

# Feminist Stylistics: A Lexico-grammatical Study of the Female Sentence in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Hume-Sotomi's *The General's Wife*

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**Abstract**—This paper is a stylistic study of the major aspects of lexis and grammar which exemplify the dialectics of genderlectal linguistics in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Hume-Sotomi's *The General's Wife*. Both texts are separated in period and culture by about a hundred and seventy eight years as well as sub genre, the former being explicitly fictional whereas the latter belongs to the genre of faction. Employing the postulations of feminine stylisticians such as Virginia Woolf, Sara Mills, Deidre Burton as well as those of French feminists such as Jacques Lacan, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, supported by Halliday's scale and category grammar as its theoretical basis, the study appraises the major lexical and grammatical components of the 'female sentence' or 'écriture feminine'. In doing this, the research attempts to discover whether it is indeed the case that women's writing is stylistically unique or just a deviation from men's writing considered as the norm. On the evidence in both texts, the research concludes affirmatively that 'écriture feminine' is at once unique and androgynous.

**Index Terms**—genderlectal, lexico-grammatical, écriture feminine, deviation, androgynous

## I. INTRODUCTION--MODERN 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. Fish (1981,p.53), who advocates what he refers to as affective stylistics, observes that:

Stylistics was born of a reaction to the subjectivity and imprecision of literary studies. For the appreciative raptures of the impressionistic critic, stylisticians purport to substitute precise and rigorous linguistic descriptions, and to proceed from those descriptions to interpretations for which they can claim a measure of objectivity. Stylistics, in short, is an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis.

But Fish, in his somewhat pejorative article suggestively entitled: 'What is stylistics and why are they saying such terrible things about it?' goes on to pillory almost all existing major approaches to stylistic study. He mocks what he sees as simply the description of the formal features of texts for their own sake devoid of any logical link with their functional discourse significance. According to him:

While it is the program of stylistics to replace the subjectivity of literary studies with objective techniques of description, its practitioners ignore what is *objectively* true -- that meaning is not the property of a timeless formalism, but something acquired in the context of an activity -- and therefore they are finally more subjective than the critics they would replace. For an open impressionism, they substitute the covert impressionism of anchorless statistics and self-referring categories. In the name of responsible procedures, they offer a methodized irresponsibility, and, as a result, they produce interpretations which are circular -- mechanical reshufflings of the data -- or arbitrary -- readings of the data that are unconstrained by anything in their machinery. (p.69).

But Wales (1997) and Matthews (2007) provide the perfect responses, as it were, to this criticism of stylistics by Fish. 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).

It is instructive that despite this seeming 'put down' of Fish's position, Wales goes on to endorse his advocacy of affective stylistics.

Similarly, Matthews describes stylistics as:

The study of style in language: traditionally, of variations in usage among literary and other texts; now, more generally, of any systematic variation, in either writing or speech, which relates to the type of discourse or its context. Thus there is a style appropriate to public lectures, different from that of casual conversation among friends; the style of prayers in church includes the intonation etc with which they are recited; and so on (p.386)

Fish's criticism itself which was very poorly written and edited (consisting of poor punctuation, an excessively chatty and informal style and no subheadings) obviously did not envisage the current hyperactivity in the field of stylistic studies resulting in the crystallization of variations in approaches to style study. As stated by Wales and Matthews above, a great many of these approaches do indeed link textual features properly with their functional discourse and contextual significance. They include especially Halliday's functional stylistics; Short, Pratt and Verdonk's pragmatic stylistics; Fowler and Birch's critical stylistics; Freeman and Sperber's cognitive stylistics; and, of course, Burton and Mills' feminist stylistics which is the focus of this paper.

## II. FEMINISM AND FEMINIST CRITICISM

Feminist stylistics has its roots in the theories and practices of feminist criticism which began in the United States and France. Feminist criticism itself derives its theoretical basis from the larger feminist movement which advocates the social, political and economic equality between the sexes. But the dialectical variations and contradictions in the feminist movement have created difficulties in defining it properly. The result is that it is now fashionable to refer to 'feminisms' rather than 'feminism'. It is now often conceived of as a rich and varied theoretical field. But, according to Mills (1995, p.3):

Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women. This does not imply that all men benefit equally from the way that society is structured, since society also oppresses men in different degrees, nor does it imply that all men take part in the continuance of the system, since men can decide to oppose the oppression of other groups. But it does imply 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.

Thus, although like feminism, feminist criticism is often undertaken without one single theoretical approach, deconstruction theory and reader-response criticism have tended to be favoured by a greater number of feminist critics. As Mills observes further, feminism implies commitment to changing the social structure to make it less oppressive to women, and, for that matter, to men. Wales (1997, p.172) on her part enumerates the major theoretical bases of feminist criticism by saying:

One strand probes the understanding of literature (predominantly written by men) through the experience of reading as a woman, and queries the supposed 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' and 'universality' of the written discourse.

Another, she observes, 'queries the evaluative procedures which have established a canon of literary works where "minor" writers are predominantly women writers'. She concludes this list as follows:

Another discusses the (frequently misogynistic) images of women in the literary works themselves. The work of Cixous (1975) and other French critics has exposed the strong phallogocentric bias of the influential psychoanalytical theory of Freud.

