

Mind Style and Motherhood in 21st Century Philippine Fiction

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of Isolde Amante's *Eve*, a 21st century Philippine fiction to reveal a contemporary worldview of motherhood. Despite the success of feminist movements in society, motherhood remains fraught with romantic ideals that stem from the essentialist notions of gender and sex. This results in 'othering'--oppressing and alienating women in the 21st century. The paper argued that the entire notion of motherhood has entered a *postmodern* framing—one that challenges traditional notions of motherhood and mothering. To characterize this worldview, the paper used the theories of cognitive stylistics, such as conceptual metaphor theory, to describe the mind style of the text's *focalizer*, the narrator in *Eve*. This theory granted access to the intricate mental processes which helped explain why a character behaves a certain way, what dispositions s/he hold in life, as well as what motivations form his/her thoughts, language, and action. Further, the mind style is drawn from the communicative force that make up the 'maternal discourse' in the text, using Searle's Speech Act theory. The result is an unorthodox but liberating view of motherhood and mothering. The study argues the need to mainstream mind style analysis in 21st century fiction literary analysis to discover evolving and liberating ideals related to the constructions of gender, and in particular, motherhood.

Keywords: *Cognitive Stylistics, gender Maternal discourse, Mind Style, Motherhood*



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INTRODUCTION

Motherhood and the topic of mothering has become an oft-researched area illuminated in the field of humanities, often to look into its inherent capacity to polarize categorizations of sex, gender, and gender roles. Patel et al. (2003), for one, links motherhood to depression incidents in Goa, India. The study identified factors that associate childbirth with depression, e.g., the low involvement of husbands in child-care, unique cultural attitudes relating to gender preferences, etc. Johnston and Swanson (2003) identified overwhelming factors that perpetuate patriarchy amidst the ascendancy of non-traditional ideologies on motherhood. These ideologies uproot ideal yet outdated ideologies that promote motherhood as fulltime, at-home, primary career for women, second to none. Fundamental to this change is the steadfast recognition of women whose values, beliefs, and attitudes may be considered *postmodern*.

Postmodern, in the context of gender studies, usually pertain to the "avant-gard situations" typified by "revising and subverting the existing discourse on motherhood: dualistic images of mothers as self-effacing, all embracing, nurturing and affectionate, and/or all powerful, devouring, and domineering" (Sugiyama, 2000). This postmodern take on motherhood is one that is closely associated with analyses of maternal discourse, especially in light of its potentials to represent new mothers or to uncover new ideals on motherhood and mothering.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sugiyama (2000) has also posited that “existing theories on motherhood and mother-daughter relationship are mostly written from a daughters’ point of view, and reflect the feminist daughters’ ambivalence and sometimes resentment and hatred toward her mother and mother figure.” This poses a hindrance to the true maternal discourse—one that listens closer to the mother’s voice as herself—a woman and a mother.

A new kind of motherhood in the Philippines may have begun at the height of the Liberation Movement in the 1970s, when new kinds of maternal representations showed changing ideals on motherhood. Hope Sabanpan-Yu (2009) rooted Philippine motherhood (during the American occupation) and found that it “inherited the Spanish ideology of domesticity and familialism, which continued to be the bedrock upon which Philippine motherhood was organized.” But she also found changes in the economic and social sphere which cascades to women who are then given a chance to seek advancement at the expense of their motherhood roles. Despite that, maternal ideology at the time, remain to be traditional.

Santos and Jugo (2013), in a collection of essays on mothering and being mothered, notes a kind of ambivalence coming from the conflicting traditional and emerging mother identity. *Lessons on a Rocky Road*, one such essay in the compilation, is where Dickson weaves her own stories of motherhood with her own growing up stories with her mother, fulfilling what Hirsch has initially foretold—that by giving voice to her mother, she is also marginalizing her.

In the same compilation, De Peralta expresses her in-denial, frustration, and finally, acceptance of the fact that she gave birth to a daughter whose eyes are slanted and a with tongue that was more often outside her mouth, features common among children with Down Syndrome. Her discourse is one filled with intense guilt and *unmotherly* thought. In the end, De Peralta affirmed her motherly love for a daughter that she described to be *suplada*, not because she is a special child, but because she is Rocio, her beloved and beautiful daughter.

