

The Language of Literary Representation of the Mother Figure in Contemporary English-Language Fiction

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ABSTRACT

*The article examines the linguistic and stylistic means used to construct the mother figure in contemporary English-language fiction. The study focuses on Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977). Rather than treating motherhood exclusively as a literary or thematic category, the research approaches the mother figure as a linguostylistic construction produced through lexical choices, phraseological combinations, repetition, metaphor, sensory vocabulary, syntactic organization, forms of nomination, internal speech, and culturally marked expressions. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which apparently ordinary words and phrases acquire additional contextual meanings when they occur in descriptions of maternal relationships. The analysis demonstrates that Allison constructs Anney Boatwright largely through tactile and sensory vocabulary, repetitive verbal structures, and emotionally charged domestic expressions; Enright represents Rosaleen through fragmented internal reflection, interrogative constructions, temporal vocabulary, and metaphorical descriptions of memory and maternal influence; while Morrison constructs Pilate through culturally and religiously marked nomination, bodily metaphor, symbolic lexical units, and unusual syntactic and narrative patterns. The study argues that the mother figure in contemporary fiction is not created by characterization alone but emerges from the interaction of linguistic form, stylistic foregrounding, narrative perspective, and contextual meaning.*

Keywords: Mother figure, linguostylistics, literary language, stylistic analysis, lexical choice, metaphor, repetition, nomination, contemporary fiction, English-language literature.

INTRODUCTION

The representation of motherhood occupies an important place in English-language fiction, but contemporary literary texts increasingly construct the mother figure through linguistically and psychologically complex forms of representation. The maternal character is no longer necessarily presented through direct authorial characterization or through a stable set of positive attributes. Instead, maternal identity may emerge through lexical choices, bodily descriptions, evaluative expressions, gestures, sensory details, internal questions, remembered experiences, spatial references and symbolic language.

From a linguistic perspective, the mother figure can therefore be regarded as a textually constructed identity. The meaning of motherhood is produced not only by what the narrator explicitly states about a character but also by the linguistic forms through which the character is described, remembered and evaluated. Lexical selection may indicate affection, vulnerability or social marginalization; bodily vocabulary may externalize psychological experience; syntactic fragmentation may reproduce emotional instability; interrogative structures may signal internal uncertainty; while metaphor and symbolic nomination may extend an individual mother beyond the limits of personal characterization.

This article examines these processes in three English-language novels: Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977). The novels were selected because they demonstrate three different but interconnected modes of linguistic construction of maternal identity.

In Allison's novel, Anney Boatwright is represented through bodily description, sensory vocabulary and concrete artistic details. The linguistic presentation of the body becomes a means of expressing poverty, exhaustion, fear and maternal attachment.

In Enright's *The Green Road*, maternal identity is constructed through memory discourse, internal reflection, shifts in narrative perspective and spatial language. In Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Pilate is represented through culturally marked vocabulary, symbolic nomination, folklore, ancestral references and metaphorical structures that associate her with cultural memory and spiritual continuity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literary representation of motherhood has been examined from feminist, psychoanalytic, sociological, cultural and literary perspectives. Earlier approaches frequently associated motherhood with biological reproduction, family responsibility and the domestic sphere, whereas later scholarship increasingly emphasized the distinction between motherhood as a social institution and mothering as an individual experience. This theoretical shift provides an important basis for examining the mother figure as a complex literary construction rather than as a fixed or idealized character type.

One of the influential theoretical approaches to motherhood is associated with Adrienne Rich, whose *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) distinguishes between motherhood as a personal experience and motherhood as a social institution. Rich's approach is particularly important for literary studies because it makes it possible to examine the tension between women's individual maternal experiences and the cultural expectations imposed upon them [13: 152]. In this perspective, motherhood cannot be understood exclusively through biological or emotional attachment; it is also shaped by social structures, cultural values and expectations concerning women's roles. This distinction is especially relevant to contemporary literary representations in which mothers experience conflicts between personal identity, maternal responsibility and social expectations.

