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## LINGUISTIC CHARACTERIZATION OF THE OVERCONTROLLING MOTHER ARCHETYPE (IN MASS CULTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FILMS)

**Summary.** The article delves into the linguistic characterization of nine female characters that represent the Overcontrolling Mother archetype in English-language mass culture films. The research draws on C. Jung's idea of an archetype as a recurring image in the collective unconscious, V. Schmidt's typology of master archetypes in fiction, and content analysis of the language used by the archetypal characters. The Overcontrolling Mother archetype is represented by characters that achieve self-fulfillment by over-protecting other characters whom they deem as vulnerable. This archetype presents female antagonists who inhibit the development of their wards by exerting excessive control and manipulating them with guilt. The Overcontrolling Mother invests all her aspirations and desires in the character she claims to protect, which hinders both the heroine and the child. The conflict is mostly resolved when the other characters are relieved of excessive care. When the Overcontrolling Mother is the main character, she needs to overcome her traumatic experience, accept new circumstances in her life and rebuild her identity. The themes of children's upbringing, obedience, duty, conformity, expectations, order, control, care, safety, loyalty, and betrayal are characteristic of the narratives of the Overcontrolling Mother.

The language used by the Overcontrolling Mother is characterized by frequent first-person singular and plural pronouns, high numbers in the 'clout', 'drive', 'power', and 'affiliation' linguistic categories, and low numbers in the 'tentative' and 'question mark' categories. This indicates that the Overcontrolling Mother is a decisive, powerful, and purposeful woman of a high social status who is prone to conflict. Low numbers in the 'authentic' category and high percentages in the 'moral' and 'adjective' categories reveal the insincerity of the characters and their desire to manipulate their wards. The Overcontrolling Mother, who keeps everything under obsessive control but is unable to provide the child with psychologically and physically comfortable conditions for development, receives mostly irritation and condemnation from the audience. The fate of the Overcontrolling Mother, who seeks total control and uses the ward for her own purposes, is unambiguous: social or physical destruction. Characters of the archetype who can understand their shortcomings, change their moral valence, and shift to the protagonist Nurturer archetype.

**Key words:** the Overcontrolling Mother archetype, linguistic characterization, narrative, content analysis, LIWC-22, female cinematic character

**Problem statement.** The characterization of fictional heroes involves portraying their inner states, desires, motives, intentions,

and beliefs through their actions and speech. Downes states that we can ask 'why' a speaker said what he did and propose an intentional description as an answer [1, p. 226]. When we watch a film, we interpret characters using the same structures and processes we use in real-life experiences. We also tend to talk about fictional characters as if they were real people [2, p. 10].

Robyn Lakoff points out that language is an intrinsic component of personality, and linguistic style is an outgrowth and diagnostic of psychological style. We assume that the way people talk reflects their true selves [3, p. 257]. Language attitude research combines language research with social and cognitive psychological research, using experimental psychology methods to analyze how certain aspects of someone's language performance trigger beliefs and evaluations in the hearer about that person [2, p. 12].

Language is a significant medium for creating fictional heroes' characterization. We observe linguistic similarities among millions of characters, defined by common psychological traits, resulting in prototypical characters, called archetypes (term by Jung [4]). Different fields of study have proposed several classifications of archetypes, focusing on individual psychological characteristics. However, there has been no attempt to compose a typology of psycholinguistic archetypes to account for common linguistic characteristics in the verbal portrayal of the same archetype representatives.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The term "archetype" is fundamental to Jungian analysis, yet its definition is frequently confused due to Jung's multiple definitions. Jung sometimes referred to archetypes as images, while at other times he distinguished between archetypes as unconscious forms devoid of any specific content and archetypal images as the conscious contents of those forms [5, p. 107]. Since then Jung's notion of repetitive images appearing in different cultural tales regardless of location, time, or language [4] has been interpreted in various ways by authors from diverse fields, including psychology, management, and literary studies. Despite different names and overlapping characteristics, common prototypes can be identified based on individual needs and motivations.

