

# **The Mother and Her Adolescent Daughter in the Stories of Alice Munro**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13788911>

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**Abstract:** Mother-Daughter relationship is one of the most discussed aspects in the short stories of Alice Munro. Her inclination towards this has been studied as having started with her life's experience and her own relationship with her mother. Thus, we find a poignant touch of her personal life in such stories. This essay discusses the dialectics of an adolescent daughter and mother. The important factors that have deciding effect on this relationship at the crucial stage of daughter's life have also been discussed. Equally important are the factors that make a daughter write down her feelings through her growth.

Adolescence is stated as a transitional stage of physical psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood which is the age of majority. (WHO) Culturally adolescence is the preparation of children for the adult roles. It is a period of multiple transitions involving education, training and employability. Most importantly this stage is marked by the onset of puberty cognitively, as changes in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally. Major pubertal and biological changes and the sexual attitude of the society affect the behaviour of the adolescents. This is the time by which they have built up their personality and individuality.

The Britannica mentions that in the classical world, Aristotle recorded what now is known as adolescent development, that is, the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics in both males and females. An adolescent has to face challenges as per the expectations of the society. Besides, the adolescent has to prepare

according to the physical changes along with the psychological, social and moral terrain. Thus, this is an ambiguous stage between childhood and adulthood. The common belief is that of the adolescence disobedience and rebellion against the parents and a marked change in the behaviour. (Web)

Alice Munro as an adolescent experienced her first difficulties of life, in form of deprivation of maternal care and affection and attention; rather she had to be the mother which she could not tolerate for long and escaped to fulfil her own ambitions. Getting married to her fellow was also a means towards establishing her own identity. A gift of a type writer by James Munro was the first symbol of support towards her goal.

While trying to understand Munro, Catherine Sheldrik Ross, writes that she had decided to become a very famous writer when she was only nine. But the fact remained that such ambition was 'not encouraged in the reticent self-effacing Scotts-Irish community of Wingham, Ontario, where Alice grew up in the 1930s and 40s.(15) Adding to her bad luck and her troubles was the fact that when she was twelve years old, her mother developed Parkinson's disease . She suffered from a severe form of Parkinson's disease from 1943 until her death in 1959; according to her biographer Robert Thacker, "The Peace of Utrecht' was the first story where Munro wrote about this subject (150). It was 'an incurable, slowly debilitating illness with bizarre and evasive symptoms that are initially hard to diagnose.' (39)

The mother – daughter ambiguous relationship of the adolescent female characters of Munro mostly arise because of the role-reversal of the daughter who at this stage is planning her wishes to be fulfilled. She, however, has to become not only the caretaker of the mother but also the one responsible for the whole family.

In family like ours it is the oldest daughter's job to stay home and look after people when they're in this situation, until they die. I, instead got a Scholarship and went to University. There is enormous guilt about doing that, but at the time you are so busy

protecting yourself that you simply push it under,  
and then you suffer from it later on. (Ross 40)

Alice being the eldest daughter had to carry out all her mother's responsibilities when she was in school. As the male and female roles were clearly defined, the way she had depicted in "Boys and Girls" ... with men doing the outside works thought of as challenging and women confined to works inside the house. So, she had to take on her mother's role in the house. She started 'making meals, ironing, and bossing around her younger brother and sister though she was a good student and was doing well in her high school.

The desperate longing of an adolescent for avoiding the role reversal is apparent in the story "The Ottawa Valley" The girl is afraid of the future burden she will have to carry out if the mother becomes bed-ridden. Aunt described her own miserable example and also hinted at her mother's ill health.

Your mother's had a little stroke...she might have another little one, and another, and another. Then some day she might have the big one. You'll have to learn to be the mother, then...well you are a big baby, if you can't stand to hear about Life.

