

A Psychoanalytic-Feminist Reading of Martha's "Battle" with Mrs. Quest in Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest*

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ABSTRACT

Sense of consternation and dismay always dominate the mother-daughter relationship in Doris Lessing's novels. Over protective tendency and sense of self-righteousness of the mother act as a stumbling block in achieving daughter's physical, psychological and sexual flourishing. The same we see in the case of Lessing's adolescent heroine, Martha Quest in the first volume of *The Children of Violence Series*. Analyzing from the psychoanalytic point of view, this article sheds light on the entanglement in Martha's familial relationship, especially with her mother. It also probes deep into the psyche of Martha and her mother as well as delineates how Martha's individuation is hold back by her possessive mother throughout her journey to maturity.

Introduction

Doris Lessing was born on 22 October 1919 in Persia. In 1925, she moved with her parents to a farm in Southern Rhodesia, where she spent her childhood. In the 1940s Lessing joined the Communist Party, which influenced her political thinking a lot. However, her political ideas have changed directions many times in the course of her life. Lessing's early novels are primarily concerned with the African setting and race relations in Africa.

Doris Lessing came to London in 1949 with her small son and the manuscript of her first book, *The Grass Is Singing* - a title taken from part five of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. The book was overwhelmingly well received by both the critics and the public when it was first published in 1950. The story is set in Africa and it traces the tragic life of a farmer's wife, Mary Turner, and comments on the disintegration of the coherence of her "self", as a result of the oppressive forces coming from the outside. Not only does the novel speak against colonialism in Africa but it also refers to sexual conflicts. Lessing's writing covers many styles and approaches, ranging from feminism and Marxist theory to communism. Besides, she is also particularly concerned with psychology, politics, and sociology and she always comes up with new spiritual themes and perspectives in her writing.

One of Lessing's novels of wide popularity is the *Children of Violence series*. The volumes of the *Children of Violence series* (1952-1969) comprise *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965), and *The Four-Gated City* (1969). The whole series is based on the self-analysis of the main character, Martha Quest, who goes through a long and complex process of searching for the integrated self and striving hard to be a "free woman". The issue of "free woman" is central also to the analysis of Lessing's most celebrated novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962). Anna Wulf, the heroine of this novel, is also among major protagonists of the women's movement. It is interesting to note that Lessing is considered a feminist writer by critics, although she herself refuses to accept this view. Her later fiction includes: *This was the Old Chief's Country* (1951), *Going Home* (1957), *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971), *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), *Collected African Stories* (1973), *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1975), *Collected stories* (1978), *The Fifth Child* (1988), *The Good Terrorist* (1985), and many essays, dramas and short stories, such as *Five: Short Novels* (1953)-stories set in Africa, for which Lessing won the Somerset Maugham Award.

As far as her recent fiction is concerned, it includes for instance *African Laughter* (1994), *Mara and Dann* (1999), *The Sweetest Dream* (2002) and her famous autobiography called *Under My Skin* (1994), which describes her childhood experience in Southern Rhodesia. One of her latest novels, *Alfred & Emily* (2008),

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also refers to her personal or family experience and on account of the fact that it combines more genres it is ranked both among fiction and non-fiction. Lessing's writing career can be divided into three phases: "Communist phase"--concerning social issues (1944 - 1956); "Psychological phase"--focused on the psychological development of her characters (1956 - 1969); "Sufi phase"--discussed themes related to mysticism (1969-). On October 11th 2007, Doris Lessing was announced as the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. At 87, she is the oldest person to have received the literature prize, and the third oldest Nobel Laureate in any category. She also stands as only the eleventh woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy, in its 106-year history.