For instance, any person (and thus a fictional character, being a simplified replica thereof) is compelled to satisfy his/her physiological and higher-level needs to survive and self-actualize. The basic needs are those for food and water, heat, safety, belonging, and love as distinguished by Maslow in his classification of human needs [6]. The person to satisfy the survival needs of the loved ones is the representative of the Universal Mother [7] / Caregiver [8; 9; 10] /

Nurturer archetype [11; 12]. As summarized by Faber & Mayer, the Nurturer is represented by caring, compassion, and generosity. Nurturers are typically protective, devoted, sacrificing, nurturing, and parental; they are usually very benevolent, friendly, helpful, and trusting [10, p. 309].

This paper focuses on the Overcontrolling Mother archetype, which is the antagonist embodiment of the Nurturer archetype [11]. The study is based on Schmidt's classification of archetypes, which explicitly states the dual nature of archetypes by delineating the protagonist and antagonist forms of the same archetype. Characteristic features of the archetype and their revelation in language are further discussed in the main findings of the article.

Language use can be used to identify individual differences, including age, sex, personality, and mental health. The self-focus, cognitive complexity, social references, and emotional tone inherent in language use can help identify individual differences. These language features can be used to make predictions about individuals, and also may underlie causal processes that create some individual differences. Linguistic features such as function and emotion words can provide important psychological cues to thought processes, emotional states, intentions, and motivations [13, p. 36–37].

As the repository of psychologically relevant written language expanded exponentially, opening new possibilities for social science research worldwide, there appeared a growing need to automate content analysis [see 14]. Content analysis means any systematic transformation of a string of text into statistically manageable data representing the presence, intensity, or frequency of some relevant features [15]. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) [16] is a tool that provides an automated, objective method for extracting insights about attentional focus reflected through language [17]. More precisely, it consists of an internal dictionary and software designed for tokenization and word counting. Each word or word stem in the dictionary belongs to one or more pre-established categories with different meanings, most of them ensuing from psychological theories. The software scans the input text, compares each word with the dictionary, and computes the percentage of words found in each category [18, p. 1].

**The purpose of this paper** is to examine the linguistic characterization of the Overcontrolling Mother archetype in popular cinema. This study is a component of a broader endeavor and aims to identify the typical psycholinguistic characteristics of the archetype using the LIWC-22 software. The research delves into the language used by nine antagonists, such as Dolores Umbridge (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2007), Mother Gothel (*Tangled*, 2010), Knotgrass (*Maleficent*, 2014), Joy (*Inside Out*, 2015), Freya (*The Huntsman: Winter's War*, 2016), Hippolyta (*Wonder Woman*, 2017), Amita's mother (*Ocean's Eight*, 2018), Supreme Intelligence (*Captain Marvel*, 2019), and Hua Li (*Mulan*, 2020). These characters are portrayed as antagonists because their maternal desires, such as seeking to be needed, appreciated, and loved by their children or wards, are typically obstructed, leading them to pursue their goals in harmful ways.

**Research methods.** To carry out this research, the film's cues of the examined characters were extracted from subtitles, cross-checked with the movies' sound, and subjected to qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The findings were then compared to the mean figures and standard deviations of LIWC categories in movies compiled and presented by Boyd et al. [19].

Common themes, narratives, and recurring deviations from mean figures demonstrate the typical psycholinguistic characteristics of the examined archetype.

**Main findings.** The Nurturer archetype is a commonly occurring female character type in cinema. The Nurturer is driven by the desire for love and a sense of belonging, and seeks to establish connections with others. The archetype has an antagonist form defined by Schmidt as the Overcontrolling Mother [11]. This form shares the same concern for the safety, wellbeing, and nutrition of their children or wards, but differs in having a more controlling nature. The Overcontrolling Mother's attention is focused on the ward, who is seen as a medium to fulfill their need to be needed:

Umbridge: *Good morning, **children**.*

Knotgrass: *We are three peasant women raising our orphan **child** in the woods.*

Freya: *You've done well, my **children**. / Dwarves. They're just like **children**.*

