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Language of Modern Women: A Feminist Stylistics Analysis of Song Lyrics by Sabrina Carpenter

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Abstract

Meanings conveyed through artistic expression can be viewed as a form of heritage derived from an individual's knowledge and understanding of the world. Likewise, the creator's background, experiences, and attitudes are frequently encoded in the artwork. In contemporary society, where gender inequality is increasingly contested, songs function as an important medium for voicing the concerns of socially marginalized groups. Lyrics not only offer aesthetic value but also communicate additional layers of meaning that reflect the creator's underlying emotions and perspectives. This study investigated the stylistic features in the lyrics of four popular songs by Sabrina Carpenter by (1) analyzing the figurative language employed in the lyrics and (2) examining how these features contribute to the representation of women's identity from a feminist stylistic perspective. The findings revealed that the most common figurative features deployed in the song lyrics were metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. Additionally, these figurative features embed discourses that function as the linguistic strategies to construct empowered representations of women's identity and undermine patriarchal norms.

Keywords: stylistics, figurative features, feminist stylistics, Sabrina Carpenter

1. Introduction

Songs are perceived as literary works that articulate poetry and are performed by singing along with musical instruments (Nur Fadilla et al., 2023). These works of art play a crucial role in society in several aspects: individual emotional expression, educational support, and social movements. In terms of individual emotional expression, songs are powerful in expressing or provoking emotional states such as desire, hope, happiness, or even lunacy (Deameysa et al., 2023). Apart from pleasure, song lyrics convey more than their literal meaning; that is, they uncover hidden meanings that express how users frame their attitudes or respond to surrounding phenomena. Therefore, studying the language employed in the songs helps us understand how singers articulate their individual perspectives on the world through narratives in their songs while entertaining listeners and how the singers convey conscious and unconscious meanings in those songs. In education, songs have been used to contribute to learning behavior, such as increasing interpersonal communication skills among children and reducing ESL speaking anxiety (Brand & Bar-Gil, 2010; Ejeng et al., 2020). Recently, many people have used songs to promote social change. For example, Mills (2016) stated that protesters used songs as a medium to inspire people to work together. It can be seen as an indirect yet artistic and expressive means of supporting their stance and shaping community perception of the issue.

The role of songs in social movements drew the researchers of the present study to the question of how people in modern society use songs as a tool to convey implied messages. For that reason, the researchers considered that delving into the in-depth meanings of song lyrics contributes to effective interpretation of the implied messages. To initiate the present study, the researchers took the investigation of stylistics into account. Stylistics is a discipline within applied linguistics that relates to the interpretation of how literary style in a text is constructed to express meanings (Saputra & Abida, 2021). The stylistic study emphasizes styles of language that speakers or writers use to express their perceptions about the world (Handayani, 2023). Generally, there are four main categories in stylistics: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figurative language, and cohesion and context (Fadilla et al., 2023). Figurative language is an important linguistic feature in literary works that is basically used to articulate particular messages while avoiding literal meanings (Bawemenewi & Swarniti, 2024). This type of language is utilized not only in written language, but also in spoken language, such as in speeches, TV programs, and songs (Dewi et al., 2020). Therefore, in the initial procedure of song lyrics analysis, the researchers

enriched their understanding of the implied meanings of the selected songs by identifying figurative language.

Afterwards, we proceeded with further analysis to identify hidden perspectives that focus on controversial issues in society. Recently, gender representation has received increased attention from the mainstream media as a result of growing support for gender equality. A lot of influencers, such as music artists, writers, or actors, have more independence to express their personal viewpoints on gender issues as long as the critique in their literary works does not infringe upon the rights of any individual. Songs are common medium used for social criticism. Malik et al. (2024) stated that lyrics are powerful as socializing agents—propagating norms and preconceptions regarding gender. Since they have a considerable impact on social perceptions, songs, therefore, serve as appropriate texts for examining the representation of gender.

In this era, the feminist community openly engages in such practices on social media. Caroline et al. (2023) stated that feminism is a movement advocating socially and politically for the equality of sexes. Previous studies have examined the use of songs by female artists to addressing gender issues. Those studies demonstrated a strong commitment to taking a stance against patriarchal norms, such as criticizing societal norms that afford men greater respect and higher status than women, empowering women's independence in romantic relationships through language, and exposing unequal practices that restrict women's freedom and emotions (Deameysa et al., 2023; Sitorus et al., 2025; Situmorang et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that many researchers have largely analyzed song lyrics within a single analytic framework. Limited studies have integrated other linguistic theories to examine stylistic features in song lyrics, particularly by incorporating feminist-based perspectives with linguistic approaches. Hence, the present study investigated stylistic features in the lyrics of four popular songs by Sabrina Carpenter by (1) analyzing the figurative language employed in the lyrics and (2) examining how these features reflect the representation of women's identity through feminist stylistics.

2. Literature review

2.1 Stylistics and Figurative Language

Stylistics is the use of linguistic elements, such as diction, imagery, and syntax, to analyze literary texts to examine how language is constructed to create aesthetic meaning (Lestari & Sulistyo, 2022; Octofiany et al., 2022). Stylistics consists of various features such as metaphor, irony, euphemism, repetition, alliteration, and others. These features are used to make songs

interesting and attractive to audiences by conveying desired messages and reinforcing meanings (Osubo & Kebaya, 2023). As stated by Fadilla et al. (2023), figurative language is one of four main categories of stylistics. Thus, an important part of the present study is to analyze figurative language in the selected song lyrics.

