

The Language of Emotion: A Corpus-Based Cognitive-Stylistic Analysis of Grief and Loss in Namwali Serpell's *The Furrows* and Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*

Sadia Parveen¹, Sohail Falak Sher^{2(*)}, Muhammad Hammad Javed³

Abstract

Grief is an intensely subjective emotional experience whose abstract nature makes metaphor, embodiment, spatialization, and repetition central to its literary representation. This study investigates the linguistic and cognitive construction of grief and loss in Namwali Serpell's *The Furrows* (2022) and Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* (2020) through an integrated corpus-based cognitive-stylistic approach. Two purpose-built corpora were compiled from the narrative portions of the novels, containing 76,860 and 102,984 word tokens, respectively. Frequency profiling, normalized frequency comparison, collocation screening, and concordance-led close reading were combined with Conceptual Metaphor Theory and image-schema analysis. Potentially metaphorical expressions were identified contextually with reference to MIPVU principles. The findings reveal both shared and divergent cognitive models of bereavement. *The Furrows* gives greater lexical prominence to death, memory, absence, and the recurrent return of the lost person, while *Hamnet* foregrounds pain, crying, bodily experience, emptiness, and familial fragmentation. Both novels draw on FORCE, CONTAINER, PATH, PART-WHOLE, and presence-absence structures, yet their stylistic effects differ. Serpell constructs grief as recursive, unstable, and resistant to closure; O'Farrell presents grief as an embodied force that fractures individual and familial coherence before being reconfigured through memory and artistic representation. The study demonstrates that corpus evidence and cognitive-stylistic interpretation can complement each other by showing not merely that grief is a dominant theme but how recurrent linguistic choices organize different conceptual experiences of loss.



Keywords: corpus stylistics, cognitive stylistics, grief, loss, conceptual metaphor, image schema, emotion, contemporary fiction

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¹ Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, Sadia.parveen@iub.edu.pk

² Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, sfsher888@gmail.com (*Corresponding Author)

³ Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, mr.hafizhamad@gmail.com



1. INTRODUCTION

Emotion has a special status in literary language, as emotion is a phenomenon that is at the same time bodily, psychological, social and conceptual. Representing grief is a unique challenge because bereavement is more than sad, it's a shift of perception in time, space, memory, identity, embodiment and interpersonal relationships. Grief is therefore often metaphorically, spatially, bodily and sensorily presented in literary texts, in addition to the rather simple emotion labelling. Cognitive linguistics is a suitable theoretical framework to explore such representation as it views metaphor as a way of structuring abstract experience via more concrete domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As with emotion language, Kövecses (2000) also shows how emotion language is intimately related to body experience and repeated conceptual mappings.

Cognitive stylistics takes the implications of these two concepts and elaborates them by focusing on the relationships between linguistic choice, conceptual processing, the structuring of texts, and interpretation (Semino & Culpeper, 2002). Corpus stylistics, on the other hand, offers empirical procedures for identifying regularities of linguistic variation that might be not so easily established reliably by the unaided close reading. The studies by Semino and Short (2004) and by McIntyre and Walker (2019) show the potential for combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches in literary and narrative analysis, as well as the importance of transitioning from corpus-informed patterns to stylistically and contextually informed interpretation. The synergy used here is especially suited to the task of emotion research, because the corpus-based analysis can identify patterns of recurrence in the use of the lexicon in this context, and the cognitive stylistic analysis of this type of language can uncover the effect of these patterns on the conceptualization of emotional experience.

The Furrows: An Elegy (2022) by Namwali Serpell and *Hamnet* (2020) by Maggie O'Farrell provide particularly rich grist for the mill of this inquiry. The theme of Serpell's novel is Cassandra Williams' unclosed experience of the death of her younger brother Wayne. Through various re-enactments of his disappearance and presumed death, the film's themes of repetition, uncertainty, memory, doubling, water, and absence are integral to its portrayal of grief.

O'Farrell's novel explores what happened when Shakespeare's eleven-year-old son died and how his family – particularly Agnes – grieved. Bereavement is built up through bodily feeling, derailed thinking, vacancy, fragment, silence, movement and finally artistic reconfiguration.

When it comes to emotions, they're not structured the same in both novels, although grief is a central theme in both. *The Furrows* constantly challenges the ontological status of the person lost, by repeatedly suggesting his absence, but also his impersonation and resemblance, alternative versions of his death and a possible return to the story. *Hamnet* starts with a verified death and looks at how this loss is felt in the body, in the home space, in the family and in theatrically. The contrast of the texts makes them suitable for comparative cognitive-stylistic analysis.

