

## A FEMINIST-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS IN WOMAN AT POINT ZERO NOVELS

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### Abstract

This study describes the feminist stylistics in Woman at Point Zero novel. Woman at Point Zero is a novel about feminism, woman that demand equality and justice. The methods used is descriptive qualitative. The objective of this study is to find out the word, phrase / sentence, and discourse level presented in gender-specific in Woman at Point Zero novel. The result of this study uncovered the writing style or practice of the said author that has to do with the presentation of gender. Female characters differ from the male in that there are more descriptions given to them which pertain to their thoughts, emotions, experiences, vulnerability towards men, and their physical characteristics. Males, on the other hand, are described according to their physical strength, personalities, attitudes, which dominate females. The novel contains descriptions of women and men focusing on their physique, some of which displaying sensual appeal.

**Keywords: Feminist stylistic, Descriptive Qualitative**

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan stilistika feminis di dalam novel Woman at Point Zero. Woman at Poin Zero adalah sebuah novel tentang feminisme, perempuan yang meminta haknya dan keadilan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat penggunaan kata, frasa / kalimat, dan wacana di dalam spesifik gender di dalam novel Woman at Point Zero. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkap gaya penulisan yang berkaitan dengan gender. Karakter perempuan berbeda dari laki-laki karena ada lebih banyak deskripsi yang diberikan kepada mereka yang berkaitan dengan pemikiran, emosi, pengalaman, kerentanan terhadap laki-laki, dan karakteristik fisik mereka. Laki-laki, sebaliknya, digambarkan sesuai dengan kekuatan fisik, kepribadian, sikap, yang mendominasi perempuan. Novel tersebut memuat deskripsi tentang wanita dan pria yang berfokus pada fisik mereka, beberapa di antaranya menampilkan daya tarik sensual.

**Kata Kunci: Stilistika Feminis, Kualitatif Deskriptif**

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Feminist stylistics, as the term suggests, combines both the notion of feminism and the

linguistic branch of stylistics. Montoro (2014) defines feminist stylistics as “the sub-branch of stylistics which aims to account for the way

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in which gender concerns are linguistically encoded in texts, and which attempts to do so by employing some of the frameworks and models pertaining in the stylistics tool-kit” (Montoro, 2014, p. 346).

The explanation given to the term ‘gender concerns’, according to Montoro, has been subject to a variety of meanings, which has thus resulted in the emergence of several perspectives that tackle the concept of gender. One perspective, Montoro points out, is provided by the analyses of feminist stylistics, which takes into account both the study of language and the notion of feminism. This approach demonstrates the way gender issues and language are embodied in literary texts, as a result of the contribution of feminists to the field.

Historically speaking, Montoro clarifies that the term ‘feminist stylistics’ “should be properly credited to Mills (1995)” despite the fact that other stylisticians preceded her in employing a feminist stylistic approach. Mills, however, as Montoro illustrates, is the one who coined the term.

To introduce the term in a clearer light, it is better to refer to Mills’ (1995) own definition of ‘feminist stylistics’. She explains that the two parts constituting the phrase, ‘feminist’ and ‘stylistics’, are complex and could be interpreted differently by the readers, yet the phrase remains the best to illustrate comprehensively her own concern with “an

analysis which identifies itself as feminist and which uses linguistic or language analysis to examine texts” (p. 1). She further demonstrates that the feminist stylistic analysis does not, therefore, solely consider the sexism in a text; it rather aims to analyse how point of view, metaphor or transitivity are “unexpectedly closely related to matters of gender” (p. 1), and to figure out if there is a way to describe women’s writing practices (Mills, 1995).

The term ‘feminism’ began in the West in the late nineteenth century as a political movement that fought for women’s suffrage and later for their other rights in society. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that feminism grew into an aggressive, vocal, and active movement led by various proponents from the west. Today, feminism has turned into an interesting intellectual standpoint which permeates various fields of study, including language and literary studies.

Feminist linguists from the West such as Deborah Cameron, Dale Spender, and Jennifer Coates, have devoted research to the way women are presented in language. According to Cameron (1992:6), language is “a medium of representation”. This is what feminists had in mind when they began examining sexism or gender bias in literature and the media in the late 1960s and early 1970s as mentioned above. This led them to

“look for some kind of linguistic theory” (Cameron, 1992:7). There are many studies now which even discuss the differences in the way men and women are represented in texts, as well as differences in their speech and writings.

Feminist stylistic is branch of linguistic, “the linguistic study of different styles” (Chapman, 1973:11). So feminist stylistic focus on style in the study of stylistics, and limit the concept of stylistics to the study of literature.

