

Mother-Daughter Dynamics of Rivalry and Connection in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*

The phrase “Mother and daughter prepared for battle” in the very beginning of the book contributes to establishing one of the the central notions of The Fortunate Pilgrim (1997) by Maro Puzo. Through the tense yet intimate bond between Lucia Santa and Octavia in, this paper examines how cultural values, gender expectations, and generational conflict shape mother–daughter dynamics. The text demonstrates that their rivalry generates not from personal animosity but from the challenges of survival within an immigrant patriarchy. Moving beyond solely socio-cultural lens, the discussion also incorporates psychoanalytic perspectives, without which many issues of autonomy and attachment between Lucia santa and Octavia would remain unresolved. Through close analysis of key moments in the text, this study examines how their dynamic embodies and challenges the broader themes of identity construction, social advancement, and patriarchy.

Keywords: *Matrophobia, Patriarchy, Mother-daughter relationship, Generational conflicts*

Introduction

Fictions of mother–daughter antagonism or bonding are common in women’s writings. The conflict or connection within this relationship is often inherent, and what exists socially, psychologically or historically is frequently reflected and upheld in fiction. *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (Puzo 1997) is a male-authored narrative centered on women, and Mario Puzo portrays the relationship between Lucia Santa and Octavia with striking emotional depth and sincerity. A significant part of the novel revolves around the bonding and rivalry between these two women. As Puzo himself admits in the introduction of the text “my mother turned out to be the hero of the book. And that my sister was more honest, trustworthy, and braver than me” (Puzo 1997). Although this portrayal is rooted in his autobiographical experience, the story of Lucia Santa is “in many ways contemporary” (Puzo 1997), and so too is the depiction of the mother–daughter relationship.

Literature Review

Among the scholarship on *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, Eva Pelayo Sañudo is a notable critic who examines “the Italian American position in transnational Western literature and analyzes the presence of the West in the city and gender representation” (2023). According to her, “[the] spirit of conquest, in the context of twentieth-century immigration and urbanization, is not portrayed through Larry but the figure of Lucia Santa, his mother, who becomes his substitute as the most important character when the novel progresses (2023). Pelayo implies

that, in terms of gender representation, it is the alliance between Lucia Santa and Octavia that occupies the center of the plot in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. June Dwyer marks Lucia Santa as “the book’s eponymous ‘fortunate pilgrim’” (2003), noting that women among Italian immigrants are more involved in the rhetoric of mobility than men. The feature of her pilgrimage “is neither spiritual nor crassly material but rather a melding of the two: it is a serious secular quest” (2003). Meanwhile, Rose de Angelis also in her discussion on the “The Italian Woman’s Journey from Private to Public in *The Confessions of Zeno* and *The Fortunate Pilgrim*” comments that “Lucia Santa defies the standards of behavior set for the Italian woman and takes the first step out of the private sphere; and later, her daughter Ottavia makes the transition” (1995).

While discussing the mothers-daughters dyad in a cluster of novels by Italian American writers, Mary Jo Bona remarks,

Daughters in Italian American narratives speak their mother tongue, but also develop code-shifting skills that help them to adapt to American culture. Aware of Italian maternal expectations that they be good daughters (chaste, domestic, industrious, interdependent), they covertly express an American form of individualism that is simultaneously influenced by Italian ways of being. (2018)

In the immigrant land, the relationship between mothers and daughters becomes significantly a cultural and generational paradox. Likewise, Franco Mulas points out “the great generational differences between parents born in the old country and children born in America,” but Lucia Santa “somehow draws from them [her children] the necessary strength to fight for survival and social mobility” (1995).

