



A Feminist Stylistic Study of Self-identity in Audre Lorde's Selected Poems

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Abstract

This study delves into how Audre Lorde's poetry shapes and asserts Black female identity, using a feminist stylistic approach to uncover the power of her language. Lorde's work captures the layered oppressions—racial, gendered, and social—that Black women face, as well as their struggle to maintain visibility and self-worth. The study explores the tools she uses—like naming, deixis, and transitivity—to build a voice that is both strong and independent within a system that often tries to silence it. By drawing on Jeffries' model of textual analysis, this paper highlights Lorde's poetic choices that convey resilience and community, showcasing her dual impact as both a feminist and a powerful advocate for Black women.

The findings suggest that Lorde's language not only claims space for Black female identity but also pushes back against dominant societal narratives, making her poetry a blend of personal expression and a call for justice. Through her deliberate stylistic choices, Lorde reaffirms the power of feminist stylistics to illuminate vital issues of identity and agency.

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المخلص

الدراسة الحالية تتعمق في كيفية تشكيل شعر الشاعرة اودري لورد لهوية المرأة السوداء وتأكيدها باستخدام نهج اسلوبي لغوي لاكتشاف قوة لغتها. يتناول عمل الشاعرة لورد الاضطهاد المتعدد الطبقات – العنصري والجنسي والاجتماعي – الذي تواجهه النساء السود، بالإضافة الى نضالهن للحفاظ على الرؤية والقيمة الذاتية. تستكشف الدراسة الادوات اللغوية التي تستخدمها الشاعرة مثل التسمية والتعبير والتعددية لبناء صوت قوي ومستقل داخل نضام يحاول غالباً اسكاته. من خلال تبني نموذج جيفريز للتحليل النصي، الدراسة الحالية تسلط الضوء على اختيارات لورد الشعرية التي تنقل المرونة والمجتمع، وتعرض تأثيرها المزدوج كنسوية ومدافعة قوية عن النساء السود.

تشير النتائج الى ان لغة لورد لا تطالب بمساحة للهوية الانثوية للنساء السود فحسب، بل تتعارض أيضاً مع الروايات المجتمعية السائدة، مما يجعل شعرها مزيجاً من التعبير الشخصي والدعوة الى العدالة. ومن خلال اختياراتها الاسلوبية المتعددة، تؤكد لورد على قوة الاسلوبية النسوية في تسليط الضوء على قضايا حيوية تتعلق بالهوية والفاعلية.

1. Introduction

The term "feminist stylistics" describes the examination of a work from a feminist standpoint, focusing on the linguistic representation of gender-related concerns within a text. Poetry serves as a means to express identity, allowing one to convey "who you are" as well as "what you believe" through poetic language. Power and conflict are often central to themes such as identity, death, sacrifice, battle, and ignorance. Poetry, along with autobiography, aids in the revelation of self, particularly among African Americans. Black women writers have faced many challenges in their struggle for identity and freedom in America. Since women were historically considered inferior, their writings deeply reflect their life stories and work to construct a positive self-identity (Archuleta, 2017: 23).

2. Identity and Blacks

Over the years, Black individuals in the United States have been heavily oppressed and subjected to injustices imposed by White Americans. This oppression and subjugation cause them to lose their sense of identity. Within the Black Power movement, a Black woman was often seen as irrelevant; she was regarded as a pariah, despised and rejected, and believed to impede the Blacks' progress. Thus, the perception of Black women within the movement lacked public validation, clearly representing an identity denial.

Under repression, Black identity development is the process that people of African descent (often referred to as Black) strive to define themselves via language, culture, and religion. This gives them the ability to establish a name and a voice for themselves where they are supposed to be seen rather than heard. That is, they do not have an identity, and they need to work on forming new one. African American authors address the theme of identity by depicting circumstances, events, ideas, and cultural patterns that support their oppression and subordination. Through their works, they explore ways to reclaim and affirm their identity within a repressive context (Kerstin, Giulia et al., 2015: 33).

