

REIMAGINING GENDER THROUGH LANGUAGE: A FEMINIST STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NOVELS BY ABI DARÉ AND DAMILARE KUKU

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Abstract

This paper uses feminist stylistics to analyze *The Girl With The Louding Voice* (2020) by Abi Dare and *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* (2024) by Damilare Kuku as an exploration of how linguistic innovation reimagines gender norms in the 21st-century African fiction. Based on qualitative analysis at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels, using the framework of Sara Mills (1995,2008), the study recognizes non-standard grammar and neologisms such as louding, bumbum-enlargement, as well as derogatory body policing lexis, transitivity patterns that objectify women, and first-person/multi-voiced narratives as forms of resisting patriarchal silencing and commodification. The findings demonstrate that language is a two-fold mechanism of revealing ideological domination of the female body and a voice allowing identity rebuilding and empowerment of the marginalized protagonists; *Adunni* and *Temilade*. The discussion highlights the validity of non-standard forms in feminist discourse and suggests the use of digital space to create the voices of such alternative forms and additional stylistic research of the narratives of contemporary African women.

Keywords: feminist stylistics, gender reimagination, non-standard language, body policing, contemporary African fiction.

Introduction

The 21st century has marked a significant shift in the representation of gender. The feminist movements, known as the waves of feminism played a major role in bringing about these changes. The movements have evolved from fighting for political rights to emphasizing intersectionality, countering body shaming and implementing online platforms for empowerment. According to Rampton (2015), Feminism which was once restricted to academic discourse is now largely discussed and addressed by the public. This shift captures how modern societies have experienced an increase in the interrogation of gender norms and how women assert visibility and agency in new and transformative ways. Language is central to these transformations; it functions as both a communicative tool and a means of shaping the society's perspective regarding gender. It plays a

pivotal role in advancing global initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment (Ezeh et'al.,2020). The inclusion of gender equality among the SDG5 indicates how feminist struggles have evolved from being women's issues alone to a global objective that is deeply embedded in achieving collective progress and transformation. Individuals and communities incorporate language to convey gendered experiences, resist patriarchal structures, and redefine social hierarchies. Therefore, language serves as a reflection and also an instrument of transformation within feminist discourses of the 21st century.

In literature, language is utilized as a strong tool for expressing and challenging gender identities. The language used by writers is strategic in its utilization to express, criticize, and transform the image of gender in society. Even though every work of literature is based on language, the writing choices made by each author which makes them unique is their style. Style is a linguistic fingerprint that discloses an author's vision of the world, their intentions, and creative self. Wales (1989) describes style as the unique method of expressing ideas in writing or speech and Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as the linguistic study of literary texts that forms the gap between literary criticism and linguistic investigation. Based on this notion, Feminist Stylistics as theorized by Mills (1995) examines how the use of language in texts propagates, supports or challenges gender ideologies. It dwells upon the linguistic preferences as the manifestations of power relations and gendered experiences in the texts, which enables readers to see the ways in which women writers use their style as a means of resistance and empowerment.

The feminist fight against self-expression and representation has always been connected with linguistic reclamation, the demand to hear, to be heard, and to be represented. It is against this background that the modern African female writers use linguistic innovation to challenge the patriarchal systems and to provide a voice to the realities of women. A relevant portrayal of this reformation of the concept of gender using language is Abi Daré and Damilare Kuku in their novels: *The Girl with the Louding Voice* (2020) and *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* (2024). The two authors are creative in manipulating the English language as they use it to predetermine the agency of women in patriarchal societies. In her effort to describe the socioeconomic situation and the level of education of her heroine, *Adunni*, Daré uses less commonly employed variants of English. Apart from using it as a symbol of honesty, Daré's word choice is equally well-suited for

Adunni's inner conflict and ultimate triumph. Her lack of schooling is similarly set out in words and therefore serves to reinforce her intelligence and determination. By the unique word choice, Daré intentionally humanizes her and reverses the sociocultural context that limits *Adunni*.