A few other feminist critics have also identified what they refer to as the phallogocentric or patriarchal bias of much of mainstream ('malestream' in the words of Mills) writing. They see this as a challenge which feminism must take up. Obbo (1980 p.143) for instance posits that:

Even though the world is changing all about them, it seems that women's own attempts to cope with the new situations they find themselves in are regarded as a 'problem' by men, and a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women's role....

Similarly, Ogundipe-Leslie (1987,p.8) argues that:

.....the concept of a woman is a complex one. Womanhood does not only relate to gender, because situations exist where women adopt other gender roles (although sometimes only after menopause) as with women in the armies of Dahomey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries...

And referring specifically to what should be feminist thematic concerns, she adds:

The female writers cannot usefully claim to be concerned with various social predicaments in their countries or in Africa without situating their awareness and solutions within the larger global context of imperialism and neo-colonialism. (pp. 11-12)

Feminism and feminist criticism – not surprisingly, therefore – have given rise to a host of critical views about language, 'the very medium of literary reality, and the real world codification of social values'. Some of these views have crystallized into a fresh text linguistic theory as well as an approach to the study of stylistics referred to as feminist stylistics.

### III. FEMINIST STYLISTICS

Feminist approach to stylistics is most closely associated with the recent works of Sara Mills and Deirdre Burton, and the critical intervention of Virginia Woolf as well as the French feminists such as Jacques Lacan, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. It argues that there is a male hegemony in both the treatment of women in society and their characterization in literary works. It therefore seeks to formulate an authentic counter-image of women through their writings. The purpose of this approach to stylistics is to explore the ways in which literature expresses (or otherwise) a decidedly female consciousness. In the process, literary art is seen essentially as a medium for the foregrounding of female experiences and the destruction of male stereotypes about women. Feminist stylisticians seek to write the woman into relevance.

In addition to general stylistic questions of 'why' and 'how'; that is, 'why does the author here choose to express himself or herself in this particular way?... how is such-and-such an aesthetic effect achieved through language?' (Leech and Short, 1981 p.13):

[feminist stylisticians] place less emphasis on the artistic function of language than on other aspects of language, since it is clear that there are regularities in representations across a range of different texts. The beauty of form and language in a poem is less important than perhaps that the same techniques are employed in the poem as in pornography. (Mills 1995, p.5)

The reference to pornography here is significant. Feminists frown at what they see as the debasement of womanhood in such films regardless of the 'beauty of their styles'. Thus, at the heart of feminist stylistics is a change in focus of analysis from the strict analysis of text in itself to an analysis of the factors which determine the meaning of text in its social context. This change in focus is better understood from the words of Fowler (1981, p.21) in Mills (1995, p.8). Fowler observes as follows:

There is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both products of socio-economic forces and institutions – reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc – and practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions.

It is thus this relationship between language and social structure which feminist stylistics typically exemplifies. In doing this, it recognizes the dialectical struggle between the protagonists and antagonists of feminist writing as well as that between linguistic phraseology and the sponsoring social reality and ideology. For Burton (1982, p.196) cited in Mills (1995):

all observation, let alone description, must take place within an already constructed theoretical reality, whether the observer/describer of observations is articulately aware of that framework or not. (p.4)

Similarly, McFadden (1997, p.14) observes that feminist writing and feminist stylistics:

Recognize that since literature both reflects culture and shapes it, literary studies can either perpetuate the oppression of women or help to eliminate it. Thus feminist [stylistics] raises questions about literature that are basic to men's struggle for autonomy. Such questions include: how does the language of literature represent women and define gender relations? ... How does one's gender alter the way in which one writes?

Feminist stylistics therefore focuses on the analysis of texts from a feminist standpoint. It points out that there are linguistic correlates of the subordination of women to men by society and its undertakes not only to reveal these correlates but also to -- as it were -- eliminate them. Feminist stylisticians highlight in a systematic manner the self conscious attempts by female writers to modify traditional modes of language use. They do this by identifying the dialectical features as well as the alternative forms of expression in such texts. This approach to stylistics extends over a broad range of issues and skills in textual analysis with the feminist ethos as its underpinning ideology. Mills (1995a) describes it as 'a form of politically motivated stylistics whose aim is to develop an awareness of the way gender is handled in texts' (p.1). She goes on to add that feminist stylistics goes beyond mere description of sexual discrimination in literary works, but broadens to include a study of 'the ways that point of view, agency, metaphor or transitivity are unexpectedly related to matters of gender.'

Feminist stylistics achieves its goals through close linguistic scrutiny and the explication of linguistic theory to set out the rationale for feminist textual analysis. Basically this type of stylistic study undertakes to exemplify not only the ways in which authors conceptualize their works but also the variety of meaning reflected in a particular text. Blaine (1990, p.3) argues that:

Feminist stylistics is the strongest successor of critical stylistics with more specific concerns of unmasking patriarchal ideologies and denaturalizing patriarchal assumptions.

The goal therefore of this approach to stylistic study is the evolution of linguistic and social change. This is achieved through attempts at dismantling both the figurative and expressive possibilities of language which encourage the subordination, dehumanization and enslavement of women in society.

