



## A Feminist Stylistic Analysis on "Being a Woman" Poem

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### Abstract

This article explores the field of feminist stylistics, a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing a poem titled "Being a Woman" through a feminist lens. By examining the stylistic choices and linguistic strategies in poetry, the article investigates how language can either reinforce or challenge prevailing gender norms and stereotypes. Focusing on three topics, feminism in stylistics, female sentences, and metaphor, we can construct a conclusion regarding the contents within the poem. We found that the theme of oppression and fighting against inequality is heavily prevalent within the poem. The author uses veiled words to hide their hidden antagonism against the male gender. In conclusion, this article emphasizes the critical role of feminist stylistics in redefining how we understand and interact with language in the context of gender. It offers valuable insights into the ways in which language can be both a tool of oppression and a vehicle for feminist empowerment.

### 1. Introduction

In the world of literature, poetry stands as a luminous prism through which society's deepest emotions, thoughts, and desires refract. Each line of verse, laden with meaning, has the capacity to reflect and influence the prevailing cultural paradigms. Yet, the intricacies of poetry have long been viewed through the lens of a predominantly male literary tradition, often obscuring the unique perspectives and experiences of women. This article embarks on a journey into the fascinating realm of feminist stylistics in poetry, exploring how this critical approach unravels the layers of gender, power, and language that lie concealed within the lines and stanzas of poetic works.

Feminist stylistics is a multidisciplinary field that has emerged as a powerful tool for analyzing the ways in which gender, power dynamics, and identity intersect with language in literary texts. In the context of poetry, it provides a fresh and invigorating perspective that enables us to uncover the subtle nuances and hidden messages often woven into the fabric of verse. By examining the stylistic choices, linguistic devices, and narrative strategies employed by poets—both historical and contemporary—this article seeks to shed light on how poetry can either reinforce or challenge prevailing gender norms, stereotypes, and social constructs.

The intersection of feminism and stylistics in the realm of poetry is a vibrant, dynamic arena where the very act of reading becomes an exercise in dismantling patriarchal conventions and opening doors to new, uncharted narratives. We will explore how feminist stylistics not only illuminates the creative genius of women poets but also offers us a profound understanding of how language itself can be both a tool of oppression and a medium for liberation.

Feminism has been living around human civilization since forever and has created many inequalities among genders. Especially in Asian families, male in the family is a must rather than just a girl, by means of feminism already experienced by an unborn baby. Feminism is associated with numerous negative health outcomes and we believe a lot of people are aware of this. Despite all of the movement that has been going on, feminism has a lot of aspects and stereotypes. There is a need for effective interventions that target the unique needs for feminism issues.

## 2. Research Methods

The gender representations in a speech are examined in this study using a content analysis technique from a feminist perspective. According to Fraenkel, "Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through written contents of a communication"(Fraenkel & et al., 2012: 448). Within this study we will focus on three different subjects, stylistic into feminism, female sentences, and metaphors.

### Analysis

#### General Overview

Below is the poem to be analyzed for its feminist stylistics titled "Being a Woman" by Skylah Ginette:

#### Being a Woman

#### By Skylah Ginette (The Poetry Elf)

To be a woman  
is to be stronger  
than the fragile framework  
aiming to oppress.

It is to be fiercer  
than the hands that  
muffle our voices  
so they can speak louder,  
with more merit.

It's running, so fast,  
never knowing what  
is a few steps behind. It is tragically beautiful,  
to be a woman.

### 3. Discussions

#### 3.1. Feminism in Stylistics

Since it is obvious that there are regularities in representations across a language in a poem, feminist stylisticians place less emphasis on the artistic function of language than on other aspects of language, perhaps because the same techniques are used in the poem as in pornography. But this explains why authors choose some methods of expression over others and how certain effects are produced through language. (S. Mills 2005:4) The author links their work to hidden meanings. When used in context, this enigmatic phrase lends literature a certain mystic perspective. As a result, reading changes the reader's curiosity and prompts inquiries. Unfortunately, a woman's physical appearance is what most men find attractive. This gravity results in pornography and sexism. As a result, feminists explicitly use specific sentence structures and sexism-related terms to embellish their creative works. Through the use of veiled language, the feminist writer may expose their deep-seated contempt and loathing for males without disturbing the male reader.

In this poem, we can see this use of veiled language in the fourth verse in the first stanza "aiming to oppress." From this verse, we can analyze the veiled antagonism by the very negative use of the word "oppress" and also the use of the word "aiming" meaning a very intentional action. In this case, the subjects are not directly stated but by reading between the lines we can conclude that the male gender aims to oppress the female gender. The hidden but powerful antagonism of the male gender is a big part in feminist stylistics, and this is one of the examples from this poem.