Perrine (1973) identified twelve features of figurative language; each of them serves distinct rhetorical and semantic functions in literary and lyrical texts.

Metaphor equates one subject with a different subject, creating a conceptual linkage between two elements. The study by Octofiany et al. (2022) revealed this device in the Beatles' popular songs, citing the line "Don't carry the world upon your shoulders."

Simile overlaps with metaphor in its broad concept; that is, both are used to compare two elements by inference. However, a simile explicitly shows the use of connectors between two clauses. In Fadilla et al.'s study (2023), this feature was found in one of Ariana Grande's lyrics: "treat it like Givenchy."

Personification is closely related to the preceding two features. This means personification still revolves around equating one subject with another; however, this feature focuses on comparing human characteristics with an animal, an object, or an idea. Fadilla et al. (2023) illustrated this device through the line "Heaven sent you to me" in Ariana Grande's lyric, wherein an abstract concept is endowed with human agency.

Apostrophe is closely related to personification. It is a way for a narrator to interact with an absent person, someone who has passed away, an inanimate object, or an abstract concept as if they existed and were able to respond. Fadilla et al. (2023) provided an example: "You love my lips 'cause they say the things we've always been afraid of, and if my eyes deceive me, won't let them stray too far away."

Synecdoche is used to represent an item by referring to one of its parts. Additionally, it can represent a part by referring to a larger whole. Pande et al. (2023) demonstrated this feature through the line "Too many mouths I must pay by my own."

Symbol signifies meaning through a word, object, character, or action that represents meaning beyond its literal sense. Octofiany et al. (2022) identified this usage in the line "There's a shadow hanging over me." The "shadow" signifies abstract concepts such as burden or foreboding.

Allegory uncovers hidden meaning through narratives that represent meanings beyond their literal content. Gustsa and Laili (2022) exemplified this through Taylor Swift's

"Cardigan," citing the line "Tried to change the ending, Peter losing Wendy," which invokes an established literary narrative to convey personal experience.

Paradox is a statement that appears to contradiction itself, but the meaning remains true upon examination. Fadilla et al. (2023) identified this device in Ariana Grande's lyric "I'ma love you even though I'm scared," wherein contradictory emotional states coexist authentically.

Hyperbole, or overstatement, is an exaggeration used to emphasize the truth. Aryanika et al. (2022) cited "Go and catch the falling star" as exemplary. Such statements often involve surreal objects or events composed to amuse, confuse, compel, or emphasize something serious.

Irony is a rhetorical device used to imply a meaning opposite to what is being said. It may be deployed for the purpose of sarcasm and satire. Gustsa and Laili (2022) illustrated this through the line "For the boys who broke my heart, now I send their babies presents," wherein apparent goodwill masks underlying sentiment.

Metonymy is a way of replacing an object or event with another closely related representative. Aryanika et al. (2022) provided the example of "the crown" being used for "the king."

Allusion can be difficult to distinguish from allegory since both can refer to an existing story. However, allusion is a specific reference to an existing story assumed to be known by readers. This type of figurative language is used to evoke the meaning of what is being presented. While both allusion and allegory invoke external narratives, allusion operates through discrete reference rather than sustained parallel. The use of Joan of Arc as a representative of strength, leadership, and courage in the song "Pearl" by Katy Perry is an example of allusion in a song.

2.2 Implementation of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics

Previous studies used a wide range of theories to investigate figurative language in songs. These studies have applied various figurative language theories to analyze song lyrics, such as Knickerbocker and Reninger's theory (1957), Kennedy's theory (2013), Leech's theory (1981), and Hurford's theory (2007). These theories share similar principles in their conception of each figurative device. However, they still possess distinctive dimensions in terms of usage; that is, Knickerbocker and Reninger's theory and Kennedy's theory are compatible with literary interpretation, while the theories offered by Kennedy and Leech emphasize semantic and pragmatic analysis; their interpretation extends beyond the literary context. Recently, the major contributions from previous studies have often emphasized meaning

decipherment for understanding feelings, implied meaning for aesthetics, and language comprehension (Bora & Agung, 2023; Datul & Agung, 2023; Santika & Syafryadin, 2023; Teja et al., 2022).

In the present study, the researchers employed Perrine's theory (1973) to analyze the figurative language in song lyrics. This theory identifies several figurative language types that allow comprehensive interpretation of meanings, making it a useful framework for stylistic analysis across various forms of literary works. Thus, applying Perrine's theory in the present study facilitates the investigation of deeper layers of the meanings conveyed in the song lyrics.

2.3 Feminist Stylistics

The aforementioned theory of figurative language was deployed as the primary framework to analyze the selected texts in the present study. Apart from identifying hidden meanings in Sabrina's song lyrics, the researchers applied a feminist stylistic framework to the analysis in order to examine how the figurative features identified contribute to the representations of women. Feminist stylistics is a field of linguistic study that uses a stylistic framework to investigate gender issues embedded in texts. Such studies provide up-to-date perspectives on gender issues in the current era (Tarigan et al., 2023).