### IV. CHANGING TRENDS IN FEMINIST STYLISTICS

Generally, feminist stylistics, in recent years, tends to emphasize, in a variety of ways, the differences between the sexes whereas in the early period of feminism and feminist criticism its focus was on the sameness of the sexes. Then it

was seen as the basis for the struggle for women's equality with men. For the early feminist stylisticians, emphasis was placed on the similarities between texts produced by both men and women. It was thought then that there were no significant or substantial differences in style between works written by men and those by women. It was argued, for instance, that both sexes manifested in more or less the same degree the presence of simple and complex sentence structures in their works as well as the same type of lexical choices.

In modern times, however, emphasis has shifted. A number of feminist stylisticians now insist that there is a 'women's writing', which is fundamentally different in style from 'men's writing'. The debate about whether women writers produce texts which are significantly different in language from those of men is actually not new. It began with the work of Virginia Woolf. According to Mills(1995,p.44): '[Woolf] asserted that there was a sentence which women writers had developed which she termed the 'female sentence' or the sentence of the feminine gender.' Mills proceeds to elaborate Woolf's position as follows:

For Woolf, certain women writers crafted a new type of sentence which is looser and more accretive than the male sentence. This view ... seems to be echoed in the more recent statements by French feminists such as Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous...Both Woolf and some French feminists assert that there is a difference between men's and women's writing....

Modern feminist stylisticians thus insist that men and women differ even in their ways of thinking and perceiving reality. The linguistic differences in the way men and women perceive social reality is now technically referred to as 'genderlect'. Wales (1997, p.202) for instance observes that:

Speech differences have always been part of sexual stereotyping, whatever the basis in reality: in many societies...the supposed garrulity of women is reflected in proverbs, jokes as well as the novel.... It is difficult to get quantitative evidence, as it is to get firm confirmation that, for example, women use more tag questions, and favour intensifiers like *so* and *such* and the use of hyperbole.

Another crucial concept associated with this debate is gynocriticism. It is the stylistic study of women writers by women who have been greatly influenced by the critical interventions of Woolf. Gynocriticism attempts to rediscover women writers who have faded into oblivion as well as evaluate general matters such as the sociopolitical issues which affect women writers' educational and job careers especially as these are exemplified by language. Feminist stylisticians posit that female writing is substantially different in terms of its formal linguistic constituents as well as thematic concerns. Woolf refers to this as the 'female sentence' and Mills describes it as the 'gendered sentence'.

## V. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MALE AND FEMALE SENTENCE

There are specific significant distinctions between women's and men's writings. These occur in thematic, lexical, grammatical and graphological features. Women writers and characters are more likely to court admiration and approval. This view is expressed by Hiatt as cited in Mills (1995, p.15) in the following way:

The aim of...women apparently is to please, to be charming, witty and amusing. This aim can fairly be said to be a manifestation of approval seeking behaviour of which women in general are accused. They 'win' by cajoling, a subtle sort of seductiveness, by pretending that they aren't serious.

This, surely, is an attitudinal feature but still phallogocentric. Thematically, the female sentence is seen as lacking in rationality and authority, one which is essentially emotive, as the writer 'simply pours out her feelings and her soul' in an essentially planless and structureless way. The male sentence, on the other hand has the element of control and choice. The male writer chooses to include certain elements and disregards others. The male sentence is thus clear and rational. The writer appears to be in control. He is assertive and authoritative whereas the woman is apologetic. Also, the female sentence is that which thematically describes female experience which more often than not is about relationships while the male sentence depicts male experience.

Lexically, women are said to prefer such devices of hedging as 'really', 'however', 'because' and 'so' more often than men. In addition, such personalized pronouns as 'I', 'she', 'he' and 'they' are associated with women's writings while male texts prefer determiners like 'a', 'the', 'these', 'more' and 'some'. Significantly also, feminist stylisticians repudiate such genderlectal suffixes as '-man/-woman' and '-ess' in expressions like 'draughtsman/woman', 'air hostess' and the cataphoric use of 'he' to include male and female. They instead advocate:

draughter(s)                   (not draughtsmen/women)  
flight attendant(s)       (not air hostess(es))  
hotel attendant(s)       (not waiter(s)/waitress(es))  
and, rather than:

Everyone has *his* role to play.

If a customer wants *his* change....

A person who knows what *he* wants....

they recommend:

Everyone has *his or her* role to play.

If a customer wants *his or her* change....

A person who knows what *he or she/(s) he* wants....

or better still, as in colloquial usage:

Everyone has *their* role.

If a customer wants *their* change....

A person who knows what *they* want....

Lexically, also, women's writing is said to employ, in its description of women characters, metaphors of birds (Rossetti's 'My Heart Is Singing Like a Bird...') and Hume-Sotomi's *The General's Wife*). This is because women are emotionally closer to nature and the environment than men. Other possible reasons include that 'birds are soft and round and sensuous, because they palpitate and flutter when held in the hands and especially because they sing'. Women are also closer to the 'home front', and are often seen as 'mother earth'; they are the source of life.