In the writing of this journal, authors only focus to study of stylistics. The author analyzes the A Feminist-Stylistic Analysis Discourse in Woman at Point Zero novels. To support this research, in collecting data from Novels and other sources.

The problems discussed in this journal are the problems which relate to a Feminist-Stylistic Analysis Discourse in Woman at Point Zero novel. So, the writer formulates them as follows:

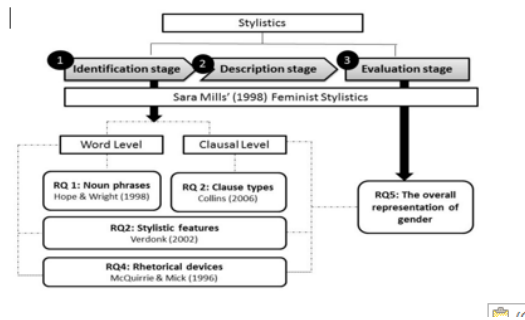
1. How is the word in the novel presented gender-specific?
2. How is the phrase or sentence in the novel presented gender-specific?
3. How is the discourse in the novel presented gender-specific?

In relation to the problems stated above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the presentation of gender-specific in the novel at the word level.
2. To analyze the presentation of gender-specific in the novel at the phrase or sentence level.
3. To analyze the presentation of gender-specific in the novel at the discourse level.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Motivated by issues concerning gender difference and social injustice conveyed through texts, there is a need for stylistic analysis to be performed from the point of view of a feminist (Mills, 1998). Although not all feminist analysis of texts report on the oppressive nature of texts towards women, feminist stylistics provides insights and awareness of underlying messages, ultimately allows for a detailed analysis of texts to be given that uncovers how texts represent and describe women in particular (Mills, 1998). Feminist stylistics, which is largely informed by Halliday’s social-semiotic theory, demonstrates how language, ideologies and dominance are interconnected. It proposes a framework for the texts to be analyzed from three different angles; 1) word, 2) clause/sentence and 3) discourse.



### Theoretical framework.

Based on Figure 1, the analysis of the study will be conducted in three stages; 1) identification, 2) description and 3) evaluation. With reference to the research questions; noun phrases will be examined using Wright and Hope's (1996) framework, clause types identification and categorization using Collins (2006), stylistic features using guidelines outlined by Verdonk (2002). On the whole, this novel's will be analyzed from the perspective of Mills' (1995) Feminist Stylistic that serves as the main foundation of this study.

### 2.1 Stylistics

Stylistics is still the linguistic study of the various components of a writer's literary (or non-literary) style. Alternatively, it is still considered as the literary evaluation of linguistic devices. In the last few decades, however, there has been a constant shift in focus and emphasis in recognition of variables occasioned by the critical interventions of a number of stylistic schools of thought.

Stylistics, in short, is an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis. Wales (1997) and Matthews (2007) provide the perfect responses. Wales posits that: The goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic „causes“ where these are felt to be relevant. Intuitions and interpretative skills are just as important in stylistics and literary criticism; however, stylisticians want to avoid vague and impressionistic judgments about the way formal features are manipulated.... So the 1970s saw a shift away from the text itself to the reader and his or her responses to the text (pp.437-438).

### 2.2 Feminism

Mills (1995) first demonstrates that no definite comprehensive definition exists concerning feminism; rather, there is a diversity of definitions. However, she attempts to introduce a concise one that highlights the shared area amongst all such definitions.

Commonly held among feminists, Mills argues, is that women are collectively treated in an oppressive way that differs from the way men are treated. In addition, they, women, suffer from discrimination at the personal and institutional level. That society generally and

systematically works to the benefit of men not women is another belief held by feminists. In other words, as Mills makes it clear, they regard the society as patriarchal. It does not, however, follow that men have an equal share of the benefit they get from such a societal structure, nor that all men participate in allowing for this system to perpetuate. It, Mills continues to argue, rather implies that “there is a general difference in the way that men and women are treated in society as a whole and in the way that they view themselves and others view them as gendered beings” (1995, p. 2).

In addition to the differences between women and men, there are equally significant differences within women themselves. Such differences, as Mills clarifies, are at the class, race, age, education and wealth. She also contends that the vast majority of feminists remain for the notion that women, in general, are subject to discrimination, though not in the same way, yet not all women are the same. Thus, feminism involves “commitment to changing the social structure to make it less oppressive to women, and for that matter, to *men*” (p. 3; my emphasis).