The daughter at this stage is threatened to face more secrets than she could stand. Daughter became a rebel against role thrust upon the female as a caretaker becomes the prime cause of mother daughter ambiguity in Munro's stories; particularly when the girl has her own dreams to fulfill. "So, are you not going to get sick at all?" I said, pushing further. I was very much relieved that she had decided against strokes, and that I would not have to be the mother, and wash and wipe and feed her lying in the bed, as Aunt Dodie had to do with her mother." (283)

The mother in "The Ottawa Valley" was coming up with the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. "Her left forearm trembled. The hand trembled more than the arm. The thumb knocked ceaselessly against the palm. She could hide it in her fingers, and she could

hold the arm still by stiffening it against her body.” (284) Again “my mother’s voice had taken on an embarrassing tremor...” (285)

‘Is your arm going to stop shaking?’ I pursued recklessly, stubbornly. I demanded of her now, that she turn and promise me what I needed. But she did not do it. For the first time she held out altogether against me. She went on as if she had not heard, her familiar bulk ahead of me turning strange, indifferent. (284).

"The Ottawa Valley" is about the problems of a daughter more than it is about the problems of a person with futuristic views. Most of the story concerns the narrator's memory of a trip made with her mother and her sister to her mother's "old home in the Ottawa valley." (227) Ildikó de Papp Carrington argues that while the story might seem loosely linked (102) or jumbled (74) "the links are not loose at all, and the sequence, far from being jumbled, is deliberately calculated to jar the reader into experiencing the same. In "The Ottawa Valley" the retrospective narrator, forty-one or forty-two years old, the same age as her mother when her parkinsonism began." (191) The narrator pours out her emotional disturbances in the last paragraph of the story

The problem, the only problem, is my mother. And she is the one of course that 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 celebrate, to *get rid*, of her; and it did not work, for she looms too close, just as she always did. She is heavy as always, she weighs everything down, and yet she is indistinct, her edges melt and flow. Which means she has stuck to me as close as ever and refused to fall away, and I could go on, and on, applying what skills I have, using what tricks I know, and it would always be the same. (285)

The story “The Peace of Utrecht” depicts one such case where the role reversal of care –taking was the main cause of mother-daughter conflict. Munro began writing “The Peace of Utrecht,” soon after her mother died in early 1959. It was first published in 1960 in *The Tamarack Review*. Eight years later, it reappeared in *Dance of the Happy Shades*. “The Peace of Utrecht” is set in the Canada of 1960 in the fictional Southwestern Ontario town of Jubilee, is the turning point story for Munro. She once said it was “the first story I absolutely had to write and wasn’t writing to see if I could write that kind of story” (qtd. in Howells 1998: 14). Indeed, for Munro the story was “a breakthrough: confronting the fact of her mother freed her into autobiographical fiction (or ‘personal who remained a fraught presence’ (Edemariam, Web)

Helen the narrator, visits her home as a mother with her two children. She had left her hometown Jubilee in spite of the need of her mother and knowing the difficulties at home and did not even attend her mother’s funeral on the excuse of a blizzard and the safety of her children. She returns home in spring several months after her mother’s death. The past comes up in Helen’s memory in form of the haunting house, the recollections of the aunts with mother’s clothes, with the stories of her suffering and thus her invisible presence in the town. “...at every turn the sisters confront their doubled selves as adults and as the adolescents they were ten years earlier.” (20) Howells interprets Munro in this story as “a Gothic plot of female imprisonment and betrayal; it deals with the uncanny as it hovers around the emblematic Gothic fear that what is dead and buried may not be dead at all but may come back to haunt the living.” (20)

“The Peace of Utrecht” discusses the lived experience of Munro. Munro was the eldest of three children She had a sister five years younger to her and a younger brother. While Munro and her sister did look after their mother, they both eventually left home. The sisters in the story are their mother’s primary caregivers. there is no mention of father or any male member of the family. Amelia De Falco rightly establishes, care - giving can have long-lasting adverse effects on caregivers, and Munro has explored this theme in other stories too. According to De Falco, “Throughout her early

work, in stories like 'The Peace of Utrecht' [1960], 'The Ottawa Valley' (1974), 'Winter Wind' (1974), 'Spelling' (1978), and 'A Queer Streak' (1986), one finds care giving roles, young women saddled with the responsibility to care for older family members" (2012: 380). This is the situation both Maddy and Helen were in for several years before Maddy's "ten-years' vigil" alone with the mother (1998: 195). Having to care for their mother seems to have made the sisters love her, and each other, less.

