply a reflection of power relations in patriarchal society.... Powerless women have always used mothering as a channel – narrow and deep – for their own human will to power, their need to return upon the world what it has visited them”(38). Regarding such a relationship Simone de Beauvoir comments, “The daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person, the mother is overweeningly affectionate and hostile toward her daughter; she saddles her child with her own destiny, a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it”(317).

Children value the words of the mother so much that carelessly uttered words of the mother can be dangerous. When Sophie Mol’s body is brought to Ayemenem, Ammu remembers the careless words she uttered to the children.

“Because of you!” Ammu had screamed. “If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t be here! None of this would have happened! I wouldn’t be here! I would have been free! I should have dumped you in an
orphanage the day you were born! You’re the millstones round my neck!"

She couldn’t see them crouched against the door.

“Just go away!” Ammu had said. “Why can’t you just go away and leave me alone?”

So they had. (253)

In general when mothers are anxious they ask questions but do not allow the daughters to reply. Ammu is not willing to accept the growth and development of Rahel, which she fears will make her get answers that may not be pleasing.

She asked Rahel questions, but never let her answer them. If Rahel tried to say anything, Ammu would try to interrupt with a new thought or query. She seemed terrified of what adult thing her daughter would say and thaw Frozen Time. Fear made her garrulous. She kept it at bay with her babble. (160)

In Mohit kumar Ray’s words, Ammu’s “feminine sensibility was on razor’s edge whenever Rahel tried to say something”(58). In the book On Being a Mother: A Study of Woman with Pre school Children, there is a discussion on motherhood:

In motherhood, a woman relives the mother-child relationship of her own past. She identifies with both her child and her own mother, or the mother she would have liked to have had. This dual identification, however, reactivates all the woman’s unresolved
conflicts and anxieties developed in relation to her own mother during her childhood. These are re-experienced and expressed in her relationship with her children. (6)

Like Mammachi, Ammu too seems to have apprehensions about the daughter entering the world of adults. The thought that the daughter will grow serves as a threat to the mother’s emotional security. Even as Rahel kisses the stomach of Ammu, it is this thought that comes to Ammu. “Ammu wondered at the transparence of that kiss. It was a clear-as-glass kiss. Unclouded by passion or desire – that pair of dogs that sleeps so soundly inside children, waiting for them to grow up. It was a kiss that demanded no kiss-back”(221).

A mother secretly wishes the daughter to remain a child, and refuses to accept the reality that she is grown up. This is evident in Ammu-Rahel relationship. Ammu takes with her gifts for her eleven year old daughter.

A packet of cigarette sweets, A tin Phantom pencil box and Paul Bunyan – a Junior Classics Illustrated Comic. They were presents for a seven-year-old; Rahel was nearly eleven. It was as though Ammu believed that if she refused to acknowledge the passage of time, if she willed it to stand still in the lives of her twins, it would. As though sheer willpower was enough to suspend her children’s childhoods until she could afford to have them with her. (149)

A manifestation of the love-hate relationship is the envy the mother has for the daughter especially when it comes to matters of pleasure and enjoyment.
Ammu was not able to accept her young daughter playing so freely with Velutha whose physique and skill she had always been enjoying. She was surprised at the extent of her daughter’s physical ease with him (Velutha). Surprised that her child seemed to have a sub-world that excluded her entirely. A tactile world of smiles and laughter that she, her mother, had no part in. Ammu recognized vaguely that her thoughts were shot with a delicate, purple tinge of envy. She didn’t allow herself to consider whom it was that she envied. The man or her own child. (176)

There is a profound but complex relationship between mothers and their daughters. The girl child’s world is centered on her mother. Whatever the turbulence, the mother wants to be with the daughter. After the death of Sophie Mol and Velutha, Ammu decides to part with Estha as the society would demand the boy to be with the father, but she decides to keep Rahel with her. “I’ll be a teacher. I’ll start a school. And you and Rahel will be in it.” ‘We’ll have our own house,’ Ammu said. ‘A little house,’ Rahel said”(325). To the girl child, the dream of a world is her mother’s “little home”.

In the Indian culture, one would expect the mother to show a sacrificial love for the daughter as in Nissim Exekiel’s “The Night of the Scorpion”. But, it is a universal fact that, in spite of the affectionate moments, very often what the daughter has in store for her mother is not love but hatred. This hatred is manifested when the mother becomes ill. Ammu is sick and Rahel is aware of it.
“Ammu coughed up a wad of phlegm into her handkerchief and showed it to Rahel”(160). This action of Ammu makes Rahel hate her. “She thought of the phlegm and nearly retched. She hated her mother then. Hated her. She never saw her again”(161).

It is this love-hate relationship that comes to the forefront relegating the sacrificial love to the background. Margaret Nortar and Susan McDaniel describe the mother/daughter relationship as "often conflictual, particularly during their daughter’s adolescence, and [it] manifests many of the ambiguities and confusions about the social meanings of womanhood and motherhood”(13).

