'Intimate Enemies'[1]: An Analysis of the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Punyakante Wijenaike's 'The Waiting Earth'[2]

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Abstract

This paper analyses the role played by traditional Sri Lankan culture in the relationship between Sellohamy and Isabella Hamy, the two female protagonists in Punyakante Wijenaike's **The Waiting Earth**. The argument presents that cultural values are at the core of the problems between mother and daughter, among which are the preference for the male child, the stress on housework as opposed to education, and the sexual repression imposed on females. The essay will conclude with a deconstruction of the image of Sellohamy popularly seen by readers and critics as the "*diriya mava*" of patriarchy, and show her more to be Simone de Beauvoir's "*mater dolorosa*".

I Introduction: Mother - Womb and Tomb of the World

Taking up Virginia Woolf's complaint in the late 1920s, about the dearth in the portrayal of women in relation to one another (Woolf, 1994: 89-91), later feminist critics have focused on female relationships. Foremost among these is that between mother and daughter. That the mother-daughter relationship is very strong, however, does not mean that the bond is always and necessarily a positive one. Feminist criticism has challenged the cultural concept of the unquestioned sacredness of motherhood, and revealed the veiled jealousies, greed and cruelties that may be part of it.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, that mothers may harbour hostile feelings towards their daughters is shown in the scapegoat figure of the notorious stepmother of fairy tales (de Beauvoir, 1997: 529). In recent literature, however, this 'bad' mother is beginning to appear, more or less, in her own guise. Yet, for all that, the general reader/critic may not be too quick to recognize her as such, when encountering her. My purpose in this article is to see if, and if so how far, de Beauvoir's theory can be applied to the Sri Lankan cultural context, by analyzing the mother-daughter relationship in Punyakante Wijenaike's novel, **The Waiting Earth** (1966). I shall attempt to show that Sellohamy is more de Beauvoir's "*mater dolorosa*" (de Beauvoir, 1949: 580),[3] than the "*diriya mava*" ("mother courage") of patriarchal tradition, and, that instead of the 'self-sacrificing mother' as presented by critics,[4] she is the 'martyr mother' so condemned by those like de Beauvoir and Irigaray.

Sellohamy is delineated with all the clichétic qualities Sri Lankan tradition expects of the wife/mother. Readers and critics tend to see in her a long-suffering, innocent village woman subject, on the one hand, to the malicious slandering of the villagers, and, on the other, the victim of hostility within her own family.[5] She is presented as a positive character - the one who holds the family together in the face of adversity. Her role in Isabella Hamy's tragedy has been heavily downplayed by critics. For instance, in his analysis of the causes leading to the girl's suicide, Rajiva Wijesinha says that it 'has its roots in the tensions within the family caused by Podi Singho's ambitions' (Wijesinha, 1998: 65). The other

factors he gives as leading to the tragedy are: '... [Isabella Hamy's] own powerful will, her resentment of her family, her determination to be different from her peers' (Wijesinha, 99). In Wijesinha's analysis Sellohamy makes no appearance in the causes of the tragedy, except maybe indirectly, as one of the collective 'family'. My argument is that she is at least *one* of the causes that destroy her daughter.

A Sinhala proverb equates the burden born by the mother and the earth. The title of the story itself implies this concept: Sellohamy *is* 'the waiting earth.' (The earth standing for woman is a symbolism common to both East and West.) Yet the concept of woman as 'bearer' of burdens is more strongly embodied in the title of the Sinhala translation of the novel by Neil Sri Wijesinghe- **Uhulana Derana** – 'the earth that bears' [as in the Sinhala simile for the 'model' woman/wife/ mother- "*derana men usulana*" (bearing like the earth]. And, of all the 'burdens' Sellohamy 'bears', the greatest is that of bringing up a daughter. The 'burden' of Sellohamy's difficult relationship with her daughter can be read as an illustration of the not-too-uncommon relationships between mothers and daughters in our society, irrespective of the time gap between the 1930s of the story's setting[6] and today. Thus, cultural values are at the root of the problems between Sellohamy and her daughter, among which are the preference for the male child, the stress on houework as opposed to education, and the sexual repression put on females.

II Preference Towards the son: "*menalaya duve kiri denne ma numbata*"[7]

Society's preference for the son is among the root causes of Sellohamy's 'failure' as a mother to her daughter. Embracing the decree that a 'dutiful wife' should bear her husband 'nothing but sons' (29), Sellohamy displays a negative attitude towards the birth of a daughter, even before Isabella Hamy's conception. In her prayers to the gods, and her reassurances to the husband, the arrival of the *son* is what is foregrounded: ' "I do not want daughters like myself ... only sons that are of the same heart as the father and will carry on his good name" ' (11). Her 'duty-consciousness' is such that she regards her life itself in terms of a son-creating incubator: ' "But I knew I had to live. I have to give you a son before I die" ' (10). The language used to describe Sellohamy's second confinement and childbirth is no less powerful in implying the negativity regarding the birth of the girl child: 'She [Sellohamy] had prayed to the Gods for a safe delivery *and* the astrologer had predicted a son ... the child was born easily and completely whole *except that* it was a daughter and not a son' (italics added, 29). Here, the positivism of 'and' in connection with the anticipation of a son, and the negativity of 'except that' in connection with the daughter that actually arrives, is an indication of Sellohamy's lukewarm relationship with her daughter, as well as Isabella Hamy's plight to come. For all her prettiness, intelligence and winning ways, Isabella Hamy's fate is to be rejected by the world - at birth, as a female, by her father; at school, as the daughter of a "whore", by her classmates; at pregnancy, as a threat to his reputation, by her teacher-cum-lover; had she lived, as an unmarried mother, by the village. And the first to have rejected her was her own mother.

Just as the daughter is rejected by the mother, the mother, too, in turn, is 'rejected' by society, because of the daughter:

> It was like a knife being driven into a wound to know that the women, too, shared the opinion that it was somehow her fault that the child was not a son. Because it had come out of her body she was held responsible and blamed...But deeper than

this went the pain of knowing that the Gods had turned against her. (30)

Here, Sellohamy shows the characteristics de Beauvoir ascribes to the frustrated mother: guilt at having brought forth a daughter into the world (de Beauvour, 533). On the other hand, Isabella Hamy, too, is subject to hostility on the part of society where she is harassed because of her mother's reputation. One's suffering mirrors the other's.