Most critics read the relationship between Lucia Santa and Octavia in terms of ethnicity, and upward mobility within the context of the new American land. This paper, however, through a close analysis of the text, examines the mother-daughter relationship from a psychoanalytic perspective within its broader socio-cultural context.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical concerns about mother-daughter relationships are varied and multidisciplinary in nature. Scholars trace the origins of this relationship through both psychoanalytic theory and social learning perspectives. Marianne Hirsch, in her review essay, “Mothers and Daughters,” surveys significant mother-daughter scholarship published between 1976 and 1981, including theoretical works, interview-based studies, and literary criticism. She highlights the methodological and ideological divisions that shape the study of mothers and daughters. In her renowned book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich contemplates motherhood as a social construct within the domain of patriarchy. Drawing from her personal experience and interdisciplinary approaches, she focuses on the mothers’ association with both anger and tenderness as well as with the nurturance and violence (1986). Her

1 detailed discussion of the issues of “motherhood and daughterhood” is relevant
2 and timeless:

3
4 The cathexis between mother and daughter-essential, distorted, misused-is the
5 great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant
6 with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of
7 which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give
8 birth to the other. (1986)

9
10 To her, the mother-daughter relationship is essential and deeply intense, yet
11 often overlooked in human history and record. This bond is biologically defined
12 by the reciprocal emotional attachment between the two. Nancy Chodorow’s
13 seminal book *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the*
14 *Sociology of Gender* examines the relation to the mother and the mothering
15 relation through concepts such as the preoedipal mother-daughter relationship,
16 post-oedipal gender personality, and the psychology of object-relations. She
17 explains:

18
19 The turn to the father . . . is embedded in a girl’s external relationship to her mother
20 and in her relation to her mother as an internal object. It expresses hostility to her
21 mother; it results from an attempt to win her mother’s love; it is a reaction to
22 powerlessness vis-à-vis maternal omnipotence and to primary identification. (1999)

23
24 Chodorow argues that the mother–daughter bond reveals itself primarily
25 through intertwined feelings of jealousy and affection; the girl wants to establish
26 her self-identity from mother’s authority, whereas the father’s role remains
27 largely external to this emotional dynamic. In relation to mother–daughter
28 rivalry, María Dolores Martínez Reventós defines *matrophobia* as “the gender
29 conflict that results from the daughter’s narcissistic desire for an image of herself
30 as a woman that does not partake of her mother’s inferiority and diminishment”
31 (1996). Such maternal rejection by the daughter originates from broader socio-
32 historical exclusion. As a clinician, Jane Flax clearly explains the female child’s
33 desire for “separation and individuation.” “Separation means establishing a firm
34 sense of differentiation from the mother, of possessing one’s own physical and
35 mental boundaries. Individuation means the development of a range of
36 characteristics, skill and personality traits which are uniquely one’s own” (1978).
37 These two attempts split the daughter from her mother’s influence and expose
38 how patriarchal structures produce ambivalent, conflicted, and often strained
39 mother–daughter dynamics.

40 All these scholarly discussions illuminate the mother–daughter relationship
41 from diverse perspectives. Critics examine the interactions and communication
42 between mothers and daughters by drawing on psychological theories and socio-
43 cultural frameworks. Childhood attachment, emotional dynamics, and gendered
44 expectations play central roles in shaping a daughter’s identity in relation to her
45 mother. Feelings of separation, individuation, and matrophobia often emerge
46 from internalized patriarchal structures. Despite these complexities, the
47 relationship is universal, marked by both conflict and an undeniable connection.

Textual Discussion

Mother-daughter Rivalry

The Fortunate Pilgrim introduces Lucia Santa and Octavia in a state of non-verbal conflict right from the beginning. When the mother, Lucia joins her Italian folk at her utmost ease for “quarrelling gossip” (Puzo 1997) on Summer night, a routine activity for first-generation immigrants, Octavia’s entry into the scene draws attention to the mother–daughter dynamic:

Lucia Santa felt Octavia sitting beside her on the backless chair: their hips and thighs touched. This always irritated the mother, but her daughter would be offended if she moved, so she accepted it. Seeing her daughter so oddly handsome, dressed in the American style, she gave . . . a smile that showed . . . a hint of derisive irony. Octavia, dutifully silent and attentive, saw that smile and understood it, yet she was bewildered once again by her mother’s nature. (Puzo 1997)

This scene suggests that their relationship, metaphorically like “the backless chair” is not grounded in peace or harmony. The root of their conflict is clearly cultural. As a second-generation American, Octavia seeks more physical closeness with her mother, but Lucia has a mind to resist. Her “American style” dress (Puzo 1997) also seems odd to her. In contrast, while the mother thoroughly enjoys the company of her Italian womenfolk, Octavia does not. She “wanted to be everything these women were not” (Puzo 1997), fully aware of their mentality of “dreamless slavery by children and the unknown pleasure of a marriage bed” (Puzo 1997), shaped by their Italian heritage. These women expect unquestioned passivity and obedience from children, and view marriage as the ultimate destiny for girls.