Nancy Chodorow develops another significant dimension of the study of motherhood by emphasizing the psychological and social processes through which mothering is reproduced. Her

work connects motherhood with the formation of personality and gender identity and draws particular attention to the relationship between mothers and daughters. From this perspective, maternal experience is not isolated within an individual woman but participates in the reproduction of gender roles across generations. Such an approach is useful for literary analysis because it enables the mother-daughter relationship to be examined as a dynamic psychological and cultural process. Chodorow's ideas are particularly relevant to the analysis of literary characters whose understanding of motherhood is influenced by their own childhood experiences and relationships with their mothers [3: 263].

The relationship between motherhood, identity and narrative has been further explored by Marianne Hirsch in *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Hirsch considers the mother-daughter relationship in relation to identity formation, dependency, separation and autonomy. Her approach demonstrates that the literary representation of the mother is frequently connected with the daughter's process of constructing her own identity [9: 260]. The mother may therefore function simultaneously as a source of emotional attachment and as a figure from whom the daughter seeks psychological independence. This theoretical perspective is particularly productive for the analysis of contemporary fiction in which maternal relationships are represented through memory, retrospective narration and psychological conflict.

The significance of the mother-daughter relationship is also emphasized in Elizabeth Brown-Guillory's *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*. Her research demonstrates that literary representations of motherhood are influenced by race, gender, class and cultural environment. The mother-daughter relationship can consequently become a space in which social restrictions are transmitted, negotiated or resisted [2: 347]. This perspective is especially valuable for reading Dorothy Allison and Toni Morrison, whose maternal characters exist within social environments shaped by economic, racial and gender inequalities.

A further important contribution is provided by Gloria Wade-Gayles, who challenges the assumption that biological capacity automatically produces maternal ability. In her study of mother-daughter relationships in Black women's fiction, she argues that women bring their individual strengths and weaknesses to the maternal role and that their understanding of themselves influences their mothering [14]. At the same time, these individual characteristics are affected by external social forces, including discrimination. This approach is particularly significant for literary representations of mothers who experience poverty, gender inequality, racial discrimination or other forms of social pressure.

Patricia Hill Collins further expands the discussion of motherhood by examining African-American women's experiences of mothering, community and resistance. Her concept of the "other mother" emphasizes that mothering may extend beyond the biological mother and can involve women who share responsibility for children's care and development. This idea is relevant to literary texts in which a child's development is influenced not only by the biological mother but also by sisters, aunts, grandmothers and other women. The theoretical framework is particularly applicable to *Bastard Out of Carolina*, where the network of Boatwright women constitutes an important social and emotional environment surrounding Anney and Bone [5: 198]. The dissertation material based on McDaniels also identifies women-centered networks and "other mothers" as important strategies through which fictional mothers respond to difficult social circumstances.

The literary study of motherhood has also increasingly focused on mothers who experience social oppression. Preselfannie McDaniels, in *Mothering Modes: Analyzing Mother Roles in Novels by Twentieth-Century American Women*, examines fictional motherhood in relation to oppressive circumstances, including gender, race, ethnicity and class. Her research argues that the strengths and weaknesses of mothers are influenced by social conditions and that fictional mothers develop different strategies for coping with circumstances that complicate their maternal roles [11: 376]. McDaniels specifically

includes Dorothy Allison's *Anney Boatwright* among poor mothers whose maternal experience must be understood within difficult socioeconomic circumstances. McDaniels' approach is particularly important for the present study because it moves the interpretation of motherhood away from the concept of the "perfect mother." Her research emphasizes that fictional mother-daughter relationships may contain love, conflict, failure, dependency and attempts at adaptation simultaneously. Such an understanding provides a productive theoretical basis for examining Allison's *Anney* not simply as a "weak mother," but as a character whose maternal identity is constructed through the interaction of personal limitations and oppressive social circumstances.

The study of motherhood in Anne Enright's fiction has also attracted attention from feminist and psychoanalytic critics. Scholarship on Enright emphasizes the relationship between female identity, the body, family history and cultural expectations. Patricia Coughlan's work on Irish literature and feminism provides a broader context for understanding the representation of women and gender in contemporary Irish writing [6: 1-19]. Other scholarship on Enright has examined psychological subjectivity, maternal identity and the representation of the female body. The dissertation research also draws upon Julia Kristeva's discussion of motherhood in *Stabat Mater*, as well as studies of Irish motherhood and cultural change [10]. These approaches provide a theoretical context for examining how Enright represents motherhood not as a stable social identity but as an experience involving bodily, psychological and cultural contradictions.