The narratives of the Overcontrolling Mother typically revolve around the well-being of the ward. Her utterances might manifest genuine concern on the part of an overprotective mother striving to keep her ward safe and happy:

Li: *It is because I'm trying to **protect** Mulan that I say this.*

Hippolyta: *You see? You are **safe**... and there is **nothing you should concern yourself with**. / Diana! Are you **hurt**?*

Joy: *I just wanted Riley to be **happy**. / But Riley needs to be **happy**.*

Alternatively, the mother's statements could reveal feigned care, strategically designed to manipulate the ward into complying with the mother's wishes:

Umbridge: *You'll be learning about defensive spells in a **secure, risk-free** way.*

Mother Gothel: *You know why we stay up in this tower. To keep you **safe and sound, dear**. / I was so **worried** about you, dear.*

Freya: *How lucky you are. You're with me now. And **you will never know this suffering again**.*

The Nurturer archetype is characterized by high numbers in the 'food' category, as food is seen as a symbol of love and care. On the other hand, the Overcontrolling Mother archetype has low numbers in the 'food' category, and even when the characters speak about nutrition, it does not bring any comfort to the ward. For example, Umbridge lures children with fake kindness: *Up you come. Would you like a cup of **tea**?* She pours the Veritaserum potion into the tea to make sure the children speak the truth when she interrogates them. Hua Li forbids Mulan from eating: *I already told you, you cannot **eat**. It will ruin your **makeup**.* Mother Gothel alludes to the hazelnut soup as the symbol of the previous life, when Rapunzel was obedient: *There. It never happened. Now, wash up for **dinner**. I'm making hazelnut **soup**.* Knotgrass expresses annoyance at being forced to care for the baby Aurora: *Then **feed** her!* In the end, it is Maleficent, who needs to step in to save the child from starvation.

The Overcontrolling Mother has high numbers in the 'clout' category. 'Clout' refers to the relative social status, confidence, or leadership [20]. Numbers above standard in the cues of the archetypal characters reveal their higher social standing and authority over the ward. The Overcontrolling Mother is not above reminding her position to her prodigal children:

Hippolyta: *So you will do nothing. As your queen I forbid it.*

Freya: *I am queen. This is what I trained you for. This is why I raised you.*

Umbridge: *...it sounds as if you're questioning my authority... But to question my practices is to question the Ministry, and by extension, the minister himself.*

Therefore, the Overcontrolling Mother expects the ward to comply with her expectations and behave according to the rules imposed by the mother. The corresponding narratives are characteristic of her language:

Li: *Tell me your sister is not the cause of this. Mulan! **Take control of yourself!***

Umbridge: *Study hard and you will be **rewarded**. Fail to do so, and the **consequences** may be severe. / Now, enough. I will have **order**. / Any student in **noncompliance** will be expelled.*

Mother Gothel: *All I have is one **request**. Don't ever ask to leave this tower again.*

Freya: *Never let it render you frail of mind or of will, because in my kingdom, there is but one **law**.*

The Overcontrolling Mother is focused on her ward's loyalty; she cannot stand betrayal of any form:

Freya: *And in exchange for this precious gift, I ask only one thing, your **loyalty**.*

Umbridge: *I am a tolerant woman, but the one thing I will not stand for is **disloyalty**.*

Hippolyta: *It seems I'm not the revered queen I should be. Disobeyed, **betrayed** by my own sister...*

Mother Gothel: *I just listened for the sound of complete and utter **betrayal** and followed that.*

High numbers in the 'drive' category (consisting of 'affiliation', 'power', and 'achieve') demonstrate her tenacity, authority, and motivation to pursue desired outcomes. The numbers in the category are the highest among other female archetypes and often combine percentages above standard deviation for more than one subcategory:

Umbridge: *Those wishing to **join** the Inquisitorial **Squad** for extra credit, may sign up in the high inquisitor's office (affiliation). / **Detention**, Mr. Potter (power).*

Supreme Intelligence: ***We** found you. **We embraced** you as **our** own (affiliation). / And yet, you've never had the **strength** to **control** them on your **own** (power).*