Women's writing is also seen to be different most fundamentally at the grammatical (syntactic) level. Women writers, it is observed, employ shorter sentences than men, a phenomenon which leads Hiatt (quoted in Mills, 1995 p.51) for instance to suggest that women's sentences are generally shorter and so 'structurally less complex than longer sentences', and that because of a perceived lack of variety in sentence length 'fewer of the female writers possess a noteworthy style than do their male counterparts'.

Another major distinction between the female and the male sentence at the syntactic level is that whereas men's writing prefers subordination (suppression; hypotaxis; inequality) which is exemplified by subordinate clauses and complex sentences, that of women employs co-ordination (parataxis; equality). The result of this is that men's writing has the effect of hierarchizing, suppressing and ordering. Coupland (2007p.58) posits in support of this view that:

Feminist writers pursue non-linear, anti-hierarchical and discentred writing. But many women who affiliate themselves with this tendency write against norms of realistic narrative from a consciousness put up by feminist discourse of resistance....

Meaning that modern feminist writers are often identified by their preference for alternate modes of grammar in exploring the politics of gender.

Again, women's writing is grammatically unique by the lack of completion and closure of the female sentence. This is a result of its being characterized mainly by co-ordination (parataxis) rather than subordination (hypotaxis). But some have disputed this claim pointing out that it is a contradiction to speak of a sentence (traditionally a complete thought) as lacking completion. But Mills concludes her statement by observing that:

The female sentence is far more grammatically complex than the male sentence which is linked only by hypotaxis, that is, by that fact that the clauses are placed side by side; but it is classified as female because it is concerned with emotion and dominance. (Mills, 1995 p.54)

Thus, paradoxically, while the male sentence with its subordination and hierarchizing is seen as transparent, the female sentence is described as opaque on account of its complexity. In the following sections, this paper exemplifies in a systematic way some of these theories in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (PAP) and the Hume-Sotomi's *The General's Wife* (TGW).

## VI. LEXICO-SEMANTIC FEATURES

*Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is separated in time and context from *The General's Wife* (1991) by a period of about 178 years. But there are features in both texts which, in several dialectical ways, exemplify the theoretical concerns of feminist stylistics. Both texts explore the concepts of love, character, marriage and society. *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the way in which a young man, Mr. Darcy, changes his manners, and a young lady, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, changes her mind. It is a story of appearances and first impressions, and the way in which these give way to knowledge, understanding and good sense. It is, as Tanner (1972, p.8) suggests:

about pre-judging and rejudging. It is a drama of recognition – re-cognition, that act by which the mind can look again at a thing and if necessary make revisions and amendments until it sees the thing as it really is.

The novel is also about how Mr. Bingley first desires for marriage Miss Jane Bennet, then is prevailed upon by Darcy to repudiate such a union on account of – by society's view – the inferiority of her (family) connections, and finally marries her. Finally, it is about the most dramatic change in fortunes for the Bennet family of Longbourn in rural eighteenth and nineteenth century England.

Consisting of Mr and Mrs Bennet and their five daughters – Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia, Mary and Catherine – the Bennets are at first 'marked out for misfortune'; Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins' marriage proposal, Jane is spurned by Mr. Bingley on the prompting of Darcy and Lydia elopes with Mr. Wickham. But they are finally united in happiness at the simultaneous marriage of their three daughters, Lydia, Jane and Elizabeth to Wickham, Bingley and Darcy respectively. Wealth is constantly and potentially, albeit not actually, a factor in the consideration of the possibility of marriage in this novel. Thus, the predominant lexico-semantic items concern decisions, opinions and conviction suggesting the essential instability of human judgments, accounts and impressions of situations and other people.

Similarly, *The General's Wife* is an (auto) biographical fiction of the author and Nigeria. It is also a story of appearances, impressions and changes in the life of the heroine, Ginger Stoneridge, and of the larger socio-political Nigerian society. It locates the personal betrayals, disappointments and failures in the writer's (Ginger is her alter ego) marital life within the context of similar phenomena in military and civilian dictatorships in Nigeria socially and economically. It is the story of Ginger's first impressions of, and attempted romance with, Bashir; he suddenly leaves her and reappears several years later attempting to rape her. It is about her marriages to General Santos Bariga and

Sheikh Ahmed El Kamil; the former is a lecherous, polygamous five-star general of the Nigerian Army while the latter is later revealed as her distant cousin.

The book also explores the author's feminist impressions of the socio-political milieu of several Nigerian governments beginning from Yakubu Gowon up till Muhammad Buhari. For the heroine, Ginger, the failure of political leadership in Nigeria is the larger context of her personal romantic and marital disappointments. And so both texts focus on appearance, impressions, hopes and disappointments with lexical items appropriately reflecting these concerns. Although the lexical style in both texts is 'calm, wise, objective and impersonal' there are strong traces of the distinctly female voice. This is seen in the euphuistic prolixity of the narrative and female character speech in the novel, as well as the hyperbolic and emotional sermonizing in the (auto) biography. Let us consider some examples from both texts.