In the same vein, *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* by Kuku relies on colloquial expressions and informal language to portray the commodification of women in the society and the survival of the protagonist in a society where physical appearance comes first over people's personalities. Through the choice of words of the protagonist (Kuku) the energy and resilience in the face of the patriarchal system is seen as she managed to go beyond representation to the complexity of objectification and agency.

The study, hence, presents a feminist stylistic analysis of *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Daré and *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* by Kuku to consider how the two authors employ language to redefine the concept of gender and agency in the 21st century. The study sheds light on how linguistic creativity can defy the conventional gender norms and make women voices as empowerment agents by analyzing their stylistic devices: non-standard English, colloquialism, lexical inventions, metaphors, modality, point of view and so on. The importance of the present study is that it helps to comprehend how the African women writers of the 21st century use language to reshape gender discourses, portray feminism, and assert social-cultural realities in postcolonial settings.

Language, Identity and Empowerment in Contemporary African Women's Writing

The use of non-standard English has increasingly gained recognition as a means of expressing authentic African experiences and challenging dominant linguistic and social orders in African literature. The debate surrounding the use of English as a medium of African expression has been a long-standing one, involving key figures such as Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Achebe (1975) advocates for the adaptation of English to eloquently present African realities, while writers of the postcolonial era have since transformed this stance by infusing their writing with the rhythms and idioms of African speech. As Percillier (2018) observes, contemporary African authors use non-standard English to mimic everyday conversations, thereby reversing colonial linguistic conventions and foregrounding postcolonial identities.

Furthermore, the concept of foregrounding, a key term in stylistic analysis, refers to the ways in which certain linguistic elements in a text are made prominent to evoke particular effects. Riaz (2021) argues that literary works usually utilizes strategies like grammatical and semantic deviations, along with lexical, syntactic, and phonological repetitions, to deviate from ordinary language use, in order to draw attention to their form as much as their content. Language deviation serves not only as a stylistic choice, but also as a form of social resistance and empowerment. Tupas (2022) asserts that through deliberate subversion of linguistic norms, authors are able to challenge dominant discourses and open new perspectives on social inequalities. Similarly, Elgie (2021) highlights the power of narrative as a vehicle for agency among marginalized groups, particularly women. According to her, indigenous women have long used storytelling to resist oppression and to reclaim their autonomy. Dojack and Abu-Obeida (2023) equally demonstrate how issues of race are mediated through metaphors and other linguistic devices in a stylistic analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*. Likewise, scholars such as Ogunyemi (1988) and Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) have emphasized the feminist linguistic practices of African women writers who employ language to transcend patriarchal boundaries and assert agency. In postcolonial Africa where gender discrimination and cultural exclusion persist, such linguistic defiance becomes deeply meaningful.

In contemporary African women's writing, the use of non-standard English and native language elements functions as a strategy of self-definition and resistance to sociopolitical constraints. In *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, Abi Daré's protagonist, *Adunni*, embodies this linguistic rebellion as her fractured English and Nigerian Pidgin express both her marginalization and her courage. Similarly, Damilare Kuku's stories employ colloquial languages to critique society's obsession with wealth and appearance while promoting broader notions of empowerment and self-worth. Recent studies also emphasize the importance of narrative perspective in advancing social advocacy. Singh and Medhavi (2024) observe that writers such as Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga use point of view to foreground marginalized voices and dismantle dominant power structures. Kakembo (2025) adds that inclusive narration allows literature to confront stereotypes and represent silenced identities. These insights are reflected in the works of Daré and Kuku, whose protagonists' voices symbolize both empowerment and resistance within patriarchal and socio-economic constraints. Although existing scholarship has explored stylistic elements in

African prose and poetry, providing insight into how linguistic choices contribute to meaning, there remains a need for further investigation into the use of non-standard English in representing marginalized voices in contemporary African women's fiction. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining how language functions as a tool of identity, empowerment, and resistance in the works of Abi Daré and Damilare Kuku.

