

"the complete woman": matrophobia and its effect on the mother daughter relations...

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



What is a "complete woman?" The thought-provoking question opens the door to matrophobia, a term Adrienne Rich coined in her work *Of Woman Born*. Rich stated that matrophobia is the fear a woman feels of becoming her own mother, and that "the mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman," (236) and also that "the institution of motherhood finds all mothers more or less guilty of having failed their children when they are expected to create the perfect daughter" (223).

Women's lives have been touched, throughout history, by various events and life altering thought processes, such as patriarchal power, feminism weaving its way into numerous ages-fading and reemerging, the psychological analysis of a mother's relationship with her daughter(s) versus her relationship with her son(s), and the epiphany of matrophobia. Even with these historic markers on the "timeline of woman," what makes a complete woman? Is she considered "natural" or "unnatural" when suppressing her "wild side," and who is she suppressing for? Is this a sarcastic undertone, created by man to continue to make woman "demure and delicate?" Is it a title woman seeks to attach to herself, yet it is hanging above the "glass ceiling," never to be obtained, only merely admired?

The following body of work, along with various questions in conjunction with the intertwining topics focused upon, explores the possible beginnings for matrophobia, by examining some of America's history with the patriarchal view of woman, portions of feminism by way of the sexual revolution of the 1830s to the 1960's, the psychological/sociological viewpoint of the mother/daughter relationship with comparison fragments of the mother/son

bond, and the voice of Adrienne Rich and the defining aspects of matrophobia, to bring us to conclusion.

The Male “ Attitude” Towards Women

The male “ attitude” towards women, historically, has ranged from having to protect and provide for the “ frail, demure creature” to the destructive tone of domination through sexual relations and through labeling, sterilizing and controlling the female body, through way of obstetrics and gynecology.

Woman, in her state of virginity, is viewed as “ pure,” and if “ unknown” before coming into the state of marriage, she is considered “ a good woman” (Fiedler, 67). This stance of man’s view of woman came to public attention with Samuel Richardson’s novel, *Clarissa*, in 1740; this was one of three novels for Richardson at the time. Women were long placed on a pedestal, made to appear fragile and in need of protection; fainting spells were the sign of a pure woman of the gentile class. Men were believed to be pursuers of the “ chaste maiden,” that men carried a sort of “ guilt” in treating women merely as sexual objects to be obtained and dominated once the demure creature submitted to her husband or lover. Yet even with this “ guilt,” men continued and still continue to this day, the pursuit and domination of women. Calvinism teachings focused on sexual union to be only for the married couple, for procreation purposes and to avoid the sin of copulation on Sundays (Fiedler, 79). Only “ fallen women” could enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, as “ good women” were not supposed to be in touch with their sensual feelings.

James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* portrays two female characters, Cora and Alice, sisters on a quest to go be with their father-reason unknown. Cooper sets the sisters as polar opposites, one dark haired and sultry, while the other is perceived as a fair maiden of innocence to the realities of life. Cora is the stronger of the two but with the implication that her raven colored hair and determined spirit are two marks against her character, making her less desirable to protect after being conquered by man. Alice, the fair and fragile girl, is man's desirable and obtainable goal, the woman a man perceives as a "good girl." Cooper had used this portrayal of women in several of his novels, showing a balance between light and dark, good and evil. A fair and fragile appearing woman is considered more desirable to obtainment and protecting, while the dark haired woman who possesses an air of strength and independence is seen as a woman to pursue, conquer and toss aside because man fears her power.

With this kind of labeling, how does a woman feel when a man views her like this, to be seen as a sex object, someone to be dominated and controlled? To be seen and treated like an object to be pursued and owned is degrading, and fosters the growth of low self-esteem; that low level of self-esteem is passed down to her daughter when she becomes a mother. Does she feel like the weaker sex because the demands of being "demure" place expectations on her holding in her ability to be "complete?" Expectations can cause undue stress and scarring of the psyche, which in turn, can be damaging throughout a woman's life, from childhood to adulthood, especially in the realm of being a mother. Why is a woman seen as "dirty" or "sinful"

because of being in touch with the fullness of being a woman, being sensual and aware of her body? A woman unaware of her natural senses, otherwise known as urges, comes upon a time in her life when she begins to question who she really is; to the people around her and ultimately, to herself. It's as if being naïve opens the door to shed light on the reality of her situation, causing the woman to awake from the illusion of what is bestowed upon her.

If men have always been considered the dominant sex, how does one explain the importance of the mother's role of shaping civilization? If all people, including men, come into the world by way of woman, why is he is fear of her power as a woman? Women carry a child in their bodies for nine months, becoming the " doorway" for new life to be received into this world, and then are responsible for nurturing, feeding, comforting and educating the child she holds in her arms, soothing its cries when hungry, wet, or experiencing colic or teething pains. Women have been subjected to men's " order or sense of stability from the home (Barker-Benfield, 48). Yet these same women are the ones running the household while the men are away from home, being part of the workforce, fighting wars, or at times, absent all together.