The genesis of mother–daughter conflicts is not individual; it emerges from a “male gaze” operating within cultural constraints and the patriarchal social structure. Born and raised in Italy, the “Mediterranean area” (Merenda and Mattioni 1993), Lucia Santa experiences multiple forms of discrimination. Her father’s “stern pity” (Puzo 1997) in declaring his inability to provide her with “bridal linen” (Puzo 1997) turns her into a rebel, since “a bride without linen was shameful” (Puzo 1997) in her society. Beyond overt patriarchal domination, the internalized male gaze of women themselves also shapes social attitudes:

Mother–daughter relationships are, therefore, generally much more problematic than mother–son relationships, right from the early months. This becomes evident in typical conflicts. Mothers confess to being more anxious, nervous, and insecure when bringing up a son; and yet they find it an easier undertaking. They do not blame any of the troubles encountered in raising a girl on themselves, but rather on the “difficult nature” of girls. All in all, mothers themselves recognize that they are stricter with girls. (Merenda and Mattioni 1993)

This reveals a patriarchal mindset in Italian society much like in many societies, that values male children over females. In mother–daughter

1 relationships, this gender bias persists and mothers often worry about the
 2 daughter's "difficult nature," a term that suggests independence, autonomy, and
 3 strong will, qualities seen as threatening to traditional masculinity. Thus,
 4 mothers may unknowingly reinforce patriarchal norms by being "stricter" with
 5 daughters, suppressing these traits to uphold male dominance. In *The Fortunate*
 6 *Pilgrim*, we see examples of this cultural conditioning in the Italian mothers,
 7 described as "of the quick and heavy hands" (Puzo 1997). To teach moral and
 8 social values, they may beat their daughters and "drag [them] to the hospital bed
 9 by the hair of [their] head" (Puzo 1997). They lament their "Italia, Italia" (Puzo
 10 1997) because the "new land" (Puzo 1997) does not allow such practices. Lucia
 11 Santa, shaped by this cultural background, is also psychologically influenced and
 12 seeks "possession and dominance" (Puzo 1997) in her relationship with Octavia.

13 *The Fortunate Pilgrim* is partially built on the adolescent daughter's
 14 relationship with her mother as a manifestation of matrophobic hostility.
 15 Matrophobia denotes daughters' "rage at their mothers for having accepted, too
 16 readily and passively, 'whatever comes'" (Rich 1996) within a masculine society.
 17 Octavia's intense matrophobia, expressed as disgust toward conventional femininity
 18 in many situations, fuels the mother-daughter conflict. At the beginning of the
 19 novel, Octavia's psychodevelopmental conflict is evident:

20
 21 She felt doomed. She was afraid that one day she would wake on a warm summer
 22 morning as old as her mother, in a bed and home like this, her children living in
 23 squalor, with unending days of laundry, cooking, and dishwashing before her.
 24 Octavia suffered, shook her head angrily yet fearfully, knowing how vulnerable
 25 she was, knowing that one day she must lie on a marriage bed. (Puzo 1997)