The present study thus integrates both corpus and cognitive stylistics approaches in the analysis of the organization of grief and loss in the two novels. The analysis starts with the fact of recurrent lexical evidence, followed by contextual concordance interpretation and then conceptual-metaphorical and image-schematic explanation, but not with predetermined metaphors and then examples to support them. The aim is to draw conclusions as to the formation of recognizably related yet stylistically different cognitive models of bereavement in two contemporary novels.

1.1 Research Objectives

- To identify and compare recurrent lexical and collocational patterns associated with grief and loss in *The Furrows* and *Hamnet*.
- To examine the conceptual metaphors and image schemas through which grief and loss are cognitively represented in the two novels.
- To investigate how similarities and differences in these linguistic and cognitive patterns contribute to the distinctive stylistic construction of bereavement in each novel.



1.2 Research Questions

1. What recurrent lexical and collocational patterns characterize the representation of grief and loss in *The Furrows* and *Hamnet*?
2. What conceptual metaphors and image schemas structure the representation of grief and loss in the two novels?
3. How do similarities and differences in these linguistic and cognitive patterns contribute to the distinctive stylistic representation of grief and loss in each novel?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotion, Metaphor, and Embodied Conceptualization

Conceptual Metaphor Theory re-conceptualizes metaphor as a feature of thought, not just a 'decorative' property of language. However, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that abstract domains are often comprehended by means of a mapping from other and more concrete, experiential domains. Conceptual resources are then available in less tangible phenomena, via the experience of spatial orientation, physical entities, movement, containment, force and bodily experience. This account is relevant to emotion specifically in that emotions are abstract, but they depend on embodiment and perceptual experiences and therefore cannot be separated from these.

Emotion concepts are systematically connected with such phenomena as embodiment, force, containment, physiological change and culturally mediated conceptual structures, as demonstrated by Kövecses (2000). These mappings may be intensified, expanded, juxtaposed or disrupted in literary discourse. For example, grief can be manifested as weighing as if on a scale, being hurt, moving, water, enclosure, emptiness, darkness, broken upness and separation. Cognitive stylistics address not only which metaphors are used, but also how occurrence and recurrence of particular metaphors in a text contribute to characterizations, perspectives, narrative organization and affective meanings of the author.

2.2 Image Schemas and Literary Emotion

Johnson (1987) theorised that the image schemas are recurring patterns that result from embodied experiences of the physical environment. From this perspective, abstract experiences, like CONTAINER, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, FORCE, UP-DOWN, NEAR-FAR, and PART-WHOLE, can be organized prior to their elaboration into more specific conceptual metaphors. The focus for grief is how bereavement can be experienced and expressed geographically and/or bodily: as feeling "in bereavement", in pressure, pulled by bereavement, moving through bereavement, falling apart, not being able to leave behind the deceased. These expressions render emotional experience cognitively accessible by correlating it with familiar bodily structures.

2.3 Corpus Stylistics and Literary Metaphor

Corpus stylistics is a mixture of corpus-linguistic procedures and stylistic interpretation. There is little value in it as an alternative to close reading, but it can find patterns to guide, challenge, develop the interpretation of those patterns. The examples of Semino and Short (2004) demonstrate the way that electronic corpora can be used in quantitative or qualitative analysis of the narrative discourse. Corpus stylistics can also be viewed, according to McIntyre and Walker (2019), as a process whereby the patterns found are explained in context, which in turn leads to the discovery of new patterns.

This combination is especially valuable for metaphor studies. Building on this work, Dorst (2015) illustrated that, with the help of a 45,000-word annotated fiction corpus, fiction does not mean more metaphor but more specific metaphorical forms, such as more direct metaphor and more simile. Kimmel (2008) also proposes a software-aided cognitive-stylistic approach to establishing complex, recurring metaphorical patterns in literature. This type of work will be useful in a method that identifies potentially significant patterns by means of frequency and concordance evidence, and then their metaphorical and stylistic functions by means of contextual analysis.