Isabella Hamy goes through her short life having to struggle, and to reach out herself, for what are not directly given her by her mother. She has to fight for the right to go to school when the mother insists that only sons need an education; she has to fight against the convention that the daughter of the house should confine herself to the kitchen, when she turns away from housework to books; she has to reach out for love that is denied at home and make bold to start a clandestine relationship with her teacher. All this is, directly or indirectly, because her mother, through whom the social partiality towards the male child works its obnoxious manifestations, 'fails' her. Having to reach out herself for what her mother 'fails' to give her starts from Isabella Hamy's infancy. To be rejected by the father is (at a symbolic level) to be rejected by society (society being patriarchal). At first, Podi Singho ignores Isabella Hamy's existence. But she wins for herself not only her father's recognition, but his love as well. Once, while Sellohamy is making preparations for the Sinhala New Year, Podi Singho walks in, and the infant turns and smiles at him. This is how the writer puts the incident: "... In that instant, the child's innocent smile won what its mother had *failed* to get for it at its birth' (italics added, 32). Moreover, this most significant change in Podi Singho occurs when the mother's back is turned away from her. During the inauspicious period between the death of the old year and the birth of a new (the *nonegata*), Sellohamy, true to the ideal of the tradition-preserving housewife, observes the time-honoured practices of this transitional period. Thus, instead of giving Isabella Hamy her toy to play with, she pushes it towards the child, so that she may 'stretch and reach it herself' (36). It is in 'having to reach herself' for what her mother, in cleaving to convention, denies her, that the girl is ultimately led to destruction. What Sellohamy denies her during this 'in-between period', presages that other 'in-between period' - the transition from girlhood to womanhood - when, in her absurd adherence to custom and superstition, she denies her daughter simple liberties, thus estranging the child from herself.

In traditional Sri Lanka, not only is there a marked gender bias in favour of the son in matters like education, housework, expected behaviour and food distribution, but even in a more abstract concept like love, too, we see that mothers tend to be partial towards the male child. This gender bigotry can have one of two outcomes for the daughter: She may imbue her mother's values and attitudes and consider herself an unworthy person, or, if she is the more questioning type, may retaliate against such discrimination. Either way, the daughter's identity is formed negatively : she ends up with a servile personality, or a rebellious one. Isabella Hamy's identity formation is of the latter category, where the bitterness of the deprivation of adequate maternal care remains with her till the day she dies.[8]

The birth of her sons makes Sellohamy neglect the daughter's emotional needs. This would, understandably, have been a blow to Isabella Hamy, still in her own

infancy. She who would draw her nipple away from the suckling Isabella Hamy to serve her husband's most trivial demand, feeds her sons without limit. The irony here is that Sellohamy also has enough milk even for her dead son in a way she never did, for her daughter. Unlimited milk is popularly seen as a metaphor for a mother's unlimited love, especially in regard to the son: "*Menalada pute kiri dunne ma numbata*?" ("Did I ever measure the amount of milk I gave thee, O son?") is a line in one of the popular Sinhala folk-poems upholding the values of motherhood. On the other hand, on the daughter's wedding day, the groom traditionally gives the bride's mother a white cloth seven cubits in length (*kirikada sele*), as compensation for the milk she had fed the daughter (Senaratne, 1999: 13). The implication is that the amount of milk given the daughter *can* be measured. Such sayings, symbolisms and traditions go to show that even so-called 'abstract' concepts such as 'a mother's love' are culture-specific, and that at a covert level, society *does* acknowledge that there are different degrees to a mother's love depending on the sex of the child. Even more than the mere fact of Sellohamy's having milk, and the mere act of her giving milk, is the attitude behind all this: when it comes to the daughter, breast-feeding comes second to serving the husband. The frustration of having food and human contact suspended suddenly may have had a repercussion on Isabella Hamy's personality. Her feelings of rejection, which seem to pervade her growing years, may have been the result of her mother's cruel denial in the early stages of her life. On the other hand, the way Sellohamy pours excess milk upon the earth beneath which her deformed, stillborn son is buried - a son whom she never saw, nor touched - shows a tenderness lacking in the description of her feeding her daughter:

> Sometimes she would go out and squat near the mango tree... and with a slight pressure of the fingers she would let the milk flow into the rich earth. She did this when her breasts were too full and painful and sometimes her tears would mingle with the milk upon the earth. It was strange to feel that beneath the place upon which the milk ran lay her first-born son. He lay there so cold and dead that even the warmth of a mother's milk could not stir him back to life. (63)

'The moment he [Podi Singho] called she would leave the crying child, tear her nipple from its mouth, and give him what he wanted' (30-31). (Note also, that the son is referred to as "he", while the daughter is a mere "it".)

Sellohamy's coldness towards her infant daughter continues into Isabella Hamy's girlhood. For instance, this is how she frustrates the child's longing to go to school: 'Isabella Hamy cried every morning. Why should only her brothers go to school? But Sellohamy could be firm here. Surely a mother knew what was best for a daughter?' (100). A girl usually holds the frustration caused by the privileges given and superiority attributed to her brothers, against the mother, and rarely against the father (de Beauvoir, 305). In this instance, there is cause for double hostility, for it is the mother who is directly responsible for this sex discrimination. Also, if one argues that Sellohamy was doing this in the daughter's best interests, as she asserts to the reader, it may be pointed out that a mother's 'over-anxiousness' about a daughter's 'safety' may, in fact, be a repressed hostility on her part towards the girl (de Beauvoir, 358).

Conflict between mother and daughter is not confined to Sri Lanka, but is widespread, especially in countries with a marked preference for the male child. If one considers a novel like Maxine Hong Kingston's **The Woman Warrior**

(1976), based on a migrant Chinese family in America, for instance, one would discern a similarity with **The Waiting Earth**, in its treatment of the mother-daughter relationship. The eldest to be born to her parents in America, the narrator feels acutely the discrimination against the girl child in the family system. She is tortured by the notion that, had she been born in China, she would have been killed for being a girl. Isabella Hamy too, though to a lesser degree, is tortured by feelings of rejection. It is the *mother* who instils this feeling. If we take a culture even more oppressed than the Sri Lankan, we see the extent to which this harm is done. In **The Good Earth** (1925), by Pearl S. Buck (a writer Wijenaike has often been compared with),[9] the mother strangles and kills the girl child at birth. Sellohamy too, in a way, strangles her daughter in a slow death through various forms of cultural oppression, among which the preference for the male child plays a prominent part.

III Education Vs Housework: *"hoddata lunu ambul damana padama igena ganin duve"*[10]

The conflict education causes between females of different generations is a recurring theme in Wijenaike's fiction.[11] In **The Waiting Earth**, this clash implies the historical change in Sri Lanka, when the girl child in the village was exposed to formal education for the first time,[12] as well as the eternal generation gap. It is, however, more than just education and age that are the causes of conflict. Ignorance and lack of understanding, added to social prejudice, also alienate Isabella Hamy from her mother. What has anyway been a tepid relationship steadily deteriorates when education vs housework becomes an increasingly alarming contention between the two.