Man's obsessive need to be in control of women led to the practice of obstetrics and gynecology, which to this day, is primarily male-dominant; only in the midst of the 20th century had midwives begun to fight and take back their rights as caretakers of pregnant women in need of nurturing, prenatal care, and labor and delivery; this movement brings with it a sense of " naturalism," or the desire of having a more natural way of receiving a

child into the world. It was during the 1850s that the AMA (American Medical Association) Committee on Education, comprised of male doctors, decided that exposure of a woman's genitals was "unnecessary" and that knowledge of this part of the body, for the doctor, could be obtained by using charts, descriptions, and sense of feel under a sheet (Barker-Benfield, 61 & 62). If midwives were to continue to practice, they had to obtain the proper education, according to the AMA.

The Bellevue School for Midwives, based in New York, was established in 1911 and thrived for thirty years before it was closed; this due in part to the laws passed to make midwifery illegal for a time in America. Midwives were under scrutiny as to who they could take on for patients to assist in labor and delivery, and as regulations for continuing their practice became more and more strict, more midwives were pushed into assisting women of "low class"; poorly educated if at all, immigrants who didn't speak English, and black women. Eventually, laws were being passed to outlaw midwives and their "dirty and dangerous" practice of delivering babies (Barker-Benfield, 63 & 64). To add continued insult to the midwifery community, laws began to pass, pushed by obstetricians, to "outlaw" the practice of midwifery, and by the 1930s, midwives began to "vanish" (Barker-Benfield, 70). Women were being pushed into becoming more the doctor's assistant, who is best known as the nurse.

Midwifery has made a major comeback, especially with the 60s, 70s, and 80s. Midwives still find themselves subject to a doctor's arrogance that "he knows best," even with advances in the medical community and knowledge

that midwives have a lower infant mortality rate and post labor/delivery complications for both mother and child. Some medical institutions are seeing more doctors working side by side with midwives in the private practice setting but when it comes to the stage of labor and delivery, the midwives find themselves on their own with the mother and nursing staff unless " something goes wrong" or the mother is perceived to have " labored too long and is in need of a cesarean section to deliver her baby into the world.

Women were also becoming the experimental or surgical stage for male doctors to perform outrageous " necessary repairs" to female genitalia. Marion Sims, a surgeon of the early to mid 1800s, was considered one of the first doctors interested in performing surgery on women, specifically sexual organs. His first patients being slaves in the South, he traveled from plantation to plantation, performing, failing and continuing, numerous surgeries to correct vesico-vaginal fistula-a tear or numerous tears in the walls of the vagina during parturition (Barker-Benfield, 91-93). In the 1840s, he opened a small " hospital," a small building behind his home, and kept three black female slaves in his " clinic" to perform the surgeries on. He spent four years working on these women, failing and trying over again and again. One particular slave, Anarcha, he tried and failed thirty times (Barker-Benfield, 96). It wasn't until just before he went to New York to practice medicine that he perfected " the greatest surgical achievement," the silver suture; even with this accomplishment, he continued to work on his " patients" to perfect the procedure. His patients often assisted him in his

surgeries, therefore were not subjected to sedation and a "pain free" surgical procedure.

This practice of surgical experimentation is barbaric, and at the time that it was being explored, the women chosen for the surgical practice were not women in a position to say no or refuse to be "guinea pigs" for Sims. Black women had no "voice" in the South, and became the easiest form of "surgical stage" for the times. Sims moved into New York's medical scene in 1853, and his new patients became part of the hospital he founded in New York; by 1870, he was performing more barbaric procedures, such as clitoridectomies and female castrations but sedation and more sterile, comfortable settings were available to these women, a contrast to his earlier patients (Barker-Benfield, 96-97).

Women had been dominated by men merely by class, pushed into silence and being viewed as objects to behold, pursue, possess and dominate, and now women were being subjugated by men in the medical profession; these men were convincing women that repairs to their genitalia could be performed to correct any abnormalities, any damage resulting from the dangerous venture of childbearing, that diseases they had contracted from their husbands (which was never disclosed but passed off as the woman's disease) could be treated and in many cases, especially women of color, low class and immigrants, were subjected to sterilization methods. Sterilization was performed, with or without consent, often being done under the guise of another surgical procedure or never disclosed to the patient before or after operation was completed. This ushered in a time of eugenics, which lurked

in the medical community as " necessary surgical repairs." Women were subjected to man's control through medicine, with or without consent of what exactly was being done to their bodies. Why would a woman submit her body to science for experimentation, other than under the guise of improvement and medical treatment?