In relation to *The Green Road*, recent literary criticism has paid attention to family memory, domestic space, psychological conflict and the changing relationship between mothers and adult children. The novel's structure allows maternal identity to emerge through different perspectives and memories. The family house, childhood experiences and recollections of the mother become important elements through which the characters reconstruct their past. Existing scholarship therefore provides a basis for

examining Enright's use of memory and interior reflection as techniques for representing maternal experience.

Toni Morrison's representation of motherhood has received extensive critical attention from feminist, African-American literary and psychoanalytic perspectives. Barbara Christian considers Morrison's fiction in relation to African-American women's experience, community and cultural identity [4: 7], while Trudier Harris examines *Song of Solomon* through the relationship between reality and myth within the African-American community [8: 228]. The critical collection devoted to *Song of Solomon* also includes studies of trauma, narrative identity, biblical typology, mythology and naming. These approaches demonstrate that Morrison's characters often operate simultaneously at the individual and collective levels.

The existing criticism of *Song of Solomon* is particularly important for understanding Pilate. Her character has been examined in connection with African-American cultural memory, ancestry, naming, spirituality and myth. Pilate therefore provides an example of a maternal figure whose significance extends beyond the conventional biological definition of motherhood. Her songs, relationship with ancestors and role in transmitting family history allow her to function as a carrier of cultural memory. The present study builds upon this critical context but focuses specifically on the poetic mechanisms through which Pilate acquires her symbolic and mythological maternal significance.

Despite the considerable body of scholarship on motherhood, several aspects require further integrated examination. Existing feminist and sociological studies have provided important explanations of motherhood as an institution, social role and psychological experience. Literary studies have also examined individual mother figures in relation to gender, race, class, family history and cultural identity. However, these approaches are not always brought together with a systematic analysis of the artistic means by which the mother figure is constructed within the literary text. In particular, portrait, artistic detail, inner reflection, memory, spatial imagery, symbolism and mythology are often examined separately or in relation to broader thematic questions.

A more integrated poetic approach can demonstrate how these artistic mechanisms transform motherhood into a multidimensional literary image. This gap provides the methodological and scholarly basis for the present study.

Accordingly, the present article examines three different poetic modes of constructing the mother figure in English-language literature. Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* is analyzed through portraiture and artistic detail; Anne Enright's *The Green Road* through psychologism, inner reflection and memory; and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* through symbolic and mythological imagery. By bringing these approaches together, the study seeks to demonstrate how contemporary writers use different artistic mechanisms to move beyond an idealized representation of motherhood and create psychologically, socially and culturally complex maternal figures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is based on a linguostylistic analysis of three English-language novels: Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Anne Enright's *The Green Road*, and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. The selection of these works is determined by the different linguistic strategies through which maternal characters are represented. The purpose of the analysis is not to classify the mothers according to predetermined literary types, but to examine how their identities, emotional states, relationships with their children, and cultural meanings are constructed through the language of the texts.

The study applies principles of literary stylistics and linguopoetics, with particular attention to lexical choice, phraseological combinations, repetition, metaphor, nomination, syntactic organization, sensory vocabulary, internal speech, and culturally marked expressions. The analysis is conducted at the level of concrete textual fragments rather than through general descriptions of the novels. Each selected passage is examined in relation to the linguistic forms that make particular aspects of motherhood perceptible to the reader.

The methodological procedure is based on the relationship between linguistic form and contextual function. First, a significant lexical, phraseological, metaphorical, or syntactic unit is identified within the passage. Second, its stylistic characteristics are determined. Third, the unit is interpreted within the immediate narrative context. Finally, its contribution to the linguistic construction of the mother figure is established. Such an approach makes it possible to distinguish between the lexical meaning of a word and the additional stylistic meanings that emerge from its interaction with other elements of the text.

Particular attention is also given to repetition and semantic accumulation. A repeated lexical item is not treated merely as a formal device. Its recurrence is examined in relation to rhythm, emotional intensity, memory, characterization, and narrative perspective. Metaphorical expressions are similarly interpreted not simply as examples of figurative language, but as conceptual mechanisms through which abstract psychological or relational meanings are expressed in concrete linguistic form.