2.4 Metaphor Identification and Methodological Control

One of the problems in the study of metaphors is that any phrase that is figurative or in any way suggestive of a meaning is considered a metaphor. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, and later developed and refined by Steen et al., 2010) solves this problem by making analysts identify the contextual meaning of a lexical unit, identify a more basic meaning of the unit (where applicable) and also check if the context meaning can be understood from the cross-domain comparison. Additionally, MIPVU differentiates between direct, indirect and implicit metaphor related words and has been used with fiction and also in non-literary registers. In the present study, these principles are used to limit rather than all words from domains like water, body or movement are automatically considered metaphorical.

2.5 Critical Work on *The Furrows*

The themes of grief, repetition, disruption and uncertainty are always recognized as significant to the novel in critical discussions of "*The Furrows*". In his description of formal pyrotechnics in the novel, Alam (2023) says that the book is depicting the madness, repetition, disruption, and shock of grief. Serpell has also described how the repetitions in the novel were supposed to represent the act of grieving: when the person that is being grieved over passes away, the mourner lives through it again each time they remember the death. This type of commentary sets up a very satisfying correspondence between form and grief but does not offer a systematic description of a corpus-based lexical and conceptual relationship that creates this correspondence.

2.6 Critical Work on *Hamnet*

The studies of *Hamnet* have focused on bereavement as memory, motherhood, adaptation, historical recovery, and psychological models. O'Neill (2021) suggests that the novel is composed of maternalized networks of remembrance involving doubles, memory, ghosts and interaction with Hamlet. Harinda and Widayanti (2025) specifically look at Agnes' process of grief according to the Kübler-Ross model of the process. While these studies confirm that grief and memory are significant critical issues, they do not compare and contrast recurrent emotion

language, conceptual metaphor, and image schemas in a corpus-based cognitive-stylistic study.

2.7 Research Gap

Existing work confirms grief, mourning, memory, absence, and familial disruption as central to both *The Furrows* and *Hamnet*. However, the reviewed scholarship primarily approaches these concerns through literary criticism, memory studies, adaptation studies, or psychological models. A comparative study integrating normalized corpus evidence, concordance analysis, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, image schemas, and systematic metaphor-identification principles remains underdeveloped. This study addresses that gap by asking not simply what grief means thematically in the two novels, but which recurrent linguistic patterns construct grief and what cognitive structures those patterns activate.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study takes place in the field of cognitive stylistics and is mostly based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which is further supported by image-schema theory (Johnson, 1987), and Kövecses's (2000) theory of metaphorical emotion conceptualization. The main mechanism of interpretation is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which focuses on the contrast between the abstract target domains (here predominant GRIEF and LOSS) and the concrete source domains, such as WATER, FORCE, BODY, MOVEMENT, CONTAINMENT, and FRAGMENTATION. Recurrent language items are analyzed to consider if they could represent systematic crossdomain linguistic correspondences or whether they are merely occasional stylistic ornaments.

Below this level of these mappings, there is an embodied level provided by image-schema analysis. Due to the frequent occurrence of these structures in corpus-driven close reading, special attention is given to CONTAINER, FORCE, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, PART-WHOLE and NEAR-FAR. Corpus linguistics is an empirical methodology, not an alternative interpretive theory. The process of the analytical movement is thus: Corpus evidence – Identification of contextual metaphor –



Conceptual mapping – Image-schema structure –
Cognitive-stylistic interpretation.

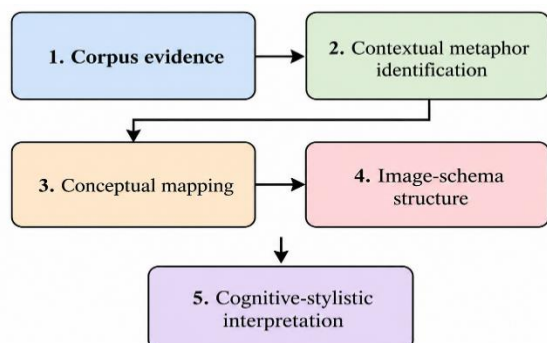


Figure 1: Analytical Movement

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

Corpus-stylistic comparative with quantitative and qualitative approaches is chosen in the study. The quantitative dimension sets the size of the corpus, the frequency of the words and their normalized distribution, and their exploratory collocational profile. The qualitative aspect investigates the context of concordance and the understanding of patterns of metaphorical and image-schematic illustrations with the help of cognitive stylistics. This design is based upon the corpus-stylistic principle that quantitative patterns only become literary if they are interpreted in a contextsensitive manner and not merely by virtue of their frequency (McIntyre & Walker, 2019; Semino & Short, 2004).