Sellohamy looks upon education for girls negatively: ' "There is nothing for a girl to do in school... What will she gain by learning to read and write?" ' (77). The irony here is that the mother's words *do* come true. What Isabella Hamy 'gains' by going to school is an illegitimate pregnancy, which leads her to suicide. Yasmine Gooneratne says this gives the impression that the writer herself is endorsing Sellohamy's point of view. It is also unfortunate, says the critic, that the daughter's death does not seem to have taught the mother a lesson (Gooneratne, 1980: 48). On the contrary, not only does she dismiss the tragedy as Isabella Hamy's "*karma*" (302), but the plot itself turns miraculously towards Sellohamy's fortune after this death, when *everything* turns for the better: the buried curse is removed; the estranged husband is reconciled; her wayward son is to return; the heretofore hostile villagers turn sympathetic; the villain Rappiel Appu disappears, and the family is left at the end of the novel with a promise of their long-awaited land. This stresses the negativity of the mother-daughter relationship. Not only has each a negative effect on the other, but also, the daughter's removal from the scene has a decidedly positive effect on the mother. In fact, there is a suggestion that the daughter herself has been the 'curse', the removal of which was necessary for the redemption of the mother.[13]

As far as Sellohamy is concerned, 'education' is invariably in opposition to 'housework' and a 'good name' - the two most vital 'qualifications' for a woman/wife. Her association with housework (we see her almost always squatting in front of the hearth, or seated on a coconut scraper), and her ingrained conviction that it is more important for a woman than a formal education, is expressed rhetorically. Her response to Podi Singho's exultation over Isabellla Hamy's progress in learning is the silent act of washing rice,

described in detail. The length taken to narrate this cooking process - a daily chore in the life of the average Sri Lankan housewife - is loud with Sellohamy's wordless protest against what she sees as 'this new thing for a woman' (101):

> But Sellohamy said nothing. She went on with the washing of the rice, turning the raw grain over and over with her right hand until the water turned grey with the dirt. Then she tilted the pot and the rice ran out with the water, gently, little by little, into the second pot, leaving behind in the first pot the stones and the heavy pieces of dirt that always comes with the unwashed rice. Then she tilted the second pot and let only the grey and unclean water drain away leaving the grain washed and clean. Onto this pot she poured fresh water measuring it until it stood as high as the second joint of her middle finger. Then she covered the pot and set it on the fire. These things were part of a woman's life, this cooking of the rice, this blowing of the flames until they gradually rose to lick the bottom of the pot heating it so that what was inside it bubbled and boiled until tender and soft and dry with the water all gone. The smoke burned under her eyelids and tears coursed down her face. These things she understood but not this learning, this new thing for a woman ...*She was too afraid to speak of it.* (italics added, 111-10)

While the mother resents the daughter for neglecting the housework in the latter's pursuit of education, the daughter, in turn, looks down on the mother for her 'ignorance' and pre-occupation with housework. Education vs housework takes the form of daughter vs mother: 'And now she disdained to do any work at all in the house and she looked the other way when Sellohamy spoke to her and seeing this the mother's fear and anger increased daily' (101). Housework and education are also very much part of the mutual comparisons between mother and daughter. Also, if we were to compare the story with one like Chitra Fernando's **Of Bread and Power** (1983), we would discern a similar antagonism, which need not be decoded, like in the novel. The perceptive reader will see that Agnes Hamine's grousings against Seela are a distant, yet audible echo of Sellohamy's: ' "She has always been the fine lady painting and drawing while I was working in the kitchen from morning till night" ' (Fernando, 1994: 21); ' "But if all women were to paint their nails who would do the work?" ' (Wijenaike, 254); 'Agnes Hamine soon realized that Seela's interests were taking up more and more time. She had very little leisure now for her mother's concerns' (Fernando, 11); 'It was her grievance that Isabella Hamy, unlike other daughters, refused to pull out the lice from her mother's head.... She had always sat alone and cleaned her own head' (Wijenaike, 277). For all the sympathy Sellohamy draws, and scorn Agnes Hamine receives from the reader, the mentality of the two characters is the same. And almost always, in both stories, the mother's displeasure towards the daughter is seen in the latter's neglect of housework, as if housework were a straw the elder hangs on to, in the face of her own inferiority complex regarding her lack of education: ' "I'm just an unpaid servant in the house ..." ' (Fernando, 14); ' "If she must learn anything it must be to watch a pot of rice without letting it burn and this she will not do..." ' (Wijenaike, 100). That the relationship between Agnes Hamine and Seela was inspired by a real-life situation in which a bed-ridden woman resented her unmarried daughter upon whom the family depended financially (Fernando,1990: 159), goes to show that

such states of affairs in mother-daughter relationships are both realistic and prevalent, irrespective of class and the period of time.[14]

It is strange that critics who are full of praise for Sellohamy's 'motherly concern' when she 'protects' her daughter by imposing restrictions on her, blithely ignore that she was in the habit of leaving a four-year-old without adult supervision, to watch over a pot of boiling rice on an open hearth. Even a mother particular about bringing up her daughter efficient in housework will agree that four years is too young an age to be given the responsibility of looking after infant siblings less than a month old, and to be hit for leaving them for a few minutes to greet her father when he comes home. [As Podi Singho says: ' "Why, she is but a babe herself and there was nothing wrong in leaving the babes when both of us are here" ' (79). (One may wonder whether the slap was for neglecting the babies or for running to greet her father!)]. In such aspects, Sellohamy is characteristic of de Beauvoir's "*mater dolorosa*". Let us compare what de Beauvoir has to say about this destructive type of mother, with Sellohamy:

> ... she ... tends to inflict upon her [the daughter] the disadvantages from which she has suffered. Sometimes she tries to impose on the child exactly her own fate: 'What was good enough for me is good enough for you; I was brought up this way, you shall share my lot' (de Beauvoir, 533-34).

> No amount of scolding could calm down the girl who was now four years old. When Sellohamy was four years old she had helped in the cooking and the tending of her brothers and sisters...Isabella Hamy did no work inside the house. Even to sit still and watch a pot of rice for a few minutes was a burden to her. (Wijenaike, 83)

Contrary to Gooneratne's comment that the writer seems to affirm Sellohamy's theory that education for females is unnecessary, I find that the lack of education on the mother's part is a major cause of the daughter's tragedy.