The feminist linguistic theory used in this study was derived from Sarah Mills (1995), as presented by Simanjuntak et al. (2024). This theory provides an analysis of language and gender through linguistic choices or structures to uncovering influential factors affecting gender norms. Feminist stylistics scrutinizes texts from feminist perspectives and aims to analyze the ways language is constructed to reflect gender ideologies (Caroline et al., 2023).

According to Sarah Mills's theory, feminist stylistic analysis has three levels: the word level, focusing on pronouns, verbs, or adjectives that show unfair treatment between men and women; and the sentence level, which looks at power relations, agency, and sentence structures that illustrate how women are portrayed as either passive objects or active subjects. There are four dimensions at this level. The first one is ready-made phrases. The emphasis relates to the discovery of sexist meanings in the text. The second one is presupposition and inference. This is a dimension that concerns gender assumptions and stereotyped gender identity that society takes for granted. In literary works, presupposition and inference often lead readers to draw inferences and form perceptions about gender identity. The third dimension is metaphor. This dimension focuses on how language users employ metaphor to depict women's subordination. The last dimension is jokes and humor. Some literary works articulate narratives to entertain readers without acknowledging that many of them perpetuate practices of sexism. Thus, jokes and humor focus on identifying

such narratives, phrases, sentences, or parts of sexist language embedded within those works. The last level of feminist stylistics is the discourse level. This level investigates how language influences societal perceptions of gender roles and whether it reinforces or challenges patriarchal ideologies (Sitorus et al., 2025). The discourse level consists of four dimensions, including characterization, the analysis of a central concept or idea in a literary work; fragmentation, decoding the structure of the text to determine how the language is constructed and how it affects the entire meaning; focalization, identifying the point of view of the language users and how it affects narratives; and schemata, considering the connotation in the texts and the language user's or author's principal purposes.

2.4 Implementation of Feminist Stylistics in Song Lyrics

Previous studies demonstrated the implementation of feminist stylistics by Sarah Mills (1995) to study numerous song lyrics. These studies addressed linguistic practices that affected artists' perceptions of women's identity at every linguistic level, whether it was the words, sentences, or discourse level. The common findings identified language patterns that showed different representations of women's identity in song lyrics, such as the repetition of sexist and metaphorical terms; dehumanized terms; the of self-confidences; and the restructuring of women's representation. Lyrics written be men showed a tendency to frame women's identity in relation to sexual intercourse using metaphors. The types of words that were particularly used were pronouns or nouns. They often functioned as gendered agents, labeling women with animal or object imagery that carried negative connotations. On the other hand, some song lyrics illustrated a strong intention to encourage women's voices, empower women's identity, and challenge societal restrictions on women's independence. Lyrics written by female artists tended to embrace femininity and fight against sexism. Such practices are often realized through reconstructing stereotypical phrases or producing reflexive expressions to devalue men (Simanjuntak et al., 2025; Urbano et al., 2021; Zeb et al., 2025).

Previously, feminist stylistics was applied to study both single-song samples and large corpora of songs that were released between 1997 and 2022. Continued examination of songs from different time periods provides updated perspectives on linguistic patterns in song lyrics. We, therefore, specifically focused on identifying feminist stylistics in contemporary song lyrics that were released from 2023 to 2024.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

This study use a qualitative research design that highlighted how women construct language to express their gender identity. The selected texts were the song lyrics of the top four songs by Sabrina Carpenter: “Espresso”, which was released in 2024; “Please, Please, Please”, which was released in 2024; “Taste”, which was released in 2024; and “Feather”, which was released in 2023. This study involved the identification of figurative language and the analysis of feminist stylistics to investigate hidden meanings and gender issues embedded in the song lyrics (see Appendix A). The outcomes were expected to revealed the use of stylistic features in the popular songs and the conveyed meanings that reflect women’s identity.

3.2 Data collection

The data sources were popular songs that present women’s identity and self-expression. Hence, the texts were selected using purposive sampling. Since Sabrina Carpenter is a well-known singer whose popular songs highlight the representation of women’s identity and self-expression, the researchers selected her songs for analysis. Only songs with more than one hundred million views were selected and arranged in descending order of viewership. Four songs met the selection criteria of the present study: “Espresso”, “Please, Please, Please”, “Taste”, and “Feather”. Each song lasts no longer than 5 minutes. The lyrics were retrieved from the artist’s official audio videos on YouTube. After collecting the data, all song lyrics were divided into separate Units. In the analysis procedure, only Units that contained figurative features were selected for further analysis using feminist stylistics.

3.3 Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Perrine’s (1973) figurative language framework, which consists of 12 figurative devices: simile, metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, symbol, allegory, paradox, allusion, and irony. We next examined women’s identity and self-expression from the identified figurative language devices through the feminist stylistic framework of Sarah Mills (1995). Feminist stylistics contains three levels of analytical perspectives. The first is the word level. The main focus is on meanings that indicate gender inequality. The second is the sentence level. There are four dimensions to be analyzed: ready-made phrases, presupposition and inference, metaphor, and jokes and humor. The third is the discourse level. There are also four dimensions to be analyzed: characterization, fragmentation, focalization, and schemata.