The analysis also considers the relationship between maternal representation and narrative perspective. In Allison's novel, for example, Anney is largely perceived through Bone's remembered sensory experience; in Enright's novel, Rosaleen is represented through shifting perspectives and internal reflection; while Morrison's representation of Pilate is strongly connected with naming, bodily imagery, religious vocabulary, and oral-cultural associations. Consequently, the linguistic construction of motherhood is examined as a product of both stylistic choice and narrative mediation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lexical and phraseological representation of Anney Boatwright in Bastard Out of Carolina

Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* offers a particularly significant example of maternal representation through sensory and tactile language. Rather than providing a conventional physical portrait of Anney Boatwright, Allison allows the reader to encounter the mother through Bone's bodily memory of

everyday interaction with her. The mother is remembered through touching, brushing, smell, sound, and physical proximity. This strategy is linguistically important because the mother figure emerges from concrete lexical details rather than from direct authorial evaluation. A particularly revealing passage occurs when Bone remembers sitting on her mother's lap while Anney brushes her hair: "...on Mama's lap sitting in the curve of her arm while she brushed and brushed and smoothed my hair and talked soft above me" [1: 30–31]. The most immediately noticeable stylistic feature of this fragment is the repetition of the verb "brushed." The repetition in "brushed and brushed" does not provide new factual information. The second occurrence is semantically redundant, but stylistically meaningful. It slows down the description and gives the action a sense of duration. The mother's brushing becomes not a single completed action but a repeated, almost ritualized activity. In this context, repetition functions as a linguistic representation of emotional continuity. The verb "smoothed" reinforces the same semantic field. Unlike a neutral verb such as "touched" or "handled," "smoothed" contains an implicit suggestion of care, gentleness, and restoration. Its semantic relation with "brushed" creates a cluster of tactile verbs associated with maternal care. The linguistic pattern therefore establishes physical contact as one of the principal forms through which Bone experiences her mother's affection.

The phrase "the curve of her arm" is also significant. The noun "curve" transforms the mother's arm from an anatomical object into a protective spatial form. Bone is positioned "in" this curve, and the preposition itself contributes to the representation of enclosure and security. The linguistic construction consequently makes the mother's body function as a protective space. The phrase "talked soft above me" adds an auditory dimension to the tactile representation. The adjective "soft", grammatically associated with the verb "talked," produces a sensory impression rather than simply describing volume. The reader perceives the mother's speech through the child's bodily experience. Thus, the lexical choices operate across different sensory domains: "curve" and "arm" evoke touch and spatial

perception, “brushed” and “smoothed” evoke physical contact, while “talked soft” introduces sound.

The passage therefore creates maternal intimacy through the accumulation of relatively ordinary lexical units. None of the individual words explicitly means “maternal love.” Nevertheless, their combination constructs precisely this meaning. The stylistic effect emerges from the interaction of the lexical items rather than from a direct statement. The same passage contains another important sensory cluster when Bone recalls the smell associated with her mother: “...flour, salt, and fingernail polish...” [1: 30-31]. The three nouns are especially significant because they belong to different semantic fields. “Flour” and “salt” evoke food preparation and domestic labour, whereas “fingernail polish” belongs to the semantic field of personal appearance and femininity. Their juxtaposition produces a complex linguistic representation of Anney. She is simultaneously associated with domestic motherhood and with an individual female identity.

The stylistic significance of the expression lies in this semantic coexistence. Allison does not construct the mother exclusively through conventional domestic vocabulary. The lexical field of cooking is interrupted by an item associated with bodily appearance. Consequently, the mother is linguistically represented as both caregiver and woman.

The phrase “unspeakable pleasure” further intensifies the emotional meaning of the passage. The adjective “unspeakable” is an evaluative lexical item that indicates the inadequacy of ordinary language to express the narrator’s emotional response. It also creates a contrast with the concrete sensory vocabulary that dominates the preceding description. The passage moves from physical details toward an abstract emotional evaluation. This movement is characteristic of Allison’s stylistic strategy: concrete bodily experience becomes the basis for the articulation of emotional meaning.

The linguistic construction of Anney is therefore strongly dependent on sensory memory. The words referring to hair, arm, lap, smell, and voice form a recurring semantic network around the mother. Through this network, motherhood is represented as an embodied experience rather than an abstract social role.