IV Education Vs Sexuality

That the mother may see the daughter's sexual development as a threat, is a possibility considered as far back as the times of Sophocles and the Grimm Brothers. (Recall the conflicts between Clytemnestra and Electra, and Snow White and her stepmother.) Although this aspect was underemphasized by Sigmund Freud, whose exclusive focus on the Oedipus complex led sexual psychology along a one-sided track, today, feminists have taken up this issue in their analysis of female relationships.[15] What Sellohamy looks at with a critical eye may, in fact, be her own 'fear' and 'shame' at whatever is 'new' (progressive) to her backward nature which, all along, has been (mis)interpreted by readers and critics alike, as 'timidity' and 'modesty'. She looks upon her daughter's education as '...this new thing for a woman ... *She was afraid to speak of it* (italics added, 101). Looking upon Isabella Hamy's brassiere, another 'new thing', her face 'burns with shame' (254). ' "How could a woman wear such a thing without shame?" ' (254), she asks herself. Yet the reader cannot but notice the attention with which she regards this 'shameful' garment: 'Because there was no one in the hut, at the moment, she could look at it closely' (254). [In

this instance, Sellohamy shows a similarity to a later character in Wijenaike's fiction - the loathsome yet pitiful Lucia Hamy in **Giraya**, who, says the narrator, 'looks upon the brassiere as a modern evil' (Giraya, 9).]

In her over-anxiousness regarding her daughter's budding sexuality, Sellohamy epitomizes Irigaray's image of suffocating motherhood: ' "Now how will I know what is happening to her if she is not with me? And is it proper for a girl to be among people other than her mother most of the time?" ' (100). Compare this with Irigaray's: ' "You take care of me. You want me always in sight in order to protect me. Do you fear that something will happen?" ' (Jacobus, 1977: 277).[16] The difference here is that, while Irigaray's mother's 'fear' is related to the daughter, Sellohamy's is concerning her 'proper conduct'. In all her worrying about her daughter - which is a pervading issue in the novel--there is a striking absence of concern for the daughter, for her own sake. Sellohamy's concern for Isabella Hamy is invariably in connection with the possible public censure upon herself for not having brought up her daughter 'properly', or that she and Podi Singho may fail to keep their promise to the Mudalali if she turns 'unchaste' : 'She slapped hard on both sides of the girl's face. 'When people hear you talk this way they will think I taught you to talk like this", she said angrily. "I will not allow you to bring shame on us" ' (244).

Even when she thinks of her daughter's life, it is in connection with the preservation of her virginity for the Mudalali's nephew that she considers it, as if life and chastity were inseparable:

> Her [Isabella Hamy's] life must be protected so that it could mature and flower into its full promise. She [Sellohamy] spoke to the girl. She reminded her, once again, that a promise had been made. In exchange for the kindness the Mudalali had shown their family Isabella Hamy had been promised to the Mudalali's nephew as a wife. But how could this word be honoured if the girl brought dishonour upon herself and her family by being too familiar with the school teacher? (257-58)

On the day Isabella Hamy comes of age:

> She [Sellohamy] put a nail into a mud wall and tied a piece of rope to it. The other end of the rope she then tied to the window. Over this she hung, like a curtain, an old cloth of hers. She had planned where to hang this cloth *ever since the day of Isabella Hamy's birth*. She had planned for this moment as every mother plans, knowing, in her anxious heart, that no protection was too much when it was puberty in a young girl. (italics added, 138)

The italicized words recalls de Beauvoir's comment on the 'bad' mother's reaction to having given birth to a female child: 'Vexed at having produced a woman, the mother greets her with the ambiguous curse: "You shall be a woman" ' (de Beauvoir, 533). Yet, it appears that, for all the crude and embarrassing references she has been making to Isabella Hamy's forthcoming menarche, and her own long 'preparation' for it, Sellohamy has not bothered to forewarn the daughter of the more important aspects of the pubertal process. Thus, the first sight of her menstrual blood comes as a shock to the girl.

The eleventh chapter, which describes Isabella Hamy's coming of age, is a turning point in the plot as much as in the girl's biological development, as well as

in the relationship between mother and daughter. It is unfortunate that critics seem to overlook the impact of this crucial chapter, either undermining its significance, or misrepresenting (what I read as) its purpose. While Ryhana Raheem and Siromi Fernando see the puberty ceremony as 'description for description's sake', neither advancing the reader's 'comprehension of either plot or character' (Fernando & Raheem, 1978: 95), Chandani Lokuge criticizes it for denoting 'the author's too obvious wish to unveil the intricacies of Sri Lankan rural life to her readers' (Lokuge, 1986: 202). All three critics, unlike Gooneratne, who praises the scene for its 'evocation of the stifling atmosphere of incomprehensible ritual and carefully maintained secrecy that surrounds Isabella Hamy's attainment of puberty' (Gooneratne, 46-47), ignore the intensity with which Wijenaike has captured the complexities of an adolescent mind imprisoned by petty social conventions. From a thematic point of view, this description of the puberty ritual makes plausible the strong antagonism Isabella Hamy feels towards her mother. The reader cannot but sympathize with the girl subject to the self-abasing process of 'womanization' by her mother:

> Now you are a woman and you must be conscious of the difference between man and woman. You must not speak nor laugh nor smile as freely and willingly as before, with men. There are those who will take your friendliness for one thing only and a ruined chastity will bring nothing but shame upon your family. And then there are those who will whisper that you are unchaste, even when you are not, only because you laugh and smile too much. (139/40)

Gooneratne finds 'the confrontation between mother and daughter ... a trifle overdone, the voices too shrill and dismissive' (Gooneratne, 47). However, I see this scene as bringing out the trauma of a girl's bewilderment at her sudden metamorphosis in life. As if the physical changes she has to deal with were not enough, she is burdened with the negative aspects of womanhood, conveyed in crude language, where the mother's main concern is the girl's preservation of the 'family name'. What, if at all, should be shown her as a 'privilege' which may lead to the joys and fulfillment of motherhood, is presented as a 'burden' every woman should 'bear as her 'duty' to a future, as yet unknown and unseen, husband. At a time when an impressionable girl should be reassured, it is the mother's willful intention to frighten her: 'She [Sellohamy] would try to instil fear' (138). One of the methods she resorts to, to achieve her aim, is to suggest what may be looked upon by more 'permissive' societies with shock:

> In this period of change in your body, your mind too must be guarded. If you look upon a man and set your mind upon him, be he even your father or your brother, a strange love will take root in your being...
>
> The girl's shoulders shuddered beneath her [Sellohamy's] hand. *Sellohamy was pleased. The girl was afraid.* (italics added, 139)