### 2.3 Feminist Stylistics

Feminist stylistics, as the term suggests, combines both the notion of feminism and the linguistic branch of stylistics. Montoro (2014) defines feminist stylistics as “the sub-branch

of stylistics which aims to account for the way in which gender concerns are linguistically encoded in texts, and which attempts to do so by employing some of the frameworks and models pertaining in the stylistics tool-kit” (Montoro, 2014, p. 346). The explanation given to the term ‘gender concerns’, according to Montoro, has been subject to a variety of meanings, which has thus resulted in the emergence of several perspectives that tackle the concept of gender. One perspective, Montoro points out, is provided by the analyses of feminist stylistics, which takes into account both the study of language and the notion of feminism. This approach demonstrates the way gender issues and language are embodied in literary texts, as a result of the contribution of feminists to the field. Historically speaking, Montoro clarifies that the term ‘feminist stylistics’ “should be properly credited to Mills (1995)” despite the fact that other stylisticians preceded her in employing a feminist stylistic approach. Mills, however, as Montoro illustrates, is the one who coined the term. To introduce the term in a clearer light, it is better to refer to Mills' (1995) own definition of ‘feminist stylistics’. She explains that the two parts constituting the phrase, ‘feminist’ and ‘stylistics’, are complex and could be interpreted differently by the readers, yet the phrase remains the best to illustrate comprehensively her own concern with “an

analysis which identifies itself as feminist and which uses linguistic or language analysis to examine texts” (p. 1). She further demonstrates that the feminist stylistic analysis does not, therefore, solely consider the sexism in a text; it rather aims to analyse how point of view, metaphor or transitivity are “unexpectedly closely related to matters of gender” (p. 1), and to figure out if there is a way to describe women's writing practices (Mills, 1995). Yet, before moving any further, it is appropriately enough to shed some light on the interpretation of each of the two constituents of the term separately with reference to Mills' (1995) introduction of both.

## 2.4 Gender

Throughout the previous sections, we have seen how women and men are not represented equally in language, on the one hand, and how, on the other hand, many linguists have tried to approve that women and men speak differently, providing a host of hypotheses and explanations for this. Another issue, not so far from this, is raised by Mills (1995) in her book *Feminist Stylistics* regarding whether women write differently from men, a phenomenon which she calls the ‘gendered sentence’. If linguists like Lakoff have tried to prove that women's speech is different from men's, others have tried to

show that there is the *male sentence* and there is the *female sentence*.

The debate over the so-called female sentence, according to Mills (1995), was first sparked by Virginia Woolf, who referred to the form of sentence she used as one ‘made by men’, describing it as ‘too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman’s use’ (Woolf (1929) in Mills, 1995, p. 35). Woolf's words, ‘made by men’, as Mills observes, echo Spender's words that language is literally made by man. Woolf also suggests that the **malesentence** was insufficient for women writers, apparently arguing that males write in a more formal mode than women in that:

- Women use nominalizations rather than verbs or adjectives.
- Women use parallel phrasing of ‘not to’/‘but to’.

Describing the female sentence, Woolf argues that *she*:

- writes in a rage where she should write calmly
- writes foolishly where she should write wisely
- writes of herself where she should write of her characters

(Woolf in Mills, 1995, p. 35)

Mills contends that Woolf's description of the female sentence seems to be less a matter of style or language and more a question of content and subject-matter. She also explains

that Woolf shares a very close point of view with the French feminist Hélène Cixous, i.e. suggesting that the best type of writing is androgynous, not sexless but bisexual writing.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research takes a lot of the process by doing a research and observing some objects in order to produce a real conclusion in this study. In General, the types of research methods this thesis is divided into two forms, namely; (a) quantitative research and (b) qualitative research. And then, the writer used the qualitative method identify one or a few variant that they intend to use in their research work and process with data collection related to those variant.

According to (Bogdan and Biklen 1982) define qualitative data analysis as working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others". Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data (Patton, 1990)

According to (Nazir 2003) describes that descriptive qualitative method is one which uses to make even or accumulate the basic data. The writer just do some observation in some libraries to take a conclusion of this

lesson. To conclude, this study the writer uses only a descriptive qualitative research to explain about the findings with a presented descriptive qualitative.

the object of the study is the words, phrases/sentences or discourses indicate gender-specific would be analysed by feminist stylistic analysis.