Overview of the Selected Texts and their Authors

The Girl with the Louding Voice, Nigerian novelist and public speaker Abimbola Dare's debut novel, was long listed for the 2018 Literary Consultancy Pen Factor competition and received the Bath Novel Award for unpublished fiction. In 2023, she established the Louding Voice Educational and Empowerment Foundation in Nigeria, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing scholarships to young girls in rural Nigeria. It exists as a testament to the belief that education and empowerment can be an avenue of change for girls in the 21st century in Nigeria. Also, Damilare Kuku, the author of *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, is a Nigerian writer who has also worked as a filmmaker, actor, producer, playwright, and radio host. She has also spoken at United Nations-hosted mentoring workshops for teen girls in Lagos and taught academies about feminism and the craft of visual storytelling.

Abi Dare's 2020 novel, *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, and Damilare Kuku's 2024 novel, *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, both discuss the ways that women attempt to shatter ill-conventional social norms. Female commodification, sexism against women, body shaming and sexual harassment, and rape culture are some of the issues described in the books of the two new Nigerian writers.

Abi Dare portrays how women navigate their paths under the cover of societal circumstances through the eyes of *Adunni*, the heroine of *The Girl with the Louding Voice*. The novel focuses on the manner in which the heroine, *Adunni*, struggles to achieve self-empowerment and resistance against patriarchal oppression. Her father, her husband and her boss' husband oppress *Adunni* as she develops her voice in a society that silences women's voice.

On the other hand, *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* by Damilare Kuku reflects the latest trends among women in the society known as BBL (Brazilian Butt Lift). This cosmetic surgery is done in order to enlarge or reshape the buttocks, most of the women who undergo the surgery are

influenced by societal standards of an ideal woman, where women with "snatched body" (curvy or well-shaped body) are more privileged and celebrated in the society. The issue of body shaming has pervaded the society to an extent that females are making every possible effort to fit into the category of the ideal type. *Temilade*, the protagonist is determined to 'renovate' her bumbum at all cost due to constant mockery from people. She tries to modify her body shape by becoming gluttonous and eating late foods which resulted in a big belly —another body dissatisfaction. She tries several other means and eventually resolves to get a BBL, travel to Lagos and meet the love of her life. The story also explores the experiences of women such as Ladun, Jummai, Big Mummy and Temi's mother, Hassana with an ideal shape and their ordeals with men. The novel portrays certain ideas of the second wave of feminism that were reintroduced in the fourth wave of feminism such as sexual abuse, rape, violence against women, the pressure on women to conform to a single and unrealistic body type.

Female oppression stems from gender differences which occur as a result of social convention that dictates how both men and women are expected to behave. These societal conventions are the major cause of several women's ordeal which has been portrayed by the distinct styles used in the representation of marginalized voices that are employed in both texts through their main characters, *Adunni* and *Temilade* including some other women in the novels respectively.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be adopted for this study is feminist stylistics. It is a stylistic sub-discipline interested in locating how gender matters are inscribed into language within texts and examining gender's association with language through stylistic analytical models. As Mills (1995), one of the first to apply the term, describes it, feminist stylistics is not only interested in detecting sexist representation in texts, but also in investigating how literary devices such as metaphor, transitivity, and point of view are related to gender relations. In exposing the main biases in the manner language formulates gender identities, feminist stylistics questions conventional gender norms. For example, both Mills (1995) and Woolf (1929) opine that language is gendered in nature and reflects and consolidates social inequality. This philosophy has its roots in feminist criticism, specifically the notion that language is key to the perpetuation of patriarchal system. One of the most significant notions in contemporary feminist linguistic analysis is that feminist stylistics

identifies a seeming stylistic difference between women's and men's writing (Mills, 1995). Ashimbuli and Woldemariam (2024) point out how readers can reinforce or challenge prevailing gendered constructions in texts, and note the significance of considering both the writer's and the reader's double role in producing and interpreting gendered meanings.