3. The Poet: An Overview

Baumeister and Hutton (1987:71) state that the behavior that aims to project an image or communicate information about oneself to others is known as self-presentation. According to this definition, Lorde and the women speakers in her selected poems express who they are and reveal their identities. Moreover, Bomarito and Hunter (2005:65) assert that Lorde, as a black feminist author and as a woman, shows her struggle to find a sense of identity and self-acceptance as well as her triumph over formidable social obstacles. Thus, Lorde's writings are closely tied to the concerns of the feminist literary movement. She aims to present a powerful

image and construct a positive personality. Therefore, achieving and proving these objectives requires a careful analysis of the language used in the chosen texts, which can be done by applying specific feminist stylistics and pragmatics approaches. Her poems address the identity of African American women who have endured racism, sexism, and class oppression. Consequently, the present study aims to explore how Lorde uses language to represent women and to define their identities by examining the pragmatic and linguistic elements in the selected poems.

4. Feminist Stylistics

A subfield of stylistics known as feminist stylistics aims to clarify how gender issues are expressed linguistically in texts. It employs various frameworks and models within stylistics. The term 'gender concerns' encompasses multiple meanings, giving rise to diverse perspectives from which the concept of gender is explored. One such perspective is feminist stylistics. Traditionally, feminist stylisticians have shown how language and gender concerns overlap in literary texts (Mills and Mullany 2011:2). However, Mills (1995) is credited for coining the term "feminist stylistics" and providing a comprehensive description of the practices of this sub-field, who, although not being the first stylistician to employ a feminist stylistic approach. Feminist stylistics is first described by Mills (1995) as a specific form of analysis. She argues that the 'feminist' and the 'stylistics' parts are both complex and could mean different meanings to different readers. Thus, feminist stylistics looks at how point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly connected to gender issue, to determine whether women's writing practices can be defined, and so on (Mills, 1995: 1).

Moreover, Nørgaard et al. (2010:18) state that "Feminist stylistics aims to utilize stylistic tools to investigate concerns and preoccupations traditionally addressed in feminist approaches to language study. Like feminist studies in general, a feminist stylistic perspective highlights gender issues, though the focus critically shifts to the linguistic (and multimodal) manifestations of these concerns. As Mills puts it: 'Feminist stylistics is concerned with the analysis of the way that questions of gender impact on the production and interpretation of texts'" (Mills, 2006: 221).

5. Identity

Identity is not a stable trait but is subjectively developed. The process of identity formation can be described through features of interactions, where identity evolves within social environments. Two particularly important elements in this structure are "society" and "self"; society acts as a reflexive mirror through actions. Additionally, identity originates from the process of identifying with groups based on surrounding conditions. The creation of identity is pragmatically constructed upon a combination of sameness and difference. Thus, we shape our individual identity by accumulating characteristics that relate to our inner and outer attributes, such as skin color, gender, profession, language, and region. This combination distinguishes "us" from "them"—groups with differing features and values (Hayward, 2010: 22).

Identity is a complex literary theme. It can be described as a source of pride and strength or as a source of weakness when someone experiences an identity crises. Identity is a major theme in postmodern literature. Yet, identity also includes how one differs and how one is similar to other people in one's social or ethnic group. This implies that a person may share qualities with others in terms of gender, nationality, and culture, but they may also have unique attributes that set them apart from one another (Lawler, 2008: 2).

As Mercer (1995:43) states, "the issue of identity begins when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent, and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty." Thus, self-concept appears to be a deeply personal phenomenon. People's self-

perceptions are often concealed and frequently quite personal. However, self-concept is also a social construct. It has social identities, roles, and foundations like reflected appraisals, social comparison. So, it shapes our perception of how do we feel about other people and behave in social situations. Jones (1994:2) notes that self-presentation is a type of social influence where the self-presenter tries to gain control over the listener. Additionally, self-presenter usually tries to influence other's impressions of him/herself to establish a specific identity for him/herself (Baumeister, 1982:26; Rosenberg, 1979:22; Schlenker, 1980:18).

Moreover, any action intended to establish, modify, or preserve an impression of ourselves in minds of others is considered self-presentational behavior. Thus, self-presentation occurs whenever we try to influence others' perceptions of us. This serves a personal function by convincing others that we possess certain qualities, we reinforce those qualities in ourselves. In other words, people try to create impressions in others' minds because it boosts their self-esteem (Hogan and Briggs, 1986:179-188).