This strategy becomes particularly important when the narrative later depicts the deterioration of the relationship between Anney and Bone. The earlier tactile vocabulary establishes a linguistic expectation of maternal protection. When that physical closeness disappears, the absence of the same vocabulary becomes meaningful. The stylistic contrast between proximity and distance consequently contributes to the representation of the transformation in the mother-daughter relationship.

The linguistic representation of maternal psychological influence in The Green Road

Irish writer Anne Enright employs a markedly different linguistic strategy in *The Green Road*. Rosaleen Madigan is not primarily constructed through detailed descriptions of physical care. Instead, her presence is repeatedly mediated through memory, fragmented reflection, temporal vocabulary, and metaphorical language. The mother figure therefore exists not only as a character who acts in the narrative but also as a psychological presence within the consciousness of her children. One of the most revealing examples occurs when Rosaleen asks herself: "Where did it begin?" [7: 259]. At first sight, this is a simple interrogative sentence. However, its stylistic function exceeds its grammatical meaning. There is no clearly defined interlocutor and no immediately identifiable answer. The question is therefore not primarily informational. It functions as an instance of internal speech. Margaret O'Neill describes the phrase as "more a cadence than a question," emphasizing its rhythmic and psychological character [15]. This observation is particularly relevant from a linguostylistic perspective because the grammatical form of the utterance is interrogative, while its contextual function is reflective and affective. The most important linguistic feature is the pronoun "it". The referent of "it" remains unspecified. This creates semantic indeterminacy. The reader cannot immediately determine whether Rosaleen is asking when a particular emotional condition began, when her family relationships changed, or when a particular event entered her consciousness. The absence of an explicit referent transforms

a grammatical question into an expression of psychological uncertainty.

The phrase is subsequently described as “another scrap in a life full of scraps, some of them beautiful.” The noun “scrap” is especially significant. Literally, it refers to a small piece or fragment. In the context of memory, however, it becomes a metaphorical nomination for an incomplete recollection. The repetition of the noun in “a life full of scraps” extends the metaphor from one memory to Rosaleen’s entire experience. The metaphor is reinforced by the adjective “beautiful.” The combination of fragmentation and beauty creates a complex representation of memory. The past is neither presented as a coherent narrative nor rejected as meaningless. It survives in fragments, some painful and some beautiful.

The linguistic construction of the mother figure therefore becomes inseparable from the representation of memory itself. Rosaleen is not described through a stable sequence of biographical facts; she is reconstructed through fragments of consciousness. The novel employs similar spatial vocabulary when it describes the absence of direction: “there was no path. No trajectory” [7: 193]. The nouns “path” and “trajectory” normally denote movement through physical space. In this context, however, they function metaphorically. The absence of a path represents the absence of a coherent direction in psychological and familial experience. The second sentence, “No trajectory,” is particularly important syntactically. It is not a complete independent clause but a fragment consisting of a negative determiner and noun. Its incompleteness gives it emphatic force. The omission of a verb makes the statement abrupt and final. Thus, syntax reinforces the semantic meaning of disorientation.

This relationship between syntactic fragmentation and psychological meaning is central to Enright’s representation of motherhood. The fragmented form of the narrative reflects the fragmented experience of the character. The representation of Rosaleen’s influence becomes even more explicit in the description of Emmet’s consciousness: “Her shadow moving through him. He had to shake her out of himself like a wet dog.

Mother” [7: 210]. The central stylistic device here is metaphor. The noun “shadow” is transferred from the physical domain to the psychological domain. A shadow is normally dependent upon a body and accompanies it without being physically tangible. When maternal influence is represented as a “shadow,” the metaphor conceptualizes the mother as an internal presence that cannot simply be removed. The phrase “moving through him” intensifies this metaphor. The preposition “through” suggests penetration and continuity. The mother is not merely remembered by the son; her influence is represented as something that exists within him. The following sentence introduces an unusual simile: “shake her out of himself like a wet dog.” The comparison is striking because it transforms psychological separation into a physical act. The verb “shake” implies violent movement, while the image of a wet dog suggests an instinctive attempt to remove something clinging to the body. The isolated noun “Mother” at the end of the passage is equally significant. Grammatically, it functions as a single noun rather than as part of a complete sentence. Syntactically isolated, it acquires emphatic force. After the metaphor and simile, the noun returns the reader to the central referent. The linguistic sequence can therefore be understood as a movement from metaphorical representation to direct nomination.