Hers is probably an example of a genuine maternal discourse— “a narrative about a mother written from a mother’s point view” and as “narrative that unifies fragmented and de-centered small narrative parts into a larger whole” (Sugiyama, 2000). *Lessons on a Rocky Road* and *When My Daughter Was Born* are maternal narratives that reflect the way contemporary Philippine fiction probably responds to the complex tension of *identifying*, *distancing*, and *appropriating*. The experience and the ideals of motherhood seem to have been fragmented in contemporary maternal narratives.

In the past, there is only a variation of one ideal of motherhood: that of the good mother ideal. Other ideals are only an extension of this good mother ideal—nurturing, loving, patient, altruistic, moral. This obviously undermines those narratives that do not fit the mould by subtly conditioning the reading process to focus only on those aspects that show this kind of ideal.

Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) formerly argued that technological changes in reproductive practices would “offer a step toward gender equality by liberating women from the burden of pregnancy and birthing” (in Sugiyama, 2000). This radical theory presupposes that motherhood could be fragmented into a “biological mother,” “egg donor,” “surrogate mother,” “contract mother,” “nurturing mother,” “legal mother,” and so on. In the 21st century, the notion of what it is to be a mother is challenged by this kind of fragmentation.

This fragmentation (on motherhood), along with the changing perspectives on women’s bodies, identities, and roles, seem to coincide with Judith Butler’s postmodernist take on the issue of gender. Her riveting examination of gender in *Gender Trouble* (1993; 1999) raised questions that powerfully depart from traditional categories of sex that have, for a long time, been held as constructs of identity shaping the interests and perspectives of women.

As a kind of gender role, motherhood, now largely fragmented in society, following Butler's argument on *gender performativity*, may no longer stand exclusively in the heterosexual female's domicile. Motherhood has lost its agency in the female body in favor of emerging maternal discourses which presuppose that a 'woman' is something we 'do' rather than something we 'are' (Butler, 1993). This calls to mind Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) famous insight that '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.

Butler persistently offers this notion that the subject is not a pre-existing, essential entity. To her (and to de Beauvoir), one's identity is something that we construct, and therefore, something that can further be reconstructed. This kind of reconstruction suggests that 'woman' as the subject is not a woman, because of her biological make-up alone. She is a 'woman' because of the different ways by which she has been instituted to be that 'gender'.

Motherhood, traditionally upheld as a woman's most stable identity (Sugiyama, 2000), seems to have entered Butler's postmodern framing; in that, it no longer seems to represent a woman, her femininity, and her womanhood. Furthermore, it may be posited, following Butler, that motherhood has been de-naturalized—in both the sciences and the arts. Butler's biting criticism on the machinations of power inherent in the binary constructions of gender, sex, and sexuality, provides an insightful lens by which to gauge the plurality (and fragmentation) of 21st century maternal discourse.

What constitutes maternal discourse, despite the abundance of motherhood narratives, remains disputed, especially considering a "burgeoning maternal subjectivity" (coined by Hirsch, 1989) in contemporary fiction. Interestingly, in the Philippines, Bienvenido Lumbea (2015), Filipino poet, critic, dramatist, in his article, *The Country's Literary Produce for 2000*, pointed out "the plurality of what used to be designated as "Philippine Literature". This plurality recognized women's creativity and allows them space in the contemporary literary scene. This was heralded by the Manila Critics Circle in the year 2000 when it awarded the works of three women writers, Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo (*Catch a Falling Star*, 1999), Reine Arcache Melvin (*A Normal Life and Other Stories*, 1999) and Merlinda Bobis (*White Turtle: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1999) as the best fiction of the previous year.

Other works by women writers which are fronting the mainstream of literature of the "new century" include *Pinay: Autobiographical Narratives by Women Writers* edited by Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo, *Sarilaysay: Tinig ng 20 Babae sa Sariling Danas bilang Manunulat*, a counter-part work in Tagalog and Filipino, by Rosario Torres-Yu, and *The Writers' Wives* (2000) by Narita M. Gonzalez. It is interesting whether this plurality and creativity that Lumbea (and the rest of the contemporary Philippine literary establishment e.g., Hector Santos, Gilda Cordero-Fernando, etc.) associate with women also carries Hirsch's notion of "burgeoning maternal subjectivity".

