

ELIZABETH DALLOWAY -AN EXTENSION OF MATROPHOBIC DAUGHTERS

K. Hemalatha

Ph.D Research Scholar,
Department of English,
Pondicherry University,
Kalapet, India

The representation of depiction of daughters has been changing down to the literature. 'Good Enough Daughters' alters into 'New Daughters' then it moves to 'Rebellious Daughter'. This modification of daughters shows the cultural alter in the literature. Precisely, it is Virginia Woolf, the artist who achieved, but the achievement of testimony not merely to the power of her art but to the passion of the daughter for the mother. Prior works of Woolf exhibits the failure of daughter figures to overcome the essential, limited identities imposed on them by a society that considers them not as "human beings" but rather as "young ladies" of a certain type (26). Woolf's delineation of her daughter figures as both silent and powerless continues in her first novel until she creates Elizabeth Dalloway.

Virginia Woolf clearly foregrounds the liberating nature of Elizabeth's psychological detachment from her mother's feminine and "decorative" nature in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. "She had a passion for gloves", but Elizabeth never cared for either of them. When Clarissa insists to wears gloves and shoes, Elizabeth is free from both her mother's control and her oppressive Victorian attitude. In addition, Woolf viably and unobtrusively underlines the obstructions of this character overcomes in the quest of her selfhood. This young woman has to escape from the society of those who impose this inadequate identity on her. Ultimately, Elizabeth separates herself from her mother both physically and psychologically in order to escape the subordinate position and passive behaviour, which portray her in their relationship.

However, the previous daughter figures eventually fail in their struggle to communicate their individuality and needs to their families and companions. Though disjointed and incomplete, Elizabeth's story nonetheless figures as a revision of the failed attempts at self-discovery by Woolf's earlier daughter figures. In my reading Elizabeth Dalloway, represents an alternate vision of female subjectivity, and her existence that does not involve a "slow sinking" beneath the suffocating role and duties of daughterhood (MD 131). Elizabeth Dalloway serves out of this and wants to free from these "certain roles". Thus Elizabeth, in the novel represents as an alternate new daughter whose existence does not involve the rules and duties of dutiful daughterhood. The relationship between Elizabeth and her mother provides much insight with this daughter figure. Elizabeth manages to escapes the interpretations and impositions which would limit her identity by inscribing her in the patriarchal social order that moulded Clarissa Dalloway.

As a young, upper middle-class woman in fin-de siècle British culture Clarissa had been reared without any expectation of her achieving any significant accomplishments or for that matter, assuming any significant responsibilities. Rather, the greatest expectations

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

- indeed, an imperative - imposed upon her was simply that she should marry well and be decorative... (Smith 50-51)

Woolf liberating nature of Elizabeth's psychological detachment from her mother in the novel's earliest reference to this daughter figure, in which her removal from her mother's feminine, or "decorative" mindset is clearly evident. Elizabeth's introduction thus figures as an ironically empty declaration of maternal ownership on Clarissa's part: "Her old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves. ... Gloves and shoes: she had a passion for gloves: but *her own* daughter, *her* Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them" (MD 13. my emphasis). Clarissa's repeated use of the possessive pronoun, combined with her tone of incredulity at her daughter's lack of interest in the "shoes and gloves" that figure here as time-honoured, patriarchal markers of femininity, serves to emphasize Elizabeth's freedom from both her mother's control and her oppressive Victorian mentality.

By having Clarissa's vision of Elizabeth, as well as Peter Walsh and Miss Kilman occupy a prominent place in her portrayal of this daughter figure. Woolf effectively and subtly underlines the barriers this character must overcome in her quest for selfhood. Ultimately Elizabeth must separate herself, both physically and psychologically, from her mother and her tutor in order to escape the subordinate position and passive behaviour which characterize her in these relationships. For Elizabeth, this social sphere represents a realm of "trivial chatterings" (179) which construct her as nothing more than an object - not a thinking being, but a lily, a hyacinth, a fawn - all metaphors that afford no room for a young woman's individuality, thoughts and interests.

In this striking juxtaposition of Elizabeth's expected passivity with her sudden, authoritative act Woolf highlights the young woman's movement forward into a future of her own creation - as this action ultimately leads Elizabeth to the Strand, where she imagines a future for herself as "a doctor, a farmer" or a member of parliament (178). By boarding the bus Elizabeth escapes both the identity and the destiny patriarchal culture would impose upon her, an achievement that is unmatched by Woolf's earlier daughter figures. That Elizabeth triumphs where her fictional predecessors failed is a vision shared by critic Rachel Bowlby:

When Elizabeth Dalloway steps out and takes the bus up the Strand on a fine June day in 1923 everything seems to suggest that she is the bearer of new opportunities for her sex a woman who will be able to go further than her mother, still bound to the conventional femininity of the Victorian Angel in the House denounced by Woolf in "Professions for Women."26 (70)