Enright thus constructs maternal influence through a combination of metaphor, simile, spatial prepositions, sentence fragments, and isolated nomination. The mother figure becomes a psychological presence that remains active in the adult child’s consciousness even when physical distance separates them.

Nomination, religious lexicon and symbolic language in Song of Solomon

Toni Morrison’s representation of Pilate develops another form of linguostylistic complexity. In this case, nomination itself becomes a major device through which the mother-related semantic field is constructed. Pilate’s name carries religious and intertextual associations from the moment it is introduced.

The naming scene contains the expression “motherless child.” The compound adjective “motherless” is formed by the

noun “mother” and the negative suffix “-less.” Morphologically, the word defines the child through the absence of the mother. The linguistic construction is therefore significant because motherhood becomes present in the text precisely through its absence. The naming scene also places the word “motherless” within a religiously marked dialogue concerning the name “Pilate.” The midwife objects that the father should not give a “motherless child” the name of the biblical figure associated with the condemnation of Jesus. The stylistic significance of the expression lies in the semantic concentration of the word “motherless.” Morrison could have represented the child simply through a personal name or kinship description. Instead, the negative morphological form foregrounds the absence of the mother as a defining condition. The word consequently performs two functions simultaneously. At the grammatical level, it is an adjective modifying “child.” At the semantic and stylistic level, it foregrounds the maternal absence surrounding Pilate’s birth. This linguistic construction is especially important because Pilate subsequently becomes a character associated with forms of care, memory, family continuity, and cultural transmission. The initial lexical representation of her as a “motherless child” therefore establishes a semantic tension between maternal absence and later forms of maternal or nurturing identity.

The name “Pilate” itself creates another layer of stylistic meaning. The naming episode explicitly connects the name with the biblical Pilate, producing an intertextual relationship between the character and the Christian tradition. The word is therefore culturally marked: its meaning cannot be exhausted by its function as a proper name. Morrison intensifies the cultural markedness of the name through the dialogue surrounding it. The midwife’s reaction – particularly the association of the name with a “Christ-killing Pilate” – creates a semantic conflict between the father’s act of naming and the cultural expectations surrounding the biblical reference.

From a linguostylistic perspective, this is an example of onomastic foregrounding. A proper name normally identifies an individual; here, however, the name simultaneously activates a cultural narrative. Pilate is therefore linguistically marked before

the reader encounters the full development of her character. The bodily representation of Pilate develops this markedness further. Her unusual birth and the absence of a navel become recurring physical signs. Secondary scholarship on the novel connects this feature with the representation of Pilate's exceptional birth and identity. The navel is particularly productive as a linguistic and symbolic detail because it normally represents a physical trace of the maternal connection established before birth. Its absence therefore acquires contextual meaning beyond anatomy. The bodily detail becomes associated with questions of origin, belonging, maternal connection, and identity. Morrison consequently creates a semantic chain in which a small bodily detail becomes connected with broader cultural meanings:

body → birth → maternal connection → absence → identity.

This is not merely a symbolic interpretation imposed from outside the text. The connection is generated by the recurrence of lexical fields associated with birth, motherhood, family, and origin.

Pilate's representation is also enriched through sensory and auditory vocabulary. In a scene involving Pilate, Reba, and Hagar, Morrison describes the women singing in candlelight and refers to Reba's "soft profile" and Hagar's hands moving through her hair. The adjective "soft" is particularly interesting because it belongs simultaneously to the tactile and visual semantic domains. A profile cannot literally be soft in the tactile sense within the context of visual observation; the adjective therefore transfers a tactile quality into visual description. This creates a cross-sensory stylistic effect. Similarly, the repetition in "moving, moving" foregrounds Hagar's hand movement. The repeated participle creates rhythmic continuity and contributes to the musical atmosphere established by the women's singing. Thus, the linguistic structure of the scene combines visual, tactile, and auditory vocabulary. Pilate is consequently embedded within a female linguistic environment of singing, movement, softness, body, and voice. Her characterization is not achieved through direct psychological explanation. Instead, the surrounding lexical

and syntactic patterns create an atmosphere in which the female characters become associated with oral and embodied forms of cultural continuity.

The three novels demonstrate that maternal representation depends heavily on the organization of lexical fields.