One of the principles of feminist stylistics is an exploration of gendered language options, including discourse strategies, grammatical features, and lexical selection. Feminist stylisticians can investigate how linguistic structures mirror changing gender knowledge, beyond binary conceptualizations of man and woman...(Montoro, 2014:348). Particularly in examining how language constructs gender in society, feminist stylistics comes into play in this current research. Feminist stylistics is an adequate method to analyze the manner language in Abi Daré's *The Girl with the Louding Voice* represents the struggle of the protagonist towards empowerment and identity within a patriarchal society. Feminist stylistics becomes an appropriate approach to conduct this study since the language of the novel such as the use of non-standard English and female agency representation sheds light on the intersections of language, gender, and class in the 21st century.

Methodology

In seeking stylistic examination of Abi Daré's *The Girl with the Louding Voice* and Damilare Kuku's *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, this study utilizes a qualitative research design. Through a close reading of the selected texts, the study considers the author's usage of unique linguistic features to understand how the concept of gender is redefined with the help of language and narrative voice. The excerpts that portray the main issues of the novels on patriarchy, identity, and reclaiming the voices of women were adequately identified for the analysis. Based on the principles of feminist stylistics by Mills (1995), the study examines how language in the novels reinforces or challenges gendered power relations as evident in the 21st century. The identification of occurrences of colloquialism, non-standard English, and characteristic linguistic features in the narrative will be the main goal of the study. The utilization of language in redefining gender in modern African fiction; creating unique voices for the protagonists and delineating their personal, societal conflicts will be analyzed.

Data Analysis

Feminist stylistics, as developed by Mills (1995), foregrounds how women's language serves as a tool for resisting the usual role of women to be silent while asserting their agency. The language of women in literary texts is foregrounded most especially when marked by deviation from dominant norms. Based on these, Mills (2008) proposed three levels of feminist stylistics analysis with tenets that serves as lens for examining gendered linguistic choices under each level: The lexical level, syntactic level and discourse level. This section applies Mills' Feminist Stylistic framework to *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* by Damilare Kuku and *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Daré. Each level is further divided into thematized sub-sections that allow for a comparative interpretation of how gender ideology, power relations, silencing, and female agency are linguistically constructed, negotiated, and reimagined in both texts.

The Lexical Level

Mills (1995) argues that sexist ideology is frequently embedded in apparently ordinary lexical items; particularly nouns, adjectives, and metaphors used to describe women. Feminist stylistics therefore interrogates what is named, how it is named, and whose interests such naming serves.

Body-Centred Lexicalisation and the Reduction of Female Identity

In *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, female identity is frequently qualified with body-centered adjectives such as “tiny, flat, skinny, fat, inverted, fake, big, saggy. As in: “Your bumbum has always been flat” (p. 8). The lexical choices of the author foreground the body as the yardstick that defines a woman, thereby relegating their mental capacity to the background. These evaluative adjectives depict how the female physique is being measured by a standard set by the society, any woman that fails to meet the requirement will be described with different derogatory adjectives and this act is known as body policing.

Also, in *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, words like lazy, talkative, feisty, good-for-nothing, wasted waste, useless, godforsaken are some of the derogatory adjectives used to describe the main character, *Adunni* as seen in the sentence: “A lazy good-for-nothing waste-of-space” (p. 134). The dominant uses of the derogatory adjectives reduce the identity of the female protagonist to someone who lacks value. The social level of *Adunni* further propels the usage of such adjectives

to describe her. These reflect the situation of maids like *Adunni* in the 21st century, where they are treated with less regard. The literary texts effectively mirror the issues of gender in the 21st century through the unique lexical choices of the authors.

Mills (1995) highlights that the lexical level should examine what words were used to describe women and what words were emphasized. Thus, the analysis highlights data that portrays the derogatory adjectives used to describe women repeatedly in the literary texts, revealing how language actively sustains patriarchal definitions of female worth in texts.

