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TRACING MATERNAL FILICIDE AS A MANIFESTATION OF MATERNAL AMBIVALENCE IN NAYOMI MUNAWEERA'S WHAT LIES BETWEEN US

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Abstract

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The institution of Motherhood, as propagated by traditional philosophical discourse, has been challenged by feminist scholars during the last few decades. This research article carries out a thematic analysis of the selected work of contemporary fiction using Sarah LaChance Adams' theory of Maternal Ambivalence. The research engages with Nayomi Munaweera's *What Lies Between Us*, which depicts maternal filicide, analyzing how these narratives lead to the construction of cultural perceptions of motherhood, as well as the reigning societal expectations of mothers. By examining fictional accounts, the paper explores the symbolic and metaphorical representations of maternal filicide in literature, uncovering the deeper psychological and socio-cultural implications embedded within the text. Drawing on theories from motherhood studies using Brown and Clarke's model of textual analysis, the paper investigates the interplay of power in the patriarchy as well as the existence of maternal identity in the status quo, thus illustrating how literary representations of maternal filicide contribute to broader discourses on women's roles and societal norms. It critically examines how the author navigates the labyrinth of maternal emotions, societal pressures, and mental health crises through their narrative, offering insights into the ways literature both reflects and challenges prevailing cultural ideologies. It engages with the normative perception of motherhood and challenges it by providing evidence from the fiction under study, proving that a mother is a flawed human, who when overridden by her ambivalence, can harm the child under her care.

Keywords: Maternal, Ambivalence, Filicide, Normative, Motherhood

Introduction

Cultural paradigms on mothering, both in Western as well as Eastern tradition stipulate specific behavior patterns that are deemed appropriate for perfect motherhood. These ideologies also provide the emotional framework that should govern the relationship between mother and child. The prescribed framework defines the nature of maternal love as being selfless and a source of unconditional and continuous happiness. (Zeheer, Khan, Zubair, 2023), It is also unproblematic. Ideally speaking most mothers love their children unconditionally and consider motherhood to be a rewarding and uniquely fulfilling journey. However, there are many mothers who despite loving their children, consider love and joy to be neither unconditional nor selfless or continuous. Motherhood is not unproblematic. (Carmona, Ortega, Romera, et. al. 2023), The perfect definition of maternal love, proclaimed by conventional discourses on mothering is still extensively considered to be natural, innate, and instinctive, so scholars consider it a given without feeling the need to further explore it. This article brings forth the contrast between the notion of the ideal mother propagated by traditionalists and the darker reality of motherhood and its ambivalence as illustrated in the selected work of fiction (O'Reilly et al., 2000). This is an exploratory and descriptive study and the method used is a thematic analysis of selected texts, carried out using Sarah LaChance Adams' theory of maternal ambivalence. Brown and Clarke's model of thematic analysis is employed to investigate the phenomenon under study.

Significance of the Research

This study aims to contribute to feminist studies by critically analyzing the conventional ideologies of the mother-child relationship, which propagate that maternal ambivalence is a sign of the absence of maternal love. The researcher proceeds by studying the selected

work of literature that provides insight into the phenomenon of maternal ambivalence. This research brings forth the contrast between the notion of the ideal mother propagated by traditionalists and the darker reality of motherhood and its ambivalence as illustrated in the selected work of fiction.

Research Questions

1. How does maternal ambivalence contribute to the evolution of the mother-child relationship in selected works of fiction?
2. How does maternal ambivalence manifest itself in the selected text?
3. How do various factors contribute to exhibiting the complexity of maternal ambivalence in the chosen fictional work?

Literature Review

1. Why Mothers Kill

There is a morbid fascination in the media, both print and electronic, as well as in the masses with the mothers who kill their children. This becomes evident every time a maternal filicide is reported in the media. They are not interested in looking at it academically but are mostly eager to share their ill-formed conclusion. (Estevez, Canas, Estevez, 2023), Their opinions are usually driven by the prevailing insanity plea or ideas about what kind of woman would kill her child, hence tapping in on the traditional discourse on mothering. In academia, scholars have consistently treated filicidal mothers as a uniform group with very few differentiating factors among the members. There is a group of mothers who kill soon after giving birth, called neonaticide (Oberman, Meyer & White, 2001), and mothers who commit filicide, that is, kill their older children. It is crucial to understand the classification of mothers who kill their children to understand the reasons that lead to it before this present study digs deeper into maternal ambivalence manifesting itself into maternal filicide. The classification of mothers who kill starts with Rensik's model. Philip Rensik in 1970, proposed a typology