26
 27 This passage conveys both bitterness and awe toward marriage, which
 28 confines women to childbirth, childrearing, and repetitive domestic labor.
 29 Octavia perceives these conditions as barriers to female autonomy and
 30 individualism. She closely observes her mother's everyday life, and Lucia
 31 Santa's fragmented identity is revealed by the narrator as "Lucia Santa
 32 Angeluzzi-Corbo . . . mother of Octavia and Vincenzo Angeluzzi, widow of
 33 Anthony Angeluzzi, now wife of Frank Corbo and mother of his three children"
 34 (Puzo 1997). Octavia has witnessed her stepfather as a "cruel, villainous, evil"
 35 (Puzo 1997) husband who "[gives] blows [to] her mother" (Puzo 1997), even
 36 during pregnancy. She openly tells her mother, "I don't want what you had in
 37 your life" (Puzo 1997), in response to her mother's implicit desire that "As I
 38 am, so you will be" (Carter 1984). It is Octavia who forbids Lucia Santa from
 39 marrying again, blaming her mother for the second marriage. Later it generates
 40 a fear in Octavia about male image which is "hairy, gorilla-like, naked and with
 41 penis enormous and erect" (Puzo 1997) to her. Although she gets married at 25,
 42 her mother's "wasted" life (Puzo 1997) probably provokes her resistance to
 43 motherhood and traditional maternal ideals about marriage.

44 The generational gap within immigrant status heightens the conflict between
 45 mother and daughter. According to scholars, adolescence is a particularly
 46 complex transitional period in the older-youth generations. Bengtson and
 47 Kuypers explore how parents and adolescent children stand at "the

1 developmental stake” (1971). While parents are “more likely to control the
 2 destinies of the young, being in command of . . . monies, and other resources,
 3 and being concerned with generational continuity” (1971), adolescent children
 4 fight “for minimization of external controls” (1971), which parents mostly
 5 navigate in their children’s life. Lucia Santa regrets, “America, America, what
 6 different bones and flesh and blood grow in your name? My children do not
 7 understand me when I speak, and I do not understand them when they weep”
 8 (Puzo 1997). This conflict becomes more complicated when the child is female
 9 and the mother is in a second marriage while living with immigrant status. As
 10 “Ethnicity intersects with changes in . . . intergenerational ties” (Gavlin 2006),
 11 there is an ongoing struggle between old and new values. Octavia wants to
 12 become a teacher by attending night school, whereas her mother wants her to
 13 “earn money” (Puzo 1997). Shaped by the ideology of her Italian heritage and
 14 her experience as a peasant in America, Lucia Santa finds education valueless
 15 while money becomes “God” (Puzo 1997). She believes that Octavia is “too
 16 young to understand” (Puzo 1997) this reality. Having experienced extreme
 17 poverty, the mother cannot imagine any alternative to financial survival in
 18 America. To her, money is security. Their moral concerns also differ. When
 19 Octavia refuses to compromise ethical values at her workplace by participating
 20 in capitalist deception, she is eventually fired. Lucia Santa reacts by saying,
 21 “People like you will never be rich” (Puzo 1997). Similarly, when Octavia
 22 protests against allowing Gino to collect ice, Lucia Santa shows little concern
 23 for either safety or ethical responsibility. In contrast to her mother’s monetary
 24 focus, Octavia “[wants] to be happy” (Puzo 1997). For her, life offers abundant
 25 non-material sources of joy. She discovers these sources through reading
 26 storybooks and refuses to accept the dissatisfaction that defines her mother’s life.
 27 She feels fine being “a forelady in dress shops” (Puzo 1997). Later, she marries
 28 a man who is neither of Italian background nor wealthy, but who shows “mercy
 29 to womankind” (Puzo 1997). Rebelliously but naturally, she breaks the social,
 30 financial and ethical boundaries to establish her freedom and achieve mental
 31 happiness.

32 The cultural clash between mother and daughter becomes evident when
 33 Octavia expresses anger at her mother’s inability to speak English and
 34 pronounces her sister’s name as “Allen” instead of the Americanized “Aileen”
 35 (Puzo 1997). As research suggests, language proficiency, education, and
 36 employment are primary catalysts of cultural integration (Salin et al. 2023).
 37 Raised in America by an Italian mother, Octavia is fluent in both Italian and
 38 English. She develops this dual capability through what Bona describes as
 39 “code-shifting skills” (2018), a linguistic flexibility that allows her to align more
 40 easily with American culture. Age is one of the critical factors in acquiring this
 41 capability, as “the occurrence of a particular switching strategy may often be
 42 traced to the influence of factors outside the domain of syntax, such as age,
 43 which interacts with other socio and psycho-linguistic factors” (Alfonzetti
 44 2015). Younger than her mother, Octavia assimilates more readily into American
 45 society through her education and employment, whereas Lucia Santa views this
 46 new environment as “another planet” from which she feels alienated (Puzo