Lexical Invention and Informal language as Markers of Female Objectivity and Agency

In *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, *Adunni's* neologism; “louding”, “force-marry”, “memorying,” and “sorrowing”, “dunni-licious” are linguistic inventions that function as deviations from normal linguistic choices. These words highlight the pains and struggles of women in a society that commodifies them through marriage and simultaneously reflect female agency. These inventions reflect her limited exposure to formal education; yet, they showcase her refusal to remain silent within a society that expects women to keep their emotions bottled up and follow the norms such as being forced into a marriage.

The term “louding,” is a fusion of the adjective “loud” and the progressive “-ing”. The coinage becomes a symbolic articulation of *Adunni's* desire to have a voice in a patriarchal context where women are discouraged from communicating their opinions and are subjected to listening and obeying rules. Through the lens of feminist stylistics, such deviations are not linguistic errors but are signals of female subjectivity (Mills, 1995).

Similarly, in *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, compounded words like “Bumbum-enlargement” (p. 9), “Keep-Your-Husband” (p. 44), emphasizes the new means through which women get and keep men. These innovative words capture the deep meaning behind the compounded words that would not have been foregrounded if it were separated. Also, the usage of an informal language to describe the female protagonist also adds to the intensity of the female body's policing. Yoruba words like “Opelenge”, “Penkelemeesi”, “Lepa Shandy” are words that indicates a very slim person with no shape which were used to body shame *Temilade*.

The Usage of Metaphors

Metaphor operates as a powerful ideological device in both texts. A Metaphor is a figure of speech that involves direct comparison without using "like" or "as." It states one thing is another thing, to highlight a shared quality or characteristic.

In *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, metaphorical terms such as "Témi Is a Blackboard" (p. 8) and "Témi Is Also a Mopstick" (p. 54) replace the female body with inanimate objects. These metaphors strip women of humanity and turning them into an object of ridicule.

In contrast, *The Girl with the Louding Voice* deploys metaphor as a counter-discursive tool. In the text, education is portrayed with utmost importance through the metaphorical expression "Your schooling is your voice, child" (p. 23). The depiction of education as "your voice," therefore highlights the role of education as a tool for audibility and empowerment in a society where the protagonist lacks the right to voice out her preferences.

Syntactic Level

At the sentence level, feminist stylistics focus on how grammatical structures distribute power by determining who acts, who is acted upon, and whose responsibility is obscured (Mills, 2008).

Transitivity and Grammatical Construction of the Female Agency

Transitivity patterns, as a feminist stylistic tool for analysis, can show the allocation of the participants into the role of Actor, Process, and Goal in grammatical structures. (Mills, 2008). The analysis of the agent and recipient of the actions is thus vital in gaining insight into the manner in which gender ideology is coded at the sentence level.

In Damilare Kuku's *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, a very gendered agency is encoded in the clause: "If she could fuck, cook and keep her mouth shut, she would find a husband" (p. 53) using transitivity. The repetition of "she" as the Actor of behavioural (fuck), material (cook) and behavioural/verbal-suppressive (keep her mouth shut) processes, builds female agency as performative and a conditional agency. Even though the woman is grammatically active, her behaviour is confined as being in sexual availability, domestic labour, and silence which are ideologically depicted as conditions to achieve social legitimacy. The material process "find a

husband" is a secondary act, which makes marriage a reward following adherence to patriarchal rules. This transitivity pattern, according to a feminist stylistic view, strengthens the commodification and power of the women bodies, labour and voices, and it reinforces an argument of Mills (1995) that grammatical agency is not always accompanied by social power.

Equally, in *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, the statement is: "Do her anyhow you want. Use her till she is useless" (p. 31), predicts the existence of extreme gendered power asymmetry in the form of its transitivity structure. Both statements use material processes (do, use) in which the male Actor (you) has a free hand and thus the female partner (her) is always put in the Goal position and is objectified with no agency. Domination is enhanced by the imperative mood since it does away with selection and agreement which makes exploitation appear as an action that can be accepted. The circumstantial aspect, also enhances this predominance by authorizing unlimited mistreatment. The final relational clause she is useless acts as an attributive process coding the resultant condition of the woman and making her value and usefulness the only unique way to describe her worth. In terms of feminist stylistic analysis, the grammar is not only an expression of patriarchal ideology, but also a proponent of the latter, because it makes the male the focal point of action while it makes the female existence a condition and a dispensable aspect.