In this context, Black American women's literary work—whether fictional, biographical, autobiographical, or poetic—often reflects themes that speak to the spirit of Black women. As Lisa Jones states, these women embody "a sense of dignity and self that cannot be denied; though they may live in a war zone, they go out every day greased, pressed, and dressed... they have the lip and nerve and use that lip and nerve to elevate themselves and the world" (Jones, 1994:3).

In the United States, Black women poets started looking for their identities in the late 20th century, confronting two key questions: How can we claim our identities in a society that pretend we do not exist? How can we show others our love and warmth while controlling our anger?

5.1 Types of Identity

5.1.1 Personal Identity

Olson (2000:33), mentions that particular qualities that a person feels a special sense of ownership or affinity to is considered "personal identity". Accordingly, an individual's personal identity is made up of the characteristics that he/she feels characterize or define him/her. Personal identity is not always well defined; however, it indicates how an individual is aware of their distinctiveness in relation to others. This sense of identity can only be experienced in relation to others, as it reflects the individual's perception of being consistent with themselves over time and space—what makes them both the same as and distinct from others (Worchel, 1998:3).

According to Jenkins (2008:112), social and personal identities are not the same. Social identity is the internalization of group identifications. Personal identity is what makes the individual self-distinctive from all other selves. So, social identity can occasionally have a greater impact on an individual's behavior.

5.1.2 Social Identity

Tajfel (2004, cited in Vignoles, 2017: 1) states that social identity is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Lawler's ideas on identity are considerably more complicated because she raises the possibility that an individual has multiple identities. Multiple identities can be acquired by one individual in a "additive way". That is a person can have multiple identities and those identities are layered, dynamic, and interact with one another. These identities center around race, gender, religion, and other factors, as when we call someone a Black Christian lady. Each description of this particular person has a set of properties (2008:3).

Tajfel and Turner's "social identity" hypothesis that a person's sense of self is based on whether or not they belong to a particular social group (Tajfel and Turner, 2004: 7). As a result, this certain group provides a sense of social identification. Indeed, a person's sense of social belonging always shapes who they are.

Accordingly, Tajfel and Turner (2004:7) differentiate between the "in-groups" and the "out-groups" as two types of groups that people identify with. When an individual identifies with a certain group, whether due to cultural, political, gender, social class, or religious roots, this is referred to "in-group". The "out-group" is when an individual does not identify with a certain social group. Therefore, members of the "in-group" will discriminate against members of the "out-group". This process is the cause of racism and other group disputes. Thus, "the more intense an intergroup conflict is, the more likely it is that the individuals who are members of the opposite groups will behave toward each other as a function of their respective group memberships" (Tajfel and Turner, 2004:8).

Consequently, "identity" refers to our perception of ourselves and others, as well as the perception of others (including ourselves) by others. Combining similarities and differences is a very practical process. Identification is not fixed; it is the outcome of agreement and disagreement and is, at least in principle, always adjustable (Jenkins, 2008:18).

6. Research Methodology

The present study is a quantitative and qualitative investigation that adopts Jeffries' model (2010) of analysis. The application of certain textual-conceptual tools is the focus of the analysis. It clarifies the ideological frameworks and cognitive processes within the analyzed texts (Jeffries, 2010:15). These tools are divided into functional and pragma-semantic categories.

1. *Naming*: The text name makes this evident and distinguish between animate and inanimate elements. Naming is realized in "noun choices, modification of nouns, and nominalization" (Jefferies, 2014: 413).
2. *Representing of actions*: it depends on the use of transitivity processes.
3. *Negating*: This analytical tool is connected to a number of negating devices, including negative particles and morphological negation of a word.
4. *Equating and contrasting*: The linguistic realization of this tool can be realized through the use of apposition, parallel structures, relational transitivity processes, or syntactic frames.
5. *Exemplifying and numerating*: This tool is seen through the use of meaning relations known as metonyms and hyponyms.
6. *Prioritizing*: Active and passive structures is the realization of this textual tool.
7. *Implying and assuming* is realized in the use of implicature and presupposition.
8. *Hypothesizing*: Modality processes is the realization of hypothesizing within a text.
9. *Presenting the ideas of others*: This tool is realized by presenting various ideas and speeches.
10. *Presenting time, space and society*: The use of different kinds of deixis is the realization of this tool.