Women had long been treated as objects, convinced by man that they had no status, no say over their own bodies, and that the life they were given to live was that of suffering and submission. To appear as fragile, almost broken at times, was a sign of a " good woman" that needed a man's protection, that he could " fix" whatever was ailing her. In the world of obstetrics and gynecology, man became the " savior" with surgery, knowledge because of his educational background-some doctors had very little college education and were performing surgeries more out of experimentation than for medical treatment of a woman's body-was what made the words he spoke the right thing for a woman to have to hear, to have to submit to.

The sexual revolution adds another twist in the formation of matrophobia, adding to the already present " attitude" of men towards women, its beginnings in the 1830s until the second phase, the counterrevolution, which was taking place during the Nazi occupation of Germany and the rise of the Soviet Union, 1930-1960. (Millett). Men were beginning to find themselves being challenged by women, and it was evident that women were no longer willing to put up with the treatment they endured for centuries prior. The patriarchal view was that women were undermining authority, the male

authority over women and their bodies, their voices, and their thoughts (Millett, 62).

The Victorian times and the first phase of the sexual revolution, 1830-1930, saw the beginnings of sexual freedom for both men and women; women had never been allowed this kind of freedom before this time in history; only men had been allowed to come and go and treat a woman's body as a sexual object to obtain and discard at his convenience and measure of pleasurable satisfaction. There appeared to be a rise in illegitimate births, changing the standard of morality and the image of the "fallen woman" (Millett, 63).

During the second phase, the continued practice of sexual freedom for women was coupled with the birth control pill, enabling more freedom without the consequences of illegitimate children or the decision to have an abortion.

The 1830s also ushered in the lobbying for women's rights and the formation of political stages for women to express that they had rights. In 1848, the beginning of the political organization of women formed in Seneca Falls, New York; this marked a seventy-two year struggle, better known as the Woman's Movement (Millett, 66). Yet, with this victory, rights were bestowed upon women only fragments at a time, as men did not want to give women power of any kind, even after giving into the fight for women's recognition for making decisions and not having to depend on men for security. The right to property with her husband's death became a large area of focus during the 1880s, as women fought to secure property, wages and children; beforehand, if a husband died, a woman and her children could lose their

home and either become homeless or be forced into servitude to ensure survival (Millett, 68 & 69). Women were no longer willing to accept being thrown aside because a man wasn't present in the home to be "head of household" or the protector and provider for the family.

Education became another pressing matter during this time, and in 1837, Mount Holyoke was open to women students. Numerous colleges in the northeastern United States continued to open afterwards, with such colleges as Vassar in 1865, Smith and Wellesley in 1875, and Radcliffe-the Harvard Annex-in 1882 (Millett, 75). Employment accompanied this fight, as women were coming out of the home to work in places such as factories or moving into the professional world after completion of their college educational pursuits. Why not for a woman to become a doctor or pursue the possibilities of law, perhaps owning her own business, such as a mercantile, instead of being subjected to what man determined was her "place" in the world? Women for the longest time had been subject to lower standards of education than men, often becoming school teachers upon completion of high school education-if having attended that far-and/or becoming housewives after a short time in the teaching profession. Once a housewife, the expectation of becoming a mother would rise, as it has continued to do so throughout time.

The first phase ended, or rather moved into, the second phase, the counterrevolution, through reform, and the radical transformation with the models of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union took its place in history. How the institutions of marriage and children would be altered significantly and

the urge to eradicate such things as prostitution, venereal disease, coercive marital unions, and involuntary parenthood would come into place (Millett, 157). Historically, eradication of people with disabilities, different cultures- Jews, Poles, and even low class Germans were subject to concentration camps and often times, gas chambers, just to name a couple of many people who were subject to the laws of the Nazi party's occupation of Germany.

The Woman's Movement didn't take place in Germany until after the first decade of the twentieth century. It wasn't until 1928 that feminism was in full force, which has begun five years prior to the Nazi party coming into power (Millett, 159). Yet by 1934, women were being removed from their professions of status and being placed in low-paid occupations, per the Nazi party (Millett, 162). Women were once again viewed as "breeding grounds" for the coming generations, and had no place for women in war, much less in professions where they had a voice and displayed power of any kind, such as college professors or women that were part of the woman's movement. Women once again, became nurses and teachers, while men were given the higher status of employment, until war broke out and men were pulled into the field of battle. Who was left behind to provide for the household: the woman, once again.