Alice speaks of her feelings in the interview to Ross "...this guilt of negligence, of not attending to her echoes in "The Peace of Utrecht." She could hear mother's desperate cry for help and this haunted her for many years.

Then I paused ...I realized that I must have been waiting for my mother to call , from her couch in the dining -room, where she lay with blinds down in the summer heat,...I could not close the door behind me without hearing my mother's ruined voice call out to me, and feeling myself go heavy as I prepared to answer it.Calling *Who's there?*(198)

Her shouting, trembling voice, the cry for help gradually increased which they found difficult to attend to, they had to perform 'some of the trivial and unpleasant services endlessly required, or ...supply five minutes' (199) expediently cheerful conversation, ...with her demands increasing their caretaking became only a duty to be fulfilled devoid of any emotions, pity or affection. They felt trapped in the mother's sickly condition. They started planning to escape unpleasant situations 'we (199) These interruptions are described as mere parodies of normal life. Maddy had tricked her into a hospital for a check-up, but actually left her to stay where she would no longer have to care for the mother. When the mother tries to run away, she is caught and brought back to her room, where she is henceforth restrained to her bed.

Helen recalls her school days with mother's ill health as ' dim world of continuing disaster , of home' and describe her home as 'I want to ask her : is it possible that children growing up as we

did lose the ability to believe in - to be at home in-any ordinary and peaceful reality? Coral Ann Howells aptly compares the domestic world with battle as the titled story is. The Peace of Utrecht,” published in Munro's first short story collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), the title is suggestive of the domestic dissonance between the female members of a family with the disease affected mother being the centre of disharmony. The story is told in retrospect by the narrator Helen, who returns home to visit her older sister Maddy a few months after the death of their mother. There was no peace or happiness in the life of the adolescent sisters after their mothers' sickness. Their role was that of the keepers/attendant of the ever-increasing demands of the deteriorating mother. She was like a sickly child. “the most frightful parodies of love, in which she tried, through her creaking throat, to plead for kisses in coy pitiable childish tones” (270). The sisters perceive their mother's needs as indecent, because she has, due to her illness, lost all restraint: “the cry for help-undisguised, oh, shamefully undisguised and raw and supplicating – that sounded in her voice. They started considering it as urgency without any emotions ‘as one of those household sounds which must be dealt with, so that the worse may not follow.’” (198) The daughters were fed up with her increasing demands, doing unpleasant services throughout the day ‘grew cunning, unfailing in cold solicitude; ...took all emotion away from our dealings with her, as you might take away meat from a prisoner to weaken him till he died. (199) The sisters were now devoid of any feelings towards as Maddy says “Our Gothic Mother” I don’t keep trying to make her *human* anymore. Helen even describes her gothic looks. Helen says ‘our Gothic mother, with the cold appalling mask of the Shaking Palsy laid across her features, shuffling, weeping, devouring attention...eyes dead and burning, fixed inward on herself. (200). The Gothic atmosphere is hinted repeatedly in the story. Her first impression of her hometown introduces Jubilee as a self-absorbed place unwilling to deal with its darker sides: I drove up to the main street –a new service station, new stucco front on the Queen’s Hotel– and turned into the quiet, decaying side streets where old maids live, and have birdbaths and blue delphiniums in their