### 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### Words Level

Language may produces our perception of gender roles and sexism or it is a consequence of sexism in community is a contradictive issue. However, it is an undeniable notion – as linguistic determinism suggests that “language produces our perception of the world” (Mills, 2005:84). That is the reason why feminists require a language reform based firstly on the words, that is, what we called by the terms ‘gender-specific’ that refer to a particular gender. This part of analysis focuses on the presentation of several words indicate gender-specific which are found in the novel *Speak* as shown in the following table.

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
Man (p,9)	Woman (p,1)
Men (p,10)	Female (p,1)
Imam (p,10)	Prostitute (p,9)
Father (p,10)	Make-up (p,10)
Boys (p,12)	Lipstick (p,10)
Uncle (p,13)	Wives (p,10)
Brothers (p,17)	Mother (p,11)

Jebbah (p,22)	Sisters (p,17)
Kaftan (p,22)	Girls (p,20)
Suit (p,22)	Aunt (p, 23)
Jerk (p,53)	Grandma (p,23)
Husband	Concubines (p, 26)
Prince (p,106)	Hala (p, 41)
Pimps (p,101)	Slut (p,53)
	Bitch (p,53)
	Princess (p,106)

Having presented the words used gender-specific above, we can see that the terms are gender-specific mostly used to refer particularly to the female gender. Furthermore, this study will further analyse the generic pronoun. Gender-specific pronouns are often used in a sexist way to refer to people working in stereotypically male and female professions.

Generic pronouns are also focused on sexism in language that presents male oriented experience as generic or as the norm. The word “principal” (p, 32) was used to refer to the occupation of the lead male character. But in the novel *Woman at Point Zero*, the author didn’t tell us the detail about the gender of “principal” then we can assume that this “principal” is can be both female or male character.

“**The Principal** called out my name in the big hall crowded with hundred of mothers, fathers, and other relatives of the girls, but one stepped up to take the certificate...”

There are also similar difficulties in interpreting word of “warder” (p, 5) in the

novel *Woman at Point Zero* the word “warder” is referred to a female character. Usually the word “warder” is used to occupation of a male character, but in this novel the author using the generic pronoun “she” to show the sex-specific character.

“It was the **warder**. **She** ran up panting heavily. Her gasping voice reminded me of the voices I often heard in my dreams. Her mouth had grown bigger, and so her lips, which kept opening and closing with a mechanical movement, like a swing door.”

Other generic nouns found in the novel can be presented in the following table.

Generic nouns	Male or female
Warder	Referred to a female because the author tell us that the warder when cleaning the prison is like no more than a woman cleaning a prison (p,5)
Prison doctor	Referred to a male who is in charge as a doctor in prison
Galabeya	Referred to male and female because galabeya is a kind of clothes in middle-east that can be wear for male and female
Superintendent	Referred to a female who is in charge in boarding house (p,24)
Teacher	Referred to a female who taught Firdaus in school (p, 28)



The Principal	Referred to Firdaus's principal both a male or female (p,32)
Guardians	Referered to the parents who act as a guardian for the students both male or female (p.32)
People	Referred to everyone
Dustman	Referred to a male who is in charge to take litter from the bin (p.46)
Stranger	Referred to a male who carry Firdaus to a bed (p,68)

### Phrase/Sentence Level

The author presents the narration with a female persona's honest confession of her innermost thoughts towards a reading audience. The narrator, who is also a character in the text, freely unleashes her thoughts and emotions while describing events transpiring at a certain period of her life. In general, several parts of the text are gender-specific. There are certain statements that are gender-specific in a sense that defines the characteristic of a male or a female, or addresses the male or female exclusively. For instance, in one description of Firdaus experience of her life including her past occupation.

"...But because **I am a woman** I have never had the courage to lift my hand. And because **I am a prostitute**, I hid my fear under layers of **make-up**. Since I was successful, my make-

up was always the best and most expensive kind, just like the **make-up of respectable upper-class woman...**"

These sentences talked about her experience in the past, that she was a prostitute and also she wore the make-up of respectable upper class woman to show us that even though she is prostitute she can make herself as upper class woman. It means that in this novel it has classes as human being whether they are an upper class or lower class.

The author also told us about Firdaus childhood physical appearance and also her perspective about men when she was a child. "**...I was still young** at that the time, **and my breasts were not yet rounded. I knew nothing about men.** But I could hear them as they invoked Allah's name and called upon his blessings, or repeated His holy words in a subdued guttural tone..."

The several sentences show the text in the novel contains gender-specific. Another text that makes special mention between of woman character were Firdaus, in which she was trying to kill the prince and she utter every thought in her mind that she is not a criminal and she pointing that the criminals are the men.