In Allison, the dominant lexical field is bodily and domestic. Words connected with hair, hands, lap, smell, food, and voice construct motherhood as physical intimacy and everyday care. The repeated presence of tactile vocabulary is particularly important because the relationship between Bone and Anney is initially experienced through bodily closeness. In Enright, the lexical field is more abstract and psychological. Words connected with beginning, fragments, path, trajectory, gap, shadow, and movement transform emotional experience into spatial and temporal structures. Motherhood is consequently represented as a psychological presence that continues beyond physical proximity. In Morrison, the lexical field is culturally and symbolically marked. Words associated with motherlessness, biblical naming, birth, body, song, and family history connect motherhood with questions of origin and cultural identity.

The important point is that these lexical fields are not isolated lists of vocabulary. They form semantic networks through repetition and contextual association. A word acquires stylistic importance because it enters into a relationship with other words and with the narrative situation in which it occurs. For this reason, the linguistic analysis of the mother figure should move beyond identifying individual metaphors or stylistic devices. The more significant question concerns the accumulation and interaction of linguistic choices across a passage and, ultimately, across the novel.

Repetition is one of the most productive devices in the selected texts. In Allison, the repetition of “brushed and brushed” transforms a simple domestic action into a remembered ritual of intimacy. In Morrison, “moving, moving” creates rhythmic continuity within a scene of female singing and bodily movement. In Enright, the recurrence of particular forms of nomination including “Mammy,” “Mama,” “Ma,” and “Rosaleen” – demonstrates that the mother can be linguistically

constructed through several competing or overlapping names. O'Neill specifically notes the multiplicity of names by which Rosaleen is known.

The variation between these forms of address is stylistically significant. "Mama" and "Mammy" are intimate kinship terms, while "Rosaleen" foregrounds the woman's individual identity. "Gran" marks another generational relationship. Consequently, nomination does not simply identify the character; it encodes different relational positions. This demonstrates that the mother figure is linguistically constructed through relational nomination. The same woman may be represented differently depending on who names her and from what position. Such variation is especially important for contemporary fiction because it prevents motherhood from functioning as a single, fixed identity. The language itself preserves the tension between the woman as mother, individual, daughter, wife, and member of a particular cultural community.

CONCLUSION

The analysis demonstrates that the mother figure in contemporary English-language fiction is constructed through a complex interaction of lexical, phraseological, metaphorical, and syntactic choices. The linguistic representation of motherhood is therefore not simply a matter of selecting emotionally expressive vocabulary. Rather, it emerges from the systematic organization of semantic fields, repetitions, metaphors, nominations, sensory expressions, sentence structures, and narrative forms. In Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, maternal intimacy is primarily constructed through tactile and sensory language. The repetition of "brushed and brushed," the phrase "the curve of her arm," the expression "talked soft," and the sensory nouns associated with Anney's smell create a linguistic representation of motherhood as embodied memory. The mother becomes perceptible through the physical experience of the child. Anne Enright's *The Green Road* employs a different stylistic strategy. The interrogative "Where did it begin?" the metaphorical vocabulary of fragments and paths, and the metaphor of the mother as a "shadow moving

through him” construct motherhood as a psychological and mnemonic presence. Here, the mother figure is represented through the language of uncertainty, memory, internal reflection, and persistent influence. Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, in turn, foregrounds nomination, religiously marked vocabulary, bodily imagery, and culturally significant lexical units. The expression “motherless child” linguistically foregrounds maternal absence, while the name “Pilate” activates a biblical and intertextual semantic field. The bodily motif of the absent navel further connects language with questions of birth, origin, maternal connection, and identity.

Thus, the selected novels demonstrate that literary motherhood is linguistically heterogeneous. Allison foregrounds embodied maternal intimacy; Enright foregrounds psychological and mnemonic maternal presence; Morrison foregrounds cultural, genealogical, and symbolic dimensions of maternal identity. These meanings are not communicated exclusively through thematic statements. They are generated through concrete linguistic structures operating within the literary text. The findings therefore support the use of linguostylistic analysis as a productive method for investigating representations of motherhood in contemporary English-language fiction. Close attention to words, phrases, repetition, metaphor, nomination, syntax, and contextual semantic relations reveals how literary language transforms the mother figure from a thematic category into a multidimensional textual construct.

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