7. Analysis and Discussion of the Data

In this section, structural and pragma-semantic analysis of each poem will be covered. The analysis is qualitative and quantitative in nature. Each poem is analyzed using feminist stylistic analysis. The analysis of each poem will be presented in the following sub-sections according to the adopted model of feminist stylistic analysis:

7.1 Text.1/ Qualitative Analysis of Text (1) "A Woman Speaks" (1984)

The structural and pragma-semantic analysis of the poem above are divided into two parts:

• Structural analysis

1. **Naming and Describing:** *Moon marked and touched by sun, my magic is unwritten, but when the sea turns back, it will leave my shape behind. I seek no favor, untouched by blood, unrelenting as the curse of love, permanent as my errors, or my pride, I do not mix, love with pity, nor hate with scorn, look into the entrails of Uranus, where the restless oceans pound. within my birth nor my divinities, my sisters, witches in Dahomey, wear me inside their coiled cloths, as our mother did. I have been woman, for a long time, beware my smile, I am treacherous with old magic, and the noon's new fury with all your wide futures, woman.*

According to extracts of the poem above, the analysis is confronted with how the self is represented in relation to visibility and strength through use of different images. Using a variety of noun choices like "moon"(which often represents femininity and mystery), "sun"(which usually represents clarity and strength), "magic", "sea" , "blood" , and "woman", etc. mainly indicates speaker's identity as a Black American woman. Lorde explores the complexities of identity, power, and self-expression. The poem emphasizes self-awareness, the strength found in one's true self, and the importance of voice. Accordingly, Lorde's language and imagery reflect a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Self-identity is well expressed through the use of the word "woman" that is not white. Thus, identity representation is achieved through the themes of empowerment and self-discovery.

2. **Representing Actions/Events/States:** Transitivity processes is the focus of this part of analysis. Many procedures are used to analyze identity poems and self-representation to convey ideological consequences. These processes will be examined using Simpson's transitivity model within Jeffries' (2010) model of critical stylistics, as follows:

• **Mental Process** *And if you would know me (L:13). look into the entrails of Uranus.*

This depends on the use of several verbs related to mental processes, such *know, think, laugh ...etc.* This reflects how the poet represents herself and her identity. As a black woman in an oppressed white society, the poet uses a conditional inquiry to address her situation and share her thoughts about herself. Uranus, a Greek god associated with the sky, represents the vastness and depth of the speaker's being. "Entrails" suggest looking deep within to understand her true nature.

• **Material Process:** *Moon marked and touched by sun (1), but when the sea turns back (3), it will leave my shape behind (4), I seek no favor (5), I do not mix (10), look into the entrails of Uranus (14), and still seeking (19), wear me inside their coiled cloths (22).* Here, the poet intentionally uses several of the material processes, such as *marked, touched, turns, leave, seek, mix, look, seeking, and wear* to represent the possible actions, events and experiences that Blacks may undergo. The use of the verb "marked" means being distinguished. While the verb "turns" signifies a state of change as the sea turning back. The use of the verb "leave" suggests that even as the sea (a symbol of change or challenge) recedes, the speaker's identity and influence remain. The verb "seek" signifies that the speaker does not try to find approval or special treatment from others. The verb "mix" implies that the speaker maintains clear boundaries in her emotions toward others. The verb "look" indicates that to understand her true nature, one has to looking deeply. The verb "seeking" means that the speaker is still searching for connection and solidarity with other women, particularly those who share her struggles and heritage. While the verb "wear" conveys the idea of being held and remembered within cultural and familial traditions.

• **Verbal Process:** verbal processes are usually expressed by using verbs like *say* and *tell*. These verbs are used to improve the reader's virtual auditory perception of certain images. There is no use of such verbs throughout the Lord's poem " A Women speaks".