As if the historical markers of the revolution were not enough for women to have to carry, much like a burden not easily shouldered, male writers, such as Henry Miller, D. H. Lawrence, and Norman Mailer, began to openly degrade women through the vehicle of their writings. Miller's piece, *Sexus*, which was published in the 1940s, first in Paris and outlawed in America until

1965, for its racy contents. His reference to his affair with a friend's wife was detailed, and marked her as a "slut," "a woman asking for it" (Millett, 7). Once again, woman is placed in a position of being dominated by man, becoming his object to be pursued, dominated and then treated as if she did something wrong to "deserve" the treatment he bestows upon her for being "seductive." Such writings portrayed women as nothing more than a slave that would perform according to the master; he had control over her body, and would take brutal control when she appeared to be enjoying the "passion" bestowed upon her or she appeared to suddenly "gain an upper hand" in providing pleasure to the man who placed demands upon her to perform.

Is this a correlation to the "fallen woman?" Men have been in pursuit of controlling women for centuries, and even with what has been covered so far, the next threshold for man to attempt to cage the "wild woman" is the field of psychology by examining her abilities as mother to her children, examining her relationship with her daughter versus her son.

The Mother/Daughter and Mother/Son Relationship

Women have always been viewed as the "mother" when it comes to parenting. Yes, women nurture a child in the womb for nine months, receive the new life into this world, and they become the primary caregiver by introducing socialization and continued nurturing while the child grows. A woman can "mother" a child, even if it is not her own but cannot "father" a child; this is a man's part in the child's life (Chodorow, 11). Mothering, or the

nurturing that a woman provides for a child, is considered "natural" for the woman to fulfill as a duty of being a woman (Chodorow, 14). But what is it exactly that sets the relationship differences for a mother's relationship with her daughter versus her relationship with her son? Is the daughter an extension of her mother, while the son is part of the mother until he reaches the age in which he goes out into the world as a man? If so, does the daughter have the ability to go out and find her own identity without looking to her mother for "right way" to be a woman? Will she view how her mother has lived as a possible outcome to submit to man or will she use that viewpoint to do the opposite of what she has experienced growing up, watching her mother be submissive to her father; a woman in silence because silence makes her a "good woman."

Freud and Fliess made analytical conclusions, based on observations, of the differences between the mother/daughter and mother/son relationships. Freud was famous for applying the Oedipus complex to relationships, especially in regards to the mother/son relationship but also applied it to the mother/daughter relationship, terming it the "preoedipal relationship" (Chodorow, 95). Freud felt that because girls discovered by the age of three, that they lacked a penis, and so did their mother, the mother becomes a rival and the father a desired object; the rival view is because the mother has a closer relationship to the father, the desired object that has a penis-the missing anatomy for a woman (Chodorow, 94). "Penis envy" seems to cover the continue struggle man has to want to gain control of woman, continuing

the saga of the need for conquest and domination, this time through psychological "warfare."

There is consistent reference to a man's anatomy as being the source of power when it comes to the differences between the sexes. If a young girl realizes her difference from her father and sometimes, even her brothers, does she view herself as less of a person because of missing anatomy?

Woman possesses the power to nurture life before it is received into the world, and with the history of man's accomplishments with creating machines, advancement in technology, and even putting man on the moon, portrays his fear of woman's power to create and sustain life within the womb; yet she is the way in which we all come into the world. Man is created and comes through woman, as does woman herself.

Freud continued with his point of view by pointing out three "major features" of the preoedipal phase of the daughter with her mother and their relationship with each other. First, he believed attachment to exist until the knowledge of the absence of a penis; typically three to five years old. Secondly, he felt that the attachment between mother and daughter was dramatically intense. And last, the attachment to the father came into place due to the fact that "father" had the penis the daughter was devoid of; her relationship changing with her father from obsession because of his penis to wanting a child with him (Chodorow, 94, 95-96). Man is now dictating to woman, regardless of her age or understanding of the difference between the sexes of her parents, what she is or is not thinking or feeling in regards to what she has physically and what appears to be "absent."

Freud viewed the mother/son relationship within the context of the Oedipus complex to be simple: the father becomes a rival to the son because of his (father) relationship to the mother, thus creating a jealous feeling on part of the son. In correlation to the Oedipus myth, the son wants to do away with the father to have possession of the mother. It's as if the possession of woman is passed down from father to son, from one generation of man to another, without verbal content being present. Why do men continue to feel as if women are objects to possess, even in the developmental stages of human life? Is this a genetic handing down of divide and conquer to obtain control and power over another person, especially a man over a woman? And yet, there seems to be no problem present with this situation; it is viewed as the normal developmental stages of a man's life. Possession of woman begins at an early age, and appears to be encouraged, if not subconsciously, by the father.

