

Article

A Feminist Stylistic Analysis in Taylor Swift's Song "The Man"

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Abstract: The Man" by Taylor Swift is a song about feminism and gender inequality which happened in Taylor swift's life. This song was released on August 23th 2019. The research is qualitative descriptive research by collecting data with note taking technique through in-depth observation and analysis of the language used in the song lyrics. Taking into the social experiences of a woman to identify the feminist stylistics elements found in the song. There are several review theories that exist in the song lyrics. To convey the complexity of gender issues in a way how feminist stylistics works. The result is a woman is always demeaned and a man is always exalted in a community environment. Just because of the different perspectives of society that glorify men as more powerful and independent than women, women feel unfair because of gender inequality. This attracted the attention of Taylor Swift in bringing the song to the music media with her experiences in the entertainment world.

Keywords: Feminist Stylistics; Taylor Swift; The Man

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1. Introduction

Music is both the written symbol that denotes musical sound and the pattern of sounds made by persons playing instruments or singing that has rhythm, melody, or harmony. (Dianne, n.d.). Music is not a natural object when the sounds can convey the scores to define and make them into an intentional object (Roman, n.d.). Songs have the power to express and evoke a wide range of emotions, such as desire, hope, happiness, and even lunacy. The message is communicated through the song's lyrics. The narrative of a song will serve to convey the message (Monelle Raymond, n.d.). Alongside, Feminism was created to advocate for women's rights and roles in society. It is the outcome of cultural and social structure evolution, which increasingly differentiates the roles of men and women. Most women locate their activism not in feminist struggle, but in cultural survival because of society (UDEL, 2015). The distinctions between men and women give birth to discrimination, which leads to harassment. It is because gender equality is a significant issue in the present period. Gender inequality may be classed into numerous forms based on a society's economic structure, the social system that exists within that society, the culture, and the way of life that has evolved. In such a civilization, ancestral habits exist. Nonetheless, gender discrimination occurs often. Women suffered more than males in the same circumstance. This is the reason why we brought up this topic.

The theory of stylistic feminism introduced by (Abdulilah Ghenni, 2021) continues to grow today. More than 20 years after its publication, her work has become increasingly popular. There are two sides to Mills' work: on the one hand, her work can provide ideas about women, on the other hand, it is useful as research material for researchers interested in this field because it requires a basic understanding of feminism. The study of stylistics

focuses on how different language styles are used in communication to convey ideas more effectively or subtly. The study of different language styles to determine a text's meaning or message is known as stylistic analysis. To identify the several styles employed, stylistic analysis necessitates a rigorous examination of texts. As soon as someone recognizes the trends, they require a decent comprehension of the styles in order to ascertain the hidden message or interpretation.

Najmah and Khatimah Sai'dah define feminism in their book *Revision of Women's Politics* (2003:34) as "It's aware when the oppression and exploitation of women can occur in the family, at work, and in society." It is lexical in nature. Feminism is a movement that advocates for total equality of rights for men and women (Renzetti Curran Maier, n.d.). Since many women are feeling incapable by making this sort of judgment (Deborah, n.d.).

Feminist stylistics is a field of study that uses language research and linguistic theory to evaluate texts from a feminist perspective in Sara Mills' book *Feminist Stylistics* in 1995. *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) remains even now, almost twenty years after its release, a ground-breaking book in the area. It gives an insight into features of feminist writing, on the one hand, and stylistics, on the other hand, and it is valuable for young researchers interested in the area, as it is simply structured and does not require a full understanding of the feminist themes covered. (Mills S, n.d.) analyzes feminist stylistics and links it to critical linguistics and Halliday's systemic linguistics. Language, literary style, and speech stylistics. The similarities between these features extend beyond the theoretical model of languages and include external variable text. We use Mills' theory because she claims that while evaluating text factors such as setting, ethnicity, class, and gender should be considered, as well as assertions that examining a text in its entirety is ineffective for anything that is no longer done or is "an exceptionally outdated ancestry" (Mills, 1995). The reason for the stylistic description is to describe the reader or to criticize the reaction to how something is written (Hiat, n.d.). While languages in general have their own power to contribute to the domination of people (Marlina & Nurjanah, 2018). Language also can be an important element where women can conceptualize their knowledge (Stanley, n.d.). Accordingly, Taylor Alison Swift popularly known as Taylor Swift is an American singer/songwriter. This song, "The Man" was released on August 23rd, 2019, which became the fourth single of the album called "Lover" released on January 28th, 2020. "The Man" by Taylor Swift is a catchy little tune that speaks to the double standards faced by women in modern society. Swift uses a playful and sarcastic tone throughout the song and presents a scenario in which she is treated like a man to show how patriarchal the society is.