Another example is in the second stanza's third and fourth verse, stated below:  
 "muffle our voices  
 so they can speak louder"

In this example, it is expressed that the male gender is muffling the female gender voices, which means that their opinions are not heard and are actively ignored. It is then followed by the reasoning being the male gender speaking louder than the female gender. The male gender intentionally hindered the opinions of the female gender to be heard, so that their own biased opinions can be heard instead. This is another case of oppression, and the distaste of men from the author is heavily expressed.

#### 3.2. Female Sentences by Feminists in Literary Work

The female statement challenges the gendered statement in a manner that underscores how terms like "masculine" or "feminine" are more about power dynamics than biological sex differences. When we define something as "female," it's not primarily rooted in biology but instead tied to assertions of power. It's worth noting that we don't define things as "male" to the same extent. As Cameron points out, "stereotypes, however false, tend to persist for as long as they reinforce important social inequalities." (Cameron 1985:33). When we define the "feminine statement" as lacking qualities like rationality, coherence, and assertiveness, it's an effort to establish a specific societal role for women. (Mills, S. 2005: 43)

Society labels gender in terms of power dynamics rather than biological differences between "masculine" and "feminine." Unfortunately, men and women aren't seen as equal categories. According to Cameron, society employs stereotypes to depict gender roles, which reinforces the binary opposition between men and women through 183 distinct phrases. Feminists argue that these stereotypes are inaccurate because they contribute to unequal treatment of men and women in society. It appears that when men hold power, women are perceived as weaker.

This use of female sentences in the poem can be seen in the final stanza, which is stated below:

“It is tragically beautiful,  
to be a woman.”

We can see the association of the feminine word of “beautiful” and “tragic”, signifying how being a woman is both a beautiful thing but also a tragedy. The tragedy being the oppression of the male gender that makes the life of a woman very difficult, and much of a challenge. Overcoming that big challenge however, can be seen as a beautiful part of a woman's life. Even with all of the difficulties, women manage to still stand up for themselves and fight back against the inequalities.

### 3.3. Metaphor in Feminist Literary Work

Feminist authors refer to metaphors such as:

When you use a metaphor, you are drawing on a body of thought or background knowledge which might in fact skew your analysis or thinking of what particular object. Particularly if the metaphors that are being used are so-called “dead” then the thought – processes which are involved in the use of those metaphors may not be as open to analysis as if a less reconstructed phrase were used. Male sexuality is often described in terms of metaphors of animal behavior so that it is seen to be at the same level of instinctual behavior as an animal and as little under control. The description of sexuality in these terms means that extreme male behavior such as rape may be understood to be only “natural.” (Mills, S. 2005: 106)

A metaphor in feminist stylistics concentrates on women and the woman figure is used as the subject in every context. The feminists prefer to practice their literature with metaphors. For example, in the second stanza first verse until third verse, shown below:

“It is to be fiercer  
than the hands that muffle our voices”

In this example, women are shown to need a fierce attitude to fight against the hands that muffle their voices. In this case, “the hands” is a metaphor for the unfair system that we live in. A system where the male gender is favored, while the female gender is oppressed. Their voices being muffled by the system is by design since the system is designed to give an advantage to the male gender, which leads to ignoring the opinions of the other side.

### 4. Novelty

This study draws inspiration from Deborah Cameron’s seminal work, “Feminism and Linguistics Theory,” published in 1985. Throughout this study, the feminist movement, as a catalyst for societal transformation, consistently acknowledges the pivotal role of language in both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Within the contemporary feminist scholarship of the last two decades, linguistic theories have assumed a crucial role in endeavors to comprehend and reformulate perspectives on women's lives. "Feminism and Linguistic Theory" stands as a critical yet inclusive introduction to recent advancements in this domain.

### 5. Conclusion

In the interior study; a content analysis of *Being a Woman* by Skylah Ginette (The Poetry Elf). The author reminds the audience about how females are being oppressed by males, because of their gender. The stereotype of a female being bottom of males makes females oppressed by males. For example, the female voice is underestimated and ignored by the public. The author persuades the audiences especially the females to stand for themselves against this stereotype, because of how tragic it is for females to be oppressed by males, but the struggle to stand is the one that makes females beautiful. It may be hard for females to fight against males oppressed by

males, but it's worth it for females to be able to stand equally with males.

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