Joy: ***We** love **our** girl (affiliation). / Just follow my **lead** (power). / She can't **give up** hockey (achieve).*

As the Overcontrolling Mother is a self-assured woman, the 'tentative' category is rare or non-existent. The uncommon examples are found for instance when she is confronted with a higher authority:

Umbridge: *Dumbledore, **may** I remind you that under the terms of Educational Decree Number twenty-three, as enacted by the minister...*

Freya: *You **may** be surprised how things turn out.*

Tentativeness might also be pretended as the Overcontrolling Mother is trying to present her vision of reality or manipulate others to do her bidding:

Supreme Intelligence: ***Seems** like your time on C-53 jogged the old memory.*

Joy: *This **seems** interesting. "Long Term Memory Retrieval, Volume 47"?*

Mother Gothel: ***Or... Perhaps** you want to stop acting like wild dogs chasing their tails and think for a moment.*

It should be noted that word categories are not the only way to express tentativeness in the verbal portrayal of the characters.

For instance, Joy speaks about Sadness: *And you've met Sadness. She... Well, she... I'm not actually sure what she does. And I've checked, there's no place for her to go, so...* Pauses and repetitions in the text demonstrate unusual for the character uncertainty and indecisiveness, her inability to express approval and positive evaluation [21, c. 88].

Being the woman in charge, the Overcontrolling Mother has low numbers in the 'question\_mark' category. When she does ask questions, they are often rhetorical in nature and used to ridicule or make the wards doubt themselves:

Freya: *You knew, didn't you? You knew she'd betray you and you spared her still. Have you learnt my lesson at last?*

Umbridge: *Who do you imagine wants to attack children like yourself?*

Mother Gothel: *Why would he like you?.. You think that he's impressed? / Why would you ask such a ridiculous question?*

Additionally, the Overcontrolling Mother tends to have high numbers in the 'focus\_future' category, as she is concerned with assuring her position in her ward's life:

Mother Gothel: *Where **will** you go? He **won't** be there for you.*

Freya: *You **will** train. You **will** harden. You **will** become my elite, my Huntsmen. And nothing **will** ever, ever destroy you.*

Joy: *We are **gonna** have a good day, which **will** turn into a good week, which **will** turn into a good year; which turns into a good life!*

This character type exercises power over the ward and other characters (hence, high numbers in the 'I' category), and associates herself with the group under her leadership (high percentages in the 'we' category):

Li: ***I** already told you, you cannot eat. / **We** must be on time.*

Umbridge: ***I** will say this one last time. **I'm** ordering you to tell **me** where you've been. / **We** saw your lies for what they were.*

Freya: ***My** children. This is the day for which... For which you were born... **We** will bring fear once again to Snow White's army.*

Supreme Intelligence: ***We've** given you a great gift. / **We** saved you.*

In the cues of the Supreme Intelligence, Knotgrass, and Hippolyta the 'we' category significantly exceeds the average. Combined with high numbers in the 'clout' and 'power' categories and low numbers in the 'I' and 'question\_mark' categories, it demonstrates the high social status of the characters [22, p. 118]. The received results agree with the research by Kacewicz et al. [23], demonstrating that higher-ranked team members asked fewer questions and used more first-person plural pronouns.

On the other hand, the attentional focus of the archetype is external, as she serves in the plot as an obstacle on the hero's way to development:

Amita's mother: *What's the matter with **you**?*

Umbridge: ***You** give me no choice, Potter. As this is an issue of Ministry security, **you** leave me with... no alternative. The Cruciatius Curse ought to loosen **your** tongue.*

Mother Gothel: *Oh, Rapunzel, do **you** even hear **yourself**?*

Hippolyta: *But **you're** not an Amazon like the rest of us.*

Often the contraposition of the pronouns 'I/we' and 'you' is used as a way to manipulate the interlocutor; the Overprotecting Mother demonstrates that by making a different choice the ward is opposing herself to the others, which makes her choice wrong:

Supreme Intelligence: *Without **us**, **you're** only human.*

Freya: ***I** gave **you** both everything. And in return **you** betray **me**.*



