



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Department of Communication

A FEMINIST STYLISTICS STUDY OF *GOD OF WOMEN* AND *THE WOMAN AND THE OGRE*

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THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
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This thesis is dedicated to my lovely daughter, Aisheoyetu Nuule and my late great great-grandmother, Meekulu Aily Aisheoiwa Mkwaanyoka waShimtwikeni.

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I declare that this work was carried out by Wilka Nakashona Twelikondjela Absalom in the Department of Communication, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

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## **Abstract**

This thesis provides a feminist stylistic analysis of two Namibian plays: *God of Women* by Francis Sifiso Nyathi (2012) and *The Woman and the Ogre* by Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong (2002). The key purpose of the study was to find out how Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) used language to represent women characters in their plays. The researcher evaluated the use of language that the playwrights used to depict female characters in the plays. A feminist stylistics framework was employed in this study. The study revealed that both Nyathi (1998) and Molapong (2002) presented women characters as inferior to men characters in their plays. Nyathi (2012) presented women as victims of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of their husbands in marriage. Molapong (2002) presented women characters negatively as dependent on their fathers. He portrayed women characters as beauty goddesses who are praised based on how beautiful they are, therefore reducing their worth to physical appearance. Furthermore, both playwrights used a wide range of linguistic devices such as metaphors and figures of speech to bring to light the gender roles that are expected of women such as being domestic workers around the home, providing sexual pleasure to their husbands as well as working in the fields to provide food for their families. The study also revealed that the two playwrights used discourse to present women as voiceless, powerless and as each other's rivals. The study concluded that both Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) largely presented women characters negatively, and the feminist stylistic framework was successful in bringing these presentations to light.

**Keywords:** drama, feminism, stylistics, gender, representation, feminist stylistics

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Language has not always been merely a medium of communication; rather it has obtained multiple roles, ranging from the projection of culture, gender and politics, to the distortion and construction of reality (Ufot, 2012). One of the exciting genres in Namibian literature is drama. What describes Namibian drama is not only its conventional style such as its use of characters or plot, but rather its authentic portrayal of social issues such as gender inequality and the life of Namibians (Mbise & Vale, 1998).

Women in Namibia continue to face challenges in achieving equal treatment compared with their male counterparts. In many spheres of life, and especially under customary law, women are still subject to unequal treatment due to traditional attitudes and gender stereotyping. Tradition, customary law and certain cultural practices are frequently cited to justify patriarchy and men's discriminatory attitudes (Ruppel, 2008).

Many women in Africa, specifically, are groomed to be good wives and mothers, and because of these cultural expectations, they assume the reproductive role and responsibilities without much protest. Men as well assume that women's place is in the home and that men's place is outside the home, which limits the participation of women outside the home and men in the home (Husselmann, 2016).

The sociological status of women in Namibia and elsewhere therefore, influences writers and playwrights. Adedjoja (2010) asserts that the social relevance of literature cannot be controverted, because literature cannot be divorced from social values (p. 34). In this case, a Namibian play, "The show isn't over until..." by Vickson Hangula is an example of how the playwright portrayed women characters as sex objects at the hands of their male counterparts. In the play, Judy, a woman who was just looking for a job ended up being sexually harassed by her male potential employer, Simon. After revealing her intentions of wanting a job, Simon promised to give it to her if she agreed to have sexual intercourse with him.

Another Namibian play that exposes women characters' negative treatment in society is *The Oracle of Cidino* (2003), by Francis Sifiso Nyathi. In the play, a girl is nearly raped by a village boy and she reports the incident of attempted rape to the elders, who instead of helping her, accused her of seducing the boy. This is illustrated when it is argued that "I know the extent a woman can go to create trouble for a man, she is guilty" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 5). This depiction sends out a message that it is not proper to assume that rape is the fault of men as it is what women wear that drives men to rape or sexually assault them. In other words, it takes away the freedom and rights of women to own their own bodies.

The researcher, therefore, found interest in analysing how the language used in written Namibian plays deal with the issue of gender, more specifically on how the playwrights represent women, by using a feminist stylistics approach. Feminist stylistics challenges the notion that women are only contented with their roles as wives and mothers as they are portrayed in literature before the advent of feminism. It is a sensibility that is deeply-rooted in a popular consciousness and mass awareness of the nature of human and social existence (Mills, 1995). The two plays studied are *God of Women*, a play by Francis Sifiso Nyathi (2012) and *The Woman and the Ogre* by Joseph Keamogetsi Molapong (2002).

One branch of language studies, stylistics, has progressed from a text-immanent analysis in the mid-20th century into a method of study that, along with the advent of pragmatics, critical linguistics and discourse analysis, now offers some importance to context beyond the level of the sentence (Mills, 1995).

This enables stylistics to embrace different aims and approaches in studying texts, including a feminist perspective. Feminist stylistics provides an avenue for exploring and exposing the realities of social injustice against women in patriarchal societies and in the works of art. As a result of this, the literary scene has in recent times witnessed an incredible influx of female writers globally (Mills, 1995).

This trend can only be explained as a reaction from a new generation of feminist writers who are protesting the plight of the woman in a patriarchal society. The effort of these writers to salvage, re-create and even re-brand the image of the woman has culminated in a female literary tradition known as feminist stylistics. (Bradford, 1997, p. 52)

From Bradford's (1997) sentiments, it can be argued that feminist stylistics challenges women subjugation in texts.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

It is true that in some instances, gender differences are manipulated widely in defining sexes. The problem at hand is that, expectations and the traditional roles of women are instilled in the language of literature such as plays to function as a reminder of women's gendered position. The choice of words validates and promotes patriarchal thinking to perceive women as the marginalised gender.

Downgrading and subordinating women in patriarchal societies have been a concern to those who believe in the equality of the sexes. This has given rise to radical and/or confrontational feminism which has often been used as a tactic by feminist writers in their women emancipation crusade. However, this strategy has not always yielded the best results for women in the African context. Regarding the issue raised above, there is therefore, a need to redirect attention to a feminist stylistic approach which is devoid of confrontational and radical tendencies. Perhaps, feminism which embraces a symbiotic relationship amongst the sexes may yield greater and more effective results for the women since language and style are the major weapons in the dissemination of the feminist message (Ufot, 2012).

Although there are various texts in Namibian literature that empower and reflect positive attitudes towards women, this small portion is insufficient to securely imply that women's position in society has improved. Instead of challenging the stereotypical representation of women, some authors reinforce them through the language that is used in their literary works. This reveals that our culture to some extent is still governed by the patriarchal system. Therefore, as Arikan (2016, p.14) puts it, unless the representation of women in literature is improved, women's status in the society will always remain secondary.

Once poets, authors, playwrights and other artists write about a certain issue such as gender discrimination, then such an issue has been observed or imagined to take place in society and it will do no harm to research on such issues so as to elucidate the raised concerns. This study on the selected plays was prompted by the fact that what is written in literature is a reflection of what is taking place in the society, hence the need for research, to confirm or reject the claims of literature.

In addition, although there have been several studies on the issue of gender and language in the Namibian context, there has been little or no concentration on the approach of feminist stylistics, rather most studies on the issue of gender focused on other frameworks such as feminism. For example, a study by Andima and Tjiramanga (2014) focused on the oppression of women in African narratives. IKhaxas (2005) also analysed a collection of Namibian women's poetry from a feminist perspective revealing the presence of women's oppression. Rhode (2003) critically evaluated the silencing of the subaltern woman and related that to the novel *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* by Neshani Andreas.

Feminist stylistics introduces the concept of gender into the classic stylistic studies, focusing on the discrimination against the women through images, sexism and gender stereotypes in the stylistic analyses. It challenges the conventional distortion of women's experiences in the interpretation of the text and constructs multiple meanings and brings out diversity in textual analysis. This present study, therefore, focussed on the feminist stylistic analysis of the selected Namibian plays, *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women*.

### 1.3 Research questions

This qualitative research aimed to analyse two plays, namely, *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women* through a feminist stylistics framework and it was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the playwrights represent women in the two plays?
2. How do the playwrights use language to present the gender roles of women in the plays?
3. To what extent do the playwrights use discourse to portray women characters in the plays?

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Since the study of stylistics, particularly feminist stylistics in Namibian plays seems not to be much researched; this study to a great extent adds knowledge to the growing body of existing literature on gender, especially in Namibia. The feminist stylistic analysis in the study provides insights to questions about literature that are basic to women's struggle for sovereignty. The research is a catalyst in opening up new and fresh discourses on feminist stylistic studies in Namibian literary works. This study therefore, is of significance to researchers and readers through providing a useful reference tool for researchers conducting studies in the field of feminist stylistics. This is corroborated by the fact that:

Every study which contributes to the comprehension and interpretation of a literary work is legitimate. Every kind of study is welcomed if it adds to our knowledge of a literary work or if it permits us to feel and enjoy it better. (Alonso, 1942)

### **1.5 Delimitation of the study**

This study analysed the two selected Namibian plays, *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women* using a feminist stylistic approach, focusing mainly on Sara Mill's model of analysis. This means that this research did not consider other feminist or linguistic theories.

### **1.6. Limitations of study**

The study is limited to only two plays, namely *God of Women* by Francis Sifiso Nyathi and *The Woman and the Ogre* by Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to other Namibian plays. Also, the study was theoretically bound to the feminist stylistic analysis. Although Mills (1995) states that feminist stylistics goes beyond the mere description of sexual discrimination in literary works, but broadens to include a study of the ways that the point of view, agency, and transitivity are unexpectedly related to matters of gender, the present study only focused on the representation of women characters in the two plays studied. The research only utilised materials available and accessible to the researcher and that which was not accessible remained unconsidered.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

It is important to highlight some of the most prominent terms in order to facilitate an understanding by the reader as to how the discussion develops.

- Feminist stylistics - Feminist stylistics is a theory and method presented by Mills (1995) and used for analysing texts by focusing on the way gender is represented. The concept of stylistics is described as a study of literary texts and their language (Mills 1995, p. 4).
- Feminism - Feminism is a philosophy that seeks to redress the injustices and imbalances that feminists believe women undergo at the hands of a patriarchal society (Alavi, 2013, p. 4).
- Stylistics - Stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language (Simpson, 2004, p. 2).
- Gender - Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviour of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). Gender roles and expectations are learned (Leech, 1981).
- Sexism - Sexism is the assumption that members of one sex collectively are superior to those of the other, together with the resultant differentiation practiced against members of the supposed inferior sex, especially by men against women. The term is also used to designate conformity with the traditional stereotyping of social roles on the basis of sex (Spender, 1980).

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter introduced the study, gave the background to the study, followed by the statement of the problem, then listed the research questions of the study, highlighted the significance of the study as well as the limitation of the study, delimitations of the study and lastly the definition of key terms . The next chapter focuses on the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Creswell (2014) argues that the utmost necessity of having a literature review cannot be overemphasised, and claims that it is something which a study will not be well informed if left out. This part of the study hence covers the literature which was consulted in the general areas of feminist stylistics. The literature review is classified according to the questions of the research which are around the representation of women in texts, language and gender roles, discourse and Namibian literature. The chapter also focuses on the theoretical framework of the study which is feminist stylistics.

#### **2.2. Language and feminism**

According to Ray (2013, p. 4), feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women's labour, fertility and sexuality, in the family, at the place of work and in society in general, and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation. Gibbons (1999) explains the concept and aims of feminism as a practice and a philosophy which challenges social arrangements regarding women's and men's relative value, status, positions, roles and opportunities.

Feminists view women as an oppressed group that is treated differently. The patriarchal society runs to benefit men, and women are subject to not only personal but also institutional discrimination. Language as a tool in constructing and reflecting gender inequality is a claim of

feminist linguists. Mills (1995) sees language as a social behaviour and a form of social control. Henceforth, Holmes (1997) states that:

Linguistic behaviour expresses complex social meanings. Through language, we assert or cede control, we indicate the different social groups with which we identify, the social roles we embrace, and the sometimes conflicting values we espouse. (p.195)

Feminist criticism which began in the United States and France is a theory in which feminist stylistics has branched out from. Feminist criticism itself has its theoretical basis from the larger feminist movement which advocates for social, political and economic equality between the sexes. However, the dialectical differences and contradictions in the feminist movement have created difficulties in defining it clearly. Feminist criticism reveals that language, as a tool of communication, is saturated with male bias. Sexist views can be projected in the descriptions of females and males, even without using any generic masculine discourse or in openly disparaging descriptions. A deliberate marginalisation of women can be seen in newspaper reports on atrocities committed on women (Holmes, 1997).

Verma (2016) claims that language plays a pivotal role in feminist stylistics, and sexism in language is one of the most constitutive aspects which deal with the use of language in defining the role and place of specific gender in the social interaction. Mills (1995) points out that sexist language is that language usage, conscious or unconscious on the part of the speaker, which may estrange females, and which may lead to the establishment of an environment which is nonconductive to communication and effective social interactions.

Thus, the analysis of feminist stylistics or feminism is basically concerned with language, for language is the principal medium of the meaning which serves to sustain relations of domination. Thus, to study feminism in a literary text is to study the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination. In other words, language is not the only tool of communication or even knowledge, but it is also an instrument of power (Darweesh & Ghayadh, 2016).

### **2.3 Stylistics**

Stylistics is a method of applied language study which uses textual analysis to make discoveries about the structure and function of language (Simpson, 1997, p. 4). According to Stockwell (2006), stylistics emerged in the 1960s, influenced by formalism, literary criticism, and linguistics. It was in the 1970s that stylistics gained more recognition due to the need to account for deviant forms in the study of poetry and prose. Stylistics concerned itself with the linguistic study of literature, while the linguistic study of non-literary pieces was referred to as, for example, 'critical linguistics', 'critical discourse analysis', 'text linguistics', etc. Thus, stylistics is referred to as literary stylistics, though Burke (2014, p. 1) points out that stylistics can be applied to the study of non-literary texts.

Verdnok (2013, p.12) defines stylistics as an interdisciplinary phenomenon concerned with the study of the relationship between literary effects and linguistic means. The interdisciplinary quality shows that contemporary stylistics has gone beyond the classical rhetoric to include a number of other approaches such as cognitive, pragmatic, corpus, pedagogical, multimodal, gender, etc. (Burke, 2014). Simpson (2004) further notes that feminist stylistics and cognitive stylistics are two examples of established branches of stylistics that have contributed to enriching the stylistic methods.

Stylistic analysis, according to Short and Semino (2008, p.117), is a form of linguistic criticism that attempts to provide a commentary which is objective and scientific, based on concrete quantifiable data, and applied in a systematic way rather than subjective emotions and desires. That is, to construe how our understanding of a text is achieved by examining in detail the linguistic organisation of the text and how a reader, informed model, or super reader, needs to interact with that linguistic organisation to create meaning. Thus, it could be concluded that every analysis of style is an endeavour to find out the artistic principles underlying a writer's linguistic choices of language. Henceforth, Holmes (1997), states that linguistic behaviour expresses complex social meanings. Through language we assert or yield control, we indicate the different social groups with which we identify, the social roles we embrace, and the sometimes conflicting values we advocate.

Stylisticians such as Short (1996) and Simpson (2004) argue that good stylistic analyses are explicit, detailed and systematic. Stylistic analyses should be based on explicit criteria – criteria which are agreed upon by stylisticians and which enable other analysts to retrieve the method of analysis. Retrievability ensures that the analytical framework employed is clear enough to be able to be challenged by other researchers, either by replication of the original work or by the application of the findings to new data (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, p. 24). Stylistic analysis should also provide detailed descriptions at different levels of linguistic organisation, resulting in systematic descriptions (Simpson, 2004).

## **2.4 Feminist stylistics**

Feminist stylistics is a framework that established itself as a branch of stylistics in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while the trend of contextualisation was at an advantage in literary stylistic

explorations. It shares ideas and language models with critical stylistics, since the analysis of literature as the product of social relations has found its strongest, and one of its most politically necessary expressions in the feminist analysis of texts (Birch, 1989). Burton (1982) is also one of the important figures in the realm of feminist stylistics.

The feminist approach to stylistics is now most closely associated with the recent works of Sara Mills and Deirdre Burton, and the critical intervention of Virginia Woolf as well as the French feminists such as Jacques Lacan, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. It claims that there is a male hegemony in both the treatment of women in society and their characterisation in literary works. It therefore seeks to frame an authentic counter-image of women through their writings. The purpose of this approach to stylistics is to explore the ways in which literature expresses (or otherwise) a decidedly female consciousness. In the process, literary art is seen essentially as a medium for the foregrounding of female experiences and the destruction of male stereotypes about women. Feminist stylisticians seek to write the woman into relevance (Ufot, 2012).