1997). Lacking access to formal education and employment outside the home, Lucia Santa's world becomes increasingly confined. When her third child, Vinnie, returns from a summer excursion with money and gifts, she is deeply struck by his transformation. She is surprised by the generosity and kindness he encounters in American society, which stands in stark contrast to the hardship and scarcity that shaped her life in Italy. Nevertheless, her response to these new values remains ambivalent, revealing a persistent cultural tension that continues to define her relationship with Octavia.

The conflicts over dress between mothers and daughters represent more than mere generational differences; psychologically, they run much deeper. Lucia Santa is “always dressed in black” (Puzo 1997), like the group of Italian women in her neighborhood. Such traditions, commonly followed by older Italian women, place them in a state of being “perennially in mourning” (Merenda and Mattioni 1993). This mode of dress is traditionally associated with a “patriarchal mindset and strict” Catholic rules (Merenda and Mattioni 1993). Although Lucia Santa is not religious and has “long ceased to think of God” (Puzo 1997), these values remain embedded in her psyche, making her unwilling to break with past traditions. In contrast, a daughter’s sense of fashion is shaped “within the three main spaces of childhood: the home, the school, and peer or community spaces” (Rawlins 2006). Octavia chooses to wear an American dress, “a powder-blue suit . . . white gloves, as her school teacher [has] done” (Puzo 1997). She appears “seductive” (Puzo 1997), which may be the reason why Lucia Santa views this style as “oddly handsome” (Puzo 1997). As Martinez argues, “[t]he daughter’s adolescent body is a matrophobic battlefield” (1996). When mothers expect their daughters to conform to norms similar to their own, particularly regarding bodily appearance shaped by patriarchal and masculine ideals, the body becomes a contested space. It functions as a site of rebellion and resistance. Through Octavia’s rejection of traditional feminine appearance, she attempts to avoid becoming the “maternal double” (Martinez 286).

In connection to the mother-daughter relationship, the mother-son relationship appears in a different way in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Larry, Lucia Santa’s eldest son is a “natural-born ladykiller” (Puzo 1997), who “[loses] his virginity” (Puzo 1997) at the age of sixteen. Lucia Santa treats Larry differently from the way she treats Octavia. Aware of everything, she consoles herself, considering him “[a] good son . . . a young man in America, not in Italy” (Puzo 1997) because he is male. During her sickness, Octavia makes fun of her mother’s attempt to preserve her virginity, saying, “I’ll be all right. At least I’m not having a baby without a husband. I’m still a good Italian girl” (Puzo 1997). Although the moment is portrayed comically, it has a serious underpinning. Furthermore, when she is examined by Dr. Barbato in her room, both Octavia and the doctor can feel the presence of Lucia Santa around, “who was keeping a watchful eye upon him” (Puzo 1997). She is always conscious of guarding the chastity of Octavia, and although her purpose is good, the act imposes the stereotypes of a daughter upon Octavia.

1 *Mother-daughter Connection*

2
3 Despite all these recurring conflicts between Lucia Santa and Octavia
4 throughout the novel, Puzo consistently depicts a profound sense of bonding
5 inherent to their relationship. As the narrator notes, “They had this quarrel many
6 times and found the wound always fresh” (Puzo 1997). There is always an
7 underlying attempt at compromise, consolation, and reconciliation at the end of
8 quarrel each time. Neither woman wants to aggravate their conflicts into a major
9 crisis. In these disputes, the daughter, Octavia, is not always the loser; the
10 balance of power shifts between mother and daughter. This indicates a strong
11 sense of mutuality and understanding between them, as they are fully aware of
12 each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The depth of their bonding is not always
13 measurable; rather, it is mostly conveyed through silence and inner thoughts, at
14 times, through their passionate shouting.