Once Elizabeth boards the bus she becomes associated with this vehicle, and is accordingly transformed into an aggressive, "impetuous creature— a pirate" (MD 177; Bowlby 70). Elizabeth defies classification - she is at once a highly feminine character, and a masculine one through her association with the phallic actions of the bus; both an archetypal and a revolutionary daughter figure. Elizabeth, the young woman is able to conceive of and explore her own ambitions:

This was Somerset House. One might be a very good farmer - and that, strangely enough, though Miss Kilman had her share in it was almost entirely due to Somerset House. It looked so splendid, so serious, that great grey building. And she liked the feeling of people working. She liked those churches like shapes of grey paper, breasting the stream of the Strand. It was quite different here from

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Westminster, she thought, getting off at Chancery Lane. It was so serious; it was so busy. In short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer; possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand. (178)

Elizabeth Dalloway therefore emerges as Woolf's most successful daughter figure, the only one to find a mental and physical space in which she can escape "the laws that govern female destiny" and "speak her own ends into being" (Froula 68). This act of self-creation is however, almost immediately jeopardized by the echo of Clarissa's voice, which Elizabeth struggles with and fails to completely subdue during her walk. While Rachel Bowlby concludes that Elizabeth's ambition is but fleeting, representing a short-lived "rebellion against maternal wishes" (83).

I believe Woolf's text suggests that Elizabeth's struggle to achieve self determination is inherently a struggle against the traditions her mother embodies, as Clarissa's voice figures throughout this episode as a call to domestic duty ("She [Elizabeth] must go home. She must dress for dinner"), as well as a reminder of the codes of propriety ("Her mother would not like her to be wandering off alone like this") (MD 179-181) Thus, while Elizabeth's observations of the "serious" and professional activities taking place around her "Made her quite determined, whatever her mother might say to become either a farmer or a doctor " this promise evidently represents no easy task (178-9). With Elizabeth Dalloway Woolf thus radically reconfigures the traditional outcome of the daughter's story, rejecting the marriage plot for a detailed illustration of Elizabeth's liberation from her mother and tutor, and her subsequent, ground-breaking vision of a career and future within the male domain of public culture.

At last she escapes from the classifications and impositions of both her mother and teacher and subsequently undertakes her own journey of self-discovery. When
" Suddenly Elizabeth stepped forward and most competently boarded the omnibus, in front of everybody. She took a seat on top. The impetuous creature – a private – started forward, sprang away; she had to hold the rail to steady herself, a private it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between, and then rushing insolently all sails spread up Whitehall. (MD, 177)

An example of the unconventional woman, Elizabeth has ambitions to have a career and a professional life. She has planned to be a doctor, farmer, or to go into Parliament. The disintegration and lack of mutual understanding which mark her parent's relationship have their impact on her own life. Her father fails to recognize her at the party. When he does, he accepts her as a decorative object- a part of the trivial feminine world. Her mother feels shocked, and helpless on finding her daughter under Miss Kilman's influence all the time. Clarissa's helplessness as a mother is expressed,

With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was taking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the banisters and cried out, 'Remember the party! Remember our party tonight.' But Elizabeth had already opened the front door; there was a van passing; she didn't answer. (MD, P. 139)

By writing *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf aimed at setting up a new formula for personal development. Woolf introduces women characters who symbolize

hope in creating the androgynous world. Elizabeth Dalloway signifies the emergence of the new dawn of women. Thirty years before Elizabeth's age, women couldn't dare to imagine or think of professional life. Thus Elizabeth stands in stark contrast to Woolf's earlier daughter figures, with Elizabeth Dalloway, she radically reconfigures the traditional outcome of the daughter's story, rejecting the maternal desires and had a great vision of her career and future within the male domain of public culture. Thus, Virginia Woolf ends Mrs. Dalloway with a hope for the new woman. Woolf's point is that women shouldn't lose their femininity, and also shouldn't be limited to it, but the woman of the future embraces her femininity and masculinity and makes a choice of how to use that within herself to achieve fulfilment. Hence, Woolf's notion of 'Emergence of New Daughter' achieved its maximum dwelling in twentieth century fiction.

Elizabeth thus associated with an extension of matrophobic daughters – “not the fear of one's mother or of motherhood, but of becoming one's mother” (1976, 235). Like Elizabeth, matrophobic daughters want to escape from their mother and patriarchal institutions, which impose feminine law on them. In this way, Virginia Woolf's Elizabeth Dalloway pays way for making matrophobic daughters in the literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Oxford UP, 1992.
2. Abel, Elizabeth. *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*. U of Chicago P, 1989.
3. Bowlby, Rachel. *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh UP. 1997.
4. Chodorow, Nancy. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Yale UP. 1989.
5. -----*The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, updated edition, Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.
6. Froula, Christine. *Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out*. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5.1 (1986): 63-90.
7. Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan, Gubar. *Sexchanges*. Vol. 2 of *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. Yale UP. 1988.
8. Smith, Patricia Juliana. *Lesbian Panic: Homoeroticism in Modern British Women's Fiction*. Columbia UP. 1997.