According to Blaine (1990, p. 3), feminist stylistics is the strongest successor of critical stylistics, with more specific concerns of unmasking patriarchal ideologies and denaturalising patriarchal assumptions. The goal therefore of this approach to stylistics study is the evolution of linguistic and social change. This is achieved through attempts at dismantling both the figurative and expressive possibilities of language which encourage the subordination, dehumanisation and enslavement of women in society. Feminist stylistics therefore focuses on the analysis of texts from a feminist standpoint. It points out that there are linguistic correlates of the subordination of women to men by society and it undertakes not only to reveal these correlates but also eliminates them. Feminist stylisticians highlight in a systematic manner the self-conscious attempts by female writers to modify traditional modes of language use. They do this by identifying the dialectical features as well as the alternative forms of expression in such texts. This approach to

stylistics extends over a broad range of issues and skills in textual analysis with the feminist ethos as its underpinning ideology. Mills (1995) describes it as “a form of politically motivated stylistics whose aim is to develop an awareness of the way gender is handled in texts” (p. 1). Mills (1995) further goes on to add that feminist stylistics goes beyond the mere description of sexual discrimination in literary works, but broadens to include how a study of the ways that point of view, agency, metaphor or transitivity is unexpectedly related to matters of gender.

McFadden (1997, p.14) observes that feminist writing and feminist stylistics recognise that since literature both reflects culture and shapes it, literary studies can either perpetuate the oppression of women or help to eliminate it. Thus feminist stylistics raises questions about literature that are basic to men’s struggle for autonomy. Such questions include: how does the language of literature represent women and define gender relations? How does one’s gender alter the way in which one writes?

All in all, as Woldemariam (2018) puts it, like any other stylistics practice, feminist stylistics draws basic assumptions from linguistics. However, unlike the other traditional stylistics practices, it also opens its doors to ideology and extra-textual factors in the analysis of a text. Unlike the formalist stylistics, for example, it renders less importance to linguistic form and linguistic elegance. Drawing relevant linguistic tools like passivation, transitivity, agency and fragmentation from functional stylistics, feminist stylistics can be applied to the coherent analysis of power structures.

#### **2.4.1 Theories of feminist stylistics**

While feminist stylistics is a recent addition to stylistic analyses, it has been used variously to gather stylistic inferences from texts (literary and non-literary). One should note that feminist stylistics focuses at the peculiarities in linguistic features of the texts, so it should be classified as

being a linguistic stylistics method of analysis. However, it goes further than the general scope of linguistics and stylistics (Ufot, 2012).

As Leech and Short (2007) put it, feminist stylistics emphasises less on the artistic function of language than any other aspect of language since it is clear that there are regularities in representations across a range of different texts. From this, one can understand that feminist stylistics understands how mechanical language use can be; people use elevated language in a text to achieve aesthetic features, the use of repetition or parallelism is to show emphasis, and many other 'clichés' in language use.

Thus, feminist stylistic further focuses on analysing the factors that determine the meaning of a text in social context. It goes beyond just "general stylistic questions of *why* and *how*; that is, "Why does the author here choose to express him or herself in this particular way? How are such and such aesthetic effects achieved through language?" (Ufot, 2012, p. 2462), to a study of "the ways that point of view, agency, metaphor or transitivity are unexpectedly related to matters of gender" (Mills, 1995, in Ufot, 2012, p. 2462). In the new scope, therefore, feminism stylistics shows how linguistic details can be scrutinised for gender discrepancies.

Fowler (1981, p. 21, as cited in Mills, 1995, p. 8), regarding this expansion, says that there is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both products of socio-economic forces and institutions; reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc. and practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions.

Feminist stylistics understands that there is a connection between the structure of language and the social structure. Beyond linguistic details such as lexical choices (generic forms, gender-

specific nouns and pronouns), the effect of language use on ideology, character representation, and even the point of view that a story is told from is also considered. Other theorists also observe that all these details are analysed within a context: cultural, social, official and so on. Burton (1982, p. 196, as cited in Mills, 1995, p. 4) further proclaims that, all observation, let alone description, must take place within an already constructed theoretical reality, whether the observer/describer of observations is articulately aware of that framework or not.

Sara Mills in the book, *Feminist stylistics* (1995), defines the theories and concepts around feminist stylistics. Mill's (1995) theories and additions by other theorists (who are Feminist stylisticians such as Deidre Burton, Josephine Donovan, and even herself in later years), have helped to develop this theoretical method, procuring better analytical methods, analyses, and findings. Burton (1982) used feminist stylistics to analyse the transitivity system of *The Belle*. The conclusion was that gender discrimination is an original and profound, while difficult to be changed issue that leads to social inequality.

#### **2.4.2 Related studies in the field of feminist stylistics**

There have been a number of studies conducted by different scholars where efforts are made to analyse different aspects of language and genres of literature using a feminist stylistics approach. In the study by Ufot (2012) entitled, *Feminist stylistics: A lexico-grammatical study of the female sentences in Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Hume-Sotomi's The General's Wife*, used the feminist stylistic approach that is supported by Sara Mills to look for the dependable counter-images of women through their writings.

Ufot (2012), searched for the ways in which a decidedly female consciousness was expressed in literature. The study found that the authors of the two texts studied both employed essentially

feminist lexico-grammatical tropes such as parataxis, antithesis, anti - climax, semi-colon and euphuism as well as metaphors of buildings, rooms, nature and the environment to depict the rejection of male stereotypes. Thus, Ufot (2012) concludes that feminist stylistics will continue to interrogate the linguistic basis for the struggle for the emancipation of womanhood as reflected in literary and non-literary texts.

In a different study, Shah, Zahid, Shakir, and Rafique (2014) made an assumption that the prevailing image of women in the Pakistani society and literature is as beings that are passive, negative, distorted, submissive, and dependent. The study attempted to analyse a novel, *Mann o Salwa* from the perspective of feminist stylistics to investigate how the Pakistani female author represents women in her novel *Mann o Salwa* by utilising the analysis of transitivity choices. Shah, Zahid, Shakir, and Rafique's (2014) study went on to explore whether female authors have succeeded in abolishing the unenthusiastic negative and passive image of women in Pakistani society or their writings are also socially influenced because it is commonly believed that it is always a male author who portrays a negative and distorted image of women. The findings revealed that female authors' writings to some extent are socially influenced. They partially portray them as passive and dependent on man. Their actions are actually the reaction of men's action on them as they are equally exploited by men and other women in society.

In another study, Xiaoying and Wei (2015) showcased how the employment of transitivity choices and symbolism can be effectively applied in feminist stylistics. Through a transitivity analysis of a short story entitled *Ticket please*, they provided an objective way for readers to interpret the story and through analysing processes produced by different genders. Readers can better understand characters' relationship and how their relationship develops and infer the author's intention to depict and mock an ambiguous figure of women as a strange mixture of aggressiveness and passivity, of cruelty and tenderness, of possessiveness and surrender.

A study by Hama (2017) is also an attempt in the field of feminist stylistics approach to explore the stylistic devices employed by Maya Angelou in “And Still I Rise”, “Phenomenal Woman” and “Woman Work”. The research, which aimed to uncover how the author of the three poems used language to defy the problems that women face and how she presented her own identity, found that Angelou used language to carry out her attacks. She performed the discourse acts of challenge, expressive, declaration, commissure, assertive etc., and she also employed deictic expressions, especially feminine pronouns.

Riaz and Tehseem (2015) conducted a research that focused on the sexual representation of women in media adverts. The research identified the negative portrayal of women, most frequently as sex objects. It used the basis of Mills' feminist stylistics theory and Fairclough's model to highlight the underrepresentation of women in news, literature, television, and film entertainment. Their theory is that the media devalues women and objectifies them to the diminished level of being a sexual object. The study also acknowledged the society's distinct perception of the male and female gender.

In a study aimed to examine Angela Carter's feminist concerns in her three stories that deconstruct the traditional patriarchal fairy tales, Arikan (2016) attempted a feminist stylistics approach to do an analysis at the level of word, phrase, and discourse, of which the observation indicated that Carter subverts the established ideologies and stereotyping of gender roles with a feminist interest. Accordingly, by perceiving the power of language as producing and intensifying sexism, she not only deconstructs the sexist meanings in the earlier fairy tales but presents alternative stories to undermine the oppression of females via language.

In a different discipline of feminist stylistics, Ingilan (2017) through *A feminist stylistic analysis of the image of the female Filipino Muslims in short stories*, revealed that the female Filipino Muslim writers construct the image of Muslims as individuals who are struggling with the teachings of Islam and the tradition of the tribe. The parents of the female characters, specifically the father, shape the image of the Muslimah, a manifestation that they are doing their responsibility as khalifah, 'bearer of Allah's trust'. Thus, it is in consonance with the principle of Musawah, a global Muslim feminist group, that men are not superior over women in Islam. The paper showed that from a feminist stylistic reading of the three short stories, the female Muslim Filipino authors play a major role in the development of current gender discourses, specifically on the image of Filipino Muslimah (Ingilan, 2017).

Verma (2016), in the study entitled, *A feminist stylistics analysis of Hemingway's short story, "Cat in the rain"* came to the conclusion that feminist stylistics indeed provides a set of toolkit/methodologies by using linguistics and feminism theories to find out the creation and maintenance of gender roles in the society by the means of language. This is evident in the findings of the short story "*Cat in the rain*", in which the analysis revealed that language is a vehicle in the driving of social, cultural, economic and psychological forces or meanings in the representation of women at different stages, that is, at home or at office where women are presented as subordinates. The short story writer has not only presented the social and economic roles and status of women characters as compared to the male but also the patriarchal ideology in the presentation of women which is inherent in the thought structures of the writer which are presented at the lexical, syntactical and discourse levels of the short story.

In their study "*Representation of women in Mann O Salwa: A case study through feminist stylistic analysis*", Syed, Shah and Zahid (2014), stated that the female character is passive; the

transitivity choices are of particular types, and this has some impact on the fact that the woman is represented as passive. They went on to argue that this is a common case for representations of women as a whole, and perhaps demand that this situation changes. But it does not explain the power that these types of representations have for women listeners and the reasons why women in particular are the focus of this type of representational practice, nor is it aware of the other messages in the text which undercut this dominant passive role for the female character.

Musa (2017), also investigated gender representation through advertising language from the perspective of feminist stylistics in which the researcher explored the naming devices at word and clausal level, stylistic features and rhetorical devices in order to uncover the extent to which prevailing views of gender are either maintained or challenged and how advertisers and copywriters use language to depict women. The study found that an extensive amount of cosmetic names suggest women's constant dependence on men's love and approval. Moreover, the majority of cosmetic names are created in a way that suggests that women need to resort to cosmetics to achieve self-contentment, apart from attracting men's attention. In return, the study further strengthens the patriarchal doctrines that our society is largely practicing, which revolve around 'male identification', 'male centeredness' and 'male domination'.

Finally, a study on "*Improving sociolinguistic competence through feminist stylistics*" by Woldemariam (2018) confirms that the discrimination of gender through language exists, as one of its major findings was that inferior positions are given to women figures in the two poems studied and in the poems, men are visionary and resourceful and women are emotional.

### **2.4.3 Drama and feminist stylistic**

This study is a feminist stylistics analysis of plays and thus the researcher found it essential to look at the relationship between drama and the feminist stylistic approach. To begin with, Short (1989) points out that it is incorrect to say that the only adequate analysis of drama must be the analysis of performance. Short (1989) emphasises the necessity that critics should concentrate on dramatic texts.

Feminist stylistics focuses on the production and process of discourse and “the interaction between the text and the reader in the production of interpretations” (Mills, 1995 p. 66). This approach is therefore applicable to drama as Lane (2010) points out that to read a play in written form is different from seeing it in its multidimensional aspects of communication. In reading, one imagines the events in his/her eyes; so it is a matter of reception. Analysing a play in the form of a text indicates dealing only with its composition to arrive at its interpretation.

Down through the ages, plays have often been interpreted as more than merely entertainment. Playwrights, through the act of composing plays, can write plays that mirror culture by reflecting a given culture's values, mores, and lifestyles and as such they are in essence critiques of society. Playwrights can also create plays that reflect how they interpret their own culture; having been raised in a given time period, playwrights write as a product of a given set of societal rules (Short, 1996).

Short's (1996) perspective of plays creates room for feminist stylistics in the sense that Mills (1995) claims it to be an approach that does not ignore the context and factors such as race, class, and gender when analysing a text; besides, to analyse a text totally in isolation is “an outdated inheritance” (Mills, 1995, p. 5). Thus, the relationship between language and social

forces found in drama gives the approaches, including feminist stylistics, the opportunity to adopt a political perspective against the ideological messages inserted in texts. At this point, Mills (1995) asserts that “feminist stylistics is not simply an academic exercise, it is primarily political” (Mills, 1995, p. 40).

According to Cardullo (2015), drama inevitably reflects life; it does so in terms of a particular time, a particular place, and particular issues. Indeed, knowledge of the political and social conditions of the time of the play can be so important as to be indispensable to an understanding of an individual work. There are a number of other disciplines that we can call upon in interpreting plays, in particular. Disciplines such as patriarchy in drama invites a feminist stylistic analysis, a framework which according to McFadden (1997), recognises that since literature both reflects culture and shapes it, literary studies can either perpetuate the oppression of women or help to eliminate it.

The representations of gender and sexuality are evidently abundant in literary forms and drama in particular communicates and conveys these representations through elements such as dialogues and characters, implicating the extent to which these elements mirror the likeness of the individuals and society at large. It can be said that drama as well as other literary forms have constantly redefined and reconstructed the representations of gender and sexuality which have affected readers’ understanding of their own gender and sexuality. Feminist stylistics introduces the concept of gender into the classic stylistic studies, focusing on the discrimination against the women images and sexism and gender stereotypes in the stylistic analyses; it challenges the conventional distortion of women's experiences in the interpretation of the text and constructs the multiple meanings and diversity of the textual analysis (Mills, 1995).

## **2.5 Language and gender**

As one of the key objectives of this research is to assess how the playwrights deal with the representation of women in particular, it is relevant to examine the concept of language and gender in order to assess how language affects the representation of gender in the two plays.

The starting point for the study of language and gender is said to have been Robin Layoff's work on the subject in 1975. The relatively late start is due to the fact that throughout time men have been viewed as the norm (Coates, 2004, p. 4). Examples of earlier interests within the area exist, such as women in the beginning of the 1900s fighting for their right to keep their name after marriage (Pauwels, 1998). However, Pauwels (1998, p.18) argues that the subject as a study arose during the 70s second wave of feminism.

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) discuss the earlier days of language and gender through two types of approaches to the topic: gender dominance and gender differences. According to Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002), gender dominance, which could also be referred to as male dominance, could be generated through language by grammatical use, where women were not recognised in language because of words such as chairman, which, in present language, would often be chairperson, and lexical items which represented women in a trivial or stereotypical manner. For example, blonde or manageress and lexical items which were degrading towards women, for example, bitch.

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002, p. 5) allude that the importance of context may have been underestimated with regards to the interpretation of words and their meanings. However, they also point out that due to the identification of 'sexist' words, language received an opportunity to shape people's thinking.

Whereas gender dominance creates gender representations through language, the approach of gender differences implies that the way we speak is determined by our gender (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002, p. 4). Moreover, it is determined by whether one is a male or a female. This does not take into consideration transgendered people, for example, which is one of the downfalls of the theory. Gender differences also imply that our language is fixed in terms of gender and thus does not allow language shaping gender (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002).

According to the more extreme views, men use language to subordinate women, and women respond by tiptoeing around men in their language use. This reveals the existence of sexism in language, and it can be observed in a range of ways, for example by referring to stereotypes, by using generic terms, by employing derogative or offensive words, or terms that imply objectification (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 129).

According to Yasmin, Sohail, and Mangrio (2015), the origin of this phenomenon is not a mere accident as Spender (1980) observes in the book *Man made language* that language was made by man and it represents the biasness towards the status of women which is derived from the status of males. Male, in the English language, as observed by Vodak (1997), is taken as the norm whereas female is deviant. Language presents non-parallel structures such as “man and wife”, generics such as “man” and “he” and lexical asymmetry as in “teacher” and “lady teacher”, where an affix is used to make woman as a marked form - a deviation from the male standard norm. It also implies that the profession normally belongs to males.