15 The relationship between mother and daughter is linked physically and
16 mentally, regardless of place and time. Rich contends, “The first knowledge any
17 woman has of warmth, nourishment, tenderness, security, sensuality, mutuality,
18 comes from her mother” (1986). According to her, this is also true for a son, but
19 “institutionalized heterosexuality and institutionalized motherhood” (1986)
20 force the son to deviate from the maternal sense of security. Octavia looks “at
21 her mother with love and respect” (Puzo 1997) when she witnesses the courage
22 of this “simple peasant” (Puzo 1997) mother to fight against the injustice by
23 powerful male counterparts in the society such as Le Cinglata’s lawyer. Octavia
24 feels safe and invulnerable under her mother’s authority which maintains “scales
25 of power and justice” (Puzo 1997) in the family structure. She always distributes
26 household chores among all family members with equity including the little
27 Lena. She has this practice unlike the gender split in her native country. To
28 Octavia, her mother is a lady with “magic signal” (Puzo 1997), she gets amazed
29 noticing her financial management and dream for social mobility. With all
30 limitations, she provides “the best olive oil, expensive cheese, imported
31 prosciutto” (Puzo 1997), medical doctor and new dress for the children at Easter
32 time. Still, she saves “five or ten dollars every few weeks” for a bank deposit to
33 buy “a house on Long Island” (Puzo 1997). Lucia Santa does not compromise
34 with the well being of her family members at the expense of savings. When
35 Octavia gets sick, we do not see any procrastination in Lucia Santa who is also
36 occasionally a miser. She does not hesitate to send Octaviato to The French
37 Hospital, an expensive one in the area. This cost appears as “a foolish act,
38 immoral, shocking” to the neighbours including Dr. Barbato; “yet it [is] merely
39 an act of love” (Puzo 1997). The narrative illuminates Lucia Santa’s psyche with
40 an indomitable emotional touch, “Lucia Santa’s daughter would be treated like
41 a human being, that is, as a solvent member of society” (Puzo 1997). It is Larry
42 who feels jealous after watching this. Here, Lucia Santa defies the conventional
43 patriarchal mindset of older women who withhold their daughters’ rights based
44 on traditional values and a perceived future dependence on sons.

45 This relationship between Lucia Santa and Octavia is strengthened by their
46 shared secrets. Octavia is the only member of the family her mother trusts with

1 the details of the bank deposit. They have their regular meeting place and time
 2 in the family. When everyone goes to bed at night, mother and daughter sit
 3 drinking coffee at “the round kitchen table” (Puzo 1997) to discuss and decide
 4 any family issue. During her six month absence at hospital, Lucia Santa can feel
 5 the necessity of Octavia in her life which is not just financial:

6
 7 It was Octavia who made the children get good marks in school, brought them to
 8 the free dental clinic in the Hudson Guild. It was Octavia who planned how to save
 9 money and hide it in the post office, no matter how much they needed it for food
 10 and clothing. It was Octavia who gave her strength, on whom she leaned, who
 11 supported her in moments of weakness. (Puzo 1997)

12
 13 Prominently, she always shares her crisis times with Octavia, who offers a
 14 prompt and effective solution. Octavia remains her mother’s support system.
 15 When Frank Corbo comes back after his long absence from the family, one day,
 16 he attacks Lucia Santa with a blow. In response, Octavia protests such a scene
 17 by threatening him “with a kitchen knife” (Puzo 1997). Even after Octavia’s
 18 marriage, their emotional bond deepens strongly. Lucia Santa calls her as “the
 19 best of [her] children” (Puzo 1997). In one shared moment, Lucia Santa
 20 discusses the personalities and attitude of the other three sons, Larry, Vinnie, and
 21 Gino in a complaining tone. While Lucia Santa feels exhausted by the children’s
 22 everyday behaviour, Octavia defends her brothers by offering a positive
 23 perspective which comforts her mother in her emotional vulnerability.