Non-Standard Grammar and Female Subjugation

In *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, *Adunni's* use of non-standard grammar clearly reflects her exclusion from formal education and social power. For example, in the sentence "He have the same eyes when he was telling me, three years ago, that I must stop my educations," (p.7) there is a lack of subject-verb agreement ("He have") and unnecessary pluralisation "educations". These grammatical deviations are not accidental. They reveal that *Adunni* was denied proper schooling because of gendered expectations—her father withdrew her from school so she could be married off. As a result, she has limited access to the standard form of English, which is closely tied to authority, education and social mobility.

Similarly, in the statement "All the mens in our village, they are allowing them learn school and work, but us the girls, they are marrying us from fourteen years of age," (p. 59) *Adunni* contrasts the educational freedom given to boys with the early forced marriages imposed on girls. The non-standard structures in this sentence reinforce the reality of gender inequality. Feminist stylistics

interprets these grammatical deviations not as linguistic failure, but as evidence of how social marginalization especially of girls becomes encoded in language use. (Mills, 1995).

In *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, the letter Hassana sent to Jummai clearly shows the usage of non-standard grammar, as seen in the sentences: " I miss U. Many tins av happened to me. I lost my flower to a wicked man. I want to come to ur skul. Please send hostel number and adress. I love U" (p. 104). The inappropriate spelling of "you" as "U", "your" as "ur", things as "tins," have" as "av" and the omission of your in" please send hostel number and address" exposes social media texting culture in the 21st century which majorly influence people's writing experiences especially the ones with less education. The usage of non-standard grammar exposes her limited education and some of her ordeals with men such as being raped. In contrast to *Adunni* who desires to go to school but doesn't have the opportunity to go due to the duty she has to get married, while Hassana opts out of school because she has dyslexia.

Overall, both texts show that non-standard grammar is not a sign of incompetence, but a reflection of gendered exclusion. Feminist stylistics read these linguistic patterns as powerful indicators of how women's oppression, lack of education, and social vulnerability are inscribed directly into language.

Modality: A Reflection of Feminist Portrayal in the Texts.

According to the feminist stylistics of Sara Mills, modality serves as a language tool that expresses normalized ideology. According to Mills, modal constructions tend to hide patriarchal values by promoting gendered expectations as normal, unavoidable and unquestionable (Mills, 2008: 87-94). Within an analysis of modal options in *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* and *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, the worth and the agency of women is shown to be linguistically limited.

In *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow*, female value is structured via conditional modality as being dependent on bodily conformity. The desirability is made by the statement, "If only your ass was bigger, your little waist would be a magnet to compliments" (p. 8), which builds up the statement of desirability with the hypothetical cause-and-effect format, making social approval to conform to male established beauty standards. Compliments are therefore made to be conditional rewards as opposed to natural reward. This stance can be supported by deontic modality in the statement: "Today this small yansh must go" (p. 7), the modal auxiliary should denote the

requirement and need. The feminine body is discursively constructed as something that needs to be corrected, whereas the alteration of the body is naturalized as something inevitable.

In *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, restricted agency of the female is disclosed with the help of volitional and counterfactual modality. The statement; "I want a louding voice" (p. 23) by *Adunni* is a volitional modality, in which she desires to have, and not a right to have, voice and to express herself, which is not presumed to be part of her socio-cultural upbringing. Likewise, "I wish I'm a man" (p. 59) is an illustration of counterfactual modality where a hypothetical world is created where power and autonomy is construed as male in nature. Instead of confronting the issue of patriarchy, the statement inherits the same logic in making maleness the means of empowerment.