Mills (2012, p. 8) supports this notion by stating that women feel discriminated by these linguistic patterns, but assures that feminists see language as an arena for the negotiation of power. Mills (2012) claims that it is necessary that the speaker or writer makes a conscious choice to use non-sexist language. However, some feminists suggest that discrimination through the use of language is often unintentional due to being unconscious.

Mills (2012) goes through some of the linguistic points that need to be considered in order to develop non-sexist language policies such as the use of none gender-specific generic pronouns. Among the suggestions for moving towards a gender-free language, Mills (2012, p. 96) includes using 'Ms' instead of 'Mrs' or 'Miss' so as not to be compelled to reveal the marital status of a woman. Mills (2012) also urges people to use generic terms (to refer to both men and women) instead of the gender biased ones (e.g. 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman'). As alternatives to generic pronouns, the author proposes using plural pronouns, or writing 's/he' to include both a male and a female audience; using the female pronoun as generic, or using the masculine pronoun, but explicitly indicating that it has generic reference. Another option, Mills (2012) suggests, is to write the sentence in the passive form.

## **2.6 Representation of women in Namibian and African literature in general**

Until Namibia gained its independence, its society was deeply patriarchal and divided along racial lines. The patriarchal system is one based on paterfamilias, that is, of the man being the head of the household. As such, his wife would be his 'property', and would be subordinate to him. However, since the advent of the Namibian Constitution in 1990, there has been a paradigm shift in the human rights concepts. The Namibian Constitution provides a strong backdrop for gender equality in that it is one of the few constitutions in the world that uses gender-neutral language throughout, and it explicitly forbids discrimination on the basis of sex (Ambunda & DeKlerk, 2008).

Women in Namibia continue to face challenges in achieving equal treatment compared with their male counterparts. In many spheres of life, and especially under customary law, women are still subject to unequal treatment due to traditional attitudes and gender stereotyping. Tradition,

customary law and certain cultural practices are frequently cited to justify patriarchy and men's discriminatory attitudes (Ruppel, 2008).

Women anticipate specialising more within the reproductive role and thus they have fewer incentives to accumulate human capital through education. It is for this reason that many women do not finish their schooling years, but marry earlier due to cultural expectations from their families. Many women in Africa, specifically, are groomed to be good wives and mothers, and because of these cultural expectations they assume the reproductive role and responsibilities without much protest. Men as well assume that women's place is in the home and that the men's place is outside the home, which limits the participation of women outside the home and men in the home (Husselmann, 2016).

The current sociological status of women in Namibia therefore influences the writers. Adedoja (2010) argues that the social relevance of literature cannot be controverted, because literature cannot be divorced from social values (p. 34). It is more or less about social values and how such values are being projected by the various writers in their various generations. Namibian literature is included in this argument and hence the plays under study.

To begin with, women are represented negatively in Namibian literature. A Namibian novelist, Sifiso Nyathi in his novel, *The Other Presence* (2008) for example, writes about Kachana, a woman character who is depicted as of loose morals. Kachana is known to drink excessively and keeps company with men, unlike her female counterparts who restrict their company to women. This portrayal demeans women, as the author does not make mention of the men who keep Kachana company as being equally bad or unbecoming as they were also supposed to take the blame for being in each other's company.

IKhaxas (2005) also analysed a collection of Namibian women's poetry from a feminist perspective revealing the presence of women's oppression. On the contrary, in another study conducted by Malaba (2015), Namibian women are surprisingly represented well in recent literary works such as poetry. In the selected corpus, women are presented as very powerful, very assertive and brave enough to perform tasks that were traditionally stereotyped as men's tasks. In the poem "For grandma, who crossed the thirsty land", Kahengua presents his grandmother, Taureondja Kamutenja, as a heroic figure. The strength of the poet's grandmother is captured powerfully in the image of suckling the "father, son and daughter" from "the same thirsty nipple".

In this poem, Kahengua reverses the notion that women are weak and vulnerable; instead, they are presented as fighters and heroines who are capable of rescuing even the worst of situations. In the poem "Here she stood", Molapong proves that in the post independent Namibia, women are no longer marginalised. On the contrary, they are capable beings who have managed to achieve what men achieve. The poem celebrates a woman who has managed to be categorised amongst the best poets and has flown into the horizons of success (Mushonga, 2018). Similar situations on the negative portrayal of women characters are present in *The Oracle of Cidino* (2003), another play by Nyathi. A girl is nearly raped by a village boy and she reports the incident of attempted rape to the elders. She is instead accused by the King of having seduced the boy.

In the African context, a well-known African writer, Soyinka (1963), in his satirical play, *The Lion and the Jewel* through Sidi, a female character portrays women negatively. In the play women are represented as actually stupid or ignorant. Sidi had been warned that the chief wanted to marry her all for the sake of using her as a sex object. She instead defied all advice and went on to dine with the chief. She later ended up having sex with him after she had been warned of his intentions.

## **2.7 Gender roles in drama in general**

As a diverse country, Namibia has different cultures, and what can be observed is that women and men are taught their gender roles through the use of specific cultural practices, for instance female initiation, male initiation, genital mutilation and many others which reinforce patriarchy and power relations (Husselmann, 2016). According to Ambunda and De Klerk (2003, p. 48), “gender roles, i.e. the characteristics, and thus duties and responsibilities attributed to members of the two sexes by virtue of the fact that they are male or female, are most prominent within the sphere of the family household”. This is important to remember as gender roles are socially constructed and men and women are socialised into these roles from birth.

Down through the ages, plays have often been interpreted as more than merely entertainment. Playwrights, through the act of composing plays, can write plays that mirror culture by reflecting a given culture's values, morals, and lifestyles and the plays are in essence critiques of society. Playwrights can also create plays that reflect how they interpret their own culture; having been raised in a given time period, playwrights write as a product of a given set of societal rules. Yet the line, if it even exists, between strictly mirroring culture and producing work as a product of a culture is thin and blurred at best (Copenhaver, 2002).

A research by Copenhaver (2002), aimed to describe how gender was portrayed and to determine how gender roles were depicted and defined in a selection of modern and postmodern American plays and revealed that the majority of characters were assigned traditional gender roles, and displayed traditional gender behavioural traits. Based on their gender roles and the behaviour in their roles, characters faced limitations that confined their actions and restricted their choices. These characters therefore, experienced consequences for their behaviours, and female characters received harsher punishments for deviant behaviours than the male characters. The

study also came to a conclusion that gender portrayal in modern plays was more in keeping with traditional patterns than in postmodern plays.

## **2.8 Namibian drama**

One of the exciting genres in Namibian literature is Namibian drama. What characterises Namibian drama is not only its conventional style, such as its use of character plot and action but rather its authentic portrayal of the life of Namibians and societal concerns such as diseases, abuse and others. Contemporary themes in Namibian plays, especially after independence, deal with ancestral roots, polygamy, corruption and unemployment. The plays also reflect political themes such as exile (Mbise &Vale, 1998).

Shilemba (2018) adds that after Namibia attained independence in 1990, socio-political issues such as unemployment, violence against women and children, nepotism, corruption, poverty, injustice and economic window dressing dominated everyday life. In a study in which Shilemba (2018) critically analysed the literary representations of socio-political issues in the Namibian society as portrayed in Philander's two anthologies, *The Namibian stage chronicles* (2010) and *King of the dump and other plays* (2005), it was established from the plays that inequality and injustice have deep roots in pre-independence Namibia as life after independence has only improved for some individuals but remains a daily struggle for the majority of Namibians.

Namibian playwrights and scholars have written numerous works and plays that reflect on the problems that affect Namibian people in their everyday lives. *Election Fever* (2010), a play by Fredrick Philander, set just before the first independent elections in Namibia and the concomitant commotion. In the play, Philander uncovers how the politicians at the time lied to the masses to vote for them into power as well as portraying the chaos that ensued amongst political leaders.

Some of the parties' leaders are given a chance to confess for their political sins and numerous confessions revealing the corruption that they brought to the Namibian society.

In a recent study, Kavazanga (2018) proffers that Namibian drama indeed portrays societal issues, as her study attempted to unearth the issue of poverty according to the plays as represented by the selected Namibian playwrights. Through the plays, the researcher was able to reveal that unemployment is a major cause of poverty as portrayed by the four plays under scrutiny. Furthermore, the study revealed that unemployment not only leads exclusively to poverty, but it is also a major cause of criminal activities and suffering. Equally, the study revealed that poverty leads to malnourishment causing those affected to turn to ill activities such as eating from the dump and using their bodies in exchange for favours to alleviate themselves from the yoke of poverty.

Apart from societal issues such as poverty, unemployment and corruption, the issue of gender is also portrayed in Namibian drama as it is in other genres. Francis Sifiso Nyathi, in his play *Tears of the fears in the era of terror* made an effort to expose the strength and significant contribution of women to the struggle for Namibia's independence. In the play, Nyathi portrays a woman as brave as she takes the risk of losing her life by protecting and providing shelter to Namibian soldiers.

I wrote the play at the beginning of 1996 in recognition of the input of a silent hero of the struggle of Namibia's independence; it was written to celebrate the trials, betrayals, torture, and general tribulations experiences by a rural woman living in the battle grounds during the liberation struggle. (Nyathi, 2012, Preface)

Another play that depicts the issues of gender is "The show isn't over until..." by Vickson Hangula, a Namibian playwright. In the play, women are portrayed as sex objects at the hands of their male

counterparts. In the play, Judy who was looking for a job ended up being sexually harassed by her male potential employer, Simon. After revealing her intentions, Simon ended caressing her, as he says, "I can give you the job and we can do this every day, at work, in the toilet, in the car, on the way home and even in hotels (Act 1, scene 1, line 878). Simon's words here prove how he perceives women, as mere sex objects that can be used anywhere.

Since literature is a reflection of society, when authors and playwrights give attention to social issues such as gender inequality in their literal works, they confirm that the Namibian society is indeed being affected by them. Through the use of drama, playwrights bring the problem to the fore, for the society to decide on what to do about it. It is therefore for these reasons that this study analysed two Namibian plays, *God of women*, and *The Woman and the ogre* using a feminist stylistic approach, a form of politically motivated stylistics whose aim is to develop an awareness of the way gender is handled in texts in order to redirect and influence the actions of a society.

## **2.9 Discourse and feminist stylistics**

Fairclough (2003) views discourse as a particular way of representing some part of physical, social and psychological world. Fairclough (2003) further argues that there are alternative and often competing discourses associated with different groups of people in different social positions. Fairclough (2003) views discourse as a form of social practice which takes consideration of the context of language use.

Wodak (2001) acknowledges the dialectic relationship between discourse and society. According to Wodak (2001), language involves power and ideology, and in any interaction power relations and norms and values have a relevant role, with language gaining power by being used by

powerful participants. Furthermore, the approach, like Fairclough's approach, asserts that readers and listeners interpret texts differently depending on their background knowledge and information, and their positions. This notion is drawn upon to account for the variability of gendered identities in the target text.

Fairclough (2010) therefore, argues that since discourse is a social practice, there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and the social structure (e.g. gender power relations); with social structures impinging on discourse patterns and realities, and discourses reflecting societal norms and beliefs. It can therefore be argued that linguistic choices are drawn upon in the representation of reality and also in the maintenance of that reality.

Besides interpreting the texts and decoding the patriarchal discourses in terms of content and subject matter as earlier feminist criticisms have attempted, feminist stylistics also focuses on the production and process of discourse and "the interaction between the text and the reader in the production of interpretations" (Mills, 1995, p. 66). At this point, Mills (1995) insistently asserts that "feminist stylistics is not simply an academic exercise, it is primarily political" (Mills, 1995, p. 40).

Mills (1995) asserts that it is inevitable that a feminist stylistic analysis should use discourse analysis to depict the explicit or implicit meanings and ideologies in a narration. The characters and gender roles constitute the most significant part of an analysis at the level of discourse. Mills (1995) states that characters and gender roles that are attributed to them in texts are related to ideological concerns to a great extent, so they are just constructions: Characters are made of words, they are not *simulacra* of humans – they are simply words which the reader has learned how to construct into a set of ideological messages drawing on his/her knowledge of the way that texts have been written and continue to be written, and the views which are circulating within society about how women and men are (Mills, 1995, p. 160) .

At the level of discourse, that is, above the level of the sentence, it is the intention of this part not to focus on content as if it were a self-evidently given phenomenon, but to see content, the substance of texts, as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way that the text is constructed and the way that we decipher what is written. However, it is very much concerned with the larger structures and patterns which determine the occurrence of the individual lexical items, and it is also concerned with the effect of the items and larger structures on readers. This way, the analysis links the word and the phrase with a larger notion of ideology through these textual patterns and structures. Besides, this has implications for the way those stereotypical notions often inform the language choices which are made when describing characters in fiction, and also the way people describe themselves. Also the model considers the roles that female characters can fill, and then goes on to examine particular language choices in terms of the description of the fragmentation of the female body. Moreover, focalisation is adopted in this model because it refers to the perspective through which a narrative is presented. In literature, one can achieve this effect through first-person narration and free indirect discourse (Mills, 1995, p.123).

Under the label of feminist stylistics, Mills (1995) expands the contextual parameters of traditional stylistic analysis to include, in addition to the text and its author, its history, its relationship to other texts, and its relationship to readers. Feminist text analysis therefore involves an explication not only of how gender is represented within the text but also of how the text draws the reader into its ideological framework, and of how, through raised awareness, the reader can resist these representations and positioning's. Mills (1995) exposes the underlying assumptions about gender in advertising discourse directed at women, such as "Removes all unsightly, embarrassing facial and body hair" or "Styled to make you look slimmer," as well as in literature from popular romance to poetry and literary prose.

## **10 Theoretical framework**

Grant and Osanloo (2014) define the theoretical framework as the blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry, that serves as the guide on which to build the study and also providing the structure to define how the study is philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approached as well the dissertation as a whole (p. 13).

This study employed the framework called feminist stylistics. Mills (2002) organises what she refers to as a toolkit by dividing her questions according to different levels of analysis. Aside from posing questions about the factual information of the text being analysed, Mills (2002) presents questions for analysis at the levels of the word, phrase/sentence, and discourse. This toolkit enables the researcher to make a careful investigation of features, particularly the dominant and recurring ones in the two selected plays. Motivated by issues concerning gender difference and social injustice conveyed through texts, there is a need for stylistic analysis to be performed from the point of view of a feminist (Mills, 1998).

Although not all feminist analysis of texts report on the oppressive nature of texts towards women, feminist stylistics provides insights and awareness of underlying messages, ultimately allowing for a detailed analysis of texts to be given that uncovers how texts represent and describe women in particular (Mills, 1998). Feminist stylistics, which is largely informed by Halliday's social-semiotic theory, demonstrates how language, ideologies and dominance are interconnected. It proposes a framework for the texts to be analysed from three levels, word, phrase and discourse.

### **2.10.1 Analysis at word Level**

The analysis at this level focuses on gender bias that can be seen in the use of individual words or lexical items. Mills (2005) refers to sexism in language as the basis for examining word choice. According to Mills (2005), word analysis can only be understood and done by first studying the general and theoretical aspects of sexism and then examining the specific types of sexist language-use. Mills (2005) describes sexist language as something that alienates both women and men, and a hindrance to effective communication and social interactions.

#### **1. Generic pronouns**

In *Feminist stylistics*, Mills (2005) defines generic forms as “those elements in language which perpetuate a view of the male as a norm or universal and the female as deviant or individual” (Mills, 2005, p. 65). The generic pronoun *he* is a well-known example of gender-specific or sexist language, and it is commonly referred to as ‘he-man’ language.

#### **2. Generic nouns**

Other analysis at the word level that focused on sexism in language is generic nouns. Mills (2005) gave an example in the form, “when discussing humanity as a whole, the terms ‘mankind’ and ‘man’ are often used” (p. 66). This situation has shown that people commonly recognise them as terms which refer to males being understood as true generics, whereas, meanings that are supposedly genderless are assigned the word ‘man’ because of gender stereotypes and because the male is mostly considered the norm (Mills, 2005).