This study is specifically interested in the way this 'burgeoning maternal subjectivity' is reflected in contemporary Philippine literature. More specifically, the study is keen on finding out how much contemporary Philippine fiction has deviated from the age-old motherhood ideal aptly represented in the metaphorical adage ***Mother, light of the home*** (Ina, ilaw ng tahanan).

This adage sums up a cultural and social ideal by which women, aspiring for motherhood, should live up to. This metaphor ***Ina, ilaw ng tahanan***, used and maintained for centuries to represent a good Filipina mother embodies one of the main tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), originally expounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999); in that, the metaphor used, *ilaw* (light), is "essentially a matter of ordinary, everyday thought, rather than just a literary device" (Gomez, 2015). *Ilaw* (light), invokes both perceptual and sensory inputs that allow people access to concrete and abstract attributes, e.g., shapes, sizes, color, race, beauty, love, time, etc.

Characteristically, a mother, being the light of the home, is the one who *guides, illuminates (the path), directs* her home as a wife and mother. This equates *knowing* with *seeing*, where the

mother is able to *see*, albeit, instinctively. KNOWING IS SEEING conflates real and conceptual information, as is evident in the motherhood metaphor: *Ina, ilaw ng tahanan*. Knowing and seeing are cognitive processes that are innate and grounded in experience, enabling interaction among the mothers and children, mothers and husbands, mothers, and mothers, etc. It is as if as a mother, her opinion, character, and beliefs are almost always right and accurate. As a metaphor, it conjures tons of expressions that ultimately result in a highly romanticized mother ideal summed up in the oft-quoted expression: *A mother knows best*.

This is just one of the motherhood ideals that may have unconsciously rendered mothers with a kind of “maternal subjectivity” that fragments her physical being, and by extension, her narrative: mothers as reasonable thinking individuals vs. mothers as self-defeated entities whose sense of self is contingent upon associations and relations (as wife, mother, daughter, etc.). Do contemporary Filipina writers exhibit this “maternal subjectivity” (when writing as mothers /about mothers, mothering, being mothered), to the extent that, when studied, they could potentially alter/revise the concept of motherhood in the Philippines?

The analysis of maternal discourse is then necessary to allow for a more critical representation of the mother figure, one that may be emergent in contemporary narratives, but is in danger of being omitted/neglected, in favor of traditional motherhood representations, e.g., the good mother, the ideal mother, the nurturing mother. Attention on maternal discourse may also forward a more principled approach in determining the scope of *subjectivity* that women, who are writing as mothers, and who are using her maternal voice, have expressed in their narratives. In particular, the study aims to analyze the ideological and structural dimensions of a contemporary maternal discourse by examining the rigors of the writer’s linguistic choices (lexicon, phrases, idioms, and metaphors) as they are used in the context of mothering.

This study upholds that this emerging ideology on motherhood is one that posits Butler’s argument on gender performativity and Foucault’s notion of *subjectification*. *Subjectification* essentially pertains to the strategic process by which human beings transform from objects of power relations to “subjects” of power relations.

Being a subject allows an individual to develop, negotiate, and further his/her understanding of self. This then allows the individual to achieve a sense of autonomy. Beings who are in the process of *subjectification* characteristically possess a “critical attitude against collective norms and values, universal validity of life-conduct, tendencies of globalization and concepts of “essence of humanity as norms” (Dreyfus and Rabinow (eds), 1983). This fluidity and subjectivity of the self plays a major role in reshaping today’s maternal discourse.

This study on maternal discourse is compelled by any slight change in the way motherhood is represented in today’s narratives. It is interested with the way contemporary writers represent themselves as mothers in a highly cosmopolitan society, driven by technology, inundated by modernity (in the areas of pregnancy, child rearing, etc.), and made aware of their personal subjectivities. As writers and mothers at the same time, how have they represented their subjectivities? What are the emerging ideals of motherhood that may be fragmented? Obfuscated? *Subjectified? Postmodern?*

This seemingly reflexive capacity of the human mind resembles Steven Mithen’s notion of “cognitive fluidity” (Mithen, 1996). Mithen explains that the human mind evolves over time. By examining the mind structures of early humans, he was able to argue that because of ‘cognitive fluidity’, the human mind transcends the previous cognitive make up, until it becomes “modern”. He further argues that a modern culture is a by-product of an increasing integration of the different modules of the mind-- including social and linguistic intelligence modules. Thus, one key to ‘cognitive fluidity’ is language.