[1.6.1] Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room.... His character was *decided*. He was the proudest, most *disagreeable* man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again. (p.58 PAP)

[1.6.2] I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I *think* him very *disagreeable*. (p. 121 PAP)

[1.6.3] I beg your pardon; - one *knows exactly* what to *think* (p.129 PAP)

[1.6.4] And never allow yourself to be blinded by *prejudice*? (p. 136 PAP)

[1.6.5] ...she recollected having heard of Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy *formerly* spoken of as a very proud, ill-natured boy (p.180 PAP)

[1.6.6] But he is, beyond all comparison, the most *agreeable* man I ever saw.... Oh! that *abominable* Mr. Darcy! (p.181PAP)

[1.6.7] Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was *decided*. (p. 223 PAP).

[1.6.8] ... and I had not *known* you a month before I *felt* that you were the last man in the world whom I could be prevailed on to marry. (p. 224 PAP)

[1.6.9] How *differently* did everything now *appear* in which he was concerned!...she had been *blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd*.... I have courted prepossession and *ignorance*, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never *knew* myself (pp.236-237 PAP)

[1.6.10] ...to assume even the *appearance* of what is right .... The rest of the evening passed with the *appearance*, and his side, of usual cheerfulness.... (p. 260 PAP)

[1.6.11] It was a large, handsome, *stone building*, standing well on rising *ground*, and backed by a *ridge* of high *woody hills*;-- and in front, a *stream* of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial *appearance*. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned.... (p.267PAP)

[1.6.12] The *hill*, crowned with *wood*, from which they had descended, receiving increased abruptness from the distance, was a beautiful object. Every disposition of the *ground* was good;... the *river*, the *trees* scattered on its *banks*, and the *winding* of the *valley*.... The rooms were lofty and handsome.... (p. 268 PAP)

[1.6.13] Every body *declared* that he was the wickedest young man in the world; and every body began to *find out*, that they had always *distrusted* the *appearance* of his goodness. (p. 310 PAP).

[1.6.14] The Bennets were speedily *pronounced* to be the luckiest family in the world, though only a few weeks before, when Lydia had first run away, they had been generally *proved* to be marked out for misfortune. (p. 360 PAP)

[1.6.15] The *house* was equipped with an ultra-modern control *room* complete with television monitor displaying images picked up by scanners.... Bronze and mahogany carvings stood and vied for space on marble surface tables in every corner of the *house*.... The *house* was kept at 70°F with noiseless split level air-conditioner units including the kitchen. On the Edwardian bedside tables were large crystal decanters filled with the finest cognac.... (p. 7 TGW)

[1.6.16] She gasped, moaned and moved against him in total *femininity*. (p. 31 TGW)

[1.6.17] There were people who *disliked* and *distrusted* him both in one pulsing surge of *feelings* (p.38 TGW).

[1.6.18] So when he asked her to be his wife... she already *knew* she wanted to marry him. She did not *know* that the great General was a *drifter* of the most dangerous sort. (p.53TGW)

[1.6.19] She had not only an attractive *femininity*, she was born *romantic, beautiful* and *sensitive* and now, she was by any standard very rich (p.88 TGW)

[1.6.20] The whole course of his life was guided by an *insatiable blind* craving for sex. He had an urgent inclination for anything *substandard*. He would make love *every single day of the week* and *twice on Sundays* and never more than once with the same woman. (p. 97 TGW)

[1.6.21] No Ginger, you are *wrong*. The General has not *changed*, he has been like that all along but you did not *know*. You see, in an African family, a young girl is not allowed just to marry a man the way you did. His character must be *scrutinized*; his family background must be thoroughly *investigated*.... (p. 198 TGW)

The most common lexico-semantic items in a majority of these texts are those which refer to opinions, impressions, certainty, decisions, changes in decisions stemming from new awareness and the consequent transition in behaviour. From the foregrounded lexical items above it appears that people are first judged romantically on first impressions as either 'agreeable' or 'disagreeable' and then, with the benefit of more knowledge, the verdict is reversed. The most common lexico-semantic items here include

agreeable/disagreeable, appearance, formerly, known/did not know, think, felt, blind/blinded, prejudice/prejudiced, decided, femininity, proved, declared, changed, house, ill-natured, drifter, pride.

Thus, Mr. Darcy is at first uniformly condemned as ‘disagreeable’ and ‘abominable’ on ‘appearance’ by everyone else including Elizabeth, but he is eventually seen in ‘an amiable light’ (p.271) and as having been ‘misrepresented’ (p.128). Indeed, Elizabeth comes to realise that:

he was exactly the man who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was an union that must have been to the advantage of both... (p.325 *PAP*).

and when Darcy writes her a letter explaining to her the reasons for the general misconceptions about him, the femininity in the narrator becomes evident:

When she remembered the style of his address, she was still full of indignation; but when she considered how unjustly she had condemned and upbraided him, her anger was turned against herself; and his disappointed feelings became the object of compassion. (p.241 *PAP*)

In *The General's Wife*, General Bariga, the protagonist's husband, who was initially ‘tall, distinguished looking’ and spoke in a ‘modulated but commanding tone’, becomes – when she is no longer in love with him – a ‘directionless, extravagant, philanderer, who could not keep his eyes off women’ (p.75 *TGW*). Texts [1.6.20] and [1.6.21] express this new awareness with lexical items such as:

insatiable, blind craving... sex, wrong substandard, changed, twice on Sundays never more than once with the same woman

The obvious question which this feminist emotional response provokes is: When did this peripeteia (of the General's fortunes), like those of Darcy in the novel, occur to the heroine? When her marriage to the General fails and she attempts to blame others but herself, the truth about ‘appearances’, ‘impressions’ and negligence is expressed in bold relief in text [1.7.21], and the relevant lexical items are:

wrong/ has not changed/ all along/ did not know/  
just to marry/ character/ scrutinized/ background/  
thoroughly investigated.