#### **3. Women as the marked form**

The linguistic forms present the male as an unmarked and the female as a marked form. This has shown the fact that women are discriminated through language use by insulting descriptions pertaining to their sexual availability (Mills, 2005, p. 70). Women are often represented as a

deviation from a male universal norm since man is stereotypically considered to be the norm and the universal. For further understanding, Mills (2005) presents the examples from different affixes which are used to refer to women, such as: 'lady' with an: '-ess' '-ette' (smaller, diminutive) '-enne' '-trix' (Mills, 2005, p. 70). All of these have connotations which the male term does not and these connotations are generally derogatory.

#### ***4. Naming and andocentrism***

In feminist discussions of language, naming has always played a major role. Feminist perspectives argue that our languages are sexist particularly because they represent or "name" the world from a masculine viewpoint and according to the stereotypes and beliefs about the sexes (Mills, 2005, p.78). For example, for girls and women, there are no terms referring to their genitalia which can be used inoffensively and in public. Commonly, women are given titles differently from men and this shows that they are, indeed, a marked gender (Mills, 2005).

#### ***5. The semantic derogation of women***

There are a number of contrasting pair words in English, where one is male-specific and the other is female-specific. But the female term has acquired a connotative meaning distinctly different from that of its partner (Mills, 2005, p. 83). As Cameron (1990) argues, feminists have discovered that "many languages have an underlying semantic or grammatical rule where the male is positive and the female negative, so that the tenets of male chauvinism are encoded into language" (p.13). Mills (1990) states that the semantic derogation of women as "the process whereby words associated with women begin to have negative connotations" (p.170).

#### ***6. Endearments and diminutives***

Previous studies show that there are more terms used by men to refer to women as partners, for example, 'my bird', 'my chick', which appear to be endearments, but which imply an equivalence

between women and cute small animals (Mills, 2005). It is often hard to explain why certain endearment terms, which may well be used with affection, can also be used to demean. Mills (2005) argues that metaphors are often used when creating terms of endearment for women as well as diminutives.

### **2.10.2 Syntactic analysis**

It is a common contemporary linguistic belief that words should be analysed “in relation to their context” (Mills, 2005, p. 98) since their meanings are not contained only within the words themselves. This explanation suggests that texts should also be analysed at the level of phrases or sentences. Mills (2005) presents certain criteria for examining texts at the level of phrases based on previous studies. The analyst should be on guard for ready-made phrases, presuppositions and inferences, metaphors, jokes or humour, and transitivity choices when examining phrases to possibly unravel features that are significantly gender-biased.

#### **1. Ready-made phrase**

“There are phrases which are reconstructed and which convey sexist meanings” (Mills, 2005, p. 98). Mills (2005) has cited the phrases as the examples based on previous studies by other scholars that show the various ways in which a woman can be discriminated against in a particular text, such as the phrase “A woman’s work is never done”; there is a sense in which the message seems to be that this is a natural state of affairs (Mills, 2005, p. 98). This phrase can be used to suggest that the specificity of the difficulty of the conditions of her working life is not as important as the general ‘fact’ that women always have too much work to do.

#### **2 .Metaphor**

When using metaphors, drawings on a body of thought or background knowledge are made, which might in fact skew the analysis or thinking of that particular object. For example, “that man

is a wolf” can be interpreted as referring to male and female sexuality. That statement may be used to refer to a man who is promiscuous, and who is, on a metaphorical level, seen to hunt women in the same way as a wolf stalks its prey. Mills (2005) explains that previous studies on metaphors show that, “male sexuality is often described in terms of metaphors of animal behaviour, so that it is seen to be at the same level of instinctual behaviour as an animal, and as little under control” (Mills, 2005, p.105).

### **3 .*Jokes and humour***

According to Mills (2005), the jokes and humour can also play a part in producing bias in language. Mills (2005) demonstrates that “because the sexism may be disguised under the cover of humour, the reader may unwittingly participate in the perpetuation of the sexism embedded in the text when s/he laughs at the wit” (Mills, 2005, p.106).

### **4 .*Transitivity choices***

In discussion of transitivity, there is a range of choices which are offered and these revolve around three sets of choices: material, mental and relational. Within material action processes, there are two choices, between ‘material action intention’ and ‘material action supervision’. With material action intention, there is a clear will to do something, for example, “I broke the window, in order to get into the house”; but with supervision there is an attempt to capture for analysis those verbal processes where things are not done intentionally, for example, “I broke my favourite glasses” (Mills, 2005, p.111).

### **2.10. 3 Analysis at the level of discourse**

A general discourse theory sees content as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way that the text is constructed and the way we decipher what is written (Mills, 2005). Discourse is proof overly gendered, and

this suggests that there are actually patterns and structures in discourse which present gender difference, and these terms are called “gendered frameworks” (Mills, 2005, p. 123).

Therefore, the analysis can still be extended by exploring discursive frameworks which might be detected as gendered. Mills (2005) tries to show that by looking at discourse, words and phrases can be linked with gender ideologies by examining patterns and structures in texts. Mills (2005) organises the way that texts can be investigated at the level of discourse by looking into four areas of analysis which are influenced by stereotypical notions on gender: characterisation, fragmentation and focalisation.

### ***1 .Characterisation***

Mills (2005) is concerned with characterisation by analysing the way that stereotypical notions often inform the language choices which are made when describing characters in fiction (Mills, 2005, p.123). This is seen in the different texts describing males and females and these have been analysed to reveal stereotypical knowledge. A great number of texts draw on stereotypical knowledge when presenting information about characters, particularly when these characters are simply described briefly.

### ***2. Fragmentation***

The simplest definition of fragmentation is “the process whereby characters in texts are described in terms of their body-parts instead of as people” (Mills, 2005, p.166). Fragmentation of the female is therefore linked with male focalisation whereby the female is represented as an object and a collection of objects for the male gaze (Mills, 2005, p.133). Representations of women fragmented into anatomical elements occur far more frequently than do such representations of men. This does not only apply to pornographic material, but advertising images, romances and love poetry,

among other genres. Thus the technique of fragmenting the female body in pornographic literature has been widely noted. Descriptions of men are, on the other hand, done in terms of their bodies as a whole and not as fragmented parts (Mills, 2005).

### **3. Focalisation**

Focalisation is “the process whereby the events in a story are related to the reader through the consciousness of a character or narrator (Mills, 2005, p.166). Mills (2005) argues that focalisation can be either external or internal to the story. External focalisation “is felt to be close to the narrating agent” and is labelled “narrator-focalizer” where the position of the narrator-focalizer is “the bird’s-eye view” which has “omniscient access to all characters, wherever they occur within the universe of the narrative”. On the other hand, internal focaliser is applied in texts wherein the narrator and the focaliser are the same character “but operate independently to disclose the story” (Mills, 2005, p.139).

### **2.11 Summary**

This chapter provided insights on the feminist stylistic, an approach which mounts this study as well as validations as to why it best suited for this study. Literature was reviewed with much attention given to areas such as language and gender, gender roles in drama, representation of women in literature as well as Namibian drama. The next chapter is on the methodology that was employed in carrying out the present study.

## Chapter Three

### Research Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology that was employed to the feminist stylistics analysis of two selected Namibian plays. As such, it considers aspects of the research design such as qualitative research and research methods. The chapter further reflects on the research instruments, data analysis as well research ethics.

#### 3.2 Research design

Jupp (2006) argues that qualitative research investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measurement. What is evident from the above definitions is that qualitative research deals with words and not quantities. Creswell (1998) further emphasises that, “Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p. 54). With this definition, this study sought to discover how women are represented by the playwrights of the selected plays and it was therefore a process of inquiry attempting to explore a social and human problem.

This study was highly dependent on library and desktop comparative research to explore extensive related literatures on the major concepts of feminist stylistics, language, gender roles and gender discourse which constitute the study focus. Although the primary source is the two plays, *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women*, other sources include critical works, journals and scholarly articles in the related areas were also utilised. The researcher identified and

interpreted information from the written plays by two Namibian playwrights, Francis Sifiso Nyathi and Keamogetsi Molapong.

### **3.3 Text selection criteria**

The researcher selected two Namibian plays for the study, namely *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*, using purposive sampling. Creswell (2013) defines purposive sampling as a sampling method in qualitative research where the researcher selects individual sites for the study because they purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. Alvi (2016) states that, in purposive sampling the sample is approached having a prior purpose in mind. The criteria of the elements who are to be included in the study is predefined (p. 30). Thus, the plays, *The woman and the ogre* and *God of women* were selected based on the fact that they are Namibian plays, set in rural areas and most importantly because they both contain the theme of gender. Due to the fact that these similarities are inherent, the study was able to meet its proposed research objective through the use of the purposively selected samples.

### **3.4. Research instruments**

#### **3.4. 1. Content analysis**

The study employed a content analysis research method. Chunga (2015) argues that content analysis is a method of qualitative research design which can be used to analyse texts and draw interpretations and rich descriptions of people to draw an informed conclusion (p. 47).

Although content analysis is said to have some weakness which Neuman (2011) identifies to be its inability to provide one single interpretation for a single text, this means that the plays in the current study may be interpreted differently by a different researcher. Neuman (2011) contends

that content analysis cannot determine the truthfulness of an assertion or evaluate the aesthetic qualities of literature. It reveals the content in text, but cannot interpret the content's significance.

Mushonga (2018), points out that even though content analysis has been criticised for providing more than one interpretation of a single text, it has its strengths, such as that it can show the researcher how different people from different cultural backgrounds understand and receive the message communicated in the text. The content analysis method also assists in clarifying the message communicated in the text by linking it with the same situations that are taking place in real life, such as gender inequality, women oppression and others.

Moreover, through content analysis, this study managed to analyse the two selected plays in a way that meaningful interpretations were drawn from the plays which enabled the researcher to draw an informed conclusion upon which this study was based on. The content that the researcher analysed in this study was from the plays *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women* by two Namibian playwrights.

#### **3.4.2. Content analysis checklist**

According to Leech and Short (2007, p. 32), the use of a checklist forms the basis for stylistic analysis). In the case of this study, a checklist was formulated in order to analyse the plays using a feminist stylistics approach. The checklist consisted of three categories of feminist stylistics analysis as proposed by Mills (1995), analysis at word, sentence and discourse level. The checklist itself involves possible relevant linguistic means for feminist stylistic analysis which falls under each of the three levels. As such, the checklist can be used as a heuristic tool to find the linguistic means that uncovers the representation of women from the two plays. Because one cannot tell in advance which factors are relevant and which are not, the checklist can be helpful in finding these means, without excluding phenomena beforehand.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The two plays were analysed following the feminist stylistics framework. The content analysis checklist was used to find out what stylistic devices the plays employed as per the first research question of the study. The researcher analysed the stylistic devices found based on the outlined model of feminist stylistics, word, sentence, and discourse level in order to find how the playwrights use language to portray gender roles and represented women characters in the two plays. Finally, the researcher then assessed the effectiveness of the feministic stylistic approach in analysing the representation of women in the plays.

Mills (1995) organises a toolkit by dividing her questions according to different levels of analysis. Aside from posing questions about the factual information of the text being analysed, Mills (1995) presents questions for analysis at the levels of the word, phrase/sentence, and discourse. This toolkit enabled the researcher to make a careful investigation of features, particularly the dominant and recurring ones in both plays.

#### ***Analysis at word level***

This level of analysis focused on gender bias that can be seen in the use of individual words or lexical items (Mills, 1995). According to Mills (1995), word analysis can only be understood and done by first studying the general and theoretical aspects of sexism and then examining the specific types of sexist language use. Word choice can be investigated by finding occurrences of sex-specific pronouns, misuse of generics, address terms, and negative descriptions of women (Mills, 1995).

### ***Analysis at phrase/sentence level***

Words should be analysed “in relation to their context” (Mills, 1995, p.128) since their meanings are not contained only within the words themselves. This explanation suggests that texts should also be analysed at the level of phrases or sentences. Mills (1995) presents certain criteria for examining texts at the level of phrases based on previous studies. The analyst should be on guard for ready-made phrases, presupposition and inference, metaphor, jokes or humour, and transitivity choices when examining phrases to possibly unravel features that are significantly gender-biased (Mills, 1995).

### ***Analysis at discourse level***

Beyond the level of sentence, analysis can still be extended by exploring discursive frameworks which might be detected as gendered. Mills (1995) shows that by looking at discourse, words and phrases can be linked with gender ideologies by examining patterns and structures in texts (Mills, 1995). This is in accordance with a general discourse theory that sees content “as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way that the text is constructed and the way we decipher what is written” (Mills, 1995, p.159).

## **3.6 Ethical issues**

Dooly, Moore, and Vallejo (2017) emphasise the need for researchers to always be ethical as far as possible; they should do their best not to over-interpret or misinterpret the data and represent the possible conclusions as closely as possible. For this research, an ethical clearance form was

completed and submitted as requested by the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The researcher acknowledged all sources used and thus avoided plagiarism, and adhered to ethical issues of the research. An ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the Faculty Research and Ethical Clearance Committee (F-REC).

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter focused on the procedures and methodology that were carried out in this study. The research design which is the qualitative study was discussed. The research method which consisted of the selection criteria and content analysis were also specified. Further observed were the research tools, data analysis and finally research ethics that included ethical requirements. The next chapter (Chapter 4) focuses particularly on the in-depth analysis of the two plays: *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre* as framed by the feminist stylistics framework, and as enlightened by the reviewed literature.

## Chapter Four

### Major Findings and Discussions

#### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher analysed the plays, *The Woman and the Ogre* by Joseph Keamogetsi Molapong (2002) and *God of Women* by Francis Sifiso Nyathi (2012) following the feminist stylistic framework. The plays are analysed using a point by point comparative approach, which means that they are not analysed separately but rather at the same time depending on the content which aligns with Mill's three part model of analysis; word level, syntactical level and discourse level. Short summaries of the two plays are provided before the analysis and the last section is the discussion of the findings.

#### Summary of *God of Women*

The play *God of Women* (2012) revolves around a chief called Lewanika, a village chief who married three wives. Due to the fact that his three wives failed to bear for him a son, the customary male heir to his throne, he made a decision to marry a fourth wife in with the hope that she would finally bear him a male child. Lewanika is described as a disrespectful and abusive husband, who abuses and disrespects his wives. His clan starts ailing which encourages him to invite the service of a seer to find the origin and cause of the curse, and also to cleanse the clan from further affliction. The seer exposes that the ailment is caused by lust, and that it involves the father and son sharing the same woman. His fourth and youngest wife, Joyce, later announces that she is pregnant, but she is confused as to who the father of the unborn is. In a dramatic turn of events with the revelations and fulfilment of the seer's prophecy, Chief Lewanika decides to kill himself.

## **Summary of *The Woman and the Ogre***

The play, *The Woman and the ogre* is centred on a young woman, a daughter of the village's chief, who goes through proposals by different men from the village. The men in turn recite poems and sweet words in the hope of winning her heart, and she finally finds a man that captured her heart. The chief approves his daughter's marriage to the young blacksmith. The newlyweds take off to build their house on the outskirts of the village, near the mountains. Things however, turn upside down after the black smith leaves his pregnant wife at home to go and work in the mountains. An ogre comes and enslaves her. After the lost hope of her husband ever coming to her rescue, a miracle bird offers to go and look for him and disclose the suffering that his wife is enduring at the hands of an ogre. At last, the bird succeeds and the blacksmith comes home. Although the couple manages to kill the ogre, they do not survive the war except their baby boy of whom the chief names Oundu and claims that he shall be his successor.

### **4.1. Analysis at word level**

At the level of words, using a feminist stylistics entails looking at individual words with the intention of answering questions like "*what do we understand as 'natural sex roles', and how are they influenced by language?*". Mills (1995) classifies some models of specific types of sexist language used for analysis at word level. The plays *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre* are analysed looking at generic pronouns, generic nouns and pronouns, negative descriptions of women, naming and andocentrism, and euphemism and taboo words as well as endearments and diminutives.

#### 4.1.1. Generic nouns and pronouns

According to Mills (2012), one of the problems in literal language is related to generic pronouns and nouns, which is generally found to be masculine or when the feminine always refers to a profession that has become stereotypically reserved for women, such as nurse or secretary (Mills, 2012).

- I. Seer: He that hearkens not to mere words will hearken by the sight of his own blood (Nyathi, 2012, p. 3).
- II. Neo: Wasn't it our generation that was taught that, He who listens not with ears, understands only by the site of his own blood? (Nyathi, 2012, p. 7).
- III. Neo: You were not an infant when our previous praise singer said, when a man has nowhere else to put his hands for support, he puts them on his knees (Nyathi, 2012, p. 6).