based on obvious motive. The acutely psychotic mother will kill under the influence of a hallucination or delusion. (Chen, Garcia, Alcaide, et. al. 2024), The altruistic filicide is committed when the mother intends to commit suicide and does not want to leave the child behind at the mercy of other people and seeks to relieve her child's pain or suffering. The suffering that the mother is trying to relieve by killing her child can be real or can be a figment of her imagination. The third category is that of the unwanted child. It can be because of several reasons; the child can be an obstacle in her desired relationship, an impediment to her agency, and illegitimacy can also be a valid reason in some conservative societies. Since Rensik's attempt at classifying maternal filicide, the norms governing a woman's sexuality, and her rights including reproductive rights have undergone a massive shift. Scholars have suggested alternative models, including the system of classification by P.T d'Orban who classified filicidal mothers into six categories, "mothers who batter, mentally ill mothers, those who commit neonaticide, retaliating women, those with unwanted children and those who kill out of mercy" (Oberman et al., 2001, p.44). The mentally ill mothers suffer from depression, anxiety, and in some cases acute psychosis making them act under a strong influence. Mothers who killed their newborns or those who retaliated were, according to d'Orban, governed by societal norms. In 1997, Alder and Baker published a report with a focus on maternal filicide. They divided their findings into 3 categories. The first category is of mothers who killed their children and then committed suicide. Another prominent feature of such killings is the immaculate planning that mothers do to ensure that their children are not left alive and maimed. The second category Alder and Baker recognize is neonaticide women who kill because they are unable to come to terms with the

consequences of pregnancy or childbirth. The third and final category is fatal assault, with a history of physical abuse. However, Alder and Baker did conclude that maternal filicide is a complicated phenomenon influenced by diverse factors. Oberman indicates that mothers who kill their children go through a phase of mental disability which can be temporary or permanent rendering them unable to fulfill their role as a mother, a nurturer, or a protector. Oberman believes that "... at the outset, it is not mental disability alone, but rather the combination of mental health status, social isolation and mothering that leads to filicide" (Oberman et al., 2001, p.53).

2. The Mad Mother

Scholars working on maternal filicide have highlighted certain psychological disorders present in most women accused of filicide. These mental disorders are not the only contributing factors to violent acts. The disorders mostly exhibited by filicidal mothers are categorized under mood disorders ranging from mild depression to bipolar disorders and in extreme cases schizophrenia (Sue). All these mental ailments require therapy as well as medication. Personality disorders lead to cognitive, emotional, and functional impairment as well as poor impulse control. These personality disorders are mostly treated through psychotherapy but have a very stubborn pattern that tends to return. Several factors including genetics, childhood trauma, and abandonment/attachment issues contribute to the development of these personality disorders (Sue, 2010). Most studies conducted have found these personality disorders prevailing in filicide due to abuse and battering. Borderline Personality Disorder, Narcissistic Personality Disorder, and Antisocial Personality Disorder are associated with maternal filicide.

i. The Sociological Factors

Scholars support the idea that most filicidal mothers suffer from psychological disorders, both mood and personality disorders. However, there is an environmental contribution to violent acts as well which cannot be ignored. The filicidal woman usually has a history of trauma. In many cases, such women lack financial and emotional support or have limited access to social support. They are victims of abuse both physical and emotional. In a few cases, they are responsible for taking care of one or more children without any assistance or support. Mugavin in her study concludes that a comprehensive understanding of filicide cannot be achieved unless the sociological factors are considered in conjunction with the psychological contributors. Mugavin lists "intra-family violence, substance abuse, the disintegration of the family unit, and the marginalization of the weaker section of society" (Holm, 2023, p.41) as some of the factors relevant to maternal filicide.