As mentioned earlier, critics tend to see Sellohamy as the self-sacrificing wife and mother[17] who holds the family together, no matter at what cost to herself. Yet, it is she who undermines the sacredness of the family bond by equating the father and the brothers to any male, to whom the girl can become sexually attracted. In a telecast of **Vinivida**, commemorating Women's Day (1998), Sunila Abeysekara voiced one of the problems faced by the father of the family in

our society, as a restriction on expressing paternal love to a daughter.[18] From Sellohamy's above statement, one may gauge the source from which such restrictions are likely to spring. In this instance, too, it is the mother who snatches away from the girl a support she has been counting on. During the puberty ceremony:

> ... when she [Isabella Hamy] came to greet Podi Singho as a woman he could not show his tenderness. No, he must act the stern father, he must accept her respect in dignity, without a smile. From this moment onwards he must restrain his feelings towards her, keep a distance between father and grown up daughter. Seeing this coldness the girl could do nothing but turn away. (143-34)

Whatever differences Podi Singho may have with Sellohamy, in matters pertaining to Isabella Hamy's puberty, he bows down to his wife's convictions: ' "Of these things she knows best." ' (132). [It is to Podi Singho that Sellohamy says that when a girl 'grows up', she has to be kept away even from her father and her brothers (131).] If there are those who argue a scientific basis for Sellohamy's caution, one may point out that she could have 'protected' her daughter in more subtle ways without embarrassing her by bringing up crude allusions to matters like incest in front of her father and brothers. The misunderstanding created by Podi Singho's behaviour, instigated by Sellohamy, furthers the girl's loneliness at this crucial stage in her life. Here, too, Mother and Superstition frustrate the girl's wishes and expectations: 'At the door waiting to greet her was not her father or her brother as she had hoped, but a woman full-bellied with child. At this sight Isabella Hamy blushed' (143). It is shame and frustration that greet her in her new phase of life. Superstition says that a female's life runs on the lines of the events of her *geta ema*.[19] There may be something to be said for this belief in this instance: Isabella Hamy's life turns into both a shame and a frustration.

It is an unredeemed weakness in Sellohamy's character/ization that she never realizes that her attitude towards her daughter during this period is far more harmful than any slander her evil-minded neighbours may instigate, in adding to the girl's suspicions regarding her mother's own 'chastity'. Although Sellohamy tries to solicit the reader's sympathy regarding what she sees as her daughter's 'unprovoked hostility' towards her – ' " What did I do in my last birth that was so bad that I must pay this way in this birth?" ' (258) - it is she herself who contributes to this enmity. It is her own 'lecture' on sexual attraction that later on, makes the girl suspect a basis to the village rumour about Sellohamy's 'affair' with the Mudalali:

> Carohamy's words had terrified her [Isabella Hamy]... She remembered them now. "You must be more careful than your mother during this change in your body. It is because your grandmother was careless with your mother that she now delights in looking at men other than your father." Whom had her mother looked upon during her days of seclusion? (193-94)

Carohamy's words would not have caused so much damage had Sellohamy not 'verified' the 'truth' about such beliefs to her daughter, by voicing her own misconceptions. It is also these words, impressed forcefully upon her, that may have unwittingly created any attraction on her part for her teacher - an attraction

that ends in disaster. Looking back upon her confinement at puberty, Isabella Hamy ruminates:

> She had tried desperately during that period to draw a curtain through her own mind. She must not think of any man. Not even her brother. Who knows perhaps a thought was as binding as seeing a man with one's own eyes. But however hard that she had tried she had been unable to drive the image of the teacher from her mind. The more she struggled, the stronger came his face to her thoughts. (194)

There is reason to believe that, if not for Sellohamy, Isabella Hamy's obsession with the teacher would have gone the usual way of schoolgirl infatuations, and died a natural death. Also, if Sellohamy knew what was good for her daughter, as we hear her so often declare, she should have realized that any noxious presence near Isabella Hamy would be *females* like Carohamy and Kathirinahamy, not males like her father and her brothers. For the words of these women are among the factors that fuel anger and rebellion in the already resentful girl, and poison her against her own mother:

> "Your mother may have a shine on surface but the sting is underneath.... Do not be taken in by her quiet manner." ....
> "You, who are but newly blossomed, you must chase away the bees that come buzzing for a sip of your honey. You must preserve your treasures until the day they will be needed as wife to a good and worthy man, to bring forth his children without shame into the world."
> "I will never marry your nephew", Isabella Hamy thought and wanted to say. But instead she waited in silence, until Carohamy went away. She could not bear the sight of Carohamy's face now. (141)

The humiliation suffered by Isabella Hamy at being subjected to degrading rituals overseen by her mother, is exposed tellingly, and deserves more credit than the criticism made by Fernando, Raheem, Lokuge, etc., as unnecessary description:

> ... this bath could be given by none other than the village *dhobi*-woman and so she came for presents she would get for her task, even from a poor family.... Into ... [Isabella Hamy's] ... empty hands the *dhobi*-woman ... put a small pointed knife. While Sellohamy and the *dhobi*-woman watched in silence, the girl stabbed the tree with the knife, once, twice, until milk oozed out of the bark of the wounded stem. Seven times she stabbed, her body shuddering with each stab, as if the knife went into her own flesh... And then this woman began to unscrew the rings in the girl's ears. Isabella Hamy closed her eyes and suffered the touch of the woman's hands. These plain gold rings had been on her ears since the day the lobes were bored. Now the pain of having them taken from her flesh by a woman outside her family was almost as hard to bear as the pain of growing up. From her wrist the woman took her bangles next ... At the door waiting to greet her was not her father nor her brother as she had hoped, but a woman from the village full-bellied with child. At this sight Isabella Hamy

> blushed ... it came upon her that this was how she would look one day, swollen and ugly, and that this was the wish in every heart gathered there, that she would fulfill her destiny as a woman. This woman was there as a sign of good luck, of fertility. She wanted to run away. But as if her mother knew her thoughts, she tightened her hold on her, and pushed her forward towards the waiting woman. (142-43)

After such a *rite de passage*, no wonder Isabella Hamy withdraws into herself, and resents even the touch of her mother : 'The girl got up and moved away from her mother's hands. If they touched her any more, she would scream' (178). It is mainly as retaliation against her mother's irritating behaviour that Isabella Hamy is thrown into the arms of a deceiving lover : 'Yes, the last two days with her mother had been unbearable. *Therefore* she must see him now' (italics added, 277). The word 'therefore' connects the mother's 'unbearable' treatment and the daughter's urge to go to her lover. This illustrates the theory that revolt against her mother is the reason some girls take a lover (de Beauvoir, 562). Sellohamy typifies the average mother of Sri Lanka's conservative society - the mother who, in her very determination to 'protect' her daughter, ends up destroying her.