In *Pride and Prejudice* [1.7.14], the Bennets are first described by neighbours as ‘marked out for misfortune’. This is occasioned by Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Elizabeth's rejection of Collins' marriage proposal which results in his marrying Charlotte Lucas instead, and the initial setback in Jane's relationship with Mr Bingley. But when, shortly after, Lydia, Jane and Elizabeth are simultaneously united in marriage with Wickham, Bingley and Darcy respectively, they are ‘speedily pronounced to be the luckiest family in the world’. There are traces of the typical feminist voice in these ‘peripeteias’ and ‘hyperboles’.

In addition to these tropes of ‘appearance’, ‘impression’ and ‘change’ are metaphors of house/building, affluence and nature which are considered feminist imagery. This is evident in texts [1.6.11], [1.6.12] and [1.6.15] which describe Darcy's grounds in Pemberley (*PAP*) and the Doyonyaro's opulent residence (*TGW*). This stock of lexis and imagery recalls a typically feminist trope to which we have already made references. For the reader then these lexical features exemplify the simultaneous concern for nature and material things of which some women writers are accused. Other significant lexical items in the female sentence include:

accomplished / accomplishments / an accomplished woman  
(pp. 84-85 *PAP*)

These expressions are employed by Austen five times in the two pages. Others include:

picture of conjugal felicity/domestic comfort  
(p.262 *PAP*)

these transports (p. 320 *PAP*)

first transports of rage (p. 323 *PAP*)

pulsating transport of feeling (p. 75 *TGW*)

which are employed to describe the female protagonists and their perceptions of others in the two works. Hume-Sotomi employs:

total femininity (p.31 *TGW*), pulsing surge of feelings (p.38 *TGW*), irresponsible polygamy (p.47 *TGW*) attractive femininity (p.88 *TGW*)

in order to foreground the feminist vista of Ginger Stoneridge. It is arguable whether this essentially gynocritical vocabulary clearly contrasts with men's vocabulary. But there is evidence of a successful suppression of the phallogocentric imagery and lexis which are often implicated in the subjugation of the female voice in literary language.

## VII. GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

Grammatically, both texts feature a preponderance of simple, co-ordinate or paratactic sentences. Although there is some evidence of variety in word and sentence complexity there is obvious preference in the texts for short, parallel, allusive and antithetical structures. This confirms, to a greater extent, Hiatt's and Coupland's contentions quoted earlier about the anti-hierarchical nature of the female sentence. Austen's sentences are euphuistic (Here euphuism is natural rather than affected or artificial), vigorous, supple and muscular. Indeed her favourite devices are parataxis, antithesis and rhetorical anaphora. Hume-Sotomi's sentences exemplify a more ‘deceptively even and less complex’ manner of

storytelling garnished with the typically feminist short sentences (Ufot, 2004 p.183). Again, her favourite device is parataxis. Let us consider the following examples from both texts.

[1.7.1] Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (p.53PAP).

[1.7.2] On the strength of Darcy's regard Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion. In understanding Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient, but Darcy was clever. (p.64PAP)

[1.7.3] Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offence. (p.64PAP).

[1.7.4] A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us. (p.67PAP)

[1.7.5] You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner -- in such society; and indeed I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity and yet the noise; the nothingness and yet the self-importance of all these people! -- What would I give to hear your strictures on them! (p.73PAP).

[1.7.6] Her manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed; a mixture of pride and impertinence; and she had no conversation, no stile, no taste, no beauty. (p.81PAP)

[1.7.7] How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! (p.100PAP)

[1.7.8] In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you. (p.221PAP)

[1.7.9] How despicably have I acted!... I, who have prided myself on my discernment! -- I, who have valued myself on my abilities!... How humiliating is this discovery! -- Yet, how just a humiliation! (p.236PAP)

[1.7.10] There certainly was some great mismanagement in the education of those two young men. One has got all the *goodness*, and the other all the *appearance* of it. (p.252PAP)

[1.7.11] Bingley was ready, Georgiana was eager, and Darcy determined, to be pleased. (p.282PAP)

[1.7.12] When she saw him thus ...; when she saw him thus civil..., when no importance could result from the success of his endeavours...when even the acquaintance.... (pp.282-283PAP)

[1.7.13] She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare;.... (p.285PAP)

[1.7.14] Her face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliancy; and her features are not at all handsome. Her nose wants character; there is nothing marked in its lines. Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way;.... (p.289PAP)

[1.7.15] Elizabeth was disgusted, and even Miss Bennet was shocked. Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless. (p.328PAP)

[1.7.16] The acknowledged lovers talked and laughed, the un-acknowledged were silent. (p.381PAP)