Cognitive stylistics, an interdisciplinary tool for literary and linguistic analysis, provides a way to deal with the changes in the human mind, with respect to the ideals both men and women

maintain regarding contemporary motherhood. It accounts for the EMBODIED use of language, where mind and body cannot be separated; thus, further presupposing that all languages are elaborations of basic physical circumstances of the human condition (Simpson, 2004).

This larger conceptual system, in discourse analysis, is usually framed by the integration of linguistic frames with mental schemas. In return, the analysis of discourse may reveal constructs/ideals that are deeply embedded in the psyche, and manifests as the individual's idiolect—belief, attitude, and world view. In cognitive stylistics, this is equivalent to *mind style*. Mind style, according to Roger Fowler (in Semino, 2002), pertains to the perceivable realities in the “ideational structure of the text.”

The notion of mind style, one of the major concepts in cognitive stylistics introduced by Roger Fowler and developed by Elena Semino, is used in this study to account for the maternal discourses in the chosen texts. As Leech & Short have pointed out, mind style may be potentially applied to all texts (in Semino, 2007), since “*even in apparently normal pieces of writing, the writer slants us towards a particular “mental set”*”. These mental sets may reveal “an unorthodox conception of the fictional world”.

Fowler further characterized mind styles to be projections via “systematic linguistic and textual patterns” (Leech and Short, 1981) and represents “[c]umulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view...(Fowler in Semino, 2007).”

This study takes on the notion of mind style as the ‘world view’ of a particular text. The mind styles that may be found in the 21st century Philippine fiction may provide links of changing and progressing (unorthodox) ideals on the notion of motherhood.

Mind Style and Cognitive Stylistics

The study on mind styles involves an intricate analysis of the conflicting discourses in the text (i.e., motherhood as women's primary contribution to society vs. motherhood as an option that may be delayed or renounced). By capitalizing on a common *textbase* (the word-for-word processing over the course of a reading), different readers may come up with different knowledge and different personal goals to their reading, producing a range of macro-structural *reading*.

The study upholds that language is not a system that exists exclusively for itself (e.g. the formal properties of language). Rather, it is a system that is concerned with a larger discursive and poetic function that constitutes what Michael Halliday later on identifies as the three fundamental functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. This “Hallidayan” linguistics, more popularly known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), is useful in ferreting “*ideologically significant values and beliefs on the production, distribution and consumption*” (Haig, 2011) of discourse.

Maternal discourse is a very specific part of the narrative that reports world views, attitudes and belief systems that are easily dismissed in favor of other competing discourses in the text (i.e., mother's discourse as once a daughter to her mother, and woman's discourse as wife to her husband). It has been asserted, then and again, that a need for a more substantive analysis of maternal discourse is in order if we are to address the ever-growing multiplicity, complexity, and anxiety among mothers in the twenty-first century. Tuning in to maternal discourse, through stylistics analysis, may potentially address cogent forces that keep an alienating attitude towards unmotherly traits and thoughts (i.e., pursuit of career over household duties, passion over making babies, etc.).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study includes mapping out the categories and processes invoked in the narrative through the framework of transitivity, with focus on the textual function of language. The textual function of language is that which deals with discourse: language in context. In other words, the study will examine the production of dialogues, narrations and descriptions that thematically reveal an attitude/emotion/comment/insight on motherhood.

The following roughly constitutes the steps in analyzing maternal discourse in the texts.

1. Breakdown and analysis of the text's linguistic features, including even the minimum meaningful utterance that will be found pertinent to the function of motherhood;
2. Subjecting these linguistic features to stylistics analysis to see what they *do* in the text using Searle's Speech Act theory, and a combination of other stylistics tool that may be fit/as may be required by the text;
3. Extending the analysis of maternal discourse to cognitive stylistics analysis to uncover the mind style that is silently projected on the text.