ii. ***The Feminist Perspective***

Feminists believe that gender is a social construct that lays down the guidelines as to how a woman is to live her life, what role she is to perform, and which parameters would govern it (Holm, 2023). The feminist perspective renders the filicidal mother the role of the perpetrator as well as the victim. She is the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Patriarchy strips a mother's, and a woman's power making her powerless and confined; she in turn wields her power on the one who has even less power than her, i.e., her child. Feminists see maternal filicide because of "socially constructed gender roles" (Holm, 2023, p.42_43). Societal discourse indoctrinates girls since childhood that motherhood is the most natural and gratifying phenomenon for them (Holm, 2023, p.42_43). This has no evidence and when this is not the case, the conditioned girl becomes a mother who is anxious and ambivalent. She feels guilty

and ashamed. Marthner argues that maternal filicide is the result of systematic marginalization of women and the subsequent silencing of women's voices, thus leading desperate women to desperate acts (Holm, 2023, p.42_43)

3. ***The Neurobiological Perspective***

Human behavior is governed both by physiological and environmental factors. The basic human physiology is altered by the environment it develops in (Holm, 2023, p.43). The brain's physiology undergoes considerable structural changes when a woman is exposed to trauma during her formative years leading to her stress reaction capacity later in life. These changes occur in "the part of the brain that tends to short-term memory and the encoding and retrieval of long-term memory and affect how an individual perceives and evaluates future events" (Holm, 2023, p.43). The nature of trauma, the intensity, and the length of exposure to trauma affect a child's ability to regulate one's emotional self. (Holm, 2023, p.43).

4. ***Maternal Ambivalence and Filicide***

Feminist scholars use several approaches to understand filicide and its causes. A logical study of the phenomenon reveals that women who commit maternal filicide are themselves victims of the violence perpetrated by the patriarchal institution of motherhood which instils guilt, judgment, and the fear of being condemned in the mothers. The mother is placed in a situation where she is powerless but is simultaneously responsible for more human lives. She is afraid of the responsibility and the scope of it. K. M. Ames in *Murdering Mothers* (2017) claims that this fear renders every woman capable of committing filicide since the context in which they are to perform is created by patriarchy (Tomić, 2019 p.12). However, there is a flaw in this logic. If it is to be believed that every woman can kill her children it has to be believed that there is a standardized version of mothering too, the

normative kind, a "fixed maternal self" (Tomić, 2019, p.12) which suggests that motherhood in its essence is about loving the child. This reduces the range of emotion experienced by a mother and child in their relationship and conforms to the traditional discourse about mothering being innate and natural to a woman. Such a simplistic and reductive understanding of motherhood enables the definition of mothers as "good" or "bad". Mothers who adhere to the normative definition of a good mother uphold the conventional power structures of the patriarchal society. Hence, they are awarded a certain privileged status and wield power though passively and indirectly. The conforming mothers' self-sabotage thus is not useful for the feminist agenda of deconstructing patriarchy and its version of motherhood. The conflict arises when there is an incompatibility between what is perceived as good mothering and the ambivalent feelings a mother experiences while performing regular care practices. When she performs her duties as a mother she loses her subjectivity, her former self. Scholars have been unable to determine the exact causes of maternal filicide. There are several factors such as mental disorders, guilt, isolation, etc. which influence how a mother performs or fails to perform. Since a mother's self-sacrifice and love are considered natural, negative or ambivalent feelings do not fit in this version of motherhood. These negative feelings are considered abnormal, deviant, and even inhuman. Ames et al believe that there is no need for some extraordinary circumstances for a mother to kill her child since the demands placed on motherhood make it extraordinary enough to drive a mother over the edge. Philosophers like Simone de Beauvoir and Elizabeth Badinter have initiated discourse about the obsolescence of the term maternal instinct and have suggested replacing it with the term "maternal love", which not only

humanizes the mother but also allows room to not experience or practice the said emotion (McIlvanney, 2023). McIlvanney in her work on *Chancon douce* suggests that maternal experience or maternal love can take up many forms and it is possible and has been observed that these manifestations lie outside the mainstream, traditional prescription of motherhood. Re-defining the maternal experience is important because socially, and religiously acceptable mothering is quite restrictive. Revisiting institutionalized motherhood requires removing the divide between the ontological and the ethical mother (McIlvanney, 2023). Sarah LaChance Adams develops her theory to portray the complexity of maternal ambivalence in its entirety, boldly connecting the opposing views by a phenomenological reading, drawing lessons from maternal ambivalence for all mothers, feminists, and philosophers.