Lessing's *Martha Quest*, the first volume of *The Children of Violence Series*, presents an ordinarily curious and rebellious English adolescent, Martha Quest, coming of age against the colorful backdrop of the African landscape. The novel plot centers round Martha who is fervent to live and to disentangle herself from her confining home. Living on a genteel but far from wealthy farm on the veld, Martha, her bossy, self-righteous, hypocritical, and most of all possessive mother, and her tired, well-meaning, and sickly father along with a younger brother, Jonathan maintain a kind of peaceful coexistence until Martha decides to work in the city as a secretary after finishing high school instead of going into the university. She has read widely, and has become friends with the sons of a local merchant, Solly and Joss Cohen, who are an active part of her later life. She also learns the practical differences between her own status as a white and the status enjoyed by the natives. When she moves to Zambesia, she still has many bookish ideas about emancipation and maturing. She subsequently becomes part of a —sports club, and begins to date - at first with Donovan Anderson, a talented amateur dress designer, and probable homosexual. Getting almost no food or sleep, Martha is caught up in the invigorating life she has longed for. At the same time, she discovers a liberal, leftist clique through Joss Cohen's intervention. Her first sexual experiences come about when she daringly dates Adolph —Dolly King, a Jewish drummer in the sports club orchestra. After this relationship ends, she meets Douglas Knowell, also nominally left-wing, and agrees to marry him.

Literature Review

The feminist discourse includes the motherhood-daughterhood conflict in its core since daughters trace their mother as the primary obstacle in their individuation process. Psychoanalytic-feminist Nancy Chodorow (1978) in her *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* puts forward an oscillating triangular relationship between the little girl, her mother and her father. Girl's infantile identification as well as primary and gender identity are all components of adult identity that form early in the childhood. Psychoanalytic-feminists view that the process of identity formation also continues later. According to Chodorow (1978), the asymmetrical structure of parenting generates a feminine Oedipus complex with particular characteristics: for both girls and boys, it is the mother who is the primary love object and object of identification, and since fathers come into the relational picture rather later and differently, the Oedipus Complex in girls is directed towards their mothers (p. 133).

Psychoanalytic-feminists observe that before a girl can fully develop extra familial commitments, she must confront her entanglement in familial relationships themselves. The transition from childhood to adolescence is more complicated for girls because issues during this period concern a girl's relationship to her mother; at this point Chodorow quotes Blos, another feminist critic: "... the prolonged and painful severance from the mother constitutes the major task of this period" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 135). The feminists consider the mother-daughter relationship very crucial for the girls since the processual nature of female personality arises specifically from the mother-daughter relationship and this is due to the fact that, as Chodorow (1978) avers, mothers feel ambivalent toward them (p. 135). Chodorow further opines that the mother often wants to keep her daughter close, but at the same time she also "pushes her into adulthood" (p. 135). This anxiety leads Martha in her path towards an emancipated self, and Martha's decision to leave home is greatly affected by her urge to flee from her mother.

Another Psychoanalytic-feminist Marianne Hirsch (1989) in *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* treats both motherhood and daughterhood as a story which is a narrative representation of social and subjective reality and of literary convention. The heroines acting as daughters, Hirsch views, refuse to be identified with the conventional construction of femininity (Hirsch, 1989, p. 10-11). Hirsch further points out that since a continued allegiance to the mother appears as regressive and potentially lethal, it must be transcended; a daughter can reach maturity only through an angry and hostile

break from the mother (Hirsch, 1989, p. 11). Hirsch has rightly diagnosed Martha's case showing that Martha rejects the conventional constructions of femininity by separating her daughter (in the next novel, *A Proper Marriage*) and refusing motherhood when she opposes her husband by not getting pregnant again. Martha further fits in Hirsch's proposition as she reaches maturity after she has been able to break away from her mother.

Another observation about feminist motherhood/daughterhood has been put forward by Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto (1982) in *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions* in their discussion of the all-powerful mother. According to them, feminist writing assumes an all-powerful mother because the mother is totally responsible for how her children turn out, and she is blamed, for example, for her daughters' limitations. Chodorow and Contratto refer to Dinnerstein's views that mother is an object of children's fury and desperation, and the children want escape her evil influence. They also refer to Friday's *My Mother/My Self* when they indicate that mothers are venomous to their daughters, and the daughter's despondency and failings stem from this initial relationship. In her book Friday shows how mothers forcefully and intentionally constrain and control emancipating daughters by keeping them from individuating. Mothers also deny their daughters' sexuality and keep them for men. Mothers tend to make daughters in their image: since they have denied their own sexuality to their daughters (Chodorow and Contratto, 1982, p. 55-56).