4.2 Corpus Construction and Preprocessing

The main collection consists of the narrative prose of Serpell's *The Furrows* (2022) and O'Farrell's *Hamnet* (2020). Non-narrative paratext (covers, promotional endorsements, title and copyright pages, contents, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements, author notes, biographical material) did not count. This was particularly relevant for the exclusion of words related to promotional material, which may mention grief, loss and mourning explicitly in the form of evaluative language and thus would bias lexical frequencies. The resulting narrative corporation features 76,860-word tokens for *The Furrows* and 102,984 word tokens for *Hamnet*. Comparative

frequencies are based on the corpora and normalized on the basis of 10,000 words, due to the fact that the corpora are of different sizes.

Table 1.: Corpus Composition

Corpus	Narrative word tokens	Share of combined corpus
<i>The Furrows</i>	76,860	42.74%
<i>Hamnet</i>	102,984	57.26%
Total	179,844	100%

4.3 Lexical Profiling and Normalization

After initial frequency profiling and close reading, a set of lexical families of grief-relevant words was looked at. The chosen families contain specific words denoting emotion (explicit) and recurrent semantic fields of death, memory, absence, pain, crying, fear, emptiness and loneliness. Where two or more variants of a form were grouped together, all of them were assigned to the same analytical family. Frequency results were normalized per 10,000 words to enable comparison between different corpora that contain different numbers of words. Lexical family analysis is considered as a salience indicator not a direct measure of metaphor.

4.4 Collocation and Concordance Analysis

Exploratory analyses of collocation were carried out within a five-word window of the grief/loss anchor set including grief/grieve, loss/lost, and death/dead/die/died/dying forms. Recurrent associations of content words were ranked with logDice after removing function words. Structurally prominent words such as names of characters and kinship terms in fictional narrative were interpreted circumspectively and were used mainly for guidance with regard to concordancing but not as evidence on their own. Then, concordant contexts were explored to determine which words were salient in the contexts of bereavement, memories, bodily experience, spatial absence and repetition of narration.

4.5 Metaphor and Image-Schema Identification

All metaphor-related expressions detected during a concordance reading were analysed using MIPVU principles (Steen et al., 2010). Firstly, the contextual meaning was determined; secondly, where appropriate, a



more basic meaning was sought; thirdly, an expression was given a metaphorical interpretation only if the contextual meaning was a possible interpretation in light of cross domain comparison. These repetitions were then clustered into higher order mappings of concepts GRIEF IS FORCE, LOSS IS EMPTINESS, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, and GRIEF IS FRAGMENTATION. Then underlying image schemas were identified, focusing on FORCE, CONTAINER, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL and PART-WHOLE. The procedure was carried out as a corpus-guided one, meaning the categories were developed based on recurrent textual evidence and not as preconceived findings.

4.6 Reliability and Analytical Caution

No independent second-coding annotation was done and as such an intercoder reliability coefficient is not reported. Rather, lexical frequency is separated from the identification of metaphors and explicit MIPVU-based criteria are used to identify metaphor-related expressions. This prevents to the degree possible automated lexical matches being counted as metaphor, and to exclude the false impression of statistical reliability. Future replication could further enhance the design with an independent annotation of a stratified concordance sample along with a calculation of Cohen's kappa for metaphor identification and conceptual-category assignment.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Lexical Profile of Grief and Loss

Table 2 shows the major lexical families found in the two grievance corpora after cleaning. The most significant finding is not the use of the word 'grief' per se. Bereavement is similarly formed in both novels, though not explicitly identified by name. Differences are more telling in the lexical context of death and loss.

Table 2:. Selected Grief-Related Lexical Families

Lexical family	<i>The Furrows</i> raw	Per 10,000	<i>Hamnet</i> raw	Per 10,000
Grief/grieve	8	1.04	13	1.26
Loss/lost	29	3.77	29	2.82
Death/dead/die	118	15.35	97	9.42
Memory/remember	89	11.58	48	4.66
Absence/gone/missing	75	9.76	44	4.27

Pain/ache	19	2.47	56	5.44
Cry/tears/weeping/sobbing	43	5.59	118	11.46
Fear/afraid/terror	7	0.91	28	2.72
Empty/hollow	27	3.51	46	4.47
Alone/lonely	29	3.77	37	3.59

The Furrows has significantly increased frequencies of words for death, memory and words that relate to absence. Memory forms are found 11.58 times per 10,000 words here, versus 4.66 times per 10,000 words in *Hamnet* and absence, gone or missing 9.76 times to 4.27. There are also considerably more death-related forms in *The Furrows* (15.35 compared to 9.42). These patterns are an expression of Cassandra's dysfunction in being able to soothe Wayne all the way up to being present or all the way down to being gone. Grief is organized through recurrence—through the return of the lost brother through memory, resemblance, repetition, and through alternative narrative reconstruction.