Examples I and II given above are derived from the play *God of Women*, whereby the characters, The Seer and Neo addressed Chief Lewanika at different occasions. In the examples, the two characters used the pronouns *he* and *his* to give reference to a case that can be applicable to both genders. The literal explanation of their statements is to say that a human being who does not listen to advice will face consequences. It is safe to say that although the pronouns used refer grammatically to the singular male person, the statement speaks to both genders and there is therefore, no doubt that the pronouns used in these examples are not sex specific, but generic. When male generics are used, as in these cases, it is possible to mistakenly interpret them as referring to men only because of the inconsistency and strong association. Nyathi's (2012) usage of generics therefore excludes women and makes them invisible when they should not be.

Example III highlights the use of the gender specific noun, *man*, to refer to humanity as a whole; in the sentence, the word 'man' is generically used, diminishing women as being less important than men which reflects bias. Nyathi (2012) could have used a more neutral pronoun such as 'human' instead of 'man' as a way not to favour a particular gender. In the absence of the woman in the noun 'man', the playwright reinforces the message that humankind and being is an exclusive thing best suited for males.

Gender-specific pronouns are largely used to depict people from stereotypically male and female working domains. Whereas doctors, scientists and taxi drivers are generally labelled as male, secretaries and models are said to be female. The same subjective labelling occurs when the sex of a person is unknown, as we then mostly assume that the person is male. In this case, it was desirable to use non-sex-specific pronouns, like 'he' or 'she' or 'they', so as not to risk the accusation of having stereotypical ideas of male and female professions. Language shapes our thinking and there are huge negative consequences for excluding a certain gender from words; it therefore effectively blots out their existence.

#### **4.1.2 Endearments and diminutives**

Mills (1995) argues that there are terms which are apparently endearments, but which are applied more frequently to women than to men and which in fact reproduce asymmetric patriarchal power relations. It is hard to explain why certain endearment terms, which may well be used with affection, can also be used to demean.

- I. Man 1 to Young Woman: Your ears are perfectly ripe like mahangu... (Molapong, 2002, p. 44).
- II. Lewanika to Joyce: You are that hard to find grain... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 30).

In the two examples above, Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) used words like *mahangu* and *grain* which are in a category of words in which some men use to refer to their female partners; mostly these words are associated to food, which as in these cases imply an equivalence of women to eatable items. So the two playwrights imply that women can be compared to mahangu and grain respectively. The two comparisons reduce the referents to something good to eat or rather available for consumption. It also paints a picture that the roles of women in the society just like food, is merely to feed and satisfy men.

#### **4.1.3 Semantic derogation of women**

One area of semantic derogation of women involves insults and derogatory words towards them. Following is the analysis based on this category from the plays *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*. Chief Lewanika has on several times used insulting and demeaning words towards his wives

- I. Lewanika: It is my pleasure to treasure your mirror rather than suffer the *coldness* of my other *numb* and *chilly* wives (Nyathi, 2012, p. 6).

In the above example, the male character, Lewanika from the play, *God of Women* used derogatory words such as *coldness* and *numb* and *chilly*. According the *English Oxford Dictionary*, being numb is when one is deprived of feelings or responsiveness, to be cold is when lacking affection or warmth of feeling; unemotional and a chilly person is unemotional, distant, and quiet. From the above explanations of the words used in example I, one can pick out that they mean to describe an individual who does not have emotions. Nyathi (2012), through these adjectives presents women as unfriendly people who do not have any emotions or sympathy; despite evidence from the play that his wives love and provide food for Lewanika as their husband; Ma Inonge the eldest wife advises him and sympathised with him when he was lonely and felt

bewitched: “Ma Inonge: Shall I send for a witchdoctor my Lord” (Nyathi, 2012, p. 22). The representation of women as emotionless is indeed dangerous in the sense that it does nothing but promote the notion that women cannot feel, therefore men do whatever they please with them.

II. Lewanika: Dry that liquid on your ugly faces (Nyathi, 2012, p.17).

The example above confirms the notion that judgment and criticism of appearance in society is primarily reserved for women. In the above example, Chief Lewanika angrily calls out his wives and their ugly faces to mark the stance of their value. Due to the power invested in him as the men in the house and Chief, what he did there is to reduce the women’s worth to their appearance. Most often than not, women are judged based on their looks, while men are judged based on their individual characters which is very unfair and depreciating to female gender. With the uttered word, *ugly* which means to be unaesthetically pleasing, the women are supposed to look down on themselves and question their worth. With this, the wives’ roles in the society are slyly diminished as their value as human beings and contributors to society are sadly reduced to their looks.

III. Neo: *Little* women of the chief, what is this pestilence of anguish you invoke...? (Nyathi, 2012, p.12).

IV. Lewanika: Has there been a funeral in this compound, or have you all decided to be *children* (Nyathi, 2012, p.17).

V. Lewanika: Hey you, Nsala it is the reason for you deciding not to bear children that you want to be a *child* yourself? (Nyathi, 2012, p.18).

In the examples above, Nyathi, through characters, Neo and Lewanika, exposes the use of demeaning words to describe the women character in the play *God of Women*. First, Neo calls

Joyce a little woman; the word little implies something small or rather not enough in this case, although it was brought forward in the play that Joyce was Lewanika's younger wife, it is not accurate that she is called "little". The word "little" is therefore derogatory and in this case it means that Neo regards Joyce as not woman or rather, human enough.

In examples **IV** and **V**, Lewanika utters that his wives have decided to be children. children are human beings that are still to grow and they do not have the power and capacity to decide on things on their own and most are uncontrollable in behaviour. For the Chief to call or compare his grown up wives to children, this means that he does not value them as adults and therefore this is demeaning. It can be said that Lewanika sees his wives as immature or unable to behave as grown individuals. He implies that a woman's mind is not and cannot be fully developed, and is thus incapable of carrying out higher intellectual exercises. Moreover, most children depend on their parents economically, and addressing women as children as in the examples given above, can also mean that they are portrayed as dependent on their husbands for economic stability.

**VI.** Lewanika: Is there peace in the village? Do people still respect me? Do they still fear me? Ma Inonge: I don't know.

Lewanika: You must know! Idiot! You are the eldest of all these nincompoops. Your senses must be grown by now (Nyathi, 2012, p. 22).

The words idiot and nincompoop that are used to refer to Ma Inonge and her counterparts by Chief Lewanika in the above example are not only mere insults but also validate the stereotypical myth that women are dumb or lack intellect as compared to men in society. What is even interesting is how the last phrase from the above example indicates that women are stupid and they have no common sense and it is expected that as they grow older they attain these qualities.

**VII.** Young Man: I promise strong grandchildren who will be the *sons and daughters*, leaders for the generations to come (Molapong, 2002, p. 48).

The fact that the binary term “sons and daughters” used in **VII** is fronted by the male term *son* prioritizes the male gender and promotes the stance that men are more superior to women in society and that their position will always remain secondary even in the use of language. Moreover, since the elements of which comes first in English are generally seen to be the most important in terms of information processing, daughters in this case are seen as less important.

**VIII.** Young Man: I give to my chief; I give praise to my ancestral spirits... all my heroes and heroines (Molapong, 2002, p. 47).

In terms of the binary term, “heroes and heroines” used by Molapong (2002) in the example above, the suffixed or the male term is neutralised so that it can be used for both males and females. Often one can refer to both men and women as heroes but the same can’t be said about heroines and this gives the female term a more none prestigious meaning. This use of language can therefore be labelled as semantically derogatory to the female gender.

#### **4.1.4 Female experience: Euphemism and taboo**

Within this category, Mills (1995) explains the idea that some common concepts in the women’s lives may be difficult to talk about except in endocentric terms that present the experience from a male point of view thus she considers this category of analysis to look at euphemism and the ways that many areas of women’s lives are surrounded by linguistic taboos.

- I. Lewanika: ... you are the oldest of my wives. It does not ring in my memory that you were still *untouched* when I first met you. Did you have a son before? (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4)

In many African cultures, certain aspects about women are tabooed subjects, surrounded with special rituals and language use. Cultural views and society dictate how to address these taboos, of which the most common way to verbally address taboos is through avoidance. One taboo that crosses many African societies is the sex taboo. The subject of sex is most of the times avoided especially among women.

Example I is a question that Chief Lewanika, a character in the play *God of Women* posed to one of his wives, Ma Inonge in particular, to find out if she had had a son or had had sex before. In the example, Lewanika uses the euphemism “untouched” in an attempt to avoid the word sex. It is evident that despite the Chief’s avoidance of the word sex, Ma Inonge still felt disrespected. She replies in anger as the interrogation takes place before the other wives: “Ah, father of my children, where is your respect? How dare you malign me before these young girls?” (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4). From this reply, one can conclude that she is angry because a question of sexual nature which is regarded as taboo was posed to her in the presence of the other younger wives.

Another taboo subject around women that appears in the play is the concept of menstruation. Despite the fact that menstruation is a natural process of the female body, it is considered to be undesirable and dirty. However, there are many instances when it must be addressed and that is where the euphemisms come in.

- II. Ma Inonge: ... I danced to the first rhythm of ecstasy. Three moons passed without a fountain of brew, I knew I was carrying (Nyathi, 2012, p.14).

**III.** Lewanika: Bo Ma llenge, our first contact coincided with the intense flow of the river.

Were you unattended before, or were you simply on the moon (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4)?

Menstruation is a natural psychological phenomenon experienced by women every month after attaining puberty and it still continues till menopause. It is saddening to note that this natural process incorporates a social taboo in many societies. In most cases it is considered to be dangerous and unclean and regarded as an unsayable (Kaundal & Thaku, 2014). The euphemism used in the above examples such as “a fountain of brew” and “on the only moon” confirms the culture of silencing menstruation and the inability to discuss it openly as it is regarded as taboo.

The issue of not being able to speak freely about a natural process like menstruation can be damaging to the lives of women. The negative connotations surrounding menstruation can for example, lead them to have to dry their sanitary cloths under the bed and possibly getting urinary infections or worse just because they are afraid to be seen and thus regarded as impure. Karki and Espinosa (2018), comment that the negative cultural views on menstruation only cause embarrassment and low self-esteem among girls who transition to womanhood. The whole notion of being polluted and impure while menstruating defines a series of restrictions that have a long lasting impact on women’s lives, identities and health. Myths and stigma around menstruation and menstrual hygiene inflict humiliation upon millions of women and girls and discriminate against one gender. Menstruation taboos not only violate women’s rights but also the right to bodily integrity and equality, and the rights to freedom from inhumane treatment.

**IV.** Narrator: At a river side as she prepares to bath, men are seen hiding behind the bushes jostling to see the beauty of a women in sunlight (Molapong, 2002, p. 44).

The above example is derived from the play, *The Woman and the Ogre*, and it portrays a tabooed subject, that of the naked women body. The women's naked body is regarded as an unsayable in many African societies and among the Aawambo people for example, it is normal for a boy toddler to run around naked, but the same can't be said about a girl child as girls are supposed to be covered at all costs and their private parts are never spoken about openly. Molapong (2012) too, in example **IX** used the euphemism term "beauty" to refer to the young woman's nakedness. This type of language reinforces the perception about the female body that maintains the patriarchal subordination of women and girls.

#### **4.1.5 Naming and andocentrism**

Cameron (1990) proffers that many strands in feminist critiques of language have specifically concerned themselves with representations in which they conclude that our languages are sexist, that is, they represent or name the worlds from a masculine viewpoint and in accordance with stereotypical beliefs about the sexes. Androcentric language is biased in the sense that it promotes the norm where the male is generically taken to be the standard of humanness.

The first case of androcentric language found in the plays *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*, is the social insignificance of the women (daughter) and her marginal status within the society as opposed to the glorification and exaltation of the son is distinctively illustrated in the plays. In the play *God of Women*, Chief Lewanika is not happy regardless of his blessings of daughters. He does not feel 'chief' enough as he has no son to inherit his legacy.

- I. Lewanika... for long I wanted a son, but all has been in vain. Who shall inherit this chieftaincy when I bid farewell to this earth...? (Nyathi, 2012, p. 8)

- II. Lewanika: It has been decreed I will have a son, an heir. In spite of the ill omen of the oracle, I shall need him. My ancestor's seed has to be planted, replanted and nurtured to live life eternal (Nyathi, 2012, p. 8).
- III. (After realising his daughter gave birth to a baby boy) Chief: this is the chief to succeed me Oundu... (Molapong, 2002, p. 50).
- IV. Ma Inonge: Our lord loves you; he is expecting glory from you, a son ... (Nyathi, 2012 p. 14).

In the sentences above one comes across a connotation that a boy child is regarded to be more important compared to a girl child. Examples I- IV express the common attitude towards a boy as one who is the successor and who has to continue with the family name, the heir, and the master.

The first example reveals Chief Lewanika's stance on the boy child and it is clear that he indeed believes that the prosperity of his clan and family depends solely on a son that he wishes to have and his status. The last example shows how even women feel useless for not bearing a son and the example sadly shows that in order for women to be loved and appreciated by their husbands, they need to give glory to their husband through giving birth to a son. As a result, it is not only the pressure for women to make sure that they bear children in marriage but to produce male ones in particular.

The examples above also bring to light how the two playwrights, Nyathi (2012) and Molapong, (2002) portray the stereotypical concept that women are not to be leaders. For them to represent the fullness of human nature, it is necessary that the chief be male. What can be observed is the androcentric presupposition whereby the male possesses generic leadership skills and that women are born to be followers and to be submissive both in the society and in their homes.

Nyathi (2012), through Chief Lewanika, further shows how men feel superior over their wives. At the end of Act I, Scene I, while drinking beer with his best friend, Neo, Lewanika says to him:

We culture them . . .

We give them a little civilization . . .

We domesticate them . . .

They are ours . . . (Nyathi, 2012, p. 9).

The above utterance suggests that women do not have equal status as men in the particular African setting. The example confirms the fact that men perceived women as empty vessels that need to be moulded to fit their husband's preference or standards of the ideal women, hence Lewanika believes that it is their responsibility to *culture* them. In other words, the wife is reduced to the status of a minor. The quote further paints a picture that women need to be civilized, but only a little bit so that they will not overshadow men. Lewanika says that they need to "domesticate them". In this context, being domesticated positions the woman into a slave status, whereby they perform any required needs for their masters. Lewanika's wives are expected to work in the fields, cook, and take care of the children and their husbands, and also to provide sexual pleasure for them. This kind of beliefs can be damaging to the lives of women as they will always look at themselves as objects that belong to men.

The other issue represented from the male point of view is sexual inactivity between men and women. Although sex is supposed to be an act meant to be enjoyed and that provides pleasure to both parties, yet it is used as a practice that men do to women. What example **V** below shows is the dominance of men in the sex act, and what represents sex is the word *met*? So instead of him saying when we met, Lewanika excludes the women from the act and limits it to his actions only, which indeed only objectifies the woman.

- V. Lewanika: It does not ring in my memory that you were still untouched when I met you (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4).
- VI. Lewanika: ...Ma Inonge your traditional *dish* has lost its delicacy (Nyathi, 2012 p. 4).
- VII. Lewanika: Women, I shall continue feasting in your huts (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4).
- VIII. Ma Inonge: I am not on duty today my lord please consult your roaster.

Lewanika: I command you to come immediately.

Ma Inonge: Yes, my lord I am sorry, I thought you wanted your daily *food* (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4).

Interestingly, examples **V**, **VI**, and **VII** all relate sexual intercourse to something that is to be eaten or fed to man, which is a sexist credence that makes it difficult for women to express their own experience of sex. What Nyathi (2012) illustrates is how women bodies once again are reduced to mere dishes which their husbands feast on. The suggestion in Ma Inonge's answer in **VII** infers that whenever a woman is called by her husband, she is called for sexual intercourse, which is referred to as "daily food" within the traditional setup. That is why Ma Inonge is heard responding that she is not on duty, alluding to the fact that one of the roles of a woman is to provide sexual pressure to her husband.

#### **4.2 Analysis at phrase level**

The scope of this part of analysis is enlarged to cover phrases and sentences. At this level, meaning can be inferred from both plays and the context in which they both occur. For individual words, this could be quite difficult as some words can have several meanings. Deciding which meaning to accept can possibly be problematic and lead to misinterpretations. Mills (1995, p. 128)

says that the way that meaning takes place often involves the process of the meaning production not being accessible at the literal level of the individual words of which the sentence is composed.