Mother-Daughter Relationship in Lessing

While portraying mother-daughter relationship, Lessing depicts conflict in it most of the time (Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, however, depicts a very different mother-daughter relationship). Patriarchy, a common enemy of women all over the world, does not offer any masculine counterpart to make Martha's life a hell. Rather it is a woman who acts like a cruel patriarch in her life. Mrs. Quest tries to project herself upon Martha and tries to model her daughter according to her own wishes. Martha revolts against her and asserts her independence but Mrs. Quest feels betrayed. Katherine Fishburn (1980) points out that Mrs. Quest acts as "alert guardians" of her daughter (p. 208). Desirous of their welfare, she does not want that society should raise a finger at Martha. Fishburn (1980) adds that she wants to bring her up as graceful, dignified young girls, who would be in high demand in the marriage market (p. 208). Discussing the mother-daughter relationship, Simone de Beauvoir (1952) observes: "the daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person, the mother is at once overweeningly affectionate and hostile towards her daughter: she saddles her child with her own destiny a way of revenging herself for it (p. 309). In other words, a daughter is an alter ego of her mother. The mother wants to realize her unfulfilled dreams through her daughter.

The Battle of Clothes: "I'm not a nice girl"

Martha Quest begins, as Jane Flax puts it, with Martha knowingly "provoking negative reactions from her mother, whom throughout the novel and into early adult-hood, Martha will perceive as her primary foe" (Flax, 1987, p.175). Mrs. Quest's conservative perspective on the "appropriate" behavior of women, and her prudish nature on matters of sexuality also create in Martha's mind a fixation on sexuality that extends beyond normal adolescent curiosity. Martha's desire to shock her mother is vividly demonstrated when Martha uses her adult clothes as a weapon against her mother, forcibly suggesting Mrs. Quest to perceive her as a sexual being.

One day standing before the mirror, she took a pair of scissors and severed the bodice from the shirt of her dress. She was trying to make the folds like Marnie's when the door suddenly opened, and her father came in. Looking at Martha, he remarked "Your mother won't like you cutting her dresses to pieces." She said defiantly: "Daddy, why should I wear dresses like a kid of ten?" And when her mother enters the scene, she argues:

"I'm sixteen," said Martha, between set teeth, in a stifled voice,...

"My dear, nice girls don't wear clothes like this until..."

"I'm not a nice girl," broke in Martha, and suddenly burst into laughter. (Lessing, 1964, p.21)

One of the most significant romantic involvements Martha has over the course of the novel is with a young Jewish man named Adolph King. Adolph, like Martha, is an individual obsessed with perceived social roles to a degree that negatively affects rational decision making. Adolph is attracted to Martha because he perceives Martha to be an opportunity to improve his social standing, and conversely, Martha likes Adolph because of

her desire to subvert her mother's bigotry of members of the Jewish faith. The principal Martha covets most deeply is not the rights of women, or the epidemic of racism, but rather unfortunately, a juvenile desire to incessantly provoke her mother, Mrs. Quest.

Mona Knapp (1984) avers that the very existence of Mrs. Quest is an insult to all Martha's ideals and it is one of the fundamental points for which Martha is in a continuous struggle against her mother (p. 39). She considers the community around her as hypocritical and intolerant, and the same features apply to her mother. Holmquist (1980) agrees with Knapp and emphasizes that the primary socializing agent within Martha's family is the mother who has reached a position of power in the family: Mr. Quest stays in the background and lets his wife control their everyday life, and thus it is Mrs. Quest who makes the decisions of who they should meet (p. 29). Holmquist is right since Mrs. Quest is a character who appears as a very active member of the family and she introduces the values of society to Martha and expects Martha to obey her and the common values.

There is an imbalance between how the generation of Martha's mother see women's role in general, and how Martha perceives herself and the world. Besides,

The experts themselves seemed to be in doubt as to how she should see herself. There was the group which stated that her life was already determined when she still crouched sightless in the womb of Mrs. Quest. --- Then there were those who said it was the birth itself which set Martha on the fated road. --- For the feeling of fate, doom, was the one message they all had in common. Martha, in violent opposition to her parents, was continually being informed that their influence on her was unalterable, and that it was much too late to change herself. (Lessing, 1964, p.9)

The feminists view that the anxiety experienced by the daughter in her relationship to her mother provokes the daughter's attempts to break away from the mother and the daughter takes what steps she can in order to break away (Hirsch 11); this is clearly the case in Martha's relationship to her mother. For example, Martha provokes her mother with her relationships; being friends and borrowing literature from the Jewish Cohen boys represents resistance toward Mrs. Quest, and her critical views on the race issue are strengthened by Mrs. Quest's disapproval. Through various kind of rebellion, Martha tries to fight her way out, and to find her real self.