Hamnet, on the other hand, has significantly increased normalized frequencies of pain/ache, crying/tears, fear, and emptiness/hollowness. Crying forms happen at a rate of 11.46 per 10,000 words and are over double that of *The Furrows* at 5.59 per 10,000 words. Forms of pain occur at 5.44, while 2.47 are not related to pain. These differences suggest that O'Farrell's treatment of bereavement is more overtly manifested via bodies, tears, touch, physical collapse, hollowness and broken movement.

Thus, the contrast of the lexical field can be summarized as the difference not so much in themes as orientations: memory, absence, and recurring death-awareness are foregrounded in *The Furrows*, while the body, crying, fear, and emptiness are foregrounded in *Hamnet*. The tendencies mentioned here form the empirical grounding for the subsequent cognitive-stylistic analysis.

5.2 Exploratory Collocational Profiles

A collocation screening conducted on the combined gloss of the grief/loss/death anchor set also reveals that bereavement is relationally structured in both novels. The



best reoccurring content-word relations in *The Furrows* are brother, Wayne, body, mother, time and know. Child, son, *Hamnet*, mother, away, and lost are the most prominent associations in *Hamnet*. These patterns cannot be overinterpreted as the names of characters and terms of kinship are common in fiction, but they do help to underline an important difference. These are the two themes Serpell repeatedly connects death language to, the narrator's brother and epistemic uncertainty; O'Farrell's pattern is based on the dead child at the center of familial connections and geographic distance.

5.3 Grief as Absence and Cognitive Recurrence in *The Furrows*

This opening of *The Furrows* introduces an important stylistic principle: "factual sequence" is less important than phenomenological experience. Cassandra makes a clear separation between "what happened" and "how it felt" (Serpell, 2022). The first recounts Wayne's body lying directly next to her in water, memory, physicality, fear, weight, and movement. The novel then will not make loss a completed past event. Wayne has been re-inserted into Cassandra's mind several times in different guises and the tale of his death is told in mutually irreconcilable settings.

This normalized frequency of memory and absence vocabulary is, thus, unusually high and it plays a cognitive-stylistic role. Grief is built up as undermining the normal PRESENT/ABSENT and PAST/PRESENT boundaries. Wayne is physically gone but mentally there. The pattern becomes: 'GRIEF IS THE RECURRENCE OF ABSENCE' and, more specifically, REMEMBERING IS RETURNING. When Wayne recalls his memories, he is also in cognitive presence, but it also reminds him of his physical absence. Memory is thus a process of retrieval and a process of loss.

This pattern will invoke the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL pattern. Wayne is regularly figured as a figure who has been away, lost, come back or may be seen again. So loss happens in the form of interrupted movement, instead of stable nonexistence. Through repetition, Serpell emphasizes the incompleteness of the path: the story and the moment of loss keep coming back without ever reaching an explanatory conclusion.

5.4 Water as a Cognitive Domain of Grief

Water is particularly important in *The Furrows* as it is a literal setting and conceptually recurrent. The water of disappearance and its attendant engulfment are central elements in Cassandra's foundational account, where water is also imagined as grooved, consuming, folding and reclaiming the body (Serpell, 2022). The water domain offers a mental structure suitable to the "unstable" nature of grief: it flows without fixed form, it fools one into believing that there isn't much depth, it carves out distance between the surface and the bottom, and it can lift you up or bump you over. These affordances are analogous to the grieving experience, which is not one story.

The recurring theme can be encapsulated by the words GRIEF IS WATER, and more specific articulations of this theme include GRIEF IS SUBMERSION and MEMORY IS RETURN TO THE SITE OF LOSS. But water is not the only thing Serpell has. It also performs a significant role in *Hamnet*, a work in which the act of grieving is portrayed on multiple occasions by fierce motion and by the possibility of being dragged under. In O'Farrell's novel, the "FORCE" schema is more strongly activated by water and grief acts like a current that can overtake the bereaved person. This common source domain thus serves other stylistic purposes. Serpell's water is endowed with repetition, fluidity and precariousness; O'Farrell's is largely a medium through which emotional power is made concrete.