"**I am a killer**, but I've committed no crime. Like you, **I kill only criminals**"

"For me the feats of **kings and princes are no more than crimes**, for I do not see things the way you do"

“**you are a criminal,**” they said, “**and your mother is a criminal**”

“**My mother was not a criminal. No woman can be a criminal. To be a criminal one must be a man**”

“I am saying that you are **criminals**, all of you: **the fathers, the uncles, the husbands, the pimps, the lawyers, the doctors, the journalists, and all men professions**”

Those sentences are the conversation between Firdaus and the police. From here we can see that Firdaus trying to say the fact in their society and her experience about men that every man in is all the same.

Further is another gender specific at sentence level is when Firdaus living with her husband Sheikh Mahmoud. Here, the experience and her feeling to the male character as mentioned as follow.

“At night he would **wind his legs and arms around me, and let his old, gnarled hand travel over my body**, like the claws of a starving man who has been deprived of real food for many years wipe the bowl of food clean, and not leave a single crumb behind”

### Discourse Level

In the analysis at the discourse level, there are several larger structures in the novel which seem to be gendered. The following is one of the texts which indicate gender specific.

“In the dark suddenly perceived **two eyes**, or rather felt them, moving towards me very slowly, closer and closer. They dropped their gaze with slow intent down to **my shoes**, rested there for a moment, then gradually started to climb up **my legs, to my thighs, my belly, my breasts, my neck**, and finally came to a stop, fastening themselves steadily in **my eyes**, with the same cold intent”

Both male and female characters are described in different ways, where females are usually described by their body parts, such as ‘my legs, my thighs, my belly, my breasts, my neck’ while males are mostly described by their overall appearance.

Further text in the novel described how the characters presented through their body parts, especially for women. The following instance shows the way female characters are fragmented in the text.

“I discovered **I had black eyes**, with sparkle that attracted other eyes **like magnet**, and that **my nose was neither big, nor rounded, but full and smooth with fullness of strong passion which could turn to lust. My body was slender, my thigh tense, alive with muscle, ready at any moment to grow even more taut**. I realized that I had not hated my mother, nor loved my uncle, nor really known Bayoumi, or any other man who belonged to his gang”

“I would nurse them with **my breasts** for a while, leave them to slip down over **my**

**belly**, and then below it to the place between **my thighs**. Deep inside my body I could feel a strange trembling. At first it was like a pleasure, a pleasure akin to pain. It ended with pain, a pain which felt like pleasure. It belonged to distant past, had been it with me somehow right from the beginning. I had experienced it long ago. But forgotten it at the time. Yet it seemed to go back even further than my life, **on the body of a woman who was no longer me.**”

## 5. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

Feminist stylistic framework of Mills has been useful in examining presentation of the word, phrase/sentence, and discourse indicate gender specific in this research. By identifying dominant and recurring features of characterization and by foregrounding these recurring patterns, the study has shown the significant differences between the women and men in this novel of *Woman at Point Zero*. This study has also uncovered the writing style or practice of the said author that has to do with the presentation of gender. Female characters differ from the male in that there are more descriptions given to them which pertain to their thoughts, emotions, experiences, vulnerability towards men, and their physical characteristics. Males, on the other hand, are described according to their physical strength, personalities, attitudes, which dominate females. The novel contain descriptions of

women and men focusing on their physique, some of which displaying sensual appeal. The following are the main points for the presentation of gender-specific at the word, phrase/sentence, and discourse level.

At the word level, there are several terms refer to both men and women, such as, “pimps” (for men), “slut” (for a girl), “bitch” (for a girl). The text also dominantly feature the use of metaphors which draws on gendered assumptions.

At the phrase/sentence level, there are more active voice done by female character, that is, the narrator herself. However, there are also more interactions between the male and female characters. For examples, “I am a prostitute” (for female), “He would wind his legs and arms around me” (for male).

Finally, at the discourse level, one prominent difference between the men and women is that men are always portrayed as their overall appearance, while women are always described in terms of parts of their bodies, for examples “starving man” (for men), and “the body of a woman who was no longer me” (for women).

### Suggestion

In regard to feminist stylistics, this study proposes some suggestions that might be helpful for those who are interested in conducting a research to this study.

1. The researcher should master the analysis processes of feminist stylistics to produce a clear analysis.
2. Before analyzing any words, phrases/sentences and discourses found in any literary texts using the theory of feminist stylistics, the researcher also should have the knowledge in linguistics.
3. Further study can be conducted to analyze the difficulties in analyzing a text that contains the information of gender-specific.

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