#### **4.2.1 Ready-made sentences**

Mills (1995) argues that there are some 'ready-made' phrases which are sexist, and so, could be subjected to phrasal analysis, and, ultimately, alterations.

- I. Lewanika: All this *woman talk* reigns supreme over your unknowable world... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 3).

I is an example taken from the play *God of Women*, whereby the character, Chief Lewanika is speaking to himself in an attempt to question his strength as a Chief in the midst of all chaos that has been happening in his clan and in the process he uses the sexist phrase, women *talk*, and this phrase is belittling women. Although it is difficult to counter because it is presented in a form which is not personal: the person using the phrase does not claim responsibility for inventing it, but is simply calling upon pre-existing knowledge, the knowledge that suggests that women are weak, therefore he should not be bothered by the women's talks around the clan as they are rather useless and weak too just like the gender they are named after.

#### **4.2.2 Metaphor**

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) describe a metaphor as the essence of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. That is, it is associated with a particular rule of transference called metaphoric rule that indicates that the figurative meaning is derived from the literal meaning. Therefore, a metaphor could be considered as a fundamental element in the way that we structure our thoughts and words. A metaphor, in this view, is seen not as a literary form or as a deviation from some supposedly literal language, but rather as one of the building blocks

of our thinking, at both the level of language acquisition and language-use. The concept of the metaphor is one that directly compares two things. It is therefore, not rare to see some sexist comparisons.

- I. Lewanika: ... You must treat her as one of you, she is my fourth wife. I know that, this has upset some of you, but know yourselves why it happened, you, Ma Inonge, your granary has been depleted. Ma Ilenge your traditional dish has lost its delicacy and you, Nsala, all my hopes lay on you until you proved yourself barren beyond an ordinary desert... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 5).

In example I, Nyathi (2012) uses sexist and derogatory metaphors to refer to the Chief's wives' state of barrenness and womanhood. Ma Inonge's womb is compared to an empty granary, meaning that she can no longer give birth and now her childlessness identifies her. Ma Ilenge's vagina is compared to a traditional dish and the chief adds that it has lost its taste referring to sexual feelings when engaging in sex.

Nsala's barren womb is compared to a desert, which is a land mass that has very little or no vegetation at all. It is clear that Nyathi takes on fertility, and especially the bearing of male children which is believed to be something that guarantees the continuation of the lineage, and traditionally viewed as the main task of a wife, the fulfilment of her marriage commitment, the repayment of the cattle that were paid for her in the form of lobola. In this case, Nsala is regarded as a failure in life for failing to give birth and as a result she is most often miserable: "My bosom swells with anguish at this spell of impotence cast on my womb. I sink beneath this condemnation piled on me repeatedly by a man to whom I gave my heart and soul (Nyathi, 2012, p.170).

- II. Lewanika: You that hard to find grain amongst the dull sand on the river banks (Nyathi, 2012, p. 3).

**III.** Ma Ilenge: I had forgotten I would also age like her and that he would seek for greener vegetables (Nyathi, 2012, p. 25).

**IV.** Man 2: ... I will water your beauty and forever you will look like a sunflower (Molapong, 2002, p. 4).

In examples **II** and **IV**, Nyathi (2012) uses food as a metaphor for women. In the examples above, *grain* and *green vegetable* are used as comparisons of women characters in the play. The use of these kinds of metaphors reinforces the objectification of women, implying that they are just there for male consumption and they are both powerless and inanimate. In example **III**, a female character, Ma Ilenge, is made aware by the society that there is a similarity between her and fresh vegetables, they both are to be desired and consumed, and this type of language is demeaning to womanhood.

**V.** Ma Ilenge: You see, Ma Inonge, you and I and perhaps Nsala grumble a little now and then, but there is no change achieved. We are all the same: women who have fallen prey to a cunning beast (Nyathi, 2012, p. 29).

**VI.** Ma Inonge: Of all the bulls in the village, why did you decide to choose John? (Nyathi, 2012 p. 4).

**VII.** Ma Ilenge, I saw a vulture in a dove's feathers, he did it again and again (Nyathi, 2012, p. 25).

**VIII.** Joyce: You wild imbecile, where is your compassion? Have you ever reflected on who you are and where you come from? You are just a little devil and animal, like them (Nyathi, 2012, p. 20).

**IX.** Young man: I am stunned by her natural beauty and attracted to her like a bee to nectar (Molapong, 2002, p. 48).

The examples above illustrate the use of animals as metaphor for men by the two playwrights. Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) represent male power and supremacy by labelling men as vultures, bulls, beasts and bees and women as flowers and nectars thus casting women as powerless. Also the comparison of men to animals only grants those excuses for their uncontrollable behaviour especially towards women. No man is born an animal and while society's influences may encourage his transformation, there is a need to ensure that they are fully human to be held completely accountable for their actions towards women in society.

#### **4.2.3 Ideology**

According Mills (1995), ideology is a set of statements which have certain conceptual links, but which individual subjects will negotiate, affirm or resist. An ideology is a dogma that guides thoughts, actions, and language use. Every individual and culture subscribes to different ideologies that reflect in their daily lives and how they use language. This study acknowledges some sexist ideologies found in the plays *The Woman and the Ogre* and *God of Women*.

We live in a man's world and men are considered superior to women, and as such there is a sexist ideology that dictates that the male is the more valued child. In the play *God of Women*, Lewanika believes that all his three wives have failed him as a Chief for failing to give him a son. It is because of this that he decided to marry the fourth wife, Joyce, in order to try his luck to get a male child.

- I. Lewanika: You must treat her as one of you, she is my fourth wife, and I know this might upset some of you but you know yourselves, why it happened. ...The lords have spoken; a son shall feast with me (Nyathi, 2012, p. 5).
- II. Ma Inonge: Girl, you are now a married woman, our husband loves you and he is expecting glory from you. A son. (Nyathi, 2012, p. 6).

In example I, Lewanika reminds his wives that he shall search for a third wife as they have failed to perform their duties as wives to produce a son for him. In the second example there is pretty

much evidence of how the women have internalised the concept that the only glory one can give their husbands is a son as Ma Inonge is quoted reminding Joyce of how lucky she is that Lewanika is expecting a son from him.

Another sexist ideology is that which grants a man the right to physically harm women; this ideology is depicted in the play *God of Women*. Nyathi (2012) portrays the men in a household as a symbol of authority, although the truth is that every family needs a head because it is an institution like any other. The sexism realised in this notion is how the man is seen as the disciplinarian that punishes wrong behaviours of both his children and his wife which in many cases leads to domestic violence as the men are made to think that women are their properties.

- III. Neo: I heard and saw in my youth the frailty of her ribs crushed by the merciless fists of a father I have since denied fatherhood. Killed for not warming him water for a bath . . . (Nyathi, 2012, p. 6).
- IV. Seer: Here, take this rod of correction, with it, you shall bind your subjects to you. With it you shall keep your spouses together ... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 27).
- V. Lewanika: Slaps the woman and continues pounding on her with fists as his friend Neo rescues her (Nyathi, 2012, p. 7).
- VI. Lewanika: (whilst beating the woman). You will seal your mouth when I say so, you will obey instructions in this house, you will do as I say woman.

In example III Nyathi (2012) uses Neo, Chief Lewanika's best friend to show how women are subjected to physical harm, and no actions are taken against such men. Neo, in pleading with Chief Lewanika not to exercise punishment on his wives, shares a brutal memory of how his own mother died at the hands of her husband. The author, whether intentionally or accidentally uses the character of Neo's mother as a vehicle to show how heartless men can be that women's lives could be lost for petty issues such as failing to warm water for bathing.

Examples **IV** and **V** portray how Lewanika finds that he needs to exercise physical violence on his wives in order to demonstrate his superiority as the head of the house. Lewanika seems quite satisfied in the pride of his superior power to watch his wives suffer and cry and he sees nothing wrong with the cruel act. Men like Lewanika believe that their wives are their property which they own and as such they have every right to abuse and to torture with an excuse that they are disciplining them.

**VII.** Joyce: I understand your regret. But you cannot reverse what was begun many years ago. What choice did I have when my people decided to exchange me for some handsome herd of cattle? (Nyathi, 2012, p.11)

**VIII.** Lewanika: ... y'all crept here as destitute. I sliced my land for you. I traded you for half of my stock none of you standing here can claim hunger. Now where is my reward...? (Nyathi, 2012, p.17).

**IX.** Chief: You want to marry my daughter, son of the soil?

Young Man: With blessings from the great one, I will marry her.

Chief: You can have my daughter for a wife my son (Molapong, 2002, p. 47).

The above examples portray an ideology of the objectification of the female gender. Example **VII** identifies Joyce as 'something' that is paid for and passed from owner to owner and this is quite dehumanising because Joyce is reduced to mere property. In the same example, Nyathi (2012) shows how it is the norm for societies to sell off their daughters to wealthy husbands, especially in situations where the parents are poor. Women are human beings and under no circumstances are they supposed to be exchanged as this mentality instils a sense of unworthiness in the women's mind.

The aspect of women being used by their parents and or family in exchange for material possessions through marriage is emphasized. Nyathi (2012) uses Chief Lewanika to suggest that indeed, during those times, women were acquired for marriage to redeem them and their families from a life of hunger. Joyce suggests that she was a priced commodity sold to the Chief as suggested by the words “handsome herd of cattle”, inferring that this a good price for sacrificing her youth and happiness by conforming to the cultural perspective which involves the activity of paying a 'bride price'. The above tells us that women, having been accorded a lower status in a patriarchal society, were voiceless victims at the receiving end of discriminating and oppressive patriarchal dictates. Joyce shows that she did not wish to marry the Chief, probably still in waiting for her betrothed John, but unfortunately she could not go against her parents' wishes, especially in a situation where she would be the salvation to their life of hunger and poverty.

In example **VIII**, the impression is that what is being paid for must be rewarding is inferred. The fact that Chief Lewanika paid for his wives implies that he expects them to be worth of it by working tirelessly and performing their wife duties to his satisfaction. As their buyer, he even feels entitled to speak to them in whichever manner he pleases and he does not for a second consider their feelings, for to him the women are just his properties. Furthermore, in example **IX**, Molapong (2002) supports the idea of how in order for the women to be married, it should be with the permission of their fathers. Again the concept of men's entitlement to women is brought to light by the two playwrights.

Furthermore, the plays also portray the different ideologies surrounding the gender roles of women in society, which is one that accords women as sole disciplinarians for children. It makes women to be the ones responsible for the bad behaviours of the children, thus excluding men from the blame. The sexist ideology permeates not only in the thoughts, actions, and use of

language of the men in the society alone; it is now deeply-rooted in that women have been made to think that taking care of the home and children is solely their responsibility.

- X. Ma Inonge: Girl, you are now a married woman, our husband is expecting glory from you. A son. Keep your eye level. Leave John alone. You are no longer yourself anymore. Didn't your grandmother tell you this? (Nyathi, 2012, p.15).

Example **IV** shows the transference of this ideology into the mind-set of a woman. The speaker, Ma Inonge is a woman, and she has been made to believe that the responsibility of Joyce having "good-manners" or rather knowing how to behave well is her grandmother's.

Another ideology on gender role assigns the women to domestic workers. Instead of being seen and treated as equals in relationships and marriages, women are sometimes seen as quasi-servants whose role is to keep the home and perform domestic chores for the husband and family. In the plays *God of Woman*, and *The Woman and the Ogre*, such depictions of women as domestic servants are present.

- XI. Lewanika: Go to your mother and tell her to bring something to please our visitors (Nyathi, 2012, p. 5).

- XII. (Women one comes in with a calabash filled with traditional brew and hands it to the chief ... (Molapong, 2002, p. 43).

- XIII. Ma Ilenge: What has gone wrong?

Nsala: I have burst the blister on my right thumb.

Ma Ilenge: Take a break.

Nsala: Break?

Ma Ilenge: Yes!

Nsala: What about the meal, he is about to come and I have to complete my duty on time (Nyathi, 2012, p. 24).

**XIV.** Nsala, you were the last to bring your first harvest at the start of the previous season; this should not repeat itself (Nyathi, 2012, p. 5).

**XV.** Ma Ilenge: Listen to me, mother of the children. Lewanika does not till the field – you and your children do it. He does not help with the harvesting; neither does he help with mending your granary when termites destroy it. (Nyathi, 2012, p. 29).

**XVI.** Ogre: Cook woman, I am hungry and thirsty (Molapong, 2002, p, 54).

Examples **XI** and **XII** display how the two playwrights are indicating that it is indeed a women's duty to serve guests, when visitors arrive at homes to visit, the wives or women are expected to prepare welcoming food for the guests as a gesture of hospitality as how they portrayed to serving the chief some calabash. Nyathi (2012) shows this when Neo comes to visit his friend, the Chief Lewanika. The chief calls for his wife to prepare an alcoholic beverage for the guest of whom Ma Inonge brought the drink and the two men entertain themselves.

Example **XIII** depicts that the ideology of women as domestics is instilled in them such that they sense failure if they do not do their duties as assigned to them by patriarchal societies no matter the situation or circumstances they find themselves in. In the example given, Nsala, despite her injured thumb insists that she has to cook the food as her husband is about to come, so even though in pain, women are pressured to work as servants and voiceless wives, irrespective of how difficult the circumstances are. Their wifely tasks have to be completed without any excuse. One could therefore interpret this as bondage of wives or as marital slaves at the expense of husbands.

Examples, **XV** and **XVI** spell out that men marry women in order for them to labour and create wealth for their husbands through working for them. Despite Chief Lewanika being the head of the house, it is still the duty of his wives and children to cultivate and harvest, cook for him and in fact perform all household duties while he sits and relaxes. Nyathi (2012) confirms that the patriarchal culture suggests that women are suited for such services while men engage in social and political issues that are regarded as men's domain.

Finally, a sexist ideology of limiting women's worth to their appearance is portrayed in the play *The Woman and the Ogre*:

**XVII.** As she passes, men admire her beauty and women envy her extraordinary beauty (Molapong, 2002. p. 44).

**XVIII.** Man 1: I have been waiting for you all my life, I have been dreaming of a beautiful queen like you (Molapong, 2002, p. 44).

**XIX.** Man 2: With you as my dear wife, I will be most happy to give you the finest jewels to decorate your beauty (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).

In the above examples, Molapong (2002) promotes the society's system that uses beauty standards to dictate the women's worth to her appearance. A woman must be beautiful to be noticed but a man must be strong. With this ideology, language diminishes her role and her value as a contributor to society. The young woman in the play is admired only because of her beauty, not because she is strong or has a great personality.

### **4.3 Analysis at discourse level**

#### **4.3.1 Characterisation**

Characters are made of words - they are simply words which the reader has learnt how to construct into a set of ideological messages drawing on her knowledge of the way that texts have

been written and continue to be written, and the views which are circulating within society about what women and men are (Mills, 1995, p.16).

The play *God of Women* shows that there is a difference in the characterisation of women and men. The women characters in the play are: Ma Inonge, Joyce, Ma Ilenge, Nsala, and Inonge. The male characters are Chief Lewanika, Neo and John. The narrative pathways of the play expose the behaviour and performance of women and men. The men appear to be the ones who are bold and hold authority.

To begin with, the main character, Chief Lewanika is described as the one who is in control of his four wives and they are supposed to do as he says. In Act one, Scene one, readers are introduced to his bossy attitude as he vulgarly calls his first wife Ma Inonge shouting: “Women I command you to come here immediately” (Nyathi, 2012, p. 3). The instruction emphasises the power he holds over the women in the play. Other examples in which Lewanika presents authority in the play are as follows:

**I.** I said bring that rod of correction will you?

Neo: Why do you batter your wives?

Lewanika: Shut up, nobody, and I mean nobody lays down rules in my house except me (Nyathi, 2012, p.16).

**II.** Lewanika: You will seal your mouth when I say so. You will obey instructions in this house. You will do as I say women (Nyathi, 2012, p. 7).

Examples **I** and **II** show that Lewanika, as male being, is the only authority in the household. It does not matter to him as to who started the quarrel or who is wronged. In such situations women

or wives realise who is more favoured among them. However, to save themselves from punishment they have to do as instructed.

The other characteristic of men portrayed in the play is that of bravery and boldness.

**III.** John to Joyce: Wasn't it you who sought my hand when a serpent spat its venom into your eye? I battled to get you goat's milk to treat your eye... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 9).