Mothers are the primary caregiver, while the child is en utero and after birth; fathers are considered someone who comes into the picture at a later time. A mother wants what is best for her children at all times but finds herself in an interesting situation when it comes to her daughter. A mother wants to keep her daughter close, to protect her from the dangers of the world and what she may have experienced growing up but wants at the same time, for her daughter to grow and experience adult life (Chodorow, 135). Such a " tug of war" within the mind of the mother reflects on her relationship with her daughter, and ambivalence becomes part of their relationship with each other; thus, they react to each other's behavior directed towards one

another. A daughter can feel confused by such actions at times, " Mother wants me to stay close to her so that no harm comes to me but she still wants me to grow up and become a woman; how can I do that without separating myself from her at some point?" Chodorow made the following statement in regards to this friction between mother and daughter.

" The mother's ambivalence, too, is apt to manifest itself partly by an exaggerated (because guilty) tenderness, and partly in open hostility. In either case the danger arises that the daughter, instead of finding the path away from the mother towards men, remains tied to the mother. Coldness on the mother's part may, because of the child's unappeased love for her, prevent the requisite loosening of the bond between them. The child will still eternally seek, even when grown up, for a mother-substitute, and bring a childish, immature love to the relationship. Yet on the other hand, excessive tenderness-since it allows for no discharge of hostile feelings- keeps the child in a perpetual emotional slavery to the mother, hemmed in by potential guilt." (Chodorow, 135)

Because of the mother's experience growing up, she bestows upon her daughter what was bestowed upon her. She loves her daughter and wants her to grow up to be an individual, to be stable in her relationships with others and to experience independence yet, at the same time, doesn't want her daughter to move away from her, either in physical or emotional distance. She discovers that her daughter moves away from her emotionally at some time in her life, that she may form attachments with friends or even

mothers of her friends, forming critical viewpoints of her mother and her family (Chodorow, 137).

In the situation where relationships with men or other women have failed, a mother may turn to her daughter or son for fulfillment. A son is sometimes seen as a substitute for the missing husband, taking on an assertive stance and having to show very little to no emotion outwardly. A daughter dangerously becomes a mother figure, and confusion and questioning as to who the child is and who the mother is happens (Chodorow, 212). If a girl grows up without a father present in the family setting and she becomes a mother herself, there may be difficulty in separating themselves from their children, therefore creating an element of "you are me-I am you."

Relationships between a mother and her daughter, where the mother attempts to live her life through her daughter, can have life long affects for the daughter. A daughter may come to resent her mother for such behavior, such as becoming involved in the matters of a relationship the daughter may be having with a man, being critical of the man and his actions, placing expectations of how the man should and should not be treating her daughter; as if she is voicing her own inability to accept the behavior bestowed upon her by her own husband or men she has had relationships with. If a girl becomes a rape victim, at times the mother sees the daughter as the source of the problem as to why such injustice has been visited upon her body, "You've brought shame to this family because of what happened to you." If a daughter branches out on her own to live the single life without a man present, is there something wrong with her, will she ever find

happiness with a man if she remains alone? What if she chooses to attend college and seek higher education; is she going to have time in her life to become a "good wife" to a man and possibly enter into the institution of motherhood?

Matrophobia and the voice of a Mother

Adrienne Rich gives voice to what it is to become a mother, how a woman changes with this "rite of passage." She sites her own experience as a woman, who after getting married, becomes a mother and in procession, to three boys. *Of Woman Born* opens with the knowledge that all life is born of woman, and that a woman's status as "bearer of children" has been solidified into hard fact for her life (Rich, foreword). To understand Rich's epiphany of matrophobia, personal accounts of her life lead into the discovery and definition of this interesting phenomenon.

Her diary accounts speak of a blissful feeling of love for her children but in an instant, the need to expel anger because of the child's needs. Is this normal behavior for woman with her child? To love a child unconditionally is a selfless act but seems to come with consequences. To selflessly give of one's self without receiving in return can frustrate a person, especially a woman. Women have been conditioned for generations, to give of themselves and to not ask, demand, or expect anything in return. To place one's needs second is necessary at times but it seems that those very needs don't always fall to second place to be picked back up at a later time to be indulged upon; most often, a woman is expected to "forget" about her own

needs to continue to give without complaint. How is it for a woman to be expected to love and to give all the time without feeling like she's missing something? Rich would feel anger rise within her if she tried to give time to her writing, knowing that her children were in another room, playing amongst themselves, and somehow with intuitive knowledge, would seek her out for affection and taking her away from her work.

Women are extended the invitation to want more for their lives, to include careers and college educational pursuits, yet the "dangling carrot" does not distract from the societal expectations of the woman to become a mother and to give to her children, and her husband as well, without complaint.

Women are expected to be the caregiver and nurturer, regardless of her desire for other pursuits in life. How can a woman live up to the expectations of what is termed her "role in life," and still be able to find a place in the working world and with seeking higher education without feeling like she could commit murder without a second thought of who she is committing this violent act upon?