gardens. The big brick houses that I knew, with their wooden verandas and gaping, dark-screened windows, seemed to me plausible but unreal. (Munro 1968: 266-267) Katrin Brendt in "The Ordinary Terrors of Survival: Alice Munro and the Canadian Gothic" discussing the gothic in Alice Munro explains Gothic as the awareness of the indeterminate, obscure, and subconscious spheres of life and is expression of the hidden, ambivalent meanings and expression of fears beyond logic and rational understanding, and reminds its readers that such anxieties may lurk beneath the surface of everyday, ordinary experience. Consequently, her texts have been labelled as "Southern Ontario Gothic." 'Gothic writing, relates to the darker side of human existence, encompassing insanity, fear, cruelty, violence and sexuality. Beverly Rasporich relates directly to Gothic notions of fear and the unknown when she explores the small-town settings of Alice Munro's stories (136). The disease, she feels is disgusting in being "erratic and leisure in its progress. The daughters realized their bad fate, disease was a horror for them. But they could no more pity or be sympathetic towards mother as 'the demand on us was too great. Her theatricality humiliated us almost to death.'" (199) But her condition gradually deteriorated to that of a vegetable life. Her look has been described to a Gothic mother. (200) Her voice was not intelligible and inhuman. The desperation of the daughters for escaping increased. Their life was lost. Now they made a truce with the battle; Helen escaped and Maddy managed for ten years; but lost the peace in the battle. There was shimmering guilt, hatred, the talk of the town and for Maddy, a lonely life which was going to make her mad. Helen thought she needed a loving relationship (194) with the rural social bondages making it very difficult for them to proclaim their individuality.

the picture of her face which I carried in my mind seemed too terrible, unreal. similarly the complex strain of living with her, the feelings of hysteria...no exorcising here, says Maddy...we're not going to depress each other. so we haven't. (191) and also shows her love of her school. as it seemed to me I



could not acknowledge that we are not merely indifferent; at heart we reject each other ...(190)

Munro has also depicted the human potential for violence in "The Peace of Utrecht" The horrific situation shows a sick mother becoming such a trouble that the sisters become unsympathetic and cold towards such an extent that they become inhuman towards her. Helen escaped to establish her own life and Maddy after ten years of difficult life left her in hospital. There was humiliation, anger, impatience and disgust at this grotesque being, neither "intelligible" nor "quite human," that leads a "dim vegetable life." Time and again, however, the mother has brief periods of recovery in which her true self resurface. Maddy's impatience finally surfaced in her refusal to take her mother back home with her once she is in the hospital. Later they accepted that "the resources of love we had were not enough, the demand on us was too great; we were only children when the disease took hold of her" (270). The sisters suffered both physically and mentally while the mother was alive and also after her death. Being exhausted with caretaking they tried their way of escape and so had a terrible sense of guilt conscience. They also faced criticism for their action in Jubilee. They struggled hard to keep their mother as civilized, controlled, as tamed as possible. Yet the mother- daughter relationship takes a very ugly form. The duration and the difficulty of their increasing responsibility resulted in a hateful relationship. The obvious discrepancy between a rational approach and the lingering impact of disturbing impulses also seems to have inspired the title of the story. In a similar way, neither Helen's escape from Jubilee, nor Maddy's decision to put her mother in a hospital, gave the sisters the peace of mind they desired.

They are exasperated with the 'erratic' and 'leisurely' progress of the disease. Even if the mother becomes normal for a brief period, 'at the end of these periods of calm a kind of ravaging energy would come over her;...(200) she would behave in just the opposite way ;talking insistently, she would not be comprehensible, become more demanding , nerve-racking, more complaining ,creating an atmosphere of 'frenzy and frustration'. Daughters did

their best ten long years, sacrificing ten years of their youth trying to manage the sick mother with what they had understood her. Helen finds an old notebook in which she sees written, in her own handwriting, "The Peace of Utrecht, 1713, brought an end to the War of the Spanish Succession" (201). This reminded Helen has "a strong effect", triggering memories of high school and adolescence. The title is suggestive of the complex and disturbed situation in Europe of 1713. Helen and Maddy's emotional situation in Canada c.1960 is as *complex* as the political situation. Helen later says "that discouraging house" is all Maddy has left in Jubilee (195), and she also calls it "that house of stone." (199) Though Helen opens up with advice for Maddy. "Don't be guilty Maddy...Take your life, Maddy...Go away, don't stay here" and Maddy also confesses in the end, "But why can't I, Helen? Why can't I?" (210)

As an introspection through writing, the narrator analyses the circumstances which were painful to both the sisters and under what circumstances their attitude of love, attachment and sympathy towards their mother and towards each other changed. Maddy is firm in her voice when she says "I'm not guilty;" ... I couldn't go on ... I wanted my life." Coral Ann Howells discuss this situation as