Discussion

What Lies Between Us

Nayomi Munawera's *What Lies Between Us* (2016) opens with the narrator in a jail cell for committing a crime that is the most reprehensible act a mother could commit. We are introduced to what is perceived as the "bad mother". The prologue to the novel however sets the tone and provides a perspective that is usually ignored by mainstream scholarship. The female moon bear, unable to endure the screams of her offspring breaks out of captivity, kills her baby, and then kills herself. The reader is shocked at the turn of events, but this opening cleverly sets the tone for what is to follow, that is there will be a mother who will kill her child. The figure of a dead child haunts most of the novel though not in the usual expected way. (Jimenez, Hoyo, Fernandez, 2023), A major thread of the novel deals with the intricacies of mother-daughter relationships spanning three generations. Usually, it is perceived and mentioned as a diasporic novel which is

additionally an integral part of Ganga's (the protagonist) identity and journey. There is a sense of loss and search for self that is characteristic of diaspora novels. However, there is more to it which is what concerns this study, and the opening lines reveal the theme that runs through the novel, underneath the more obvious motifs: But here's the secret... there are no good mothers. They simply do not exist. There are always a thousand ways to fail at this singularly important job. There are failures of the body and the failures of the heart... They must all hang their heads in guilt and shame because they haven't done it perfectly and motherhood is, if anything, the assumption of perfection (Munaweera, 2016 ch.1). The novel jumps back from this point into the protagonist's life history describing what appears to be an idyllic childhood, protected and sheltered and blissful despite living in a country fraught with civil war. However, Ganga does mention her birth which was so traumatic that her mother was unable to carry another child after her. (Villarejo, Garcia, Alcaide, et. al. 2024), Whether this was by choice or by compulsion is not mentioned, however, the moods and emotional tantrums thrown by the mother are described in detail as perceived by the young Ganga setting the stage for her troubled association with motherhood. The mother is from a lower class and caste and initially, the reader is led to believe that this class difference is the reason for her erratic behavior. Ganga recalls that her mother used to oscillate between showering her with love, hugs, smiles, gifts, and cold indifference for days and weeks on end. She narrates the severe spells of headache her mother would suffer from, and which would force her to stay in her room though there were days when she would chirp around in the kitchen baking delicacies for her daughter to partake. There is frustration which shifts into anger which then leads to guilt and shame and ends in resentment. This is what Sarah

LaChance Adams calls maternal ambivalence and this it is that manifests itself in either abuse, abandonment, or Ganga's case filicide. Ambivalence is characteristic of the maternal experience and not otherwise as the traditionalists would have mothers believe. There are instances of conflict, and instances of mutuality, however, the productive ambiguous intersubjectivity is very hard to achieve, since no middle ground is achieved by the mother feeling ambivalent towards her child. She feels the dread sweeping in as Ganga refers to it, as a "shroud dropped over my head" (Munaweera, 2016 ch.20) leaving her breathless and suffocated and it is at this moment that she realizes against all the social and religious conditioning that "I love my child, but I don't like motherhood" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.20). The fault does not lie with the child, it does not lie with the mother; it is at the helm of the patriarchal institutionalizing of motherhood and the fault of prescriptive motherhood. The novel is Ganga's confession, though narrated indirectly, about what made her kill her two-year-old daughter, the bright-faced Bodhi Anne. She wants no sympathy and no understanding; all she wants to do is tell the bald-faced truth about motherhood. (Badcock, Kini, Godfrey, et. al. 2024), She wants the story of her motherhood as she experienced it herself; being a mother and a child, a story of two mothers. Ganga is called the maternal nightmare in the news reports, and she receives letters filled with ire and insults. (Li, Otgaar, Daele, et. al. 2023), This urges her to tell her story after realizing that the world is unable to look at the mother's version of the story. Before the novel unfolds the heinous crime, there is a detailed account of Ganga's growing up and her search for identity both in her native country and in the United States of America. Thus, Ganga's prophetic declaration holds that she longs for normalcy but "normalcy is a miracle, not granted to all who ask" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.21). Despite