Family is the crucial place for the female heroine and, as Labovitz (1986) observes, it is within the family where Martha meets her initial failure; "her difficult family relationships are never satisfactorily resolved, especially that with her mother" (p. 147). The relationship between the mother and daughter is strongly affected by "the battle of clothes" which actually has nothing to do with clothes. It is almost impossible for Mrs. Quest to see her daughter as a young woman: she prefers treating her more like a child: "she would smooth the childish dresses down over Martha's body, so that the girl stood hunched with resentment, and say with an embarrassed coyness, "Dear me, you are getting a pouter pigeon, are you?" (Lessing, 1964, p.17) Finally, the battle of clothes culminates when Martha starts to make changes on a dress she wants to wear in a dancing party. Mrs. Quest happens to burst in, and is shocked to see Martha naked, the dress in her hands, then she "came quickly across the room, and laid her hands on either side of the girl's waist, as if trying to press her back into childhood" ((Lessing, 1964, p. 17). Martha lifts her hand and shudders with disgust at the touch of her mother - she almost slaps her mother across the face.

Establishing Sexual Identity

The feminists claim that the mothers have a tendency to deny their daughters' sexuality (Chodorow and Contratto, 1982, p. 55-56). Mrs. Quest also denies the fact that Martha is a sexual being. Martha uses sexuality as a weapon against her mother; she knows that her mother sees her as a child just because it makes the boys around Martha seem less dangerous. If Mrs. Quest admitted that Martha actually is a young woman, she would accept Martha as a sexual being, and that is against Mrs. Quest's Victorian sense of morals. It is as if Mrs. Quest does not have any kind of relation to her own sexuality; sexuality is such a taboo, that even the mere word appears to be a threat to her. She avoids the whole issue, and is shocked when she sees that Martha intends not to do so. Thus, the battle between Martha and her mother can be seen as a battle between the Victorian values and modern values; in this battlefield Mrs. Quest represents the Victorian world, and Martha is the representative of the modern world.

From this scene about the dance dress, the real battle of motherhood/daughterhood starts. Martha knows she is facing a long fight with her mother, but she assures herself that she will not give in. Labovitz (1986) has rightly remarked that in order to become a totally emancipated human being Martha needs to liberate herself from the inhibiting hold of the unsatisfactory mother-daughter relationship (p. 148). Hirsch (1989) also avers in this point that a daughter regards her allegiance to her mother as lethal, and therefore it must be transcended (p. 168). It is possible for the daughter to reach maturity only through an angry and hostile break from the mother. The battle of clothes is not the only way through which Martha seeks for liberation: for example education becomes an issue. At the age of sixteen she is expected to pass the matriculation exam quite brilliantly, and after that she would go to the university. For months she listens to her mother's talk about university and scholarships, and she herself is sometimes eager, but more often embarrassed because of the way her mother acts. Finally, a week before the vital day, Martha is afflicted with a pink eye infection. It is not a serious infection, but Martha decides that it gives her a good excuse not to take the examination at all. After her decision Martha secretly wonders "why she was condemning herself to live on this farm, which more than anything in the world she wanted to leave? The matric was a simple passport to the outside world" (Lessing, 1964, p.23). Martha feels again as if a spell has been put on her even though it seems clear that Martha herself is behind her decision. This clearly shows the ambiguity that prevails in the actions Martha takes: while determined to stand against her mother, Martha ends up making decisions which seem actually opposite to her own plans. Thus, the role of Martha's mother cannot be overlooked when examining the decisions Martha makes in her life: without the conflicts between Martha and her mother she might not, for example, ever even have hesitated about taking the matriculation exam. Now, instead of going to the university she stays for two more years at the farm with her parents, and this is in glaring contrast with what Martha had dreamt of.