...this is the time for breaking open of secrets when Maddy confesses the intolerable strain of looking after her mother and her longing for a life of her own, while Helen speaking out of her own guilt urges her sister to go away as she had done. but no peace is made. (23)

The once all-powerful mother remains omnipotent in her claims, which seem to know no bounds. The dual voices are the perspectives of the mature narrator, Helen and of the adolescent Helen. She tries to recall and judge every action of the past, the causes behind them and the consequence of such actions. Carrington demonstrates again and again that the process of understanding through language continues in Munro's work between published versions of her stories and we see the difficult

efforts on her part to control the uncontrollable. She maintains that “the most central and creative paradox of Munro’s fiction is its repeated but consciously ambivalent attempt to control what is uncontrollable, to split in half to control a suddenly split world. These internal and external splits produce the ‘intense ... moments of experience’ that pattern Munro’s stories.” (4-5)

Again we find the retrospective narrator and the daughter’s retrospective feelings in “The Friend of my Youth.” Munro dedicates the title story to the memory of her mother. This is one of the same stories which critics have described as with the autobiographical narrative. The story extends over a long period. In “Friend of My Youth” the narrator’s recurrent dream brings back her deceased mother, but the long forgotten pre-Parkinson’s disease mother, the mother who was not a burden:

I recovered then what in waking life I had lost – my mother’s liveliness of face and voice before her throat muscles stiffened and a woeful, impersonal mask fastened itself over her features. How could I have forgotten this, I would think in the dream – the casual humor she had, not ironic but merry, the lightness and impatience and confidence? (4)

The mother-daughter conflict also emerges in the form of tension between Ada and Del where Ada like many mothers desire to vicariously live out her own relinquished dreams via her daughter’s education and escape, while at the same time expecting Del to be accepted in the social structure and so embrace motherhood like other women of the rural society of Jubilee. Del, however, is torn between the two: the fear of becoming like her independent mother and the desire to be loved and to conform to the social expectations of the community. Thus Del in her adolescence avoids the image of her mother and therefore develops a rigid tendency to develop her own will and way. Ada herself was an intelligent student, a strong personality who could carve out her own fate in the face of every hardships and criticisms. Del had the image of her mother as an all powerful person. But with her

growing knowledge of the world and mother's out of the world ways which brought her the criticisms of the society, made Del determined to be different from mother and be accepted in the society although she also cherished the same dreams and ambitions as of her mother. She grew critical of her. Del is unable to disengage from her mother's influence as their 'personalities', as Rich would argue, 'seem dangerously to blur and overlap' (236). Del has both bitterness and longing towards her mother's intrusion into her life. "Her concern about my life," she says, "which I needed and took for granted, I could not bear to have expressed." (223) In her journey to adulthood, Del struggles to define herself without suffering the same ostracism as her mother. There is ambivalence for both mother and daughter concerning freedom, education, sexuality and love. The grown-up narrator acknowledges her mother's hardship and understands her craving for knowledge. Ada as an adolescent had defied her father, walked to town, organized accommodation and returned to school. Del, in her maturity, salutes her audacity:

Oh, if there could be a moment out of time, a moment when we could choose to be judged, naked as can be, beleaguered, triumphant, then that would have been the moment for her. Later on comes compromise and error, perhaps; there she is absurd and unassailable. (98)

She was helped in this endeavor by a 'community of women' (web) to facilitate Ada's independence. Grandma Seeley provided accommodation, a job and basic clothing; Miss Rush provided love, piano tuition and a positive sense of self; Fern provides friendship and fun. Ada becomes visible in the community through letters to the paper on issues important to women. Munro creates world where every woman understands the plight of other women and thus readily supplies the necessary support, creating a 'female community'. Similarly, in "Runaway" Sylvia created a whole support network for Carla. Del realizes her love of reading like that of her mother and also decides on her future.