The strongest bond between a mother and a daughter is the biological bond, which makes the mother-daughter relationship, among all types of female relationships, the strongest. In the novel, this 'blood tie' is evoked a number of times. When Sellohamy sees the patch of Isabella Hamy's first menstrual blood, she smiles feeling that '[now they were united in this thing, mother and daughter' (136). Yet, here too, she betrays her own hidden sadism, for her 'smile' also illustrates her 'pleasure' (to use de Beauvoir's word) at 'recognizing a victim' in the daughter (de Beauvoir, 533). For the blood imagery that comes in connection with mother and daughter, for all its connotations of bonding and nurturing, is not without its pain and violence. The first 'pain' a girl usually suffers on account of her femininity, is the piercing of her ears. It is Sellohamy who pierces Isabella Hamy's ears, drawing the first blood in the novel in connection with the daughter--which, significantly, the *father* '*tenderly* wipes away' (italics added, 41). Sometimes, when the mother slaps the daughter- and slapping the daughter, especially the eldest, has been given as one of the defining characteristics of the 'bad' mother (de Beauvoir, 535) - she draws blood : 'Before she knew what she was doing she had raised her hand and slapped hard across the girl's mouth drawing blood' (258), etc. The most symbolic instance, however, of this bonding blood imagery regarding the daughter's sexuality, comes during Isabella Hamy's seduction. At the time the daughter loses her virginity in the teacher's schoolroom, back home, the mother cuts her hand while scraping coconut, and spills blood on the *white* coconut shreds - an allusion to the blood on the nuptial cloth. (Here, too, the eternal conflict between education and housework is implied : The daughter bleeds from contact with a representative of education; the mother, from contact with a utensil of housework.)

In the matter of marriage, too, it is the mother, much more than the father, who is adamant that Isabella Hamy be 'given' to the Mudalali's nephew. Whereas Podi Singho shows some reluctance to 'sell' his child, Sellohamy's attitude is that ' "[she must marry whom her father wants her to marry" ' (47). It is only to Podi Singho that the thought even occurs that she may not like the man (47). It is Sellohamy, of the two parents, who keeps reminding the girl of their promise to the Mudalali. Isabella Hamy's aversion to both the man and the 'contract' is

another cause of the rift between mother and daughter. The girl's reprisal against the mother, and her rejection of what the mother thinks is good for the girl, is implied in the instance where, mistaking Isabella Hamy's depression for a physical ailment, Sellohamy treats her with coriander water - which the girl throws up in school, a few hours later. This incident is also a physical expression of the mother's lack of understanding, and the daughter's rejection of the mother's concern, on a symbolic level.

The daughter's retaliation against the mother's restraint is a pervading issue in the story, whether literal or metaphorical : 'The sun fell on her [Isabella Hamy's] hair, braided now, and on the few willful strands that would escape the stern disciplining of Sellohamy's hand' (112). Hair that grows (awakening sexuality) is 'braided' (restrained) by the mother. Yet, just as willful strands of short hair escape 'the stern disciplining of Sellohamy's hand', so too, does the as yet ungrown, childish part in Isabella Hamy surface at moments: 'If she was sad, she cried openly and loudly; if she was happy she would skip and laugh and bubble over with it' (114). That she resents being 'covered' by the type of convention as represented by the mother, she shows from a very early age. When Sellohamy dresses her in her first frock in accordance with the Sinhala New Year customs, the infant retaliates : 'But the child did not like the feel of the frock against her cool nakedness, and she cried out in a loud protest'(36). In later years, too, the girl will opt for the 'cool nakedness' of unconventionality, instead of letting herself be 'covered up' by tradition and superstition. She will retaliate against convention (as symbolized by the mother), by breaking Piyasena's charmed thread tied by Sellohamy; she will 'uncover' herself, without inhibition, for the teacher, both defying her mother's conventions, *and* proving her mother's conceptions, at the same time - the conception that 'there is nothing between a man and a woman except this thing' (265).

Education vs sexuality is part of the mother-daughter rift. While Sellohamy sees a dangerous link between education and sexuality (it is the teacher who gives Isabella Hamy a 'shameless' brassiere; she fears that the daughter's schooling will end with the loss of her virginity), the daughter sees a lack of sexual fulfillment for the mother because of her lack of education. What is an 'animal act' for the mother, is a romantic experience for the other. Not for the mother, are those endearing compliments *she* is showered with, in what Podi Mahatmaya uses to sweet-talk her into sex with him. (Compare 'No words had passed between those two' (241), with ' "You are beautiful like a menike in the court of ancient kings" ' (236); ' " You are yet a closed bud, my Isabella Hamy. Will you permit me to bring you to your flowering?" ' (237); ' "Why do you hesitate, my flower?" ' (241) etc.)

It is ironic that the only character in the story who attributes any kind of 'knowledge' to Sellohamy is the teacher, when he suggests to Isabella Hamy that she seek her mother's 'knowledge' on how to abort her foetus. The mother's 'knowledge' is to be called in to assist in the destruction of the daughter's maternity, the culmination of female sexuality, by the representative of education. Although it is common in villages for mothers to 'terminate' an unmarried daughter's pregnancy, here, on a symbolic level, this yet again stresses the negativity of the mother-daughter relationship.

V Mirror Images: "I look like you, you look like me"[20]

The feminist literary concept that female relationships can be likened to mirror images (Gilbert & Gubar, 1984: 37-38) is no where stronger than between mother and daughter. A mirror image, at first, seems an exact replica of the self, yet, in actuality, it is the *diametrically opposite*. Isabella Hamy, on the other hand, seems the opposite of her mother, yet she is, deep down, very much like her. Podi Singho is the mirror/significant male that stands between mother and daughter, either emphasizing their similarities or highlighting their differences.[21] In the novel, it is he who first associates the mother with the daughter. His attitude towards Carohamy's jealousy at the Mudalali's fondness for Isabella Hamy is: 'Carohamy had always bullied Sellohamy and now it seemed right that Sellohamy's daughter should punish the woman on behalf of the mother who was too timid to do it herself' (43). What the mother fails to do, the daughter accomplishes for her, thus, the two becoming one. Regarding the Mudalali's proposal for Isabella Hamy and his nephew, when Sellohamy gives her verdict : ' "She must marry whom her father wants her to marry" ' , Podi Singho asks : ' "Is that how you married?" ' (47). Of Sellohamy's warning about a possible relationship between Isabella Hamy and Podi Mahatmaya, he retorts : ' "The child is not like you ... She likes to talk and smile a little and she does not take the words of others easily to heart like you do" ' (215-16). Nor does he fear about his daughter ever going astray because, 'she was not evil like her mother' (216).