The analytical procedure was conducted in two stages. Firstly, we identified instances of figurative language embedded in the song lyrics and then interpreted the connotations

to initially understand the conveyed meanings. Secondly, we carefully examined these instances to identify the linguistic construction according to the three levels of feminist stylistics: words, sentences, and discourse. Afterwards, we completed the interpretation using the feminist stylistic framework. The analysis was conducted through an annotation process that provided empirical information on each discovered stylistic feature and cross-referenced the findings of the present study with previous feminist stylistic research. After finishing the data analysis process, each identified Unit was systematically compared with three prior studies that were relevant to the present study. Emphasis was placed on alignment with previous evidence in terms of gender issues identified through the interpretation of figurative devices, including women's empowerment, identity reconstruction, resistance to patriarchal ideology, or criticism of male-centered norms. The findings were categorized by degree of alignment: strong convergence, moderate convergence, and partial convergence. This procedure enabled us to assess the consistency of the interpretation and strengthen the credibility and analytical validity of the research.

4. Results

The retrieved data were analyzed and interpreted based on the figurative language theory of (Perrine, 1973) and the feminist stylistics theory of (Mills, 1995). The results are presented as follows.

In the overall analysis, the song that had the highest number of views at the time of the data collection was Song A, "Espresso," with 433,443,665 views. The lines of the song lyrics were separated into 91 Units. The second most viewed was Song B, "Please, Please, Please," with 238,497,665 views. The lines of the song lyrics were separated into 51 Units. The third most-viewed song was Song C, "Taste," with 195,011,255 views. The lines of the song lyrics were separated into 37 Units. The least-viewed song was Song D, "Feather," with 136,807,971 views. The lines of the song lyrics were separated into 59 Units.

4.1 Analysis of Figurative Language

4.1.1 Metaphors

According to the analysis of figurative language, metaphor was the most frequently used figurative device. Seven metaphors were found in all selected song lyrics.

The first one is Unit 18 from Song A, "Espresso."

"My 'give a fucks' are on vacation."

This metaphor connotes the act of disregarding unsatisfactory aspects of her life. The phrase "give a fucks" was used, in an impolite way, to describe a state of worry, while

"being on vacation" literally represents a pause from working and taking a rest. In Song A, "being on vacation" was applied to illustrate that the singer is unaffected by annoyance. Taken together, this metaphor showed confidence and a strong state of mind.

The second metaphor is Unit 28 from Song A, "Espresso."

"I know I Mountain Dew it for ya."

This metaphor illustrates how the singer can influence the romantic experience of her lover. Mountain Dew is a popular soft drink that tastes fizzy and refreshing. In terms of word class "Mountain Dew" is a proper noun for referring to a kind of soft drink, but it was particularly used as a verb in this context to show how the singer provides a fancy experience to her lover, making the relationship refreshing and lively like drinking Mountain Dew. Considered thoroughly, this metaphor indicates a power relation where the singer's identity influences the romantic experience.

The third metaphor is Unit 52 from Song A, "Espresso."

"My honey bee, come get this pollen."

This metaphor replaces the images of the singer and her lover with a honey bee and flower pollen; that is, the singer, as pollen, encourages her lover, as a honey bee, to benefits from her. The word "pollen" is a noun that is biologically important to honey bees because it is their food source. Representing herself as the pollen can be a way to show power in the relationship. However, this metaphor also allows diverse interpretations. Pollen can be viewed as a passive object—something that honeybees come to take, not to give. From this perspective, her lover is the one who benefits in this relationship, while the singer is conforming to the passive role she received. Therefore, this metaphor reveals an attempt to demonstrate greater power but can also be paradoxical.

The fourth metaphor is in Units 26 and 27 from Song B, "Please, Please, Please."

"I know you're craving some fresh air, but the ceiling fan is so nice."

This metaphor refers to the singer's realization of the uncomfortable feeling of her lover in the relationship. "Craving some fresh air" is a verb phrase that illustrates how her lover is trying to release himself from the discomfort in this relationship. The phrase "ceiling fan" is a noun representing the state of dissatisfaction her lover is experiencing. Considered contextually, the singer convinces her lover to accept the discomfort in this relationship. Collectively, this metaphor demonstrates an act of oppression by the singer towards her lover.

The fifth metaphor is Unit 5 from Song C, "Taste."

"Now, I'm gone, but you're still layin'. Next to me, one degree of separation."

This metaphor is used by the singer, aiming to communicate to her love rival that lying next to the guy, whom they perceive as their lover, is similar to lying next to her. Whatever her love rival is currently experiencing, she experienced it before. This is an indirect way to remind her that the singer and the guy are still in contact with each other. The verb "layin'" from "laying" is a verb form that is used to present proximity as a tool to measure supremacy in a relationship. Metaphorically interpreted, the message conveys meaning that empowers the status of the singer.

The sixth metaphor is Unit 13 from Song C, "Taste."

"He pins you down on the carpet. Makes painting with his tongue."

This metaphor illustrates the act of the guy, assumed to be unfaithful in the relationship, pinning the other woman to the ground and licking her body. The word "painting" is an action verb referring to licking. The message is employed as an indirect way to portray an erotic scenario without explicitly expressing sensitive meanings. Literally, this metaphor describes a certain incident that the singer knows happened, but, contextually, such a message devalues the other woman by labeling her as a passive object.

The seventh metaphor is Unit 46 from Song D; "Feather."

"Your signals are mixed."