By identifying the mind style present in the text, a postmodern ideology may surface and this postmodern ideology may contribute not only to feminists who are seeking independence from the dictates of their prescribed gender role but also to males and members of the LGBT who have long been campaigning for social recognition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To baby talk or Not to baby Talk: Maternal Discourse in Isolde Amante's Eve

Eve is the center piece in a story about her, based on her point of view. Her story revolves around the prospect of amniocentesis. The prospect of amniocentesis hints at a medical procedure for detecting fetal abnormalities. This is a story about a woman who is constrained to become a mother. Her self-conscious narration shows a silent defiance of conventional motherhood—one that is constituted by pregnancy.

Eve is a headstrong type of woman. She holds a lot of opinion about many things concerning child-rearing. The main conflict in the story is her seeming reluctance to submit to measures that would ascertain her pregnancy. She begins very tentatively to talk about amniocentesis to imply that she is no longer at the prime of her age to conceive, reason for her to consider such medical intervention.

Eve also seems to believe that it is, indeed, time for her to finally become a mother. In fact, her narrative shows that the life she is living is not very far from maternal. By presenting her own favored child-rearing techniques, the narrator projects a self that is motherly—baby-sitting her nephews and attending to malnourished children in the malnutrition ward.

Imitating the way babies talk is common among adults who wish to connect with children in some level. But due to her inexperience, Eve is unable to access the linguistic frames that enable other adults to interact with children in the language of baby talk. Speaking about the way her sister Sarah plies her children with baby talk, the narrator probably subconsciously hints at a kind of frustration that stems from a lack of actual experience of the phenomenon of motherhood. Voicing out her disagreements with plying children with baby talk gives a raw account of mind style in the story. This disagreement with doing baby-talk when dealing with children is one that may be attributed to the woman's lack of necessary 'frames' that will enable her to actually communicate and engage with children by accommodating and assimilating their language into her own. This is, by and large, a failure in schema integration.

Eve's personal schema limits her from crossing the boundaries of her relations with the children she baby-sits as nephews. Personal schemas, according to Stockwell (2006), are "*socially*

and culturally determined” and where there is a “relatively greater degree of willful choice in performing a personal schema than in engaging in a situational schema.” This means that, even if the woman is able to interact with baby-talk, she would, more naturally, opt out of it considering the limitations of her personal schema. Eve’s disagreement with baby-talk is also possibly reinforced by what Semino calls “language schemas”—or the way humans articulate their experiences to the world. (Semino in Stockwell, 2006).

In any case, readers benefit in the first-person point of view as it provides a clear view of the narrator’s mind style when it comes to motherhood. Her opinion against baby talk clearly delineates her from the more universal maternal side of her sister. Using speech acts theory analysis, the study identifies the functions of each utterance in Table 1:

Table 1

Speech Acts found in the discourses of the text using Searle’s Speech Act Theory

| Locution (actual words uttered) | Speaker | Linguistic Feature/Characteristic | | | Illocution (intention behind the words uttered) | Perlocution (influence of the words on the listeners) |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| | | Grammar | Tone | | | |
| “What’s wrong?” | N* | Syntactic | Straightforward; precise | Contracted | To ask about the reason for Danny’s waddling | comforted |
| “Whasswro ng, Dannykins?” | S* (in N’s mind) | Shows morphophonemic variations | Sweet; affectionate | morphophonemically challenged | | |
| Come here, pumpkin. You just need a teeny-weeny nap. That’s all.” | S | Syntactic Creative | Assertive | Substitutes names with endearment ; Uses child’s lexicon: <i>teeny-weeny</i> | To provide for the child’s need (sleep) | |
| Pumpkin? | N | Semantic | Confused | | | |

This analysis shows no significant perlocutionary effect on Danny. This implies that whether the two women talk to him in baby talk or in normal talk, Danny is bound to respond in much the same way. But while it does not have any significant reflection on Danny, it does bear some effect on the two women as mothers. Sarah, judging by the way she talks to Danny, seems more assertive and comfortable about responding to Danny’s need; whereas the narrator seems a little too hesitant, formal, and straightforward. Perhaps to compensate for the lack of maternal bond between them (after all she is but the aunt and not the mother), the narrator chose, rather subconsciously, to respond to her nephew’s dilemma much like an adult who always appeals to reason, especially in dire situations.