For the references for this study, we took some articles that had the same topics and discussion for the relevant information. The first article titled "An Analysis of Taylor Swift's Song Lyric The Man using Feminist Literary Criticism Theory" by (Prayuda et al., 2019). The framework for this analysis of The Man's song lyrics is feminist literary criticism theory. This research will examine the meaning behind Taylor Swift's song "The Man" and how, from a feminist perspective, it depicts the prejudice women experience in society due to their status among males. Literary criticism that is influenced by feminist theory or, more broadly, by feminism's politics is known as feminist literary criticism. In the lyrics of The guy, Taylor toy with the idea that if she were a guy, that would make her more "acceptable" in society. In this song, Taylor Swift encapsulates what it means to be a woman in general—not just in her role.

The second article "A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of "Broken Verses" by (Hussain & Jabeen, 2019)". In comparison to male characters, female characters are shown more frequently in relation to their thoughts, feelings, experiences, vulnerability to males, and physical attributes. Conversely, males are characterized by their physical prowess, dominant personalities, and views toward women. Compared to descriptions of men's bodies,

those of women's bodies are more detailed and tend to be sensationalized. This demonstrates how ladies who are described in this way are praised for their charm and sensuality. Upon contemplation of the division of men and women, it becomes apparent that there are more descriptions of the bodies of women compared to males. The novel's plot makes clear that the narrator describes the male characters differently from the female counterparts. The narrator describes the woman's body in greater depth and with greater creativity.

The third is "A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988)" by (Rahimnouri & Ghandehariun, 2020). This study aims to find out about feminist elements by utilizing feminist stylistics theory as the guidelines. This study examines *The Fifth Child* (1988) from a feminist stylistic perspective. The way that Harriet's words and description convey her passivity, obedience, and reliance was explained using feminist stylistic ideas. The author's feminist stance is suggested by the way she describes Harriet as a conventional, archaic, helpless, and subservient woman. Accepting that males rule, Harriet convinces readers to feel sorry for her since she gave birth to a strange child who is too much bother for everyone.

The fourth is "A Feminist Stylistic Analysis in Rupri Kaur's *The Sun and Her Flowers*" by (Siregar et al., 2020). The purpose of this study is to analyze the position of women and men presented in texts by applying a feminist approach and also this study described the position of women as actors. The results of this study revealed gender-specific presentation at the level of words, phrases, sentences and discourse. Gender specific terms are mostly used to refer primarily to female gender.

The fifth is "Black Humor and Subversive Satire: Feminist Stylistic in *The Essay I Want A Wife*" by (Charuchinda, 2021). This research aims to analyze feminist stylistic features in this essay from a discourse analysis perspective and even so, Judy Syfers's essay *I Want a Wife*, exposed the unfair practice of patriarchy. The result showed that, in the essay contained 1) use of the pronoun 'I' in association with a collective identity in the self-introduction, 2) a shift into a phallogocentric point of view, 3) clausal repetition, 4) words with positive connotations, 5) wordplay, 6) modality, and 7) taboo breaking humor.

The sixth is "Madeline Miller's *Circe*: A Feminist Stylistic Approach" by (Rizwana Sarwar & Saadia Fatima, 2022). This research aims to analyze how Madeline Miller converts Circe's negative portrayal into a positive and empowered character in her retelling by challenging the stereotypical characterization of women and exposing Circe's character at the level of discourse in order to present her as a positive and empowered character.

Furthermore, the analyst should be on guard for ready-made phrases, presupposition and inference, metaphor, and jokes or humor choices when analyzing phrases to possibly unravel features that are considerably gender-biased (Mills, 1995). From this study, we analyze this song in feminist stylistics which exposes feminist messages in this song. Feminist stylistics represent gender inequality and women empowerment. We found that there is inequality between men and women since Taylor Swift's experience inspired this song. Men can more easily get their freedom than women. In society, women are often criticized for whatever they have done. This song is about the awareness in society so we can treat both men and women equally. The method of this study is a qualitative method. We expected to find how the song conveys a message of the struggles and frustration of women in society.