This metaphor indirectly describes the skeptical and emotionally unstable characteristics of the man in the song through the notion of mixed signals. The noun "signal" represents her lover's characteristics. The phrase "mixed signal" can, therefore, depict the indecisive personality of the man. This metaphor shows strong criticism of the man in the relationships, which reveals an attempt to frankly criticize the man's behavior in a negative way.

4.1.2 Similes

Across all song lyrics, five similes were employed to show explicit comparisons between two different things.

The researchers identified three similes from Song D; "Feather," including Unit 15 "like feather," Unit 18 "like whatever," and Unit 21 "like a bitch."

In Unit 15, "like feather" this phrase comes after Unit 14, "I feel so much lighter."

"I feel so much lighter <u>like feather</u>."

The connecting word 'like' is employed to modify how the singer is feeling after breaking up with her lover. "Feather" is a noun that represents lightness and comfort, being free from the chaos and worry that she experienced before when she was in the relationship. Apart from expressing the feeling directly, this simile is also inspiring in that it highlights the positive aspect of the singer's decision to liberate herself from the toxic relationship.

In Unit 18, “like whatever,” this phrase comes after Unit 17, “Floating through.”

“Floating through the memories like whatever.”

This simile describes the singer as feeling independent of the problems she has been handling in the relationship. The word “like” is a preposition that links the pronoun “whatever” with the noun “memories.” “Whatever” is normally used to say that something does not matter. So, representing the “memories” with “whatever” conveys the singer’s intention to imply that those memories are so meaningless that they are not even worth paying attention to. Hence, this simile highlights the strong standpoint of the singer in ending the relationship and shows that she is not an indecisive person.

In Unit 21, “you act like a bitch,” this phrase comes after Unit 17, “Floating through.”

“You act like a bitch.”

This simile connects the preposition “like” with the noun “bitch” to compare her lover’s behavior with that of a bitch. Normally, the word “bitch” is used to represent an image of an unpleasant person, and women have historically been insulted with this word. In this song, this simile indicates that the word “bitch” can also be used to insult men as a subversion of conservative language practice. However, such a practice can be paradoxical in itself, since “bitch” refers to a female dog. There actually is no reason to define a female dog with a negative image. Thus, insulting men with the word “bitch” can conversely be considered a preservation of the old norm.

Moreover, we found that Unit 53 is the only simile from Song A, “Espresso.”

“like Nintendo”

This simile illustrates the vibe of being in a relationship with the singer: an exciting experience, joyfulness, and, somehow, anxiety as if playing a Nintendo game. The word “like” links the proper noun “Nintendo,” which refers to a kind of game console. Players frequently change things or do something differently in the game. Functionally, this simile reinforces the image of the singer’s role as influential and impactful on the man in the relationship.

Additionally, there is one simile in Unit 8 from Song B, “Please, Please, Please.”

“I heard that you’re an actor, so act like a stand-up guy.”

This simile conveys the singer’s expectation of her lover that he maintains his image as a gentleman professionally, like an actor people say he is. The word “like” connects with the noun “stand-up guy” to introduce a desired character that the lover is asked to be. This simile can be seen as a form of sarcastic language. Telling the lover to show professional acting skills to be a stand-up guy reveals the singer’s perception of her lover’s

image. The connotation illustrates a contradiction between the person he is and the person he should be, which can be another way to exert power over the other person in the relationship.

4.1.3 Personifications

Another figurative language type that the researchers discovered was personification. Across all the songs, four personifications were identified: Espresso, honeybee, pollen, and a waste of time.

The first personification feature was identified in Unit 8, "Espresso."

"That's that me, Espresso."

"Espresso" is a proper noun and refers to an intensely flavored coffee that can refresh a person. The narrator defines herself with this proper noun in order to connote that she is comparable to an admirable person—appealing, elegant, and debonair like a trigger that raises the heart rate and causes her lover to be unable to sleep at night. The use of this personification implicitly represents a self-identity that has an impact on the man.

The second and the third personification features were found in Unit 21 from Song A, "Espresso."

"My honey bee, come get this pollen."

The word "honey bee" is a noun used to refer to the singer's lover to show a close relationship between her and her partner, while the word "pollen" is also a noun substituting for the singer. Contextually, calling her lover a honeybee functions as more than a terms of endearment; it represents how the singer posits her lover as a follower. Meanwhile, the singer has an identity that attracts the man like pollen attracting a honeybee.

The fourth personification feature was deployed in Song D, "Feather."

"You're a waste of time."

The phrase "a waste of time" is a noun phrase that means spending time on activities that are useless, unproductive, or not worthwhile. This personification represents the singer's lover who failed to maintain a good relationship, and can be seen as another way to diminish the man's identity.

4.1.4 Irony

There is only one instance of irony identified by researchers. It was in Unit 8 from Song B, "Please, Please, Please."

"I heard that you're an actor, so act like a stand-up guy."

The clause "I heard that you're an actor" is a way for the singer to sarcastically describes her lover through an occupational perspective. The noun "actor" has the closest meaning to her lover, whose profession involves pretending. Telling her lover to act like a stand-up

guy implies that the man is supposed to be a polite and loyal guy, which contrasts with the person he actually is.

4.1.5 Apostrophe

Apart from metaphors, similes, personifications, and irony, we also identified an apostrophe in Unit 10 from Song B, "Please, Please, Please."