This is a meaningful display of Sarah’s emphatic maternal discourse as she recruits words and phrases that are far too suitable to her adult self, but is perfectly relatable to her child’s. Interestingly, this does not necessarily mean that the narrator is un-motherly, as will be proven by her succeeding discourses. The narrator is flattered to resemble Kenny, the elder child of her sister Sarah. But more than just being flattered, the narrator seems delighted with that sense of ownership she gets by the semblance she has with her nephew. This sense of ownership allows the narrator

an opportunity for shared maternity. It is this shared notion of maternity and her looming pregnancy that seem to qualify the narrator's discourse as maternal, and which typifies Julia Kristeva's notion of *maternal passion*. Kelly Oliver (2010) discusses Julia Kristeva's *maternal passion* as "the prototype of all human passion".

In the story, this kind of maternal passion does not seem to have any source of credence judging by the way other people question her childlessness. The fact that this is a purely innocent question probably makes the reality more biting. The conversation marks the reality of her childlessness and her seeming oblivion to it as seen in Table 2:

Table 2

Maternal Discourse of a Pseudo-Mother in Eve

| Kenny | Narrator |
|--|---|
| "You should have babies na. Your yard is so big and Danny is so boring." | "Why?" |
| "Because married people have babies!" | "No, I meant why is Danny boring?" |
| "Because he's always running to Mama." "He's a sissy, that's what he is." | He scampers off before I can tell him he shouldn't call people names. <i>I'm the adult here, aren't I?</i> |

This innocent conversation invites a meaningful discussion of Eve's mind style processes—her "perceptions, selections, omissions, and enrichment". As the observing consciousness in the text, her response to the questions of her nephew shows her 'encyclopedic knowledge' which "provides a means of explaining phenomena such as inferencing, perceived presupposition, implicature, and apparent leaps of intuition" (Stockwell, 2006).

More than flouting the conversation, the narrator's discourse offers a way to negotiate a common experience in the conversation, so that a more meaningful communication will ensue between her and her nephew. This demonstrates the notion of 'conceptual dependency' where the speaker and hearer in the conversation, the woman and Danny, "rely on their shared assumptions, environment, and wider knowledge to convey a richness of communication without enumerating in excruciating detail every facet of the message" (Stockwell, 2006).

Despite not having children of her own, the narrator still managed to exhibit a kind of universal maternity by baby-sitting her nephews and by doing volunteer work, reading to malnourished kids in a government hospital. Both preoccupations elicit in her a kind of motherly devotion that is not credited by her sister and her husband. Both her sister and husband think that she needed more push to get pregnant. The conflict becomes clearer: the narrator is having trouble with getting pregnant.

Childlessness is a problem that symbolically represents an unfulfilled promise, a failed mission and a life worthy of others' sympathy. As a kind of penance, she is taunted by everyone around her—including her husband, to subject herself to *amniocentesis* especially as the prospect of pregnancy is once again within reach.

It is interesting whether the people around her will ever recognize that she is already living the life that they think she has ever yet to fulfil—motherhood. This makes her discourse even more significant for challenging the notion of motherhood as something that is unique to a woman who has given birth, and is in fact, a biological mother. It is just fitting to subject her discourse into stylistic analysis to see if any of it represents a kind of predicament traceable, to an extent, to universal mother.

Clearly, the narrator's link to motherhood is weak, as far as motherhood by child-birth is concerned. But even so, it still did not keep her from providing the same (maybe even better) maternal care to motherless children. The ob-gyne's recommendation to be at the mal ward is supposed to be temporary until she gets pregnant. But it is her decision, no less, to stay, providing the malnourished children with the same weight of affection and devotion their own mothers could have spared for them, but did not. Like Sarah and the other pregnant woman, the narrator, also gets to be the rope in their own tug-of-war, pulled by the children from the mal ward on one end, and by the husband on the other end.