**IV.** Lewanika: Wasn't it you who brought to this soil a spotted leopard with your bare palms... (Nyathi, 2012, p. 30).

In examples **IV** and **III**, Nyathi showcases how the male character is portrayed as a hero. John rescued Joyce from blindness or further harm when he got sip venom in the eye by a snake, by providing milk to treat the eye; had he not provided the aid she could have been blinded by the venom. In example **IV**, Lewanika speaks to himself remembering hope he had killed a leopard with his bare hands. The act shows how strong and brave the Chief is.

A male character, Chief Lewanika is also presented as charming, intelligent and esteemed.

**I.** Joyce: My lord I know you to be a man of honour, the destitute, that the sick and even the wise seek refuge in your wisdom (Nyathi, 2012, p. 32).

**II.** Ma Inonge: ... all of the budding girls admired his youthful charms (Nyathi, 2012, p.15).

**III.** Ma Ilenge, I wonder how a man of high esteem can marry such a witch (Nyathi, 2012, p. 7).

The women characters are characterised differently from men in the sense that their portrayal seems to be in contrast with those of the men. While the men are portrayed to be in power, women are portrayed to be submissive, powerless and voiceless. In Act I Scene III, Ma Inonge

confides in Joyce that she does not like the idea of having had sex with Chief Lewanika before he became chief during his youthful years.

V. Ma Inonge: I don't know whether I like this either, but I was meant for it. I feel so . . .  
. (Nyathi, 2012, p. 14).

What Nyathi (2012) infers is that Ma Inonge, as a girl like all the other girls who were coming of age, should accept sexual advances from male suitors? She therefore recounts that although she did not wish to have sex with the young Lewanika, rather, she was made for it, which means that she has no say over her sexuality, but rather simply to comply, even in situations when she does not wish to have sex.

Women are further shown to be labourers who have no power in marriage as can be evidenced in the speech in which Nsala who has hurt her thumb while preparing food for her husband is asked by her counterpart, Ma Ilenge, to rest and attend to her thumb. Nsala, for fear of punishment if the food is not ready on time refuses to do so in fear, declaring that:

VI. What about the meal? He is about to come and I have to complete my duty on time  
(Nyathi, 2012, p. 24).

This demonstrates the voicelessness of Nsala, irrespective of how difficult the circumstances are that she may find herself in as a wife; her wifely tasks have to be completed without any excuse. One could therefore interpret this as bondage of wives or as marital slaves. The female character in the play is also characterised as stupid and lacking sense.

VII. Neo: It is easier to cope with one small brain than many (Nyathi, 2012, p. 8).

VIII. Lewanika: Since when has a women thought on behalf of a man? (Nyathi, 2012,  
p. 22)

**IX.** Lewanika: Is there peace in the village? Do people respect me? Do they still fear me? Ma Inonge replies: I don't know. Idiot. You are the eldest of all these nincompoops and your senses must be grown by now (Nyathi, 2012, p. 22).

Examples **VII**, **VIII** and **IX** paint a demeaning picture that women are born with small brains and that there is no way they can think well than men. What Nyathi implies is that women's senses and intellect grow as they age but men are born wise.

Women are also characterised as each other's rivals. The petty fights start with Ma Ilenge and Ma Inonge, the two most senior wives of Chief Lewanika. Ma Inonge seems to have been provoked by Ma Ilenge's gesture of giving food to Inonge, Ma Inonge's daughter. She claims that as the second wife and arch rival in marriage, Ma Ilenge should not have given her daughter food because she is a poor cook (Nyathi, 2012, p. 7).

The actual issue that the author gives the reader is that of rivalry in marriage, which disguised as food related. It is Ma Inonge who seems still angry and who has not forgiven Ma Ilenge for coming into her marriage as the second wife. The two women continue with their fight again in Act II, Scene III when Ma Inonge asks Ma Ilenge to hurry with the cooking as she also wants to use the fireplace. The two rival wives of Chief Lewanika exchange words until Nsala, the third wife and ally of Ma Ilenge intervenes (Nyathi, 2012, p. 27).

Characterisation in the play, *The Woman and the Ogre* also portrays the women differently from the male characters. The characters in the play do not have specific names but, in order to differentiate them, Molapong (2002) made an effort to name them as follows: Chief, Young Woman, Young Man, Man 1, Man 2, Man 3, Man 4, Man, 5, Woman 1, Woman 2, Woman 3, Woman 4, Woman 5, the bird and the Ogre.

To begin with, the women characters through Young Woman are presented as beautiful, innocent and vulnerable. Young Woman who is the main character of the play is presented as a woman of great beauty. She has the beauty that various men in the play admired so much and wished to nourish, and from Scene one of the play the readers are exposed to different suitors who take turns to admire the Young Woman due to her beauty.

**X.** Narrator (as she passes, men who admire her beauty and women envy her...

(Molapong, 2002, p. 44).

**XI.** Man 1: ... your beauty is a temptation, impossible to resist its allure... (Molapong, 2002, p. 44).

**XII.** Man 2: ...I will be most happy to give you the finest jewels to decorate your beauty (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).

Apart from the beauty the female character, Young Woman is also portrayed as vulnerable and she is also presented as the one who needs protection from men. She claims that "My heart has only room for one man – that man is strong and handsome and humble. He can give me protection and love" (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).

**XIII.** Man 1: I would protect you with my simplicity... (Molapong, 2002, p. 44).

**XIV.** Ogre: Who is here? Young Woman: It's only me. Please spare me! My husband is away and I am pregnant with a child. Please, don't harm me, I...I... can do whatever you ask me, if you spare my life. Please, I am begging you, please! Ogre: Haa! Haa! Haa! I will spare you your life, but you will cook for me and when you get lazy or weak, I will eat you (Molapong, 2002, p.50).

**XV.** Bird: I can fly into the mountains and search for your husband and if I find him I will tell him that an Ogre enslaved you (Molapong, 2002, p. 51).

**XVI.** Man 5: You should go home. Who will help you if the ogre attacks again?

(Molapong, 2002, p. 55).

Women characters in the play are also portrayed physically weak. Young Woman was left alone by her husband after he left for work. Fate came to her when an Ogre decided to invade her house to enslave her. It ordered her to cook for it and in return starved her. Molapong (2002) in this case paints a picture that women are weak and they would rather die than defend themselves from their enemies. If the man had not left it could of course not come to that house in fear of it being killed of which it was when the Young Man fought with it. Sentence **XVI** is also evidence of Molapong's portrayal of women as weak as in the example, the man instructs women to go home and stop staring at the dead Ogre as they do not have the strength to defend themselves if it strikes.

#### **4.3.2 Fragmentation**

In terms of fragmentation, there is a significant difference in the way that the bodies of women and men are described in the play. Evidently, more detailed descriptions are given to women than to men. The character, Young Woman in the play *The Woman and the Ogre* is described in terms of the qualities of her body parts, such as the following:

- I. Narrator: ...She is humming a love song as she walks and responds to the melody with  
The sensual movement of her body (Molapong, 2002, p. 43).
- II. Man 1: ...to see and feel the sweat-swamped face of the one I love (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).

- III. Man 2: I will be most happy to give you the finest jewels to decorate your beauty for the tasteful eyes of my love... my small soft hands have been a blessing from my mother, to squeeze and care for a body so perfectly structured body.... Without wasting time, I kindly ask for your lovely hand (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).
- IV. She is walking proudly, on her way to bathe in the river and to fetch some water (Molapong, 2002, p. 43).
- V. She responds to the melody with the sensual movement of her body (Molapong, 2002, p. 43).

These descriptions convey to the reader the gendered assumption that women are usually noticed with regards to their fragmented body parts and not to their overall body characteristics that catch the interest of the reader, and that in reality, they easily attract men. It is apparent that the physical descriptions given to women are more complicated and rather sensationalised than those of men. This shows that the women presented in this manner are described according to their sensuality and sexual attractiveness. Their description of women includes their bodies as a whole, and, more abundantly, in fragmented parts. Although clothed, they are described in a way that can compel the reader to imagine them as if they are unclothed.

## **4.2 Discussions**

Throughout the analysis of the plays, *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*, it is clear that the two playwrights (Nyathi, 2012 and Molapong, 2002) did not challenge the stereotypical representation of gender, but reveal a rather disturbing pattern of oppression against women in particular. It is clear from the analysis of the language of the two plays using a feminist stylistic approach that although there is a rich representation of women in the novel, they are represented as subordinates to men. Most of the female characters in the plays are inactive and dependent

on men. The secondary question of this study was to analyse how the two playwrights presented women characters in their plays. It is safe to say this research achieved this as the following representations of women have been discovered from the plays.

Belsey and Moore (1997, p. 1) posit that “A feminist analyst does not necessarily read in order to praise or to blame, to judge or to censor, more commonly she sets out to assess how the text invites its readers, as members of a specific culture, to understand what it means to be a woman or a man.” It is therefore, necessary to note that though these representations may not have been intentionally meant to reflect patriarchal bias by the authors, the reader with a feminist perspective may find them inferring to patriarchal bias.

The study found that one distinct representation of women found in both plays is that of *'the other'*. Both Nyathi's (2012) and Molapong's (2002) use of language places the women character as second to men. The importance of a man as the head of the house is emphasised in the plays; Lewanika rules his homestead and is the village chief, Young Women's father is a chief and her husband as the head of the family is regarded as the provider, thus the need for him to go and work in the mountains. The women character on the other hand is portrayed as passive that has a role of taking care of the home and serving the man. This finding agrees with Spender (1980)'s views as he remarks that: While for men, every appointment of a man as head, as director, as warden, as official, may 'prove' men are the best candidates, for women this constitutes proof that men have set up the system so that it works in the interests of men (p. 51).

This system is further depicted as women characters in the two plays are also found to be represented as secondary through the placement of the male child as superior. This is observed in the play *God of Women*, when the Chief was distrusted for not having a male child. He felt that

he was not chief enough until he has a son. In the play *Woman and the Ogre* too, Molapong (2002) illustrated the importance of the male child when the chief rejoiced that the child left by the deceased parents was a boy and that he can indeed succeed him.

Brown-Guillory (1996) argues that the misogyny and devaluation of daughters leads mothers to hope for a boy when they are pregnant because girls do not strengthen or enhance their lineage; they merely function as objects of patronymic exchange. A female child does not contribute to the securing of power for the maternal position.

This observation supports the idea that although child bearing in marriage was important, it was more significant to give birth to a boy child. This sends off a message that places a girl child as secondary and that she is married for the sole reason of giving birth to a male child. This is illustrated in the following: “Look, this man does not love me. He just wants a son out of me and thereafter he will treat me as he treats you. You know very well, Ma Inonge that love is not found in the market” (Nyathi, 2012, p. 15).

Furthermore, the study also found that the representation of women characters in the plays is a form of exchange objects for marriage purposes. In *God of Women*, women characters such as Joyce are traded for marriage with cattle and used as materials to safeguard their families from poverty and this is done without their will. Joyce explains how her marriage transpired: “What choice did I have when my people decided to exchange me for a handsome herd of cattle?” and “He has paid my family fifteen cattle in exchange for me... He saved them from hunger” (Nyathi, 2012, p.11). This type of practice in Africa is referred to as lobola.

Leboa et al. (2004) indicates that lobola is more often seen as payment for a bride, meaning that the husband and his family have purchased the woman, including her future domestic production

and children. This practice relegates wives to a rather powerless position within the family unit, promotes sexual and physical abuse and limits wives' ability to negotiate safer sex. This study supports this claim as the analysis also found that the consent and feelings of women is not considered. Men cared less whether their supposed spouses were in love with them or not. Joyce tells John that she was married to Chief Lewanika by her parents, not because she loved him (Nyathi, 2012, p.11).

Molapong (2012) in his play also makes room for this representation of women, when Young Man, although he was given a green light by Young Woman to marry her, still proceeded to ask further permission from her father, Chief. If the Chief was not happy about him marrying his daughter, then the wedding would've not taken place. Women not having a say about their lives is of course negative and degrading. The tradition of forcing a child to marry a man or woman that he/she does not love reflects the way in which men in particular abuse their powerful positions in society.

Andima and Tjiramanga (2014) assert that despite the laws protecting the rights of women after independence, the notion that men are superior to women still continues to affect women in post-colonial Namibia. Much of the discrimination against women takes place in their homes and this is perpetrated by their husbands, families and their communities. These areas of discrimination are usually based on long-standing cultural practices.

The finding of women being represented as inferior to men in the plays and the overview of the gendered position of women in Namibia by Andima and Tjiramanga (2014) contributes to a better understanding of the claim by Mills (1995) that "literature is one of the many forms of writing which play a role in the constitution of the subject, and the reproduction of messages about what women and men are like in society" (p.17). It is evident from the findings that being Namibian

playwrights, Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) indeed represented women as they appear to be in the actual Namibian society.

Victims of physical and verbal abuse is another representation of women characters that was found in the plays as the plays show women going through violence at the hands of husbands and monsters. In the play *God of Women*, the reader is brought to the attention of how Neo's mother was constantly abused and later killed by his father. "I heard and saw in my youth, the frailty of her ribs crushed by the merciless fists of a father I have since denied fatherhood, killed for not warming his water (Nyathi, 2012, p. 16). The Young Woman in the play *The Woman and the Ogre* was also constantly abused and she ended up being killed by the monstrous Ogre. Moreover, Lewanika is portrayed as constantly hitting his wives with a 'rod of correction'. The abuse of women may lead not only to death but it may convey a message of worthlessness to the woman who suffers against it. This is corroborated by the following:

Patriarchy requires violence or the subliminal threat of violence in order to maintain itself. The most dangerous situation for a woman is not an unknown man in the street or even the enemy in the wartime, but a husband or lover in the isolation of their own home. (Edwards-Jauch, 2013, p. 396)

In terms of verbal abuse, the study also found that women characters especially in the play *God of Woman* consists of women that are presented as objects of insults. The study showed how Ma Inonge, Ma Ilenge, and Nsala are ridiculed and insulted whenever their husband, Chief Lewanika, wishes to. This is also reflected in the utterance of Chief Lewanika when he is angry and insults the wives: "You must know! Idiot! You are the eldest of all these nincompoops, your senses must be grown by now" (Nyathi, 2012, p. 22). This is psychological abuse of the wives; the use of the word idiot can lead them to question their intelligence and mental stability.

The second research question of this study was to seek how the playwrights used language to present the gender roles of women in the two plays. Ambunda and De Klerk (2003), state that gender roles are the characteristics, duties and responsibilities attributed to members of the two sexes by virtue of the fact that they are male or female. This is prominent within the sphere of the family household. The study found how Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) used different linguistic devices to portray the roles of women in plays.

The playwrights used metaphors assigned to women characters to demonstrate the role of being sex providers. Chief Lewanika uses metaphors that carry strong connotations that can be understood as providing sexual pleasure to their husband. Chief Lewanika after his session with the seer, orders Ma Inonge, his most senior wife to call her counterparts to a meeting where he wants to disclose the revelation of the seer. Ma Inonge responds by saying that, "I am not on duty today, my Lord. Please consult your roster" (Act I, Scene I). She continues: "I am sorry, my lord, I thought you wanted your daily food" (Nyathi, 2012, p. 4). The metaphor used here is that of comparing sexual intercourse to daily food. What can be taken out of this quotation is that Nyathi (2012) through Ma Inonge's answer in the above paragraph exposes that whenever a woman is called by her husband, she is called for sexual intercourse because she is made to believe that it is her duty as a woman to do so. That is why Ma Inonge responded that she is not on duty. Nyathi (2012) also used an idiomatic expression to elaborate this: "Father shall eat with son. Eating the abominable fruit of the sun" (Nyathi, 2012, p. 2), in reference to Chief Lewanika taking over the son's girlfriend as wife, therefore indicating the role of women as sexual objects that can be passed on around from one man to another.

Furthermore, Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) assign women characters to the role of domestic workers in their plays. In the play *The Woman and the Ogre*, Molapong used a metaphoric phrase that compared a woman to a nectar and the man to a bee. A bee feeds from

the nectar; therefore this metaphor can be interpreted as exposing that it is a societal role for women to feed men as indicated here: “Young man: I am stunned by her natural beauty and attracted to her like a bee to a nectar” ( Molapong, 2002, p. 48). What can be inferred from this statement is that a woman in a traditional setting is set to cook and feed a man. Nyathi’s (2012) language in the play *God of Women* also highlights the gendered role of women characters as house domestics as illustrated in Act I Scene I, when Neo comes to visit his friend, the Chief. The Chief calls for his wife to prepare a calabash of alcohol to drink.