having a career, a husband, and a child, her past haunts her and the normalcy she craves for slips through her fingers. Ganga's reflections on motherhood provide the reader with an insight into her maternal experience, the mother she had, the mother she was prescribed to be, the mother she thought she was, and the mother she became. She takes pride in the fact, if such emotion is possible, that "I am the bad mother" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.1). She is complacent, satisfied with being the unnatural mother and declares that to be a good mother requires an "assumption of perfection" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.1) of which she is not capable. Ganga declares that the idea of motherhood is fractured and impossible to follow. It requires the annihilation of self and complete self-effacement. There is no boundary, no conflict of interest left between them and their offspring. Ganga sees the woman smile but has no regrets because "... A good mother... is to erase yourself. This is what I refused to do" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.1). The act of filicide is tainted to the extent that a mother who commits this crime loses all other identity; as Ganga says, "I am named by the act I have committed" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.1). It is like pinning an insect to a board with a name displaying its species. She is labeled as the mother who killed her daughter and Ganga thinks this labeling lets people believe that they know her, they know what she has done and why she has done it though the truth is not what it seems to be. (Quevedo, Perez, Guillen, et. al. 2023), At this juncture she starts unraveling her life for the readers leading up to the fateful act, not in a linear or concluding fashion but the story she narrates does explain the person she becomes, and the choices she makes. Amma, her mother, is introduced to the reader with the most emphatic declaration "I was born and Amma was born into motherhood, both of us gasping from the

effort of transformation" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.1). The mother is born with the baby.

Ganga: The Mother Who Killed

The chain of ambivalence towards motherhood continues when Ganga conceives. Her identity crisis, her childhood trauma, and her love/hate relationship with her mother, all of these make her averse to the idea of motherhood. Ganga and her husband create this blissful Eden for themselves in which there is no space for a child. (Murtaza, Manj., 2023), All around them, there is a gradual pressure building up. Women are no one if they are not mothers. After the white dress the cake and the honeymoon, there must be a natural progression towards a baby bump. The magazines, the women, the men all telling a woman "How her body should act... the message is loud and clear: women's bodies are supposed to swell up, drop babies and then shrink back to manageable size" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15). The baby is to be the perfect accessory just like other things she wears or carries. The pressure is real, palpable, and offensive for Ganga. She resents the fact that society expects her to be a mother and resists it. The threat of a pregnancy is not the first time Ganga's ambivalence towards motherhood rears its ugly head. Ganga moves in a daze afraid of that which is growing inside her. The fetus is invading "some secret passage" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15) inside of her. She dreads the existence of this "tiny unwanted person" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15) stirring in her body. In addition, there is this hope that enfolds her; all the while she regrets her decision to become a mother that the "child would love me unconditionally" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15). Mother and child have this bond that no power on Earth can breach, it is holy and Ganga like many others before her believes this and suppresses herself. The monologue when she argues both sides of the case, weighing the freedom and ease of an encumbered life against "a tiny one

just like you and me" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15). The fetus that she refers to initially as "an unwanted person" becomes a poetic existence when she is at the abortion clinic about to lose it. The nurse's description of the fetus' age, length, width, and formation seems to her like a poem, "like the lines of the most beautiful poem in the world" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15) and in the very next instance she refers to the baby as a "time bomb ticking inside me" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15) or as "one problem with a deadline set in stone as much as in flesh" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15). As the baby grows in her, Ganga becomes aware that she and the baby now exist mutually and perhaps will always exist mutually. "This invisible umbilicus" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15) stretches between her and the baby. At times she is suffocated by it and then there are times she is overwhelmed in anticipation of the unconditional love she will receive from a child who would be a part of her like no other being, a soul "who will love me without condition without artifice" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.15). However, there are times when Ganga begrudges the baby, loss of her previous self, her womanhood, her agency. She looks at herself and resents being "only a body holding another body" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.16). Ganga calls her baby an "interloper" and "whose needs are more important than mine". Ganga the mother is torn between conflict and mutuality. She loves the child but abhors the idea of motherhood. Especially the motherhood that is prescribed for her in her adopted country. She recalls the way things are done in her homeland. A woman when she gets pregnant is well taken care of. The mothers she sees around her seem perfect, with perfect bodies, perfect smiles, and perfect babies competing to win the badge of the good mother. (Kayani, Mubeen et. al., 2023), In addition to the way a mother is supposed to behave and feel, there is a list of things she should have if she is to be a good