A time came when all the books in the library in the town Hall were not enough for me, Nothing we had come up against in our lives equaled in importance those examinations,..to say we studied does not half describe the training we put ourselves into;..it was not just high marks we wanted ,not just to win the scholarships and get into university; it was the highest possible marks: glory, glory, the top of the pinnacled A's, security at last.(227)

But both her mother and Del herself find their dreams about Del failing. Mother is disappointed and finds herself helpless. Still, she does not give up her search for a good future prospect to move of the small town life through the job prospects. Del realizes that she has been sabotaged by love, and it was “not likely I would get a scholarship which for years I and everybody else had been counting on, to carry me away from Jubilee.” (272)

Del like her mother is enthralled and enchanted by the vast world of knowledge in the encyclopaedias. Her pleasure like her mother's. they are also one of the significant literary sources for Del. As James Carscallen puts it in his book *The Other Country: Patterns in the Writing of Alice Munro*, “Del finds the encyclopaedias a treasury of stories and pictures; and stories and pictures have their own kind of wisdom, if we can take them in the right way.” (378) Del remarks that “I loved their sedate dark-green bidding, the spidery, reticent-looking gold letters on their spines. They might open to show me a steel engraving of a battle, taking place on the moors, say, with a castle in the background, or in a harbour of Constantinople. (55) Addie's behaviour was taken after her mother who, though never forgave her mother for making her sell the Bibles to farmers, asks her daughter, many years later, to do the same with the famous encyclopaedias. Del's grandmother was called “a religious fanatic”, and due to Addie's behaviour, she becomes something close to “an educational activist”.

The third factor which I would bring to discuss the mother daughter relationship is the effect of patriarchal society. As theorised by Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering*

motherhood is the upholder of existing values of patriarchal authority and female objectivization. The later ambivalent love/hate relationship of Del and Ada is contextualized with these patriarchal contextualizing influences and masculinity norms.

Ada herself did not confirm to the social values. She faced scrutiny, criticism and was ostracized for nonconformity. ‘...is your mother going on the road much these days?’ She was criticized by Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace “...Not much time for ironing when she has to go out on the road.”(72) So, Del tried to defend her mother

I felt the weight of my mother’s eccentricities, of something absurd and embarrassing about her- the aunts would just show me a little at a time-land on my coward’s shoulders. I did want to repudiate her... at the same time I wanted to shield her. She would never have understood how she needed shielding...they wore dark cotton dresses with fresh, perfectly starched and ironed... (73)

Neither the aunts nor the daughter understood her struggle against fate, the economic downfall “The war was still on then. Farmers were making money at last...” (73) She tried hard to be self dependent and to support her family. She had moved to Jubilee leaving behind the father on the Flats Road to get herself and the children a prestigious life. She was laughed at by Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace “All by herself, stuck on the Jericho Road! Poor Ada! but the mud on her, we had to laugh!” (73)

Her struggle against fate and her efforts were ridiculed instead of being appreciated. The worst part is when her daughter also does not understand her and refuses the least support she was able to give her in selling the encyclopedia. It was a challenge to sell encyclopedias to the farmers who had dreams of having refrigerator after recovering from the financial crunch of 1930. Ada, however was trying to bank it as precious product for the children in which Del was to set an example for the worldwide knowledge gained through these books. The Flats Roads was a very lonely, aloof place.

Ada emerged as the all powerful mother. She carried out all the responsibilities, that of a father and mother for the children. She was driving for selling encyclopedias, purchasing favourites for the children and taking care of their happiness. For them she learnt driving a car, tolerated the bad roads, managed every hardship but did not get due recognition even by her daughter. Ada herself was a good student was awarded 'Laocoon inkwell award for highest mark and general proficiency when she graduated from highschool.' (Lives 103)

Adolescent mother daughter has been presented in Munro more as critical relation than one with love and attachment. However, this was narrated from the perspective of an older narrator with sympathy, understanding and deep sense of guilt, which reminds us of the remark of Suzanne Juhasz that writing is a process of healing the past. The narrator in "Baptizing" feels guilty of her past actions.