5.5 Grief as Emptiness and the CONTAINER Schema in *Hamnet*

CONTAINER structures are very evident in *Hamnet*. After the child's death Agnes feels empty, hollowed out, and structurally changed, and everyday household items and memories stick around when she feels they should be removed (O'Farrell, 2020). This pattern reinforces the conceptual mapping THE SELF IS A CONTAINER and LOSS IS EMPTINESS. All the mapping relies on a correlation between identity and contained substance: a whole self has self-coherence, bereavement means something is lost, bereavement means the self is empty, lacking, depleted.

The same schema also applies to home environment. *Hamnet's* property abides and *Hamnet* does not. The house works like a box with the traces of the child - but not the child? Physical surroundings thus continually trigger



bereavement by showing the bereaved mind places with the person who should be there.

5.6 Grief as Fragmentation

Damage to material integrity is one of the most compelling conceptual systems at play in *Hamnet*. Throughout the whole book, O'Farrell finds the bereaved self and family in disintegration, dispersion, and disconnection. Due to these the following two related mappings emerge: GRIEF IS FRAGMENTATION OF THE SELF and FAMILY IS A WHOLE OBJECT / LOSS BREAKS THE WHOLE. The basic image schema is PART-WHOLE. Prior to *Hamnet's* death, the family members work together as parts of a whole; upon *Hamnet's* death, an organizing factor is taken away, and the whole is no longer coherent.

There is also a degree of fragmentation in *The Furrows* and in many places it is the narrative certainty that is under question. The many conflicting explanations of the way in which Wayne was killed undermine the continuity between the event and the narration. Serpell's grief is thus a not only a state of the bereaved self but is also a pressure upon narrative form. The story 'learns' not to be formalized in one way and to be unable or unwilling to be consolidated into one version and to be about a dead body.

5.7 Grief as Force

Another common image schema is FORCE. In *Hamnet*, the emotions are, again and again, felt as they move on rather than residing in the subject. Grief pulls, presses, breaks, overpowers and changes the way the body functions. This backs up the mapping GRIEF IS AN EXTERNAL FORCE. The grieving agency is slightly dislocated: grief is not so much as a "chosen" or "owned" experience, but something endured, fought against or survived.

There's a closer relationship between Serpell's FORCE structures and grief in *The Furrows*, though, as it's connected to recurrence and disruption. The loss of Wayne constantly reshapes Cassandra's experience, memory, relationships and story. Grief is thus said to have the effect of acting not only on the body, but on the conditions of experience which can be known and recounted.

5.8 Death as Departure and Loss as Separation

Both novels make use of a familiar mapping, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, but both complicate it. *Hamnet* is an experience of death as a spatial problem: death is known, yet flesh and/or traces of the child remain. Posthumously, the contradiction is inverted: the body is inaccessible, and memory and imagination create forms of 'presence'. This grief is a function of the conflict between absence and presence in space and presence in the cognition.

The Furrows itself radicalizes this contradiction; through repetition, doubles, alternate deaths, through memory, Cassandra's brother comes back. There is never a conclusion to departure. So Serpell adapts the traditional map, which is also entitled DEATH. The PATH schema is opened up or "circular" and it is this conceptual incompleteness that makes the novel resistant to the linear movement of grief toward closure.

5.9 Grief and Repetitive Cognition

The repetition is a significant cognitive-stylistic device in both novels. Repetition in *Hamnet* is often confined to the space of worried thinking, particularly when characters construct a way of integrating death. The semantic understanding and emotional acceptance are not congruent, rendering simple propositions hard to process. Repetition thus is cognition in opposition to an event which cannot immediately be integrated.

In *The Furrows*, repetition is used on a larger scale, in the narrative. For Wayne, there is a repeated death and death-threatening; this happens throughout the novel, and thus it is not simply a local representation of the distressed thought but an architectural repetition. According to Serpell's own account of writing the novel, it was intentional that this formal repetition, "a mimicry of the mourning rhythm," was created. The novels, in other words, have shared the broader pattern GRIEF IS REPETITIVE COGNITION – but have found different ways to do so: *Hamnet* is more reliant on local recurrence of cognitive and syntactic elements; *The Furrows* takes repetition further into its narration and into its ontological uncertainties.