Ammu’s death at the age of thirty-one is unexpected. But Rahel does not express shock, as one would expect. Looking at the body of her mother wrapped in a dirty bed sheet and laid out on a stretcher, instead of being overwhelmed with emotions, she allows her thought to wander. “Rahel thought she looked like a Roman Senator. Et tu, Ammu! She thought and smiled, remembering Estha”(162). In the electric crematorium, when Ammu’s body which was rejected by the church, is about to be burnt, the feeling of Rahel is not that of a girl who is deserted and lonely, but that of a girl who is prepared for a kind of emancipation. “When Ammu’s turn came, Chacko held Rahel’s hand tightly. She didn’t want her hand held. She used the slickness of crematorium sweat to slither out of his grip. No one else from the family was there”(162,63). Rahel takes the death of her mother as an incident of little consequence and watches the body being burnt in the electric crematorium.
Then Rahel’s Ammu was fed to it. Her hair, her skin, her smile. Her voice. The way she used Kipling to love her children before putting them to bed. *We be of one blood, ye and I.* Her good night kiss. The way she held their faces steady with one hand ... while she parted and combed their hair with the other. The way she held knickers out for Rahel to climb into, *Left leg, right leg.* All this was fed to the beast, and it was satisfied. (163)

The peculiar mixed feeling of love and hate surges forth flashing into the daughter’s mind different scenes of intimate mother-daughter relationship. In spite of the reminiscences of an intimate relationship, the daughter seems to consider the demise of her mother as natural and normal.

Though Ammu loved her double, playing the twin role of father and mother, Rahel sheds no tears. “The door of the furnace clanged shut. There were no tears.... The whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q498673...Rahel never wrote to Eshta”(163). But the impact of the incident on Rahel is strong and long lasting. As Mohit Kumar Ray analyses, “With the death of her mother, Rahel had lost the last moorings that she had and she began to drift, from school to school, spent eight years in a college without getting a degree and finally ‘drifted into marriage’”(59). He also says that there is enough evidence in the novel that Rahel shares the agony of her mother and is filled with profound compassion for Ammu. “Her mother has always remained a living presence in her memory”(60). The relationship, as presented through the
characters is not one of eulogized subservience or iconoclastic rebellion. It is not one of domination and obedience, but one of emotional interdependence frequently disturbed by clashes and turbulence.

If one were to see Roy in Rahel, the death of the mother and consequent separation might be taken as the artist’s urge to free from the domain of the mother, discover herself, and live in an independent world in order to be creative. Lucy Fischer maintained that “because mothers and daughters identify with each other, and because their individual boundaries are not always clear, daughters struggle all their lives to separate from their mothers” (qtd. Boyd 292).

Though trying to make out one to one correspondence may not be justified, the mother daughter relationship portrayed in the novel is influenced by Mary Roy’s relationship with Roy. In an interview with Urvashi Butalia, Roy confessed that her novel affected her deepest relationships and made them deeper. She said, “I have invested myself in it”. Though Roy admired her mother, as an adult she was not with Mary Roy. Feminists/psychologists say that to attain freedom, the daughter extricates herself from the clutches of the mother. Roy’s life is an example of such a case. She had always needed a total emancipation from the control of her mother. The mother figure always obstructs. In the case of Mammachi – Ammu relationship too, this is very much true. Ammu is in her late teens when she at last decides to extricate herself from her domineering mother. She would do anything to get this much-needed freedom, even if it were to fall in love with the unknown wrong person. It is very natural that Ammu has
the haunting fear that one day Rahel too will be grown up and that as a mother she may not have any control over her daughter.

The mother's relationship with her daughter as presented in Roy's novel, is universal. For a girl to come of age, she has to be liberated from the dictates of the mother. At the end, Rahel appears as a liberated woman who is prepared to face Ayemenem as a "manless woman". To better her lot and to arrive at a truer sense of herself, she has to be free from the control of her mother. The artist enables her this extrication through the death of her mother at an early age of thirty-one when Rahel herself has not entered her teenage. There is a ray of hope in the life of Rahel in Ayemenem because she does not have a figure like Aleyooty Ammachi, Mammachi or Ammu to put reins on her. She knows that she can be herself and does not have to waste her energy fighting against the mother who will be holding her back.

Sally Mitchell in The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, argues that during adolescence, girls increasingly occupy a separate culture, which she names a provisional free space, discordant with adult expectations. Defining girlhood as "a state of mind", Mitchell sees the end of girlhood as the age in which she is considered a sexual being. She locates this new girl in the space between parental home and marital home, a space on which the new girl moves into spheres where she tries to be different from her mother. (xxiv)

Vivien Nice describes the separation as confusing in that "the daughter does not know where she begins and the mother ends" (49-50). But Pam Morris
has asserted, “Separation from the mother is necessary to achieve self identity”(110). Julianne White feels, “A separate identity is essential to psychological health.... A young woman can and should separate herself from her mother, while remaining connected to her through respect, admiration, and love” (http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/WILLA/fall96/julianne). All the three protagonists- Esther, Rose and Rahel- are emotionally and sentimentally attached to their mothers, but during adolescence struggle to extricate themselves from that powerful influence, and in the process reach self realization and maturity.