The presence of modal constructions in both texts, in general, limits women agency and upholds the patriarchal norms. Conditional modality makes the female worthy contingent, the deontic modality makes the body to be regulated as necessitated, the volitional modality makes agency constrained by desire, and the counter modality brings out contradictory gender hierarchy in an internalized manner. As per the argument presented by Mills (2008), these modal options serve as an ideological way of clothed patriarchal control as common sense and reproducing gendered oppression via the use of everyday language.

Discourse Level

At the discourse level, feminist stylistics analyzes how textual structures shape gender representation and ideology beyond the sentence or syntactic level. As outlined by Sara Mills (1995, 2008), it focuses on narrative voice, point of view, and the positioning of characters and readers. It interrogates who speaks, whose perspectives are foregrounded or silenced, and how texts guide ideological interpretation. Through these strategies, discourse both reproduces and challenges patriarchal meanings. This section therefore analyzes how the selected novels deploy discourse features to construct female agency, silence, and resistance.

Point of View and Ideological Positioning.

Sara Mills contends that point of view is never neutral and it is an effective ideological instrument that positions the readers on the side of certain viewpoints and naturalises other views (Mills,

1995). Feminist stylistics focus on the speaker, his or her social status, and how the readers are encouraged to perceive gendered experiences.

Abi Dare uses the first-person homodiegetic voice in *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, through her character of *Adunni*, whose voice prevails throughout the story. This narrative decision throws the reader into the direct focus of the lived experience of the economically marginalised Nigerian girl at a young age. More to the point, the viewpoint of *Adunni* is not just the choice of style, but the feminist maneuver: it makes the readers confront patriarchy as understood by its victim. In the narration of *Adunni*, child marriage, educational deprivation, domestic servitude and others are not told as abstract social issues, but are very personal violations. To illustrate, as *Adunni* contemplates being taken out of school because her father could not afford school fees but at the same time considers marrying, the reader is put in a position to realize the gendered injustice as not an isolated event but a systematic issue. Based on this, the text challenges the so-called masculine generic perspective by giving a female subject, who is generally deprived of narrative prerogative, precedence.

In comparison, *Only Big Bumbum Matters Tomorrow* uses a fragmented, multi-voiced discourse, which is usually focalised by unnamed or loosely related female characters. Instead of one fixed narrator, Damilare Kuku introduces a trail of gendered experiences such as catcalling, body policing, sexual bargaining as well as everyday linguistic violence that women experience daily. Such scattered vision resembles diffusion of patriarchal ideology as Mills explains. (2008: 92-99). Most of the time the experiences of women are not told in a stance of authority but are often flavoured by a male voice, social media commentary or internalised self-surveillance. Consequently, the readers find themselves in a situation where they can observe the functioning of misogyny by direct dominance as well as by repetition and normalisation.

While reading the two novels simultaneously, one has to acknowledge the existence of some contrasting, yet complementary feminist strategies. Dare maintains her first person narration to restore narrative power to a silenced girl-child, and a fractured world-view of Kuku reveals how the female form is constantly being constructed and judged by the discourse of the public. In both instances, point of view serves an ideological purpose to disclose the aspect of patriarchy as a lived

linguistic practice and not a remote social organization, consistent with Mills insisting that feminist analysis should question the manner in which texts orchestrate reader sympathy and reading.

Conclusion

This feminist stylistic reading shows that language in the novels by Dare and Kuku goes beyond communication being a dynamic tool to resist patriarchal standards, gender identities, and gender commodification in the 21st century. Among the most important findings are lexical deviations, syntactic objectification, modal constraints, and narrative perspectives which reproduce and subvert silencing of women agency, and neologisms and slang as the true voice to authenticity in the face of body shaming and educational exclusion. They are literary texts that state the role of linguistic creativity in empowerment, the need to acknowledge non-standard varieties, digital feminist advocacy, and continued investigation of marginalized voices in postcolonial literature.

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