The relationship between Martha and her mother is a relentless struggle for power, and Martha sees her mother as "a baneful figure in the nightmare in which she herself was caught" (Lessing, 1964, p. 24). As Holmquist (1980) indicates, both the battle of clothes and the pink eye episode are questions of who is in power and who has control. In the battle of clothes Martha gains a triumph by sewing a new dress for the dance a dress which Mrs. Quest does not approve of - and at the same time the dress symbolizes the first step which Martha takes towards establishing her sexual identity (p. 36).

Rejecting the Mother as a Role Model

Jouve's (1982) observation on how the mother is never chosen is very true: even when Mrs. Quest is actually closest to Martha, she is still always avoided and rebelled against (p. 104). Even though a daughter hates her mother, she may simultaneously feel an underlying pull toward her, and she fears that if she relaxes her guard she will identify with her mother completely. With the help of this phenomenon it is possible to explain why Martha feels, on the one hand, close to her mother but, on the other hand, she dreads her mother and rebels against her. Mona Knapp (1984) continues Jouve's view by pointing out that Martha seeks a counterconcept to Mrs. Quest; she hopes to find a counterconcept which could save her from her parents' mistakes (p. 39). However, the quest for such a counterconcept makes Martha realize the paucity of models which she could follow. Labovitz (1986) has made a similar observation pointing out that one of the characteristics in a female *Bildungsroman* is that the heroine all too often suffers from the lack of role models which she could follow (p. 181). This phenomenon can also be seen in a mother-daughter relationship, where the daughter often rejects the mother as a role model. Since Martha rebels strongly against her mother, she tries to seek for other alternatives, but the result is an unsatisfactory one:

She (Martha) would not be like Mrs. Van Rensberg, a fat and earthy housekeeping woman; she would not be bitter and nagging and dissatisfied, like her mother. But then, who was she to be like? Her mind turned towards the heroines she had been offered, and discarded them. (Lessing, 1964, p.10)

Here Martha's rejection of using her own mother as a role model is evident. As Chodorow notes, a daughter's aspiration to be different from her mother is often seen in the way she uses rejection and negative identification when she examines her relationship to her mother; she strives to be something that her mother is not. Chodorow (1978) has rightly noted that a girl tries to identify with anyone else than her mother (p. 136).

Fleeing from the Mother

In order to succeed in her own attempts of emancipation, Martha finally flees her mother. Her decision to leave home and go to nearby town to work as a secretary is again an act of rebellion towards her mother: Martha hears about the job from her friend Joss who Mrs. Quest does not approve of. Mrs. Quest tries to protest that Martha could have got a job through her parents' friends, but this makes Martha even more eager to take the job from Joss' relatives. At the age of eighteen she closes the home door, and "behind it was the farm, and the girl who had been created by it. It no longer concerned her. Finished. She could forget it. She was a new person, and --- an altogether new life was beginning" (Lessing, 1964, p.80).

These thoughts of Martha show that her quest is only in the beginning: actually she does not even herself realize yet that she is seeking for something that concerns her growth as a person. Her only motivation seems to be getting away from the life she has experienced, and at this point she is a very immature eighteen-year-old girl, who assumes that the closing of a home door separates her from everything she has been so far. She is yet to be shown that such is not the case. It is impossible for anyone to get rid of one's past, and suddenly start from the start. Martha strives to alienate herself from her home and especially from her mother, and her unconscious wish is to encounter new surroundings where she could learn more about her self.

Martha's Marriage of Douglas

Martha's most dramatic act of defiance against Mrs. Quest involves the book's conclusion and Martha's marriage of Douglas. She falls in love with Douglas Knowell, a young civil servant, because he seems to be different from the men Martha has met before: he is "a man, at least, and not a silly little boy. And so intelligent too!" (Lessing, 1964, p.218) Very soon Martha discovers that she does not fully understand him, but again she is "bound to love him, that claim had been laid on her" (Lessing, 1964, p.221). She feels that she does not know what she wishes from Douglas. Knapp (1984) avers that Martha also does not know what she wants from herself (p. 41). In a sudden whim she decides to marry Douglas, and the next moment she regards herself to be mad. The fluctuation between the feelings of desperation and exhilaration, as Knapp observes, are very characteristic of Martha at this phase of life (p. 41).