6. DISCUSSION

Corpus evidence and the cognitive-stylistic considerations reveal that the two poems, *The Furrows* and *Hamnet*, use a shared conceptual vocabulary of bereavement in their different manifestations of grief worlds. The first big difference involves memory and embodiment. Memory-related forms are more than double in normalized frequency in *The Furrows* than in *Hamnet*, and there is a similar difference in the normalized frequency of forms related to absence. The distributions reflect a way of narrating experiences of grief that are undivided from remembering, misremembering, repetition, recognition and uncertainty. Cassandra's sense of loss is not a finalized feeling after an event, but a recurring mental state where Wayne continually comes and goes.

In this way, Serpell's explanation of the novella's repetitions as an attempt to mimic the rhythm of mourning, and Alam's (2023) critical focus on the two forces of repetition and disruption as grief, are supported. What the present article does is to add linguistic evidence to the kind of formal observations. Memory and absence do not need to be not only the themes discovered by means of close reading, but are also comparatively salient lexical domains in the narrative corpus.

In contrast, *Hamnet* lays a stronger emphasis on the physical and material dimension of grief. There is a higher rate of pain, crying, fear and emptiness than in *The Furrows*. O'Farrell's use of the body, deterioration, touch, tears, hollowness, force, fragmentation and the spatial is repeated, as the invisible becomes visible. Agnes' bereavement is more than an emotional state of being: it affects her body not only as an emotional experience but also as a way of altering her body's borderlines and her relation to familial space.

The second big difference is with regard to closure and transformation. Grief is eventually linked to art in *Hamnet*. Agnes experiences this through Hamlet, when she meets him, her knowledge of her husband's remoteness and the lingering presence of the dead child shift playfully in performance. This relates to O'Neill's (2021) talk about how the novel crafts maternalized networks of remembrance: remembrance does not literally restore the historical child but affords relational forms in which absence can be reconfigured. Thus, the novel maintains the sense of

irreversibility but is also afforded the possibility of representation to create a new mode of connection.

The Furrows is less susceptible to such integration. It repeats itself, it doubles, it distorts time, it creates various narratives, it does not lead to any straightforward process of traumatic loss and acceptance. The PATH schema is thus a recursive, not a teleological, schema. The grieving person still ends up with nothingness without coming to any final explaining or emotional destination. In this regard, the novel's formal structure is a representation of the cognitive state it represents.

The third difference relates to the level of structure in which grief has an impact. Fragmentation is used prominently in *Hamnet* in the case of the self, family and household. Fragmentation enters epistemology and narration in *The Furrows*: the story itself can no longer fix what has happened. The two novels thus employ embodied cognition schemata in its accessible representation of grief, and the distribution of the schemata between the various levels of the narrative differs.

Table 3: Comparative Cognitive-Stylistic Profile

Dimension	<i>The Furrows</i>	<i>Hamnet</i>
Dominant lexical orientation	Memory, absence, recurrent death-awareness	Pain, tears, fear, emptiness
Temporal organization	Recursive and unstable	Disrupted but progressively reconfigured
WATER domain	Drowning, recurrence, instability Unstable	Overwhelming emotional force
CONTAINER schema	presence/absence and internal filling/emptying	Hollowed self and emptied domestic spaces
FORCE schema	Disruption of perception and narrative	Pull, pressure, collapse, submersion
PART-WHOLE schema	Fragmented story/identity	Fragmented self and family
PATH schema	Circular or incomplete	Separation with partial representational reconnection
Overall grief model	Grief resists closure	Grief transforms without disappearing



The comparison shows the usefulness of cognitive stylistics in the study of literary emotion. The two writers don't just employ different metaphors, they build up different grief systems. Common source domains (water, force, movement, containment) are rearranged based on the narrative structure in each novel. Those distributions are made visible through corpus evidence, which in turn is explained in terms of their stylistic and personal or experiential significance through cognitive analysis.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The word grief itself is not often used to represent grief. The death concept is quantitatively more salient than the explicit grief concept in both corpora, and is also part of broader networks of death, memory, absence, tears, fear, emptiness and spatial separation.
2. *The Furrows* privileges more the words death, memory, and absence. Its grief model is therefore best described as a process of ongoing remembering and ongoing absence: Wayne can't be absent, since his absence is not fixable.
3. *Hamnet* has less to say about happiness, laughter, hope and love. O'Farrell thus creates grief as corporeal and material, exploring the experience of emotional loss as a pressure on the body, emptiness, a disruption or a fragmenting of space.
4. Both novels share similar conceptual structures (mainly GRIEF IS FORCE, LOSS IS ABSENCE/EMPTINESS, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, and GRIEF IS FRAGMENTATION) as well as FORCE, CONTAINER, PATH, and PART-WHOLE schemas. The two texts, however, use two identical source domains in different stylistic ways.
5. Narrative form is involved in emotion conceptualization. O'Farrell portrays grieving cognition in bodily imagery, local repetition, silence, domestic absence and family fragmentation, while Serpell formulates grief in story through recurrence, incompatible accounts, doubling, and refusal of closure.

8. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to analyse the language of grief and loss phenomena in Namwali Serpell's *The Furrows* and Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* based on an integrated corpus-based cognitive-stylistic framework. Normalized lexical analysis, exploratory collocation, concordance-led interpretation, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, image-schema analysis, and the metaphor identification procedure outlined in MIPVU, all used in the analysis of the data, enabled me to go beyond thematic statements about grief to an evidence-based account of the linguistic/cognitive construction of grief.

The analysis reveals that the two novels have a conceptual repertoire based on embodiment, space, force, movement, water, presence, and absence, and that they organise them differently. In *The Furrows* bereavement is mostly conveyed by recurrence, memory, absence, undetermined identity and opposition to the end of the narrative. Grief as a mode of cognition is a recursive process that constantly recovers Wayne's loss and thus keeps past and present, presence and absence, and certainty and uncertainty in perpetual limbo. But *Hamnet* provides a more corporeal sense of grief. Loss hollows, pulls, breaks, separates, fragments – the bereaved body and family are physical bodies where a part is removed and with it a component of the body, a component of the family.

The comparison also shows that conceptual metaphor and literary form are inseparably intertwined. *Hamnet* works out its grief through repetition in thought, in the physical image of its body, in silence, in the confusion of spatial geography, and ultimately the refiguration of theatrically. *The Furrows*'s grief impacts on the film's ability to determine what occurred. Both O'Farrell's and Serpell's mourning is therefore partly embodied, as an experience of the loss that cannot return to any prior status quo; partly recursive, as an experience of losing that continually threatens to exceed its boundaries.

Finally, the study shows the value of the combination of corpus stylistics and cognitive stylistics. Corpus analysis avoids making inferences based solely on individual instances, and cognitive analysis explains why recurring lexical patterns are important for more than just their numerical frequency. The approaches together demonstrate



that grief can be seen as a subject rendered by language, but also as an experience produced via language.

9. IMPLICATIONS

In methodological aspects the results indicate that the use of quantitative patterns as a starting-point and not a conclusion for cognitive-stylistic research can be strengthened by the corpus method. Not every frequent lexical item is necessarily cognitively salient, not every word from the source domain is necessarily metaphorical. Contextual concordancing analysis is still a fundamental tool. Derive benefits from a normalized comparison in literary corpora of different sizes: there is a significant increase in the clarity of the comparison between the memory/absence vocabulary in *The Furrows* and the pain/crying vocabulary in *Hamnet*.

The results indicate that, at least for literary emotion research, grief should not necessarily be treated as a “named” emotion. It comes alive in web of space, body, time, senses and stories. Research into literary affect can therefore profit from a blend of explicit emotion language and implicit conceptual fields as well as from an examination of the interplay between these fields and the narrative form.

10. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the patterns reported in the study pertain to two modern English-language novels, it does not make the claim that these patterns represent universal linguistic models of grief. There are great differences in historical context, narrative structure, cultural background, and length between the texts. These differences are analytically useful but they also limit generalizations that go beyond the comparison between two cases.

The second limitation is related to the annotation of metaphor. Lexical-family frequencies and collocation profiles give clues as to potential domains of stylistic importance but are incapable of automatically discerning between literal and metaphorical usage. The study thus proceeds with examination of the context and MIPVU principles instead of pointing out counts of lexical-domains

as metaphor frequencies. An inter-coder reliability should be reported for both the identification of metaphor and the assignment to conceptual categories in a larger project, which independently annotates a stratified sample.

Future research might broaden the sample of contemporary accounts of grief and consider the possibility of memory-oriented and embodiment-oriented grief being recurrent across authors and genres. Additional studies may involve a comparison of parental and sibling grief, ambiguous loss and confirmed death grief or gendered conceptualizations of bereavement. Unlike these approaches, a fully annotated metaphor corpus would also allow for statistical comparison of categories of conceptual metaphors between texts through inferences.

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