"Whatever devils inside you, don't let them out tonight."

The word "devils" is a noun referring to wicked creatures. The singer compares the unpleasant behavior of her lover with "devils," and she wishes it would remain concealed before messing things up in front of many people. "Devils" represents a negative image and unpleasant identity that people resist. The use of this apostrophe highlights that the singer has constructed the man's identity in terms of insidiousness, degradation, or anything else contrary to societal norms.

4.2 Feminist Stylistics Analysis

After the figurative language was identified and interpreted, we analyzed those features again based on the feminist stylistic framework of Mills (1995) to see how women were represented in each song. The researchers also incorporated the overall contextual background of the song lyrics in the analysis so that the interpretation covered all important issues. According to the feminist stylistic analysis, the use of language in the song lyrics was presented from two major perspectives.

4.2.1 The representation of women

The figurative features in the song lyrics showed several words that represented women's gender identity.

"Espresso" – Unit 8 in Song A; "Espresso"

"Pollen" – Unit 21 in Song A; "Espresso"

"Nintendo" – Unit 53 in Song A; "Espresso"

"Feather" – Unit 15 in Song D; "Feather"

The words above were deployed to construct a role that influences the other person in the relationship. "Espresso" implies that the singer is can raise the heart rate, causing her lover to be unable to sleep at night, like a strong coffee with high caffeine. "Pollen" represents the singer as something attractive the man always relies on, like pollen, which is a honey bee's food source. "Nintendo" symbolizes being in a relationship with the singer, which evokes joy, excitement, and instability at the same time. "Feather" defines a positive emotion the singer feels after a breakup, which shows the independence

she has in life without the man. These words do not humiliate women, but they empower women's identity by shifting their position from subordinate to superiors.

Looking at the sentence level, the figurative features were mostly constructed as metaphors to build a new image of women.

"My 'give a fucks' are on vacation." – Unit 18 in Song A; "Espresso"

"I know I Mountain Dew it for ya." – Unit 28 in Song A; "Espresso"

"Now, I'm gone, but you're still lyin' next to me, one degree of separation." – Unit 5 in Song C; "Taste"

"My honey bee, come get this pollen." – Unit 52 in Song A; "Espresso"

The sentences above convey meanings that liberate women's roles. In the past, women were expected to maintain a self-image by being polite and modest, practicing restraint in their speech, being obedient, and conforming to societal norms that were mostly framed by men. However, the language construction in these song lyrics deconstructs the patriarchal structure in society; women are no longer represented as subordinates in the power relation between men and women, but they can exert a certain degree of power over men in one way or another.

Based on the analysis of the discourse level, all song lyrics were portrayed through the first-person point of view—not different from most other songs. However, using the first-person point of view functions as more than a common narrative strategy. It reinforces the singer's status as an agent of women's empowerment in society. The use of word types frequently involves self-empowering phrases and the repetition of expressions of identity. Such linguistic features strengthen the directions of the songs, revealing the songs' major concepts that highlight women's confidence, self-empowerment against male ideology, and support for women's independence.

4.2.2 The patriarchal deconstruction

Many words in the song lyrics function to diminish the image of men and undermine the male role in terms of power relations.

"Whatever" – Unit 18 in Song D; "Feather"

"Honey bee" – Unit 21 in Song A; "Espresso"

"Bitch" – Unit 21 in Song D; "Feather"

In relation to the words above, "whatever" was used to compare the memories of the singer and her lover to anything she does not care about, creating a negative image of whatever belongs to the man. Meanwhile, "honey bee," as an agent of the man in the song, positions the male image as subordinate in the power relation. Another word that has a strong

meaning is “bitch.” Previously, this word was used to insult an unpleasant woman. In this context, it was used to subvert the patriarchal practice by; constructing the man’s identity through its originally negative meaning. Although this word contextually devalues male power, it can perpetuate the patriarchal practice since “bitch” literally refers to a female dog, which is represented negatively. All in all, the aforementioned words show a deliberate intention to undermine male identity by subverting patriarchal norms and promoting self-empowerment through the use of language.

At the sentence level, the figurative features that the researchers found also reveal the subversion of power relations.

“I know you’re craving some fresh air, but the ceiling fan is so nice.” – Unit 26 and 27 in Song B; “Please, Please, Please”

“Your signals are mixed.” – Unit 46 in Song D; “Feather”

“I heard that you’re an actor, so act like a stand-up guy.” – Unit 8 in Song B; “Please, Please, Please”

The sentences above were constructed in different linguistic forms. The first and second sentences are metaphors that the singer used to oppress the man through language that causes stress or embarrassment, while the third sentence is the irony that builds a negative image of the man. These metaphors linguistically undermine male power though the most common method discovered in the song lyrics in the present study, namely subversion, whether it is the subversion of gender identity or of patriarchal ideology.

At the discourse level, some song lyrics ingeniously challenge patriarchal norms by using language forms that convey key meanings in the songs.

Here are some examples of language use.