Joy: *Sadness, you nearly touched a Core Memory. And when you touch them, we can't change them back.*

The Overcontrolling Mother tends to have high numbers in the 'conflict' and 'anger' categories, revealing her propensity for disagreements, particularly with her ward:

Umbridge: *You know... I really hate children.*

Mother Gothel: *You know how I feel about the mumbling. Blah-blah-blah-blah. It's very annoying! / Enough already! Stop fighting me!*

Li: *No. You will only humiliate him further.*

Freya: *You knew she'd betray you and you spared her still... Kill him.*

High numbers in the 'allnone' category indicate the characters' conceited assertiveness and dogmatism:

Li: *Xiu gives me no trouble.*

Mother Gothel: *Guess I always knew this day was coming, knew that soon you'd want to leave the nest. / You are not leaving this tower! Ever!*

Freya: *I will free every child. I will save them all. As I saved you. And my army of Huntsmen will grow until nothing will stand in its path.*

Hippolyta: *There will be no training. / But she must never know the truth...*

Supreme Intelligence: *Freeing you to do what all Kree must... put your people's needs before your own.*

Joy: *It was amazing. Just Riley and me. Forever.*

Another important category in the language of the Overcontrolling Mother is 'authentic'. Lower numbers in 'authentic' usually suggest a more guarded, distanced form of discourse; people tend to self-regulate or filter what they say. Authenticity reflects the degree to which a person is self-monitoring [20]. In the researched material, 'authentic' tends to be low as the Overcontrolling Mother wants to keep her ward under control by deception and manipulation, and therefore tends to fake care and kindness:

Mother Gothel: *You're adorable. I love you so much, darling.*

Umbridge: *Thank you, headmaster, for those kind words of welcome. And how lovely to see all your bright, happy faces smiling up at me. I'm sure we're all going to be very good friends.*

The Overcontrolling Mother often tries to guilt the heroine into obedience or gratitude:

Mother Gothel: *Now look what you've done, Rapunzel. / Everything I did was to protect you.*

Hippolyta: *You've been my greatest love. Today... you are my greatest sorrow.*

Knotgrass: *We present this crown to our little Aurora, for whom we have sacrificed the best years of our...*

By being pessimistic and condemning about the world and human nature, the Overcontrolling Mother tends to keep her ward near. As a result, she exhibits high numbers in the 'tone negative', 'sadness', 'anxiety', and 'adjective' categories:

Mother Gothel: *The outside world is a dangerous place, filled with horrible, selfish people. If it finds even the slightest ray of sunshine, it destroys it.*

Freya: *You see, you abandoned her, Eric. But not I. I raised her from despair.*

Hippolyta: *Men are easily corrupted. / Be careful in the world of men, Diana. They do not deserve you.*

Supreme Intelligence: *You are just one victim of the Skrull expansion... that has threatened our civilization for centuries... Horrors that you remember...*

Li: *It is Mulan I worry about. They'll call her a witch.*

For better effect, the Overcontrolling Mother disparages her ward:

Mother Gothel: *Oh darling, I know you're not strong enough to handle yourself out there. / On your own, you won't survive.*

Freya: *Do not beg me! It is weak. You are weak.*

Supreme Intelligence: *But remember... without us... you're weak. You're flawed. Helpless.*

Hippolyta: *Fighting does not make you a hero. / There is much you do not understand.*

The Overcontrolling Mother often appeals to the 'moral' category to manipulate her ward. She twists the reality so that it suits her intentions:

Li: *A daughter brings honor through marriage.*

Umbridge: *As I told you once before, Mr. Potter... naughty children deserve to be punished.*

Joy: *You can't focus on what's going wrong.*

Freya: *It's a sin, and I'll not forgive it.*

Knotgrass: *No! This is all your fault!*

**Conclusion and prospects for further research.** The Overcontrolling Mother is a psycholinguistic archetype in mainstream English-language movies of the 21st century. This character is motivated by the fear of being useless or left behind and is often portrayed as a helicopter parent. She tries to become irreplaceable in the lives of her children due to her phobia of abandonment and the empty nest syndrome. The Overcontrolling Mother tends to be clingy, and overbearing. She manipulates her children by projecting her personal disappointments onto them and making them feel unsafe in the outside world. The Overcontrolling Mother turns to the themes of children's upbringing, duty, compliance, expectations, order, control, care, safety, well-being, and obedience.