But she was not well .at first she had been plagued by a whole series of uncommon ailments...she kept going to the doctor.... what was really happening was a failure of energy, a falling back, that nobody would have looked for she would still sometimes write a letter to the paper; she was trying to teach herself astronomy. But sometimes she would go and lie on her bed and call me to put a quilt over her. I would always do it carelessly...Then he would say, "Kiss Mother." I would drop one dry stingy kiss on her temple.... I preferred to be myself. (201)

Munro has also depicted the inquisitiveness and the curiosities of an adolescence particularly with the religious practices and beliefs. She observes 'my parents went to church seldom where their children were baptized. Whereas her father seemed to tolerate the system with 'an air of courtesy and forbearance, her mother, Del recalls her quest to find religion, various theological texts serve her as the means to achieve her goals. They are like guidelines, but they never cease to confuse her

with their theological points of view on life and faith of the religious person. Del Jordan argues about faith and religion with her mother and her younger brother Owen. Addie Jordan's opinion on that subject is unfortunately of no help for her daughter. Due to Del's grandmother, Addie lost her faith in her early years and started blaming religion for her unhappiness and the pain that she experienced in her childhood and adolescence. The whole episode with the Bibles, as Addie claims, "cured me of religion for life" (LGW 64). Because of the mistakes made by her grandmother, "a religious fanatic" – as Addie calls her – Del suffers, because her mother, trying too hard not to repeat those errors, fell into the opposite, yet similarly destructive pattern of behaviour (LGW 63). She is an atheist, who could not help her daughter understand and show her the way through that confusion. She wishes Del would completely abandon this quest. Her actions do not produce desired results, because her teenage daughter is in need of some answer. God was made by man! Not the other way around!... Man at a lower and blood thirstier [sic] stage of his development than he is at now, we hope. Man made God in his own image. I've argued that with ministers. I'll argue it with anybody. (89)

Del's opinion of her mother gradually changed. She could not satisfy her curiosity about her mother's wisdom and she will eventually start to link with her creative imagination. She is one curious soul and she is eager to discover new spheres in her life at different stages of her development. Establishing one's beliefs is one of the steps in becoming a self-confident woman and a writer. She is curious of God, she believes in Him, yet she is in need of some kind of evidence for His existence. She contemplates His mystery. Could there be God not contained in the churches' net at all, not made manageable by any spells and crosses, God real, and really in the world, and alien and unacceptable as death? Could there be God amazing, indifferent, beyond faith? (LGW 115) Her inner inquisitiveness leads her to many congregations in Jubilee; she slowly realizes, however, that the answers are impossible to receive.

Thus, there was the mother-daughter conflict with regard to religion. Mother was too extrovert in keeping her differences with the society to herself. I was afraid that at any moment she might



jump up and challenge something. The hymns she ostentiously did not sing. ...of the social norm her mother 'never closed her eyes in the church and 'barely inclined her head. She would sit looking all around, cautious but unabashed, like an anthropologist taking note of the behavior of the primitive tribe. She listened to the sermon bolt upright, bright-eyed, skeptically chewing at her lipstick; ... (106)

The girl in her adolescence had understood her mother's rebel attitude and that she was being criticized for this in Jubilee. Del herself becomes determined to form a different identity of herself from her mother. She regularly went to church, and ensured that everyone had watched her

At first, it was probably to bother my mother...and to make myself interesting ...I hoped that people would be intrigued and touched by my devoutness and persistence, knowing my mother's beliefs or non- beliefs, as they did.

By the time she was twelve years old her "reasons had changed or solidified. I wanted to settle the question of God." (106) Del had now developed a strong inclination towards the mysteries of religion. "God had always been a possibility for me; He was a necessity... but I wanted reassurance, proof that He actually was there. That was what I came to church for, but could not mention to anybody." (107) She started reading religious books, regularly visited church with the 'unspeakable hope' that God would display Himself...which she believed that she must 'rigidly contain this hope... (107) This adolescents' curiosity took her to different churches to understand the mysteries of religion. The question of whether God existed or not never came up in Church. I did think of taking it to another Church, to the Anglican Church. '