[1.7.17] The young women of the day flew to Milan and Rome for clothes....They drank champagne and ate caviar. They wore silk dresses and skin shoes. They called themselves international traders. The Western world was buying Nigeria crude oil at \$US40 per barrel. The money was there and the women knew how to spend it. (p.6TGW)

[1.7.18] General Bariga was completely enchanted with the captivating beauty of the Islands, the azure mountains, the bewitching and unfathomable depths of the blue lagoon, the purest of white sands stretching for miles on end and across the Island's enchanting beaches....(p.75TGW)

[1.7.19] Next to oil was drug.... Next to the South Americans, Nigerians were the most feared by the Americans in drug trafficking. (p.91TGW)

[1.7.20] The whole course of his life was guided by an insatiable blind craving for sex. He had an urgent inclination for anything substandard. It mattered least -- prostitute, virgin, illiterate, widow, native, foreigner -- black or white. (p.97TGW)

[1.7.21] A few more pleasantries were exchanged; a few more inquiries were made about friends and relations and Bashir said good-bye. He promised to call on Nene and Kiki soon; Kiki or Nene, he knew would have Ginger's number. He called Kiki first. (p.167TGW)

[1.7.22] She was more annoyed with this timorous character than with the fact that he had actually attempted to rape her.... His manhood shrivelled and limp in front of him. How could I have loved him? (p.174TGW)

Almost all the texts above corroborate the contention of feminist stylistics that the female sentence prefers co-ordination to subordination and hierarchy as well as lack of completion. None of the texts above contains any significant subordinate clauses. Rather, Austen and Hume-Sotomi seem to prefer the stylistic juxtaposition of antithetical clauses. With the exception of texts [1.7.5], [1.7.6], [1.7.7], [1.7.9], [1.7.12], [1.7.18] and [1.7.22], all the texts overtly exemplify parataxis (parallel co-ordinated clauses)/antithesis (juxtaposition). Indeed, even in these exceptions there is evidence of parallel structures, the difference being that these are overshadowed by the peculiar feminist graphological features of exclamation mark ([1.7.5], [1.7.7] and [1.7.9]) and semi colon ([1.7.21]).

In all the texts, devices for securing contrast are skillfully employed in the antithetical arrangement of the essential clauses and phrases:

Her mind...develop/She	was...temper/The	business...	married/its...	news/On	the
strength...opinion/Bingley...deficient/but	clever/A	person...vain/Pride	relates.../vanity...us		



Bingley...ready/Georgiana... eager/and...pleased/She.../she... she.../she...welfare. The young...clothes/They... caviar/ They... shoes/They called... traders/Next... drug/It was...

The most obvious characteristic of these clauses is that they are short, sharp, pointed and feminine. Their rhythmic patterns are enhanced by the hyperbolic tropes which enable them to 'rebel' against male dominance typically represented by subordination and hierarchization. Structurally for instance they consist generally of conventional clause constituents. [1.7.1] consists of four sentences three of which are quite short. The first, second and fourth sentences consist of a single clause each as follows: 'Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a... temper'. 'The business... married;... news.' The first of these clauses has the structure SPC as follows:

Subject-(ng)	modifier = Her	
	head word = mind	
Predicator- was		
Complement- (adj g)	modifier =less	
	head word = difficult	
	post modifier – (inf)	particle =to
		verb = develop

The second sentence is similar in structure but with co-ordinated elements in the complement position thus:

Subject	She
Predicator	was
Complement	a woman... temper

The last sentence consists of two parallel antithetical (paratactic) clauses separated by a semi colon, which is also a device of co-ordination. But each clause here recalls the previous sentences in the text:

Subject	The business... life/its solace
Predicator	was/was
Complement	to get... married/visiting... news

Consider also text [1.7.11] which consists of just one sentence with three paratactic clauses: 'Bingley was... pleased', with the structure SPC as follows:

Subject	Bingley/Georgiana/Darcy
Predicator	was/was
Complement	ready/eager/... determined...pleased

These clauses, unlike the others, illustrate at once the devices of zeugma, ellipsis and cohesion. There is zeugma in the fact that the three separate clauses are made to govern at once the non- finite qualifying element 'to be pleased' although it is explicitly appropriate with only the last one, 'Darcy determined'. There is also cataphoric ellipsis of the predicator 'was' in the last clause which really is 'Darcy was determined' and also anaphoric ellipsis of 'to be pleased' in the first two clauses. These instances of ellipsis produce not just cohesion but also a very vigorous rhythm for the prose.

A similar structure is observed in [1.7.13]. It consists of one sentence with four short clauses with the constituents SP, SP, SPC and SPC respectively as follows:

Subject	She/she/she/she
Predicator	respected /esteemed/was/felt
Complement	grateful... him /a real... welfare

Significantly, these clauses do not feature the adjunct element in their constituents, a fact which reinforces the short, sharp and pointed nature of the utterances.