The placement of women as housewives who perform all duties in the house, from cooking, serving guests and cultivating fields is unfair and it conforms to the patriarchal culture that suggests that women are suited for such services while men engage in social and political issues. Moreover, this result builds on Mills (1995) claims that the expectations and the traditional roles of women are instilled in the language of literature such as plays to serve as a reminder of women’s gendered place.

The third research question aimed to find out how the playwrights used discourse to present women characters in the plays. It is through the analysis at discourse level that the findings were able to be revealed. In the category of characterisation, Nyathi portrayed women characters to be voiceless. In Act I Scene III, Ma Inonge confides in Joyce that she does not like the idea of having had sex with Chief Lewanika before he became chief during his youthful years. Ma Inonge: I don’t know whether I like this either, but I was meant for it. I feel so . . . (Nyathi, 2012, p. 14).

What Nyathi (2012) infers is that Ma Inonge, as a girl like all the other girls who were coming of age, should accept sexual advances from male suitors, She therefore recounts that although she did not wish to have sex with the young Lewanika, rather, she was made for it, and has no voice

to resist, which simply means that she has no say over her sexuality, but rather simply to comply, even in situations when she does not wish to have sex.

Through characterisation, Nyathi also portrayed female characters as powerless. This is exposed through a female character, Nsala who, when she hurt her thumb while preparing food for her husband, Lewanika is asked by her counterpart, Ma Ilenge, to rest and attend to her thumb. Nsala, for fear of punishment if the food is not ready on time refuses to do so, declaring that: What about the meal? He is about to come and I have to complete my duty on time (Nyathi, 2012, p. 24). This demonstrates the powerlessness of Nsala, irrespective of how difficult the circumstances are that she may find herself in as a wife; her wifely tasks have to be completed without any excuse or therefore she shall face the consequence. One could therefore interpret this as bondage of wives or as marital slaves.

Still on the aspect of power, Young Woman in the play, *The woman and the Ogre* was also portrayed to be powerless as Molapong (2002) presented her as the one who needs protection from men. She claims that “My heart has only room for one man – that man is strong and handsome and humble. He can give me protection and love” (Molapong, 2002, p. 45). In addition, Molapong (2002) Women characters in the play are also portrayed physically weak. Young Woman was left alone by her husband after he left for work. Fate came to her when an Ogre decided to invade her house to enslave her. It ordered her to cook for it and in return starved her. Molapong (2002) in this case paints a picture that women are weak and they would rather die than defend themselves from their enemies.

The findings of this study through the analysis of characterisation at discourse level also disclosed, that Nyathi (2012) presented women characters as each other’s rivals for the attention of men, this is seen through the trivial fights between Ma Ilenge and Ma Inonge, the two most

senior wives of Chief Lewanika. Ma Inonge seems to have been provoked by Ma Ilenge's gesture of giving food to Inonge, Ma Inonge's daughter. The actual issue that the author gives the reader is that of rivalry in marriage, which disguised as food related. It is Ma Inonge who seems still angry and who has not forgiven Ma Ilenge for coming into her marriage as the second wife. The findings on characterisation conforms on Mills (1995) claims that:

The characters and gender roles constitute the most significant part of an analysis at the level of discourse. Sara Mills states that characters and gender roles that are attributed to them in texts are related to ideological concerns to a great extent, so they are just constructions: Characters are made of words, they are not simulacra of humans –they are simply words which the reader has learned how to construct into a set of ideological messages drawing on her knowledge of the way that texts have been written and continue to be written, and the views which are circulating within society about how women and men are. (Mills, 1995, p. 26)

Through fragmentation a category of analysis at discourse level, the study found that, Molapong (2002) presented women with regards to their fragmented body parts and not to their overall body .Man 2: I will be most happy to give you the finest jewels to decorate your beauty for the tasteful eyes of my love... my small soft hands have been a blessing from my mother, to squeeze and care for a body so perfectly structured body.... Without wasting time, I kindly ask for your lovely hand (Molapong, 2002, p. 45). It is apparent from this example that the women presented in this manner are described according to their sensuality and sexual attractiveness.

Finally, the researcher through the above findings acknowledges that through the comprehensive "toolkit" that was formulated by Mills (1995) that the revelations on the representations of women characters and gender roles in the two plays were able to be analysed and interpreted. The three

part model which consists of three levels of linguistic analysis, namely, the word, phrase and discourse enabled the researcher to make a meticulous investigation of dominant and recurrent linguistic features within the plays in order to access how gender is handled, particularly the female gender.

The feminist approach to stylistics argues that there is a male hegemony in both the treatment of women in society and their characterisation in literary works (Mills, 1995). Through the application of a feminist stylistic framework to analyse the plays, *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*, the findings confirm Mills (1995) claims to be true. The two playwright's portrayed women negatively by labelling them as inferior to men.

According to Blaine (1990), feminist stylistics is concerned about unmasking patriarchal ideologies and denaturalising patriarchal assumptions. At the level of discourse analysis, this study too unpacked different sexist ideologies found in the two plays studied, which seem to be hidden within language-use and posed themselves as natural.

All in all, these findings prove that indeed feminist stylistic is applicable to the study of drama. Another conclusion that could be drawn from the results is that Mills' feminist stylistics is still a relevant method for detecting sexism in literal works such as drama.

### **4.3 Summary**

This chapter (Chapter 4) was an analysis of the selected plays *God of Women* (2012) and *The Woman and the Ogre* (2002). Following a feministic stylistic approach, the plays were analysed depending on the content found as per the levels of Mills' model of analysis, which are word, phrase and discourse, paying particular attention to how women characters are represented. The last section of the study presented the discussion of findings. The next chapter (Chapter 5) is the conclusion and recommendations for the study.

## Chapter Five

### Summary, Conclusions and recommendation

#### 5.1 Summary

The study provided a feminist stylistic analysis of two Namibian plays: *God of Women* by Francis Sifiso Nyathi (2012) and *The Woman and the Ogre* by Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong (2002) with the aim of finding out how the two playwrights represent women characters in their plays. The use of language and discourse that the playwrights used to depict female characters in the plays was evaluated through a feminist stylistics framework. The study revealed that both Nyathi (1998) and Molapong (2002) presented women characters as inferior to men characters in their plays. Nyathi (2012) presented women as victims of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of their husbands in marriage. Molapong (2002) presented women characters negatively as dependent on their fathers. He portrayed women characters as beauty goddesses who are praised based on how beautiful they are. Furthermore, both playwrights used a wide range of linguistic devices such as metaphors and figures of speech to bring to light the gender roles that are expected of women such as being domestic workers around the home, providing sexual pleasure to their husbands as well as working in the fields to provide food for their families.

#### 5.2 Conclusions

The main aim of this research was to analyse the plays: *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre* from a feminist stylistic standpoint in a quest to answer the following research questions:

- How do the playwrights represent women in the two plays?

- How do the playwrights use language to present the gender roles of women in the plays?
- How applicable is the feminist stylistic framework in analysing representation of women in the in plays?

To answer these research questions, the study analysed two Namibian plays, *God of Women* (2012) by Francis Sifiso Nyathi and *The Woman and the Ogre* (2002) by Joseph Keamogetsi Molapong following feminist stylistics, a framework that allows us to see the way in which language contributes to sexist stereotypes in society. It is a subversive discourse aimed at helping to reconstruct how the woman is represented in the literary world, and how she is perceived and treated in the real world. It also alerts society to social injustice against women. The study adopted the qualitative, desk top approach and the texts were interpreted through content analysis.

The study revealed that the two playwrights represented woman characters as subordinates throughout their plays. Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) through their use of language place the women character as second to the men character. The importance of a man as a head of the house and family is emphasized in the both plays. In *God of Women*, Lewanika rules his homestead and is the village Chief. In the play *The Woman and the Ogre*, Young Woman's father is a Chief and her husband as the head of the family is regarded as the provider, thus the need for him to go and work in the mountains.

Furthermore, the study also concluded that women characters are represented as objects of exchange for marriage purposes. In *God of Women*, women characters such as Joyce are traded for marriage with cattle and they are used as materials to reassure their families through unwanted poverty without their will. Joyce explains how her marriage transpired: "What choice did I have when my people decided to exchange me for a handsome herd of cattle?" and "He has paid my

family fifteen cattle in exchange for me... He saved them from hunger” (Nyathi, 2012, p.11). This type of practice in Africa is referred to as lobola.

In the plays *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre*, the representation of women as victims of physical and verbal is evident. In *God of Women*, the reader is brought to the attention of how Neo’s mother was constantly abused and later killed by her husband. “I heard and saw in my youth, the frailty of her ribs crushed by the merciless fists of a father I have since denied fatherhood, killed for not warming his water (Nyathi, 2012, p.16). Lewanika is constantly hitting his wives with a rod of correction. The abuse of women may lead not only to death but may convey a message of worthlessness to woman who suffers against it. The Young Woman in the play *The Woman and the Ogre* was also constantly abused and ended up being killed by the monstrous Ogre.

The study concluded that through linguistic devices used by the playwrights such as metaphors and idioms, women characters are assigned to the role of sex suppliers. Chief Lewanika in the play *God of Women* uses metaphors that carry strong connotations that could be understood as showing that the women’s role is to provide sexual pleasure to their husbands. Chief Lewanika, after his session with the seer, orders Ma Inonge, his most senior wife to call her counterparts to a meeting where he wants to disclose the revelation of the seer. Ma Inonge responds by saying “I am not on duty today, my Lord. Please consult your roster” (Act I, Scene I). She continues: “I am sorry, my lord, I thought you wanted your daily food” (Nyathi, 2012, p4. The metaphor used here is that of comparing sexual intercourse to daily food that women have to provide to their husbands.

Furthermore, the study revealed that Nyathi (2012) and Molapong (2002) assign to women characters the role of domestic workers in their plays. In the play, *The Woman and the Ogre*,

Molapong (2002) used metaphoric phrases that compared a woman as nectar and man as the bee. A bee feeds from the nectar; therefore this metaphor can be interpreted as exposing that it is a societal role of women to feed men: “Young man: I am stunned by her natural beauty and attracted to her like a bee to a nectar” (Molapong, 2002, p. 48). What can be inferred from this statement is that a woman in a traditional setting is supposed to cook and feed a man. Nyathi’s (2012) language in the play *God of Women* also highlights the gendered role women characters as house domestics as demonstrated in Act I Scene I, when Neo comes to visit his friend, the Chief. The Chief calls for his wife to prepare a calabash of alcohol to drink.

In terms of the discourse used to represent women characters. The playwrights through the analysis of characterisation are found to have presented women characters as voiceless, powerless each other’s competition. Nyathi (2012) presented women characters as each other’s rivals for the attention of men; this is seen through the trivial fights between Ma Ilenge and Ma Inonge, the two most senior wives of Chief Lewanika. Ma Inonge seems to have been provoked by Ma Ilenge’s gesture of giving food to Inonge, Ma Inonge’s daughter.

Through fragmentation a category of analysis at discourse level, the study found that, Molapong (2002) presented women with regards to their fragmented body parts and not to their overall body as indicated in the following: Man 2: I will be most happy to give you the finest jewels to decorate your beauty for the tasteful eyes of my love... my small soft hands have been a blessing from my mother, to squeeze and care for a body so perfectly structured body.... Without wasting time, I kindly ask for your lovely hand (Molapong, 2002, p. 45).

A feminist stylistics approach allowed this study to achieve its goals through a close linguistic scrutiny of the plays. The researcher was not only able to study how the playwrights represented women, but also interpreted the meanings of the expressions they used. Mills (1995) pointed out

that a feminist stylistic analysis develops awareness of the way gender is handled in texts. The analysis of the plays *God of Women*, and the *Woman and the Ogre* therefore, provides readers with a view of how the women characters are depicted in the plays in order to create awareness. It can be concluded through the above major findings that the feminist stylistic framework was indeed relevant to the analysis of the two plays and successfully aided in detecting aspects of how gender is handled and particularly the representation of gender roles that are granted to female characters in the two plays.

All in all, analysing the plays *God of Women* and *The Woman and the Ogre* through a feminist stylistic analysis demonstrated that literary texts such as drama can have negative sociocultural norms and ideologies around gender. So the possibility of changing negative ideologies is the responsibility of people and institutions in society. It is also worth stating that it is important for researchers to continue approaching sexism in language in order to change it. As Mills (2008 p.159) argues, "It is one of the methods necessary for changing a sexist society".

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Feminist stylistics presents the concept of gender into the classic stylistic studies, focusing on the discrimination against the women images and sexism and gender stereotypes in stylistic analyses; it challenges the conventional distortion of women's experiences in the interpretation of the text and creates the multiple meanings and diversity of the textual analysis.

Negative representation and distorted images of women have always been associated with male authors as it is the case with this study. It is also normally regarded that male authors do not portray real women in literature.

This study brings forward the need to do further analysis of Namibian plays written by female Namibian playwrights since the research only focused on plays written by male Namibian playwrights. The possibility of studying female playwrights' works through the lenses of feminist stylistic might reinforce the findings of the present study.

Mills (1995) claims that feminist stylistics is the study of texts in order to interpret how gender is handled. The approach is informed by feminist theories which aim at ending sexism in the society. Although the main purpose is to unpack female subordination and sexism against women through the use of language, it does not benefit females alone, but both genders, as it points out all sexist issues in the society. Therefore, another recommendation is that researchers should investigate literary texts with the aim of exposing sexist issues against men too in order for the fight against sexism to be well balanced.

Although this study focused mainly on the presentation of female characters, Mills (1995) claims that feminist stylistics goes beyond the mere description of sexual discrimination in literary works, but broadens to include a study of the ways that point of view, agency, or transitivity are unexpectedly related to matters of gender. Future researchers can study Namibian texts through other feminist stylistic lenses such point of view, agency or transitivity.

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## **Annexure 1**

### **Content analysis checklist**

#### Analysis at Lexical level

1. Are the words which are used gender-specific?

2. Is the generic pronoun 'he' used to refer to males in general?
3. Are generic nouns used to refer to males?
4. Is the suffix '-man' used to refer to males?
5. How are males and females named in the text? (surname, first name, diminutives, title)
6. Do any of the terms used to describe males or females have sexual connotations?
7. Do any of the terms used to describe males or females have positive or negative connotations?
8. Do any of the terms used to describe males or females have taboos associated with them?

#### Analysis Clause Level/Sentence Level

1. Are there statements in the text which are gender-inflected?
2. Are there ready-made phrases which refer to gender difference?
3. Does the text assume you hold certain gendered assumptions? Make explicit what this information consists of.
4. In order to make sense of certain statements do you have to make a bridging assumption drawing on stereotypical gender information?
5. Are metaphors or figurative language used which draw upon gendered assumptions? Are males and females compared with different elements?
6. Is the text humorous? What propositions do you have to agree to in order to find the text funny? Why is the text using humour? Is it a difficult area? Is the text addressing you as a male? What type of male?

#### Analysis at Discourse Level

1. Are there larger structures in the text which seem to be gendered?
2. Analyse the male and female characters. Are they described in the same way?

3. What sort of relationships are they represented as having? Are there power hierarchies in the text? Do these relate to gender, race, class, or sexual orientation?
4. 6 Are there narrative pathways which seem to be gender-specific? Are the bodies of males and females represented as whole as fragmented parts? As clothed or unclothed?

## Annexure 2

### Letter of motivation to replace a text.

NUST  
Absalom  
Faculty of human sciences  
Department of communications  
[awilka@yahoo.com](mailto:awilka@yahoo.com)

Wilka

### The chairperson of the department of communication's HDC

#### Request for changing a research text

My name is Wilka Absalom, student number 217033369 a second year MEAL student. I am writing this letter in request for approval to change one of the text I am supposed to research on. In the midst of my analysis it came to my attention that, although the text that I have initially chosen has a feminist content it came out to have a very weak analytical content and thus I am pleading that your office please allow me to replace it with another one. It is also worth assuring that nothing else in my SOP, or research changes, except the text. My current title is: A Feminist Stylistic Study of *The Women and the Ogre* and ***A moment In Our lives***. The bolded text is the one I wish to replace, with another play titled: ***God of women*** by Francis Sifiso Nyati.

I look forward to your positive response

Yours sincerely

Wilka Absalom

**Annexure 3**  
**Ethical clearance certificate**