The Overcontrolling Mother tends to have high numbers in the 'clout', 'power', 'I', 'we', 'you', 'affiliation', 'tone negative', 'emotion negative', 'focus future', 'conflict', and 'moral' categories. On the other hand, she predominantly has low numbers in the 'authentic', 'tentative', and 'question mark' categories.

In the case of supporting characters, the Overcontrolling Mother serves as a plot device and is presented as an obstacle on the way of the hero's journey (Amita's mother, Knotgrass, Hippolyta, Hua Li). The plot usually defines the Overcontrolling Mother's role as a mother, guardian, or teacher. If the character is given enough screen time for development, her arc usually evolves in two ways. She can either realize her fallacies and start healthily pursuing her needs, thus shifting to the protagonist Nurturer archetype (Joy, Freya), or persist with her obsessive behavior and result in social or physical destruction (Umbridge, Supreme Intelligence, Mother Gothel).

Further research aims to comprehensively classify female psycholinguistic archetypes in mainstream English-language movies of the 21st century.

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### Бережна М. Мовленнєва характеристика персонажів архетипу «Всеволодна мати» (на матеріалі англомовних фільмів масової культури)

**Анотація.** У статті досліджено мовленнєву характеристику дев'яти жіночих персонажів англомовних фільмів масової культури, що належать до архетипу «Всеволодна мати». Дослідження базується на ідеї К. Юнга про архетип як повторюваний образ, що існує в колективному безсвідомому, типології архетипів персонажів художніх творів В. Шмідт та контент-аналізі мовлення персонажів, що належать до досліджуваного архетипу. Персонажі архетипу досягають самореалізації шляхом надмірної опіки інших (на їхню думку, вразливіших) персонажів. Архетип є основою образу персонажок-антагоністок, які стримують своїх підопічних від розвитку через надмірний контроль та маніпуляцію відчуттям провини. «Всеволодна мати» втілює свої прагнення та бажання у персонажі, яким опікується. Це створює перешкоди на шляху як самої героїні, так і її дитини. Конфлікт переважно розв'язується шляхом звільнення інших персонажів від надмірної опіки. Коли «Всеволодна мати» є головною героїнею, вона має подолати травматичний досвід, примиритися з новими обставинами у житті та відбудувати власну ідентичність. Для нарративів «Всеволодної матері» характерними є теми виховання дітей, слухняності, обов'язку, відповідності очікуванням, порядку, контролю, піклування, безпеки, відданості та зради.

Для мовлення «Всеволодної матері» частотними є займенники першої особи однини та множини, високі показники у лексико-семантичних категоріях 'clout', 'drive', 'power', 'affiliation' та низькі у категоріях 'tentative' та 'question mark'. Це характеризує її як рішучу, владну, цілеспрямовану жінку, яка має високий соціальний статус та схильна до конфліктів. Низькі показники у категорії 'authentic' та високі – у категоріях 'moral' та 'adjective' розкривають нещирість персонажів, їхнє прагнення маніпулювати думкою підопічних. «Всеволодна мати», яка тримає все під надмірним контролем, але водночас не здатна забезпечити дитині психологічно та фізично комфортні умови для розвитку, викликає у глядача переважно роздратування та засудження. Доля «Всеволодної матері», яка прагне тотального контролю та використовує підопічного у власних цілях, однозначна: фізичне чи соціальне знищення. Персонажки архетипу, які здатні зрозуміти свої недоліки, змінюють валентність образу та переходять до протагоністичного архетипу «Піклувальниця».

**Ключові слова:** архетип «Всеволодна мати», мовленнєва характеристика, нарратив, контент-аналіз, LIWC-22, жіночий кіноперсонаж.