Rich speaks of "moments of murderous anger," anger directed toward children-most often not undertaken except in extremely depressed situations-because there was no one else to project that anger onto at that given moment (Rich, 24). She speaks of an account of a woman of eight children, being depressed since the birth of her second child, committing murder of one of her smaller children in the front yard in the neighborhood she lived in. Support groups for mothers have developed and continue to increase in number, due to these kinds of situations. The element of

speaking out and reaching out of women, specifically mothers, to each other are found in support groups for mothers, many found throughout America and other parts of the world today. Modern woman, especially the mother, needs another mother to talk to about her fears, her hopes for her children, her moments of anger, her possible lingering depression after the birth of her child. Why a mother should remain silent, caged in a world where she is exposed to her children on a constant basis, the father away because of work or sometimes, because he is entirely absent from the scene? A woman doesn't forget about her own needs once she becomes a mother but finds herself, as many women do, having to put her needs aside for her children, as she submits to what man's expectation is when placed upon her.

A woman changes with the birth of her first child, and can be known to change more with successive children coming into the family. Each birth and each child affects her differently, through fluctuation of emotions, increase in hormone levels, weight gain, hopes and fears for the child while it is growing en utero and what kind of life may or may not be offered for the child once he or she is in the world. Rich accounts for this in her diary entry of August 1958; she was pregnant with her third child by this time.

August 1958 (Vermont)

" I write this as the early rays of the sun light up our hillside and eastern windows. Rose with [the baby] at 5: 30 am and have fed him and breakfasted. This is one of the few mornings on which I haven't felt terrible mental depression and physical exhaustion.

...I have to acknowledge to myself that I would not have chosen to have more children, that I was beginning to look to a time, not too far off, when I should again be free, no longer so physically tired, pursuing a more or less intellectual and creative life.... The only way I can develop now is through much harder, more continuous, connected work than my present life makes possible. Another child means postponing this for some years longer-and years at my age are significant, not to be tossed lightly away.

And yet, somehow, something, call it Nature or that affirming fatalism of the human creature, makes me aware of the inevitable as already part of me, not to be contended against so much as brought to bear as an additional weapon against drift, stagnation and spiritual death. (For it is really death that I have been fearing-the crumbling to death of that scarcely-born physiognomy which my whole life has been a battle to give birth to-a recognizable, autonomous self, a creation in poetry and in life.)

If more effort had to be made then I will make it. If more despair has to be lived through, I think I can anticipate it correctly and live through it.

Meanwhile, in a curious and unanticipated way, we really do welcome the birth of our child." (Rich, 28-29)

Women change on several aspects when becoming a mother. She changes physically, emotionally, mentally, and for some, there is an experience on the spiritual level for change. A woman's body was designed to carry life as it grows and forms into the physical body, depending on the mother for necessary nutrients for sustaining healthy growth. Because she is providing

for another life, her body undergoes fatigue, weight gain, breast enlargement for milk provision for after the child's birth. Hormone fluctuation induces emotional "swings," where a woman may experience a euphoric-like feeling one day and the next (or even in as little as five minutes) bouts of crying and rising anger towards self and others. Mentally, a woman will remember her own childhood, see her own mother from a different view than that she held as a child; sometimes, other women in the family are taken into account for personalities and mothering abilities.

With memories of childhood, does the fear of becoming one's mother rise? Is this where matrophobia comes into play and makes the woman question and fear her ability to become what she sees as a "good mother?" If her own mother was submissive to her father, always complying with the rules he set for the household, determining what money was spent on, who excelled at such things as sports, music, or just trying to be the perfect child, especially in the sense of becoming the "perfect daughter," will the new mother suddenly find herself in a terrifying level of fear of repeating those patterns?

Rich reminds her audience that her accounts of early motherhood are her own, and that all women will experience their own mothering ability differently from hers. Connection to a child becomes an experience, with interpreting cries for needs, to feeling her milk "rush in" when a child cries to be fed, to discovering her own existence as a woman, as a mother who is connected to her child. Truth be known, each woman does experience differently from another in the aspect of motherhood. Each pregnancy is different, each labor and delivery experience is different, and what a woman feels when she

begins her " new life" with her child once home from the hospital is different and wholly her experience, not to be compared with another woman's knowledge.

Rich's chapter, *Motherhood and Daugtherhood* , opens the door fully to what becomes matrophobia. She writes about her memories of her relationship with her parents when she was pregnant with her first child. Barely in contact with them, had she felt she was still fighting for her own independence from her father, from the emotional perspective, and felt she had been fighting him all her life on this aspect? She states having wanted her mother after her initial experience with labor and delivery but not being able to admit to herself, much less to her mother about her feelings. Do all women want their mothers after such an experience, after the pain, fear and exhaustion of receiving a child into the world? After years of trying to separate herself from her mother to claim her own identity and independence as an adult in the world, does she wish for but a moment to be held once more before moving forward to nurture her own child?