Hume-Sotomi's sentences continue this clause juxtaposition by means of parataxis and antithesis in [1.7.17], [1.7.19] and [1.7.20]. From the sentence: 'The young women...' to the last one in [1.7.17], we see clear evidence of lack of subordination. Two or more of these structures could have been subordinated by such formal binders as 'while', 'when', 'as', and 'because', or co-ordinated with the linker 'and' so that we might have had:

They drank ... caviar *and* they wore... shoes.  
 They called...traders *because* the Western... traders  
 As the Western... barrel, the money...it.

Significantly, save for the second sentence/clause which begins with a frontal adjunct, all the clauses/sentences begin with the subject element: 'The young women of the day...'; 'They...'; 'They...'; 'The Western world...'; 'The money...'; and 'the women...'. Again, the predicators here are remarkably simple morphologically and syntactically; 'flew'; 'drink'; 'ate'; 'wore'; 'called'; 'was buying'; 'was' and 'knew'. The structures of the six sentences are as follows: SPAA, SPCPC, SPCC, SPCC, SPCA and SPCSPC where:

Subject	The young...day
Predicator	flew
Adjunct	to Milan...Rome
Adjunct	for clothes....

Subject	They
---------	------

Predicator	drank/ate				
Complement	champagne/caviar				
Subject	They				
Predicator	wore				
Complement	(ng)	modifier = silk/skin			
		head word = dresses/shoes			
Subject	They				
Predicator	called				
Complement	themselves				
Complement – (ng)		modifier = international			
		head word = traders			
Subject	(ng)	modifier = The			
		modifier = Western			
		head word = world			
Predicator	(vg)	auxiliar = was			
		lexical = buying			
Complement	(ng)	modifier = Nigeria's			
		modifier = crude			
		head word = oil			
Adjunct	(adv.g)	prepend = at			
		completive	(ng)	modifier = 40	
				head word = US dollars	
				qualifier	(adj.g)
					prepend = per
					completive = barrel
Subject	(ng)	modifier = The/The			
		head word = money/women			
Predicator		was/knew			
Complement		there/(non-finite clause)	binder = how		
			Predicator = to spend		
			Complement = it		

From this analysis we observe the structural similarity in the clauses such that even the co-ordinated elements are similar in structure with almost identical constituents.

The same phenomenon is observed in samples [1.7.19] and [1.7.20]. In the former, the first sentence is typically short, sharp, pointed and feminine: 'Next to oil was drug', with an inverted structure: CPS. This is an instance of chiasmus (inversion of structures) of the sentence: 'Drug was next to oil', with the structure.

Subject	Drug
Predicator	was
Complement	next to oil

The purpose of the inversion is to thematise the expression: 'next to oil'. The other two sentences, although longer than the first, are nevertheless lacking in any subordination. The second is a co-ordinated structure while the third is a simple sentence.

In [1.7.20], we see more examples of parataxis. The three sentences:

The whole course...sex.

He had...substandard.

It mattered... white.

could easily have been collapsed into a typically male subordinate (hypotactic) structure thus:

The whole course...sex *because* he had...

substandard *for*, it mattered least....

but the parataxis here creates a rhythmic, repetitive rejection of this male sentence with its suppressive quality. We see this also in [1.7.22]:

She was more...her./He found...world

His manhood...him/How could...him?

This is the incident in which Bashir, Ginger's former lover, returns and attempts to rape her, but she outwits him. Thus, lexically, semantically and grammatically, the author depicts the overthrow of male dominance and suppression. Language is employed here to defeat male oppression. The trailing constituents observed in [1.7.18] create a loose sentence structure in which the main part: 'General Bariga... Islands' is followed by a plethora of noun phrases with

appositive quality almost verse-like: 'the ...mountains/the ...lagoon/ the ... beaches/'. This recalls the bathos observed in Austen's prose in [1.7.6], which is anticlimactic. Both are significant in their repudiation of male subordination.

Texts [1.7.5], [1.7.7], [1.7.9] and [1.7.21] are significant for the feminist graphological devices -- exclamation mark and semi colon -- which they exemplify. The former is employed to depict feminist emotions whereas the latter underscores the parataxis and so the rejection of subordination and hierarchization.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that feminist stylistics draws eclectically on insights from literary and linguistic theories to provide the basis for the interrogation of texts from a feminine standpoint. It is a 'systematic, empirical analysis of a text's language, which brings to light patterns of representation' of issues of sexism, political correctness, reader positioning, agency, discourse, character and sentence analysis. Feminist stylistics enables the exemplification of the relationship between language and power especially in the way in which language contributes to the patriarchal domination of women in texts. In the opinion of the paper, the significance of feminist stylistics within the context of gender discourse is in the development of alternate expressive possibilities to replace the phallogocentric archetypes.

As the study has shown Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Hume-Sotomi's *The General's Wife* employ essentially feminist lexico-grammatical tropes such as parataxis, antithesis, anticlimax, semi-colon and euphuism as well as metaphors of building, room, nature and environment to depict the rejection of male stereotypes. In doing this within a period separated by about 178 years, both texts underscore the timelessness and continuity of feminist stylistic postulations and practice. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that, from a feminist stylistic reading of the two texts, both authors play a major role in the development of current gender discourse. Thus, feminist stylistics will continue to interrogate the linguistic basis for the struggle for the emancipation of womanhood as reflected in literary and non-literary texts.

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