mother. The glossy magazines prescribe it all for young mothers, making them feel inadequate and bad mothers if they do not follow the way things are done. Ganga, despite living in the States still feels like an outsider, always comparing her complexion, and her hair to the "white sirens" around her. This prescriptive motherhood does nothing to ease the pressure, instead, it only pushes her a little closer to the edge than she would otherwise have been. The belief that there is an innate bond between mother and child is not merely assumed but as Ganga's obstetrician tells her "There are invisible bonds between mother and unborn baby that no one understands, a chemical language, perhaps or an emotional one" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.17). The expectations from the mother keep piling up. It seems inevitable that Ganga would snap under the pressure of perfect motherhood and want her "body returned" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.17). The breaking apart starts at birth, delirious with pain, the image Ganga's mind conjures is that of a serpent feeding on a mouse devouring it, breaking its bones while swallowing it. Ganga feels all the right things. She looks at her daughter and falls in love with her. She feels warm and recalls while sitting in the jail cell that she felt all the chemicals that were supposed to run through her body, the right amount of oxytocin was released showing that she loved her daughter. (Feroz, Aslam, Farah, 2023), It was the all-encompassing motherhood that caused her to commit the crime that is unspeakable as she poignantly expressed her predicament. Unable to fulfill the great task, the feeling of inadequacy creeps in and finds its expression in nightmares and blackouts for an extended period. The fact that the child needed her makes her panic because "This need was huge and everywhere. It was the definition of my life" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.18). Daniel's success reminds Ganga that she had a career and an identity too but "I am a mommy now.

Everything is secondary" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.18). Ganga tells herself "Over and over" trying to convince the diminishing woman in her that "this is the most natural thing in the world. This is natural" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.18) but there is a "thudding panic" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.18) trying to crack its way in through a door that opens towards her childhood. The child cries itself hoarse but Ganga, like her mother, remains motionless in her bed. Ganga resents how the child has marked and changed her body. People look right through her at the baby and her body is a battle site where the child has fought her previous self for supremacy and won. Ganga knows that her "body belongs to her (Bodhi Anne) more than to him or even to me" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.19). The alien has taken complete control and there is no place for anyone else. Ganga resents losing her autonomy but at the same time "adores this child who has come unexpectedly among us" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.19). Ganga's ambivalent maternal experience pushes her over the edge where she decides to drug her little girl and then put an end to her life. Like most filicidal mothers studied by psychologists, she seems to be acting in a daze. Reality strikes when she jumps from the Golden Gate Bridge with the drugged baby in her arms and her ambivalence wants to keep the child and regrets the step she has taken: she screams "What have I done what have I done what have I done" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.23) and the last thing she sees is Bodhi Anne's "eyes open" and "her fair hair streaming". She stretches her hand to keep her child but the water takes the body away and Ganga sees her "dancing away" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.23) from her. The child is dead but the mother is not. She lives to be prodded, insulted, jeered at, and punished, though according to Ganga her nightmare where Bodhi Anne visits is punishment enough for

her. She is "the most anguished soul in the world" (Munaweera, 2016, ch.24)

Conclusion

Ganga is the ultimate ambivalent mother, the most despised, the most abhorred. Nayomi Munaweera in *What Lies Between Us* (2016) traces the evolution of an ambivalent mother into a filicidal mother. Ganga, unhappy about being a mother, ignores her daughter for days on end, beats her, and starves her. The little girl would keep on looking towards her mother fearing her reaction, trying to stay quiet so as not to instigate the beast that resides in her mother which, when it takes over one final time, results in the mother killing her. While exploring the phenomenon of maternal ambivalence through the selected work of fiction it becomes obvious that maternal ambivalence manifests itself in filicide.

Innovation / Research Gap

This study aims to provide a contrast to the feminist studies that are concerned with the phenomenon under discussion. The purpose of the research is to isolate and discern clear reasons for maternal ambivalence thus strengthening a theoretical argument in favor of ambivalence, making it prominent, justifying it, and bringing it into mainstream discourse. It allows women to be their subjective selves without being apologetic about it. The ubiquity of maternal ambivalence and its acknowledgement will enable society to take steps toward curbing its extreme manifestations. A discussion in this vein further empowers women to transition from a place of maternal ambivalence to one of maternal resilience.

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