In one moment she regards herself as rational again, and decides that she does not want to marry Douglas: "She was thinking of that unimportant wedding ceremony rather as her mother might have done. Naturally this comparison wouldn't have dared to enter her head. She thought of the marriage as a door closing firmly against her life in town, which he was already regarding with puzzled loathing. She was longing for the moment when it would no longer have anything to do with her". (Lessing, 1964, p.228) The concept of a door emerges once again in Martha's thoughts: when she left her home at the age of eighteen, she saw her departure as a closing of a door, and now she sees that a door is closed in her life as she is just about to enter marriage. Whatever changes occur in Martha's life, she considers them simply to be "closings"; and Martha only wants to look into the future.

Martha tries to build up her identity and examines the phenomena around her as well as her actions. Her picture of her self and her actions are not in balance with each other, and she is aware of this. This is in compliance with Holmquist's notion that Martha tries to form an identity in a society where women are mainly wives and mother, and marriage is a white middle class woman's way of realizing her social potential (Holmquist, 1980, p.57). Holmquist further argues that even though Martha does not search for marriage, she accepts it as the social form in which love can be realized. Martha is not very much in love with Douglas after all, yet, at times she is clearly aware that her feelings have nothing to do with the desire to marry: "she did not want to marry Douglas, She did not want to marry at all" (Lessing, 1964, p.224). However, it is the overall social attitude which affects her decisions because as soon as the word gets out that she and Douglas are planning a wedding, people who Martha hardly knows congratulate her and they "shook her hand, smiling in altogether new emphasis, like those welcoming a new member. (But of what?) She understood, however, that she had done well for herself" (Lessing, 1964, p.225).

Finally, her decision to go ahead with the wedding plan is strongly affected again by Mrs Quest. One morning Martha wakes up "with a feeling of prisoner before execution" (Lessing, 1964, p.227) and she is determined to ring Douglas up and to tell him she cannot marry him. Surprisingly, when Martha gets up, she finds a

letter from her mother, “ten pages of every sort of abuse ... and words like ‘immoral’ were repeated in every sentence” (Lessing, 1964, p.229). This makes Martha fly to the telephone and implore Douglas to come to her at once. Martha is in a state of hysteria: “How dare she? ... it’s not as if they cared really one way or the other, and ...” (Lessing, 1964, p.229). Douglas calms her down saying that her mother will be alright once they get married.

Martha Quest ends with another example of how Mrs. Quest influences Martha’s actions. It is as if Mrs. Quest’s involvement causes Martha to act in a totally opposite way she herself has intended. The image of her mother underlines the negative aspirations for Martha: Martha does not want to marry Douglas, but when her mother attacks her with her letter, she suddenly decides to marry. Martha’s defiance of everything her mother approves of leads her to decisions she might not otherwise make. Martha’s instincts seem to inform her time and time again of the questionable nature of her decision to marry Douglas, but, as Katherine Fishburn (1980) notes, it is her Mother’s intense disapproval of her that convinces Martha ultimately to follow through with marriage (p. 215).

Adrienne Rich (1976) has diagnosed this tendency of Martha discussing the fact that a daughter may underline the negative images of her mother by acting in a totally opposite way than what would be characteristic of her mother. Rich further opines that in order to become individuated and free, the daughter must separate from her mother, and as she strives to differentiate from her mother, she may actually end up making decisions that are discordant with her original intentions (Rich, 1976, p. 21). Unknowingly, in her desire to be contrary, Martha always defers her decision-making to her mother, even when faced with, what is very likely, the most important decision of her life.

Conclusion

Centre of attention of the entire plot of *Martha Quest* is the involved and complicated relationship that actually instills into her a tendency to differ her mother in every important decision making. Mrs Quest’s ambivalent attitude impedes her daughter’s individuation. Ambivalent attitude of Mrs. Quest finds an exquisite expression in the battle of cloth where she loves to see her daughter as a child rather than a young woman. Obviously, the anxiety of mother-daughter relationship is greatly caused by the intimidated break from the mother that is unavoidable in reaching maturity. Martha’s decision to leave home is accelerated by her over-possessive mother who is according to psychoanalytic-feminist observation, the only obstacle in her journey towards emancipation.

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