Questions arise for a woman before and after she becomes a mother, a sense of " maternal guilt" becomes present. *Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much?* Is there a sense of failure towards the child, trying to create the perfect daughter (Rich 223)? Rich gives account of her own mother, being instructed by her father, to discipline her when she was a child, to learn to play piano, and ultimately, feeling angry because she felt that her mother was siding with her father against her. She felt that her mother must have carried her own anger; anger because of being told how

to raise their daughter, to have to carry out whatever demands the father made on the mother in regards to Rich's upbringing to become the "perfect daughter." Rich speaks of feeling anger *for* her mother because of not being able to live up to the father's expectations, and then in an instant, feeling anger towards her mother, the anger she felt as a child. Suppression of anger seems to follow from one generation to another, and the suppression doesn't seem to stop. Women hold their anger from the men they interact with, they hold it from each other but there are the moments when children become targets for the suppressed anger, in which with daughters, they in turn hold in their anger; and the cycle of suppression continues. Silence has a stronghold on women; silence through the domination by men and then in turn, silence bestowed upon the daughter.

Daughters see their mothers as having been taught a compromise and hatred towards the self that they are struggling to break free of, to be loose from the restrictions and degradation of the existence of being a woman; those feelings were bestowed by the mother through her own experience as a woman (Rich 235). As a result, hate and rejection of the mother seem to come into place that to discover the source of the restrictions and demeaning view of woman. A daughter may be resistant to her mother, not getting along for whatever reasons but still want to be close to her; borrowing clothes and learning how to apply makeup or using her perfume, etc. Yet when a woman leaves her mother's home for her own adult environment, she may exhibit opposite characteristics with such things as house keeping. The mother's expectations for a young woman to marry may

be met by refusal to submit to the institution of marriage by way of pursuing a college education.

Do women feel a "splitting of self" when it comes to their feelings towards their mothers? To become close to the mother, yet to be an individual; their mothers become the victim, the unfree woman, and most often times, the martyr. Women fear becoming their mothers, as they have struggled to become their own person through various life choices: career, marriage, and children. A classic myth of separation of the daughter from the mother is that of Demeter and Persephone (Kore). Kore is kidnapped by Hades, lord of the Underworld, and taken to his home. There are a couple of different versions that fluctuate between Kore willingly staying and being forced to stay by trickery with eating the seeds of the pomegranate, a sacred fruit symbolic of union between man and woman. Meanwhile, Demeter, the mother, is frantically looking for her daughter and takes away the fruitfulness of the earth while searching. The end result, after finding her daughter and begging her to come home, is the deal made with Hades. For six months of the year, Kore will stay with her mother and for the other six months, she is to go with Hades; the seasons of spring and fall are symbolic with this age old myth.

Does a woman feel "mothered" if she watches her mother submit to a life style of accepting whatever becomes present in life? Does she become frustrated and confused about the expectations to be placed upon her when she becomes a mother? Why is a mother's love, though powerful in its own right, too restricted in patriarchal society? Men constantly apply pressure for

"proper expectations" of women, who in turn will through silence and restriction, apply this same model upon their daughters. How can mothers honestly expect that continuing this cycle is beneficial for the survival of their daughters and the continuation of the generations of women yet to be born?

Rich uses the tradition of foot-binding of Chinese women for passing down of self-hatred and low expectations. Mutilation of the feet is symbolic of mutilation of the daughter to watch her mother go through this torturous ritual, as if this is what it means to be a woman. The mother passes her own affliction to her daughter by way of the rags that bind her feet, and the damage to the psyche continues, generation to generation. Mothers carry their own guilt and hatred of themselves over into their daughters' lives and experiences (Rich, 244). It is through weakness that the mother finds identity with the daughter, not through strength, therefore facilitating the mother to want to live her life through her daughter, especially if the daughter refuses to submit to the expectations placed on her.

How does a woman self-nurture when the relationship between mother and daughter is strained, though it doesn't have to be? Self-nurture can be obtained without verbal explanation. If a woman respects her body, not seeing it as "dirty" once a month or as an object of sexual provocation for men, her daughter will pick up on that by watching her mother have confidence in herself and take pride in her sensuality, having affection for her body and not abusing it. Creative use of anger-projected away from the

body but not onto others-does not find its way to suppress upon the daughter (Rich, 245).

Trust and tenderness are needed to nurture both mother and daughter, learning to love the self. Yes, a sense of limits is needed but not to be placed upon women by men; women need to discover the limits and accept them, not be pressed into limitations by society, which is man-based. To share with one another the endless possibilities that women possess becomes one of the most important assets in nurturing daughters.