24 With all prominent clashes between mother and daughter, the depth of their
 25 understanding based on emotion and empathy is boundless. Both mother and
 26 daughter are ready to recognize each other in their everyday sacrifice for the
 27 family. When analysing “matrophobia,” Rich argues that it is “[e]asier by far to
 28 hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon
 29 her” (1986). Lucia Santa also thinks it is too tough to make her “young virginal
 30 daughter” (Puzo 1997) understand the reason for her marriage to Frank Corbo.
 31 She confesses to herself that she has “brought sorrow to her first child” (Puzo
 32 1997) with this act. Later, she does not sign the letter coming from Ravenswood
 33 to bring back mentally ill Frank Corbo at home “on a trial basis” (Puzo 1997).
 34 Literally, she wants to make sure of the safety of all her children from the
 35 clutches of a mad man, but ideally, the reason for her “cold decision” is Octavia
 36 “who would suffer, be driven into leaving her home” (Puzo 1997). Implicitly,
 37 the strong bond allows the mother to be the daughter’s heroic rescuer. It follows
 38 that the girl’s identification with her mother is unambiguously positive. Octavia,
 39 on the contrary, although she reacts overtly against her mother’s second marital
 40 decision, knows in her mind, “she could not blame her mother for marrying . . .
 41 she knew why her mother married this evil man” (Puzo 1997). Her reactions are
 42 momentary as she is conscious of social and patriarchal “forces acting upon her
 43 [mother],” (1986) as mentioned by Rich.

44 Rejecting a mother’s values does not dismantle the maternal shadow’s
 45 influence on the daughter. Although Lucia Santa sometimes feels hopeless
 46 seeing her children’s “[f]oreign ways and a foreign tongue” (Puzo 1997), the
 47 narrative establishes the tone noting Octavia as “dutiful Italian daughter” (Puzo

1997). She speaks in Italian besides English, following the family code set by her mother, she acts as a maternal figure to her young siblings, displaying “duplicating that of [her mother]” (Hirsh 1989). She cleans the household willfully and assigns everyone to their tasks. In spite of her determination not to be like her mother, she behaves in ways that seem to imitate her mother’s self. Sometimes she gets furious enough to curse people in Italian like her mother. She rejects the dating offer of Mr. La Frotezza not modestly but aggressively calling him “a real guinea bastard from Italy” (Puzo 1997) in front of her family members. This feminine protest recreates the scene that took place between Lucia Santa and Le Cinglata’s lawyer. Ellen C. Rose opines, “A mother ‘who is a fighter’ gives her daughter a sense of life’s possibilities” (1983) in spite of generational gap. Neither Octavia nor Lucia Santa is waiting for a male to rescue them from the struggles of life. For Lucia Santa, “her migration is a selfchoice—an alteration of her linen, symbol of dignity and rebellion against patriarchy, country” (Dwyer 2003). Anthony Angeluzzi, her first husband, is a means to escape from the shackles of social and cultural code. If she had any other alternative, she would utilize that. He is not a loving person in her life, no emotional attachment is there in their relationship. She is not a pretender. She faces reality as it appears before her. Octavia also chooses to marry Norman Bergeron, a Yiddish poet, thereby defying all conventional code and ethics of her community. Being financially independent, she does not need to marry someone like Mr. Fortezza to manage the relief money. Both mother and daughter in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* perform double roles. As the “healer, helper, bringer of tenderness and security” (Rich 1986) of the family, they ensure it. In terms of social mobility, their joint venture makes the family move to Long Island. Although there are more male members in the family, it is the mother-daughter bond that shines and preserves the unity of the family partially in the Italian model in the American setting.

Conclusion

The paper studies two dynamic dimensions of the mother-daughter relationship. It is always redefined and negotiated in terms of the relative atmosphere, family structure, and social and cultural contexts. As time evolves, the bond between Octavia and Lucia Santa establishes connection more than rivalry. If Lucia Santa is Puzo’s “fortunate pilgrim,” then the pilgrim’s disciple is Octavia, who maintains her association with her mentor not passively, but with a strong sense of daughterly honour and individuality she needs for her own autonomy. On the other hand, Lucia Santa accepts her daughter’s opinion and action with a balanced perspective generated by her maternal wisdom and honour.

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