2. Materials and Methods

To study Taylor Swift's song "The Man" use a descriptive qualitative method. The data that becomes the research material is taken from books and journals that are under the topic discussed in the research, those are books and journals about feminist stylistics and mostly taken from the theory of Sara Mills. The technique we use is the note-taking technique by carefully reading the lyrics. We will listen to the song through YouTube and

Spotify and will describe the lines from the song that represents feminism. The data will be collected and analyzed as the explanation will be written down in the form of sentences and paragraphs of how the lyrics in the song convey the message of gender equality which happens to women through daily life, along with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the message

3. Results

Data 1

"I would be complex, I would be cool"

"They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to"

"And that would be okay for me to do"

"Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you"

The first data lyrics tell us about how Taylor Swift addresses the social gender and how it is used to oppress women. Seen from how societal norms and patriarchal dynamics influence the way both males and females are perceived and portrayed in the media. Through powerful imagery, Swift draws attention to double standards in society.

Data 2

"I'd be a fearless leader"

"I'd be an alpha type"

"When everyone believes ya"

"What's that like?"

The second data lyric is describing how men are seen as superior to women in society. They are seen as "fearless leaders" and "alpha types" because men are strong, hard, manly, tough and think rationally, whereas women who are gentle, think irrationally, spoiled, dependent and loving are not considered as such types. And when a woman acts like a man, she is considered inappropriate and labeled as "nags" when she is trying to ask someone to do something (Tannen Deborah, n.d.).

Data 3

"I'm so sick of running as fast as I can"

"Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man"

"And I'm so sick of them coming at me again"

"Cause if I was a man, then I'd be the man"

"I'd be the man"

The data of the third lyric describes the injustice of gender inequality where women have to work harder and extra than men to get what they want and it is considered a natural thing that exists in the scope of society. This imagery shows a challenging double standard between males and females, and acknowledging the advantages that come with being a man.

Data 4

"They'd say I hustled, put in the work"

"They wouldn't shake their heads and question how much of this I deserve"

"What I was wearing, if I was rude"
"Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves"

The data fourth lyrics are about how women seem to be hustled when it comes to work but they see it as something negative when a woman starts working. People would think that a woman does not deserve praise when she has an achievement just by how she looks and all of her ideas and power are gone. To be more contrast, society requires women on how they make herself as an erotic object (Beauvoir, n.d.). Swift highlights how men and women are held to different standards and how stereotypes and archaic gender roles prevent women from being taken seriously and respected. Swift also touches up the topic of the gender wage gap by alluding to inequality in the workplace.

Data 5

"And they would toast to me, oh, let the players play"
"I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez"

The data fifth lyrics talk about A man who will gain enormous popularity with ladies if he starts acting like a "player". On the other hand, women he dates will find his behavior embarrassing. Men will be viewed as cool due to how many dates they go on, hence this is inversely related to them. The adage "boys will be boys" describes how to forgive a boy for his errors or inappropriate actions. For instance, society will view a man dating a considerably younger lady in her twenties as normal if it is discovered that he is doing so. However, if a woman does the same and dates a man who is significantly younger than she is, society will despise her and condemn her. Similar to when their partners are far younger than them, there is a noticeable difference between men and women.

Data 6

"What's it like to brag about raking in dollars"
"And getting bitches and models?"
"And it's all good if you're bad"
"And it's okay if you're mad"

The sixth data is telling about the attitude of a man who has a lot of wealth or money so he will be considered as cool and also hardworking in the eyes of people. When a man is angry, then he is allowed if he has a logical and reasonable reason. In contrast, if a woman has a lot of money because of her hard work, but people slander her by seeing her as a bitch because they think she makes money the wrong way.

5. Conclusions

The study has analyzed song lyrics "The Man" by Taylor Swift. Based on the findings and discussion above, the researcher concludes that there are several review theories that exist in the song lyrics. In the lyrics of the song "The Man", Taylor Swift conveys that a woman is always demeaned and a man is always exalted in a community environment. Just because of the different perspectives of society that glorify men as more powerful and independent than women, women feel unfair because of gender inequality. This attracted the attention of Taylor Swift in bringing the song to the music media with her experiences in the entertainment world. This song also represents the feelings of women who feel oppressed by the social and gender inequality that occurs until now. Overall, "The Man" is a powerful song that effectively uses feminist stylistics to express the challenge of gender

norms and raise awareness about gender inequality. By putting herself in the shoes of a man and using language to illustrate the differences in how society treats men and women, Taylor Swift's able to convey the complexity of gender issues in a way that is both emotionally resonant and thought-provoking.

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