The rivalry between two females for a male has been presented as an aspect of female relationships from time immemorial (Gilbert & Gubar, 36). That the two females in this instance are mother and daughter is no exception to this phenomenon. As husband of one, and father of the other, Podi Singho (and not always unwittingly) provokes a competition between the two that further alienates mother and daughter from each other. At the height of her husband's hostility towards her, Sellohamy ruminates with a sadness not unmingled with a touch of resentment :'True it was she who still cooked his food and cleaned his house, but he called Isabella Hamy to bring his plate to him when it was ready ...' (159). In siding with Isabella Hamy, he makes the mother feel her inferiority as an 'ignorant' woman. At times, her very position as wife is threatened. For instance, it is such a siding that leads to Podi Singho's first threat of leaving her, during one of the early quarrels between mother and daughter, when Isabella Hamy refuses to wear the hand-me-down given by Carohamy (109). During the many 'education vs housework' disputes, when Podi Singho, as usual, takes the daughter's side, Sellohamy thinks : 'If he had hit her it would have caused less pain ... She would have preferred the brief, physical pain to the deep wounding of her heart by words that plainly meant that he did not want his child to grow up like her mother, a common, ignorant woman who knew only to cook and clean' (115). Thus, it is the male that reflects the same-yet-opposite characteristics between mother and daughter.

In their mutual enmity, mother and daughter are often seen turning their backs on each other, or turning away from each other : 'The girl ... turned towards the wall' (228); 'In her [Sellohamy's] own youth, if she had dared to turn her back on her mother, she would have been beaten' (229). Yet there are also times when they come face-to-face, as well, in mutual combat : 'Mother and daughter faced each other.' (250). The impression of mirror images is conveyed through both action and language :

'There is strange gossip about you, child' she scolded. 'This is a strange thing for a mother to hear about her own daughter whom she had brought up with care.'
'There is gossip about you too, mother,' answered the girl in a loud voice. 'This is a strange thing for a daughter to hear about her mother.'

...

'And why do you repeat what other mouths say about your mother?'
'And why then do you repeat what others say about your daughter?' (258)

Their final confrontation as 'enemies', when Isabella Hamy comes out with the village rumour of Sellohamy's 'affair' with the Mudalali, to her face, comes closest to the concept of mirror imaging in female relationships :

'Is your body not enough payment for all that he has given, mother? Must I be sacrificed, too?' cried the girl.
Sellohamy's hand flew across the girl's mouth for the second time. The girl took the second assault, too, unmoved. It was Sellohamy who cried after the slap. It was as if the girl had slapped the mother, and not the mother the daughter. (260)

Mutual hostility, however, is by no means, the only side to the mother-daughter relationship. It also has a tenderness, which is usually only hinted at, subtly. During one of the rare instances we hear of Isabella Hamy having done any housework (her housework almost always occurs backstage), is one such instance : 'Isabella Hamy had lit a small fire and then let it smoulder down. But a few embers were still glowing warm and Sellohamy knelt down and putting her mouth close, blew them back into life' (192). The light that seems to get extinguished in the household at Isabella Hamy's death is rekindled by the mother. That this connection between mother and daughter is given around an item of housework, adds to their bonding as females. Also, the lighting of the hearth is the first auspicious event in the Sinhala New Year. Thus, the description evokes an affinity between the two females, in a way not seen in their direct interactions. This scene also recalls us to an incident in the opening chapter, where Podi Singho tries to bring back his stillborn son to life :

'The child may not be dead yet. Bring the candles and I will try to bring back the heat to its body' ... Then he knelt and held the child over their combined warmth and did not wince when the flames scorched and blistered the back of his palms. Two packets of candles he burnt out and still the child lay stiff and cold in his hands. When the last candle spluttered out he gave up and sat still and dazed from the pain in his hands. (6)

Podi Singho kneels by the fire trying to bring his son to life; so does Sellohamy, to the fire made by her daughter. It is the latter that succeeds, as if the mother-daughter relationship were stronger than that between father and son.

VI Conclusion: Mother vs Daughter; Daughter vs Mother

Thus, the 'burdens' of womanhood - puberty rituals, confinement to the home, deprivation of education and freedom, and enforced marriage - are the 'heirlooms' handed down from mother to daughter through generations. If Sellohamy was made to watch over a pot of boiling rice when she was four, when, in all probability, she would have much preferred playing with her siblings, why should her daughter be exempt from such chores? If *she* was never sent to school, why should Isabella Hamy be allowed that privilege? If Sellohamy was subject to degrading rituals at puberty, why not her daughter? Such is the message that seeps through the 'maternal concern' readers and critics tend to associate with Sellohamy's character.

According to Elizabeth Abel, female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond (Abel, 1982 : 179). Isabella Hamy identifies herself in opposition to her mother. If the elder is uneducated, the younger makes it a point to educate herself. If the mother is servile, the other stands up for her rights. If Sellohamy is immersed in housework, Isabella Hamy considers herself above such tasks. If the mother is content to be 'given' in marriage to the man of her parents' choice, the daughter decides she will choose her future husband. Thus, her aim in life is to be everything her mother is not, and never what her mother is. This in itself shows an over-identification with the mother.

Apart from hostility, misunderstandings, too, mark the events in the deteriorization of the mother-daughter relationship, among which are the generation and educational gaps between the two. Going back to Kingston's **The Woman Warrior**, we see a similarity in the mother-daughter relationship in the two stories. Kingston's novel opens with the mother's admonition to the daughter, not to bring social censure upon the family name through misconduct - quoting, as a warning, the story of a wayward aunt back 'home' in China, who, on her illegitimate pregnancy, was ostracized by the community, and driven to suicide by throwing herself into the village well (a tragedy similar to Isabella Hamy's). The narrator identifies with this dead aunt, deleted from the memories of her family, deprived of a place in ancestral rights. The mother, having lived the early part of her life in China, is all out to preserve their native identity, while the daughter, a typical 'ABC' (American-born Chinese), finds Chinese ways difficult to understand. While the mother criticizes the daughter for her 'new ways', the daughter criticizes the mother for her superstitions, and 'ignorance' of the very same 'new ways' condemned by the mother. The daughter opts for a life of education and financial independence; the mother derides her for not being married, and not being 'pretty' enough to be married. Here, the generation gap - highlighted by the different cultures they were brought up in - is a cause for mutual misunderstanding. For instance, the narrator's suffering throughout her girlhood at the hands of a mother who constantly taunts her for being 'ugly' and 'stupid' and 'useless' when, actually, it was the Chinese habit 'to say the opposite', is similar to Isabella Hamy's sense of imprisonment at being confined behind a cloth screen on attaining puberty, when it was the mother's intention to 'protect' her. So too, is Sellohamy's reaction to Podi Singho's words in praise of their infant daughter who, she fears, will be the victim of *kata vaha*, and insists that Isabella Hamy :