Clearly, the narrator is showing a kind of ambivalence for seemingly showing this maternal passion, albeit with slight deviance. The narrator, instead of drawing from that "hollow" habitation that is growing inside her, seems invested more towards children from other mothers. The difference is that, these children are already subjects in their own, and who are never, to begin with, her double. Moreover, these are children that will never be her own by any means of pregnancy. Thus, she is screened, a little differently, from feeling destabilized and lost. This allows her to work through passion and dispassion for the (supposedly) new subject that will be her child and who is to become autonomous.

The other mothers (Sarah and the other pregnant woman) have yet to cease from becoming their children's doubles. Their identity is strongly anchored on the fact that they are mothers to their children, and by extension, wives to their husbands. They embody the kind of maternal passion as successful mothering, described more commonly as love.

The following maternal discourses from Sarah illustrate Kristeva's maternal passion more succinctly:

"Sometimes the little b-r-a-t-s drive me crazy. I wish their father would spend more time with them. Might be better at discipline than I am."

Sarah's discourse is filled with the tension characterized by dispassion, where the mother works towards bringing the children away from her, for their best interest. It is also filled with the anxiety that finds confidence in the intervention of the child/ren's father. This tension and anxiety are uncommon to the narrator for two reasons:

- 1) her pregnancy is yet to be officially pronounced, and
- 2) despite the suspected pregnancy, she did not have to feel the brunt of child-rearing, except in cases where she voluntarily subjects herself to (baby-sitting the nephews and attending to malnourished in the hospital ward).

Evidently, the narrator is showing proof of motherhood away from the traditional functions of maternal reproduction. The narrator's final discourse powerfully showcases the kind of love that children, despite their own mothers', deserve:

Soon, he quiets down and sucks contentedly on his bottle, one tiny pale hand on the swell of my left breast. I gently rock him to sleep, wondering when his mother knew she didn't want him.

CONCLUSION

The narrator maintains this straightforward language all throughout her discourse. This rather straightforward use of language draws her further away from the role that she has been portraying all along. Because she is unable to recruit creative childlike language, unlike the mothers around her, she remains an outsider to motherhood. Whatever motherly behavior she displays is ignored by the obvious lack of experience of giving birth perceivable to others. But instead of

alienation, the narrator is more able to embrace the nurturing passion of mothers without as much pressure from actual motherhood.

The narrator subtly plays on the conceptual figure of mothers as nurturers. Nurturing her nephews and the kids in the mal ward, the narrator bridges the distance to actual motherhood. This posits that motherhood is not actually dependent upon the will to bear and deliver a child. More than anything, the narrator displays an unyielding attitude towards the fulfilment of motherhood by *feeding* or *reading* to the children in the ward. She plays on the whole schema of nurturing mothers as her strongest link at motherhood. Her last discourse foregrounds the image of the narrator as a nurturing mother, purposely adopting from the universal figure of mothers whose principal connection is made through breastfeeding [*Soon, he quiets down and sucks contentedly (on his bottle), one tiny pale hand on the swell of my left breast.*]. This part of her entire narrative is an invitation to outsiders whose view of motherhood is rather limited and disempowering.

The narrator opens new ways to constitute motherhood in the contemporary society by exploiting her otherness for her otherness' sake. This means that while she shows traditional conceptions of motherhood, she also plays on motherhood as a choice that is highly personal than societal. By exploiting the context of Sarah's and the other pregnant woman's situation as mothers by virtue of child-birth, she is able to reveal conceptualizations that bring her experience closer to actual motherhood. By doing so, she achieves new conceptualizations of motherhood.

Motherhood, as a widespread universal phenomenon, should be recognized as a choice, even if this choice excludes pregnancy and child-birth, strongly emphasized by her parting discourse "*I gently rock him to sleep, wondering when his mother knew she didn't want him*". As a role, motherhood is more strongly manifested through deeds that satisfy the child's most basic need for nourishment and care. Motherhood is also a way of life. This is proven by the mind style of the narrator, characterized by the numerous instances she portrayed herself as one.

These emerging conceptualizations reveal gender ideals that should be mainstreamed in literary and social discussions. Furthermore, such maternal mind style should not be ignored in favor of ideals that romanticize motherhood, but hurt mothers in the real world for not fitting the mold.

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