The imperative statements

- *“So, act like a stand-up guy”*
- *“Don’t bring me to tears…”*

The language of criticism

- *“Your signals are mixed.”*
- *“You act like a bitch.”*
- *“You’re a waste of time.”*

Expressions of feeling

- *“I feel so much lighter like feather.”*
- *“With you out my life, it feels so good.”*

Overall, the use of these linguistic features in the song lyrics reveals a united standpoint that reverses the traditional masculine role and gradually challenges patriarchy.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The present study investigated stylistics in lyrics if a series of popular songs by Sabrina Carpenter: "Espresso," "Please, Please, Please," "Taste," and "Feather." Figurative language theory by Perrine (1973) and feminist stylistics theory by S. Mills (1995) were utilized as frameworks to analyze the texts.

The results, in terms of figurative language, revealed that the most frequently used figurative language was metaphor, appearing in seven instances in the whole text. This was followed by five instances of simile, four instances of personification and only one instance of irony. Of all the texts, it can be seen that metaphor was mostly used in Sabrina's popular songs, which confirms many previous studies that found metaphor to be the most commonly used type of figurative language employed in song lyrics (Fadilla et al., 2023; Octofiany et al., 2022; Santika & Syafryadin, 2023). The use of metaphor in the selected texts enhances the imagery of the situation that serves as a highlight of the narrator's important messages. This is in line with the statement by Milana and Ardi (2021) that metaphor helps explain ideas or make a comparison.

In terms of the feminist stylistics analysis, we found that the representation of women in the selected song lyrics portrays positive imagery of women by allocating higher or more powerful roles to women in relationships, encouraging the expression of self-identity, and supporting women's independence. The findings of the present study show that the stylistic features in female artists' songs tend to represent women using positive images, which supports the findings of Urbano et al. (2021) on the use of language in rap songs written by males and female artists. A major difference was reported in the representation of women's identity; that is, the male artist tended to use sexist words when mentioning women and often talked about women in the context of sexual intercourse while the female artist emphasized women's voices and resistance to sexism.

However, the present study also identified the language that the singer used to restructure the patriarchal frame. This appeared as a subversion of language that undermines traditional gender norms. This finding is in line with the study by Kumar and Daves (2024) revealing that, recently, postmodern feminist literature has subverted patriarchal power structures through the use of narratives that undermine patriarchal systems. Such narratives consisted of reasserting women's agency, engaging in women's

empowerment, encouraging resistance against patriarchal systems, and challenging gendered expectations.

The present study sheds light on the development of language use in contemporary songs by women that erodes gender inequality and serves as an influential voice for women. The pursuit of women's rights remains ongoing in promoting healthy perceptions among people in society. Nevertheless, some tactics used to produce language to express gender identity and challenge the traditional role of men remain a matter of debate, especially the use of subversion. Various language forms were identified as denigrating, oppressing, and devaluing another identity, which can be perceived as a continuation of gender inequality practices. Additionally, subverting male identity by invoking negative stereotypes of women may not present a strong commitment to promoting positive representations of women. Conversely, it can be considered a reproduction of patriarchal ideology.

Furthermore, the findings from the present study highlight people's awareness of using language in songs as a tool to make an impact on society. Such a practice has been evolving continuously and is still ongoing. It explicitly reflects the findings of L. Mills's (2016) study, stating that people commonly build community perceptions through the use of songs. Given the complex layers of power relations in society, enhancing critical awareness of discourse plays an important role in understanding them and helps develop compassion for other people.

This study identified figurative language that conveys the representation of women in song lyrics. Further studies should continue to explore how feminist stylistic language in songs interacts with societal norms.

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Appendix A

Song A: “Espresso” by Sabrina Carpenter, April 11, 2024

Unit	Lyric	Unit	Lyric	Unit	Lyric
1	Now he’s thinkin’ bout me	31	Is it that sweet?	61	Is it that sweet?
2	Every night, oh	32	I guess so	62	I guess so
3	Is it that sweet?	33	Say you can’t sleep	63	Say you can’t sleep
4	I guess so	34	Baby I know	64	Baby I know
5	Say you can’t sleep	35	That’s that me	65	That’s that me
6	Baby I know	36	Espresso	66	Espresso
7	That’s that me	37	Move it up down	67	Move it up down
8	Espresso	38	Left right, oh	68	Left right, oh
9	Move it up down	39	Switch it up like Nintendo	69	Switch it up like Nintendo
10	Left right, oh	40	Say you can’t sleep	70	Say you can’t sleep
11	Switch it up like Nintendo	41	Baby I know	71	Baby I know
12	Say you can’t sleep	42	That’s that me	72	That’s that me
13	Baby I know	43	Espresso	73	Espresso
14	That’s that me	44	Is it that sweet? I guess so	74	He’s thinkin’ bout me
15	Espresso	45	I’m working late	75	Every night, oh
16	I can’t relate	46	Cause I’m a singer	76	Is it that sweet?
17	To desperation	47	Oh he looks so cute	77	I guess so
18	My ‘give a fucks’ are on vacation	48	Wrapped around my finger	78	Say you can’t sleep
19	And I got this one boy	49	My twisted humor	79	Baby I know
20	And he won’t stop calling	50	Make him laugh so often	80	That’s that me
21	When they act this way	51	My honey bee	81	Espresso
22	I know I got em’	52	Come and get this pollen	82	Move it up down
23	Too bad your ex don’t do it for ya	53	Too bad your ex don’t do it for ya	83	Left right, oh
24	Walked in and dream came trued it for ya	54	Walked in and dream came trued it for ya	84	Switch it up like Nintendo
25	Soft skin and I perfumed it for ya	55	Soft skin and I perfumed it for ya	85	Say you can’t sleep
26	I know I Mountain Dew it for ya	56	I know I Mountain Dew it for ya	86	Baby I know
27	That morning coffee brewed it for ya	57	That morning coffee brewed it for ya	87	That’s that me
28	One touch and I brand newed it for ya	58	One touch and I brand newed it for ya	88	Espresso
29	Now he’s thinkin’ bout me	59	Now he’s thinkin’ bout me	89	Is it that sweet? I guess so
30	Every night, oh	60	Every night, oh	90	That’s that me
				91	Espresso