Del's struggle as an adolescent is both of rootedness and of independence. The desperate desire for individual identity, freedom from patriarchy, makes Del, like many other young people, ambiguously struggle to move herself away from her home community; the small Ontario town of Jubilee, both the mother

and the daughter realized, as Mary Wollstonecraft had remarked in *A Vindication* that "I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists. I wish to persuade women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings are only the objects of pity, and that kind of love which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt." (87)

Del as an adolescent is curious about the existence of God, she wanted and tried to understand the Anglican views on the suffering of Christ, but was disappointed when at a Good Friday service, the minister does not say much about Jesus's question on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" believing she could identify with someone who faced despair and defeated it (Lives 122). Later, after she has given up on reaching God through organized religion, she wonders, "Could there be a God not in the churches' not at all, not made manageable by any spells and crosses, God real, and really in the world, and alien and unacceptable as death? Could there be a God amazing, indifferent, beyond faith?" (128). Nora Forster Stovel has commented on how the twelve-year old "Del tours the churches of Jubilee in search of God, but she discovers social stratification instead" (2). Munro gives us a glimpse of the social and religious stratification. Del's is undermined by experience, questioning, and life's possibilities. After considering other possible churches, she is drawn to the small Anglican church by its theatrical rituals" She longs for more safety, more permanence, than her home life affords (111).

The character of Del evolves as a typical Munroian woman who could consent to sexual venture against her mother's warnings, as an adventure. As an adolescent she wanted to try sex as Jerry Storey remarked, "wouldn't it be educational? I have never seen a real live naked woman." Both of them were intellectuals and competitors but could never love lustily. still wanted to experience and experiment with what they had read about sex.

Del grew critical of her mother who "would publicly campaign for birth control would never even think she needed to

talk to me, so firmly was she convinced that sex was something no woman – no intelligent woman- would ever submit to unless she had to.” (222) But at the same time, she thought her mother decent and hated Jerry’s mother’s ‘indecent practicality’ I thought it quite offensive for a mother to mention intimacies a girl might be having with her own son.” (222) However, Del fell in love at the most crucial period of her career. She was deep in love with Garnet though she found no match intellectually or emotionally but there was the terrible attraction and lust only. “I had to review, could not let go of, those great gifts...sex seemed to me all surrender – not the woman’s to the man but the person’s to the body, an act of pure faith, freedom in humility.” (239) Despite her mother’s warning of her future prospects she could not focus on her studies for fulfilling her dream of reading in a university. She confessed “Nothing that could be said by us would bring us together; words were our enemies.... this was the knowledge that is spoken of as “only sex” or “physical attraction”.

With all the mother –daughter nuances the adolescents of Munro grow up to build their personalities and realize in retrospection the love, sacrifice of their mothers. Del does take after her mother, whether she wants it or not. She understands that she has the same inclination towards intellectual achievement like her mother and avoids the decorative behaviour of her contemporary girls. Sue Thomas points out, “Del thinks of her artistically and intellectually aspiring mother as romantic/sexual failure.” (111) Del’s mother who is herself ahead of her contemporaries, though dreams of a better life for Del, also wants her to be accepted in society. Del’s mother shows a very different aspect of woman from either Madeleine or the aunts. The world of intellect, reason and the arts is her muse, and because she doesn’t conform to any acceptable ideal of motherhood in a small town is a chronic embarrassment and a social humiliation to a conforming Del.

“I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists. I wish to persuade women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of

weakness, and that those beings are only the objects of pity, and that kind of love which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt."

Del wants to avoid her mother's fate and her attitudes, which embrace learning of any kind and deny sexual experience. Yet, at the end Del will eventually realize, as Martha Gimenez writes that conceiving motherhood as a taken-for-granted dimension of the so-called women's normal adult role has always been one of the key sources of women's oppression. (296)and therefore they find that education is the key to their freedom .Betty Friedan, writes for women in *The Feminine Mystique*

The key to the trap is, of course, education. The feminine mystique has made higher education for women seem suspect, unnecessary and even dangerous. But I think that education, and only education, has saved, and can continue to save, American women from the greater dangers of the feminine mystique. (377)

The trust between mother and the daughter and right guidance through education for future life, thus plays the most crucial role in the mother daughter relationship.

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