Reading novels like The Bell Jar, Who Do You Think You Are? and The God of Small Things makes us understand the true nature of mothers and the nature of their relationship with their daughters. This helps one to accept mothers as they are, as human beings. Considering mothers as angels may overburden them with unreasonable demands and impossible responsibilities. Considering them as monsters may distort their lives. Hence the right way of looking at a mother is as a human being with desires and aspirations as well as limitations. This revolutionary idea flies in the face of the ideal notion of looking at motherhood as the essence of pure womanhood.

As Rich says, “Institutionalised motherhood demands of women maternal instinct rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self”(42). While commenting on the mystique created by patriarchy in The Fountain of Age, Friedan highlights how a mother is exploited as the angel of the home, and constrained to perform selfless
service for her children. "More likely Mom is sweet, doting self-sacrificing, taking no end of trouble for her children.... By and large, she does all their thinking for them... she does not care how she looks or feels, for in her heart, there is the unselfish joy of service. From dawn until late at night, she finds happiness in doing for her children"(191). A mother's experiences and desires are seldom voiced. B. Arleen Dallery expresses this idea quite strongly: "Mother never speaks; she is marginalized."(57).

Shelley Phillips says, "Dissonance between mother and daughter may help the daughter; I am less convinced of its therapeutic value for mothers" (http://www.socresonline.org.uk/1/2/cotterill.html). In a social structure heavily dominated by men, the myth of the ideal mother and the myth that working mothers are not good for their children, are responsible for lowering women's self esteem, and the mutual respect between mothers and daughters. In a patriarchal society, the father asserts his masculinity by denying the value of the mother. At the same time, fathers leave child care responsibilities to mothers and this contributes to the dilemma in mother-daughter relationships. In The Bell Jar and Who Do You Think You Are? the burden of the family comes on the shoulders of Mrs. Greenwood and Flo, due to the early death of the fathers. In the case of Ammu in The God of Small Things, the responsibility of looking after Rahel rests entirely on her, as Baba had deserted her due to his immoral behaviour. In Men and Women, John Nicholson remarks, "Those who seek to establish equality of opportunity between the sexes must realize that until such
time as men accept an equal role in raising their children, any victories that
women win will be hollow ones”(179).

It also becomes evident that it is essential for any daughter to accept that
her problem is not unique but universal. Frances A. Nadeau, commenting on the
mother daughter relationship in young adult fiction points out,

Understanding the relationship is critical to young adult girls
because daughters bond with their mothers in a complex,
interdependent association that often inhibits a daughter from
establishing her own identity. By describing the daughter’s quest
for autonomy from different viewpoints, novels can offer possible
solutions to the problems faced by adolescents. (http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/)

Although the relationship is complex, young adults often need to understand their
mothers in order to understand themselves. Nancy Friday rightly says,
“Understanding what we have with our mothers is the beginning of understanding
ourselves”(vi). Although separation from one’s mother is natural, normal, and
necessary, disconnection from her causes great despair and feelings of failure,
and adolescent girls must understand this experience as common to all women at
a particular stage.

Frances A. Nadeau points out that many works, written by and for adult
women, describe the turmoil of self-discovery and the pain of mother/daughter
separation. Before Amy Tan wrote The Joy Luck Club in 1989, well-known
feminist writers had explored the mother/daughter relationship: Paule Marshall in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959); Alice Walker in *Meridian* (1976); Jamaica Kincaid in *Annie John* (1985); and Toni Morrison in *Beloved* (1987). The three novels chosen for the present study also provide an insight into the mother daughter dilemma, offering a message of comfort, reassuring daughters that others too have experienced the pain and confusion of growing independent. Esther, Rose, Ammu and Rahel go away from their mothers to cities for some time. By removing the mother, the authors allow these daughters more freedom to face and solve problems on their own.

Scholarship generated by the feminist movement has increased our sensitivity to the problem of the mothers and daughters. As Patricia Meyer Spacks says, “A special female self awareness emerges through literature in every period”(3), and by reading literature with a strong feminine focus, we can understand the mother-daughter conflict in patriarchal culture and see how it can be rediscovered. Luce Irigaray’s opinion is that “The first issue facing liberation movements is that of making each woman ‘conscious’ of the fact that what she has felt in her personal experience is a condition shared by all women, thus allowing that experience to be politicized”(164).

In the three novels under discussion, authoritarian imposition of the will of the mother on the daughter hampers the growth of the daughters and stands on the way of their emerging as independent women. The age long repetitive pattern blocks the way of the woman. The daughters in these novels try to free
themselves from the clutches of the domination of their mothers. In the case of *The Bell Jar*, the daughter rebels and consciously tries to come out of this control, whereas in *Who Do You Think You Are?* it is the old age and senility of the stepmother that gives the emancipation. In *The God of Small Things* Ammu the daughter never gets liberation but Rahel gets deliverance through the death of Ammu. In all these novels that have autobiographical overtones, the daughters have to snap their ties with their mothers. Seen from a feminist perspective, there is nothing to be glorified or idealised about the sacrificial love of the mother, but it is essential that the daughter asserts her individuality and emerges as an independent being, as part of the maturing of a woman.