Daughters are not the only ones that need encouragement to grow; the mother needs to expand on her own life, to stop being a victim of society (Rich, 246). Too many mothers have impressed upon their daughters that the life of a mother is a depressing "condition" that needs to be broken away from or to be rewarded for being submissive-the "good woman" (Rich, 247).

Conclusion

The relationship between mother and daughter is based on the connection of flesh and of a peculiar spirit. A mother carries her child, daughter or son within her body for nine months, nurturing it with her own blood but a daughter and only a daughter, is essentially an extension of her mother. A son, once assuming his independence as a man, finds his way in the world. In these modern times, although our experiences slightly different and our perceptions of gender have been revised for the better, a woman is born expected to be a mother. Despite the utmost gratefulness and respect to

the women who have in the past fought and persevered for rights and privileges (such as the right to vote); she will always be born with that expectation from society, and even from herself. She fears this, and the answer to why she fears it, I believe, is that as women have begun to gain their positions in society, among men, they are falling into a trap-a trap called matrophobia.

As seen in this essay, literature reflects time and ages. In works of the early nineteenth century, female characters (based on real women) began to be associated with plots scarcely put out in the open. Simultaneously, mothers began to be eliminated or shown without power, and female characters naturally believe that they must look to men for security. Despite the fact that their mothers have shown examples, proving how pathetic and empty a marriage may turn out to be, matrophobia drives them to escape/leave the house/mother, hence crucially competing for male protection, sometimes due to financial necessities.

A woman is seen as either fragile and in need of man's protection, or she is seen as the temptress who is in need of being pursued and conquered, to be tossed aside after she is beaten into submission and used through man's need to overcome his fear of her power, a power he cannot understand; therefore he feels the need to destroy what he doesn't understand and attempts this through the acts of sexual dominance upon a woman's body, often times in such a level of violence that leaves a woman scarred for life as to the experience she has undergone. If rape is not committed, man executes his attempt at power over a woman through sexual acts that are

degrading, insisting she submit to what he wants her to do with her body to make him feel powerful through arousal of his own body; witnessing a woman perform acts upon herself or allowing a man to commit low levels of physical pain for his own satisfaction gives him power.

One can see how the identity of the overall woman has been created by society and forced upon, through expectations and labels (image).

Throughout history, daughters have been taught skills and tasks which focus on femininity, encouraging taking on all activities their mothers and their mothers' mothers had done before them. Religions and cultures have developed in extreme to transparent but surely existing forms, to place woman below man, and for it to be just for her to bear children. But today, although altered from flawed and rigid moral concepts of society, with the choice of marriage, homosexuality and child-bearing, matrophobia has made its entrance, as a result of our independent identity attainment.

At a stage when a modern daughter begins to develop her own identity, she is struck and hurt by the destructive nature she sees in her mother, who, while loving and compassionate, is also demanding and possessive. It is not the mother's fault, for the mother honestly loves her daughter, and merely does not want her daughter to go through any of the difficulties she herself may have had to endure, in an emotional or materialistic way. As a human, especially in this materialistic society, the mother is not to be blamed for wanting better for her children, especially her daughter. Destructive nature is not to imply that the household has problems or is unhappy. It is the fact that bearing a child changes a mother's identity; her mother's identity is her

(the daughter) now. Without exaggeration, to say that a mother tries to live through her daughter and the attention and pressure the daughter receives is heavy, a burden, for feelings of pity is also present. She will feel, " Mother has sacrificed her life for me, and she will also kill for me if she had to. I know she is the very reason I exist today and for that I am truly thankful but why did she have to sacrifice herself, her dreams?" A man can still be only a man even after has a child (which comes way of this world through a woman) but a woman, after bearing a child, is a woman *and* a mother, and the modern daughter certainly does not feel this to be fair. Seeing the woman as " second class," as if having a defect, she becomes aware that her identity is at stake, and fears becoming just like her mother.

As the modern daughter matures and feels herself becoming closer to her mother physically, she will try to put herself emotionally farther away. Her mother will now seem to her as an unpleasant barrier to reach her final goal-gaining her own true identity. This is where the modern daughter must fight matrophobia. Unconsciously giving into it by identifying herself too closely with her mother will mean that she has not had an opportunity to develop an identity of her own. Fighting matrophobia does not mean *not* to love your mother or not to bear a child. I believe that bearing a child must be wonderful, as is said to be a privilege for any woman to be able to experience it but once she has before she has secured her own identity, she most likely feels a joy as though she has been reborn, and wonders what all the worrying had been about. Here is the point: she has passed her soul on to her child and the focus of her life has only superseded to her child's.

A modern woman needs to know that a modern mother cannot know little about herself, or else she will be placing too much emphasis on what her child becomes, rather than herself. A mother with a bold footing on who she truly is will set a better example for the next generation, especially for her daughter, if gender is genuinely to become without a barrier.

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