Song B: “Please, Please, Please” by Sabrina Carpenter, June 6, 2024

Unit	Lyric	Unit	Lyric
1	I know I have good judgement	32	Kinda
2	I know I have good taste	33	Really
3	It’s funny and it’s ironic	34	Really
4	That only I feel that way	35	Please please please don’t prove I’m right
5	I promise ‘em that you’re different	36	Please please please
6	And everyone makes mistakes	37	Don’t bring me to tears when I just did my makeup so nice
7	But just don’t	38	Heartbreak is one thing
8	I heard that you’re an actor	39	My egos another
9	So act like a stand up guy	40	I beg you don’t embarrass me
10	Whatever devils inside you	41	Mother fucker ahhh
11	Don’t let him out tonight	42	Please please please
12	I tell them it’s just your culture	43	If you wanna go and be stupid
13	And everyone rolls their eyes	44	Don’t do it in front of me
14	Yeah I know	45	If you don’t wanna cry to my music
15	All I’m asking baby	46	Don’t make me hate you prolifically
16	Please please please don’t prove I’m right	47	Please please please
17	Please please please	48	Please please please
18	Don’t bring me to tears when I just did my makeup so nice	49	Please
19	Heartbreak is one thing	50	Please
20	My egos another	51	Please
21	I beg you don’t embarass me		
22	Mother fucker ahhh		
23	Please please please		
24	Well I have a fun idea babe		
25	Maybe just stay inside		
26	I know you’re craving some fresh air		
27	But the ceiling fan is so nice		
28	And we could live so happily		
29	If no one knows that you’re with me		
30	I’m just kidding		
31	But really		

Song C: "Taste" by Sabrina Carpenter, August 23, 2024

Unit	Lyric	Unit	Lyric
1	Oh, I leave quite an impression	32	If you want forever, I bet you do (I bet you do)
2	Five feet to be exact	33	Just know you'll taste me too
3	You're wonderin' why half his clothes went missin'	34	Taste me too (ow)
4	My body's where they're at	35	You'll just have to taste me when he's kissin' you
5	Now I'm gone, but you're still layin'	36	You, no, yeah, uh-uh
6	Next to me, one degree of separation	37	You'll just have to taste me when he's kissin' you
7	I heard you're back together and if that's true		
8	You'll just have to taste me when he's kissin' you		
9	If you want forever, I bet you do		
10	Just know you'll taste me too		
11	Uh-huh		
12	He pins you down on the carpet		
13	Makes paintings with his tongue		
14	He's funny, now all his jokes hit different		
15	Guess who he learned that from?		
16	Now I'm gone, but you're still layin'		
17	Next to me, one degree of separation		
18	I heard you're back together and if that's true		
19	You'll just have to taste me when he's kissin' you		
20	If you want forever, I bet you do (I bet you do)		
21	Just know you'll taste me too		
22	Every time you close your eyes		
23	And feel his lips, you're feelin' mine		
24	And every time you breathe his air		
25	Just know I was already there		
26	You can have him if you like		
27	I've been there, done that, once or twice		
28	And singin' 'bout it don't mean I care		
29	Yeah, I know I've been known to share		
30	Well, I heard you're back together and if that's true		
31	You'll just have to taste me when he's kissin' you		

Song D: "Feather" by Sabrina Carpenter, March 17, 2023

Unit	Lyric	Unit	Lyric
1	Oh it's like that	32	Not pretending to like the wine u like
2	I'm your dream come true	33	I slam the door
3	When it's on a platter for you	34	I hit ignore
4	then you pull back	35	I'm saying no no no no more i
5	When i try to make plans	36	Got u blocked
6	More than 2 hours in advance	37	Excited
7	I slam the door	38	To never talk
8	I hit ignore	39	I I'm so sorry for your loss
9	I'm saying no no no no more i	40	I feel so much lighter
10	Got u blocked	41	Like a feather
11	After this	42	with you off my mind
12	An after thought	43	Floating through
13	I finally cut you off	44	The memories like whatever
14	I feel so much lighter	45	You're a waste of time
15	Like a feather	46	your Signals are Mixed
16	with you off my mind	47	You act like a bitch
17	Floating through	48	you fit every stereotype
18	The memories like whatever	49	send a pic
19	You're a waste of time	50	I feel so much lighter
20	Your Signals are Mixed	51	Like a feather
21	You act like a bitch	52	With you out my life
22	you fit every stereotype	53	You want me
23	send a pic	54	I'm done
24	I feel so much lighter	55	You miss me
25	Like a feather	56	No duh
26	With you out my life	57	Where I'm at
27	It Feels	58	I'm up
28	So	59	like a feather like a feather like a feather
29	Good		
30	Not caring where u are tonight		
31	And it feels so good		