> '... is not a perfect child.... She is a useless, pale, sickly thing while a son would have been of help to us. Aiyo, how unfortunate am I to have mothered this child. She will grow up into an ugly, shapeless thing and probably her teeth would be too long and stick out of her head and we would have trouble marrying her off seeing that there would not be much of a dowry to give to a man.' (39)

For all their differences and misunderstandings, the mother is with the daughter at the most crucial moments of the latter's life, at least in thought, if not in actual physical presence; she is thought of, if not with love, then with enmity. At the first withdrawal of Podi Mahatmaya's favours, Isabella Hamy thinks bitterly :

> Sellohamy! It was all because of her mother. Because she had created a scene in the fields, because of her suspicions, she, Isabella Hamy, must pay this terrible price .... Now he was turning against her because of Sellohamy. (230)

Whenever Isabella Hamy tortures herself with thoughts of how Podi Mahatmaya would think of her, her mother's image appears as a comparison: 'But yet his coldness, his turning to Baby Nona proved that he still thought that she was as common in her thoughts as Sellohamy' (230). The first time he makes love to her: 'It was strange that at a moment like this her thoughts should wander to her mother...' (240). Even at death, in her state of delirium, her last thoughts are of her mother, though in the usual vein of antagonism and disdain against everything she stands for: 'She would not be like her mother ...' (290). Her final self-realization, however, when Podi Mahatmaya's betrayal strikes her, is : 'She was like Sellohamy. She was her mother's daughter, a common, ignorant creature paying with her body, as she had paid Podi Mahatmaya, too, for services rendered her' (282). Thus, she becomes one with her mother, in the very aspects she looks down on her mother for- her 'ignorance', and for her being a common, 'used' object. (Just as the mother does not understand her daughter, even after death, the daughter, even at death, carries with her, the incorrect belief that her mother was the Mudalali's mistress.)

Over-identification with the maternal force has been connected to the 'death drive' in daughters (Morris, 1994: 148). Julia Kristeva sees suicide as a wish to return to the mother (Morris, 160-61). We may, at this point, recall Hélène Cixous' likening of the mother to a 'dark continent' – 'womb and tomb of the world.'[22] Just as Sellohamy is womb (gives birth to the daughter), she is also tomb [causes the daughter's death/receives the daughter's body (as the 'earth')] - thus, the shift in the symbolic meaning of the title, **The Waiting Earth**, from a male-female relationship (woman awaiting man) to a female-centred one (mother awaiting daughter), thereby stressing the significance of the mother-daughter relationship to the theme of the story. Isabella Hamy becomes Sellohamy's daughter only after death (symbolically) (suicide being 'a return to the mother'). Isabella Hamy, the daughter, returns to Sellohamy, the mother, on being rejected by Podi Mahatmaya, the male, like Sita, the daughter, returning to her mother, the earth-goddess Mahika, on being rejected by Rama, the male, who abandons her in her pregnancy.[23]

An unsympathetic reader might interpret this as poetic justice in a fairy tale allegory turned upside down. It is not the wicked mother who has to die for the redemption of the daughter, but the daughter, for the redemption of the mother. The death of the daughter is the (re)birth of the mother.[24]

Notes

[1] I have borrowed the title of Asish Nandy's book on colonialism, *Intimate Enemies*.

Nandy's title refers to the relationship between colonizer and colonized.

[2] This article is an extract from a chapter of my MPhil dissertation. I wish to acknowledge the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Carmen Wickramagamage, and the University of Peradeniya, for kind permission to submit it for publication.

[3] '[A] woman resembling the sorrowful Virgin in appearance, manner, etc.' (*The New Shorter English Dictionary*. Ed. Lesley Brown, Vol. 1. A – M, Oxford: Clarendon Press, (Rep.) 1993.)

[4] S. Fernando & R. Raheem, *World Literature Written in English*, 1978: 277, Yasmine Gooneratne, *Diverse Inheritance*, 1980: 46, Haaniya Jiffry, 1999: 'The Family in Punyakante Wijenaike's Fiction', 19, to mention a few.

[5] Goonetilleke, 2005: 251, etc.

[6] According to Chandani Lokuge, this is the period of the story's setting (191).

[7] "It is having measured the amount of milk, that I feed it thee, O daughter." An inversion of the popular stanza of a Sinhala folk-poem: "*Menalada pute kiri dunne ma numbata?*"

[8] de Beauvoir, too, holds the view that 'when the child has felt a lack of maternal affection, she is haunted all her life by it' (de Beauvoir, 434).

[9] Lokuge, 157-58, 184, Goonetilleke, 251.

[10] From a popular Sinhala *Viridu Kavya* between a mother and a daughter, where the elder spells out the 'virtues' of the model Sinhalese female, one of which is knowledge of the correct amount of salt to put in a curry.

[11] *Giraya* (1971), *The Rebel* (1978), *Amulet* (1995), *To Fall in Line...* (1991), etc.

[12] Lokuge, in her M.A. dissertation, says of the 1950s:

> As the writer (Wijenaike) introduces into the village, the new school, the new teacher, and the city influences, she once

> again transmutes fact into fiction. For these were times when the pro-national government of Sri Lanka was attempting to integrate villages with the mainstream of the country through village re-awakening schemes and village politicization. (Lokuge, 104.)

[13] I am grateful to Dr. Wickramagamage for this suggestion.

[14] Agnes Hamine is the wife of a doctor in the early 1970s; Sellohamy, the wife of a poor farmer in the 1930s.

[15]See, for instance, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (36-39).

[16] "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other" rep. Jacobus, 1979: 277.

[17] Goonetilleke, 251, Jiffry, 19.

[18] *Vinivida*, Rupavahini, 8th March, 1998.

[19] At an auspicious time following the onset of menstruation, a girl is given her first bath at the well, after which she walks in through the threshold of her home, also at a given auspicious time.

[20] So says Irigaray's daughter, to the mother's frozen image in the mirror, in "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other" (Jacobus, 280).

[21] Gilbert and Gubar put forth the concept of the male as functioning as a mirror through which females see themselves and each other (*The Madwoman in the Attic*, 1984: 37-38).

[22] As given in her famous essay 'The Laugh of the Medusa'.

[23] Sita, Mahika & Rama are characters in Valmiki's epic, *Ramayana*.

[24] An inversion of Hegel's statement: 'The birth of children is the death of parents' (de Beauvoir, 514).

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