• **Presenting the ideas of others:** Different linguistic tools are used with regard to the study of feminist stylistic analysis including narrative reported speech, direct speech, and indirect speech. These tools draw attention to particular ideas or thoughts through the use of certain verbs like "say", "tell", "speak", and "shout". In "A woman speaks", there is no use of such verbs.

• **Pragma-Semantic Analysis:**

1. **Hypothesizing:** There are certain ideological connotations associated with the use of modality in texts. According to Halliday (1985) "Modality helps in presenting ideas hypothetically and the receptor is left to believe or disbelieve". Hypothesizing can be represented in different forms: I. Modal auxiliary verbs: need, must, ought to, dare, will, would, shall, should, can, could, may, and might. II. Lexical verbs: hope, wish, imagine,... III. Modal adverbs: most likely, perhaps, obviously, definitely, of course,... IV. Modal adjectives: likely, possible, sure, definite, certain, obligatory, forbidden,.. V. Expressions with conditions: (if...then...). to express desire, duty, or confidence or uncertainty. The analysis of "A Woman Speak" shows the use of the modal auxiliaries "will and would" in *it will leave my shape behind (4), and if you would know me (13)* which indicates the future continuity of her identity that is when the sea turns back and this change occurs it will reveal her true form, identity, or legacy, something that will remain with determination. The poem analysis shows the use of the lexical verbs "marked, touched, turns, leave, seek, mix, know, look, wear, beware, promised". The use of such verbs indicates identity, power, and resistance. The verbs "marked and touched" refer to recognition and connection. While the verbs "turns and leave" refer to change and permanence. By using the verbs "seek and mix", the poet refers to independence and balance in her personality. "Know and look" refer to vastness and depth of the speaker's identity. The verb "wear" refers to the speaker who will be remembered within her society. "Beware and promised" refer to warning, self-confidence and power. The analysis shows no use of modal adverbs as well as no use of modal adjectives. However, there is a conditional construction used in the poem in "and if you would know me" (13). This construction indicates self-confidence and self-exploration.

3. **Equating and Contrasting** Concerning the analysis of Lord's poem "A Woman Speaks", there is no explicit use of equating and contrasting tools throughout the poem.
4. **Presenting Time, Space, and Society:** Different kinds of deixis including person, temporal, place, and society deixis is the focus of this section of analysis.
- Place deixis is usually presented with certain expressions like *demonstratives* (this, these, that, those), *adverbs* (here, there), and frequently prepositional- structures such as (on the right, opposite, up the road)
 - Time: *verb tense, adverbs* (then, now), *demonstratives* (this, these, that, those), *time adverbials* (later, tomorrow, next, soon).
 - Social titles: *titles* (Mr., Mrs., Dr.), *address forms* (nicknames, formal names, first names).
 - Person deixis: personal pronouns (I, we, you...)"*my magic is unwritten*"(2), "*it will leave my shape behind*"(4), "*I seek no favor*"(5), "*I do not mix*"(10), "*and if you would know me*"(13), "*I do not dwell*"(16), "*within my birth nor my divinities*"(17), "*my sisters*"(20) (*my* is personal deixis while *sisters* is society deixis), "*wear me inside their coiled cloths*"(22), "*as our mother did*"(23) (*our* is personal deixis while *mother* is society deixis), "*I have been woman*"(25), "*beware my smile*"(27), "*I am treacherous with old magic*"(28), "*with all your wide futures*"(30), "*I am*"(32). "*where the restless oceans pound*" (15) (*where* is place deixis), "*but when the sea turns back*" (3) (*when* is time deixis),

Both personal and social deixis are used by the poet in her identity poem. Personal deixis is used to denote the thoughts and fragmented self. The personal pronoun "I" usually refers to

the speaker, asserting his identity. While titles like “sister”, and “mother” are examples of social deixis. Such kind of deixis is usually used to indicate social ranking. Thus, the poet uses social deixis to show the social hierarchy between Blacks and Whites. In "A Woman Speaks", Lorde shows the inferiority of the Blacks in the society of the Whites. Time deixis refers to change a state of the speaker, place deixis refers to the idea of constant movement and change, with a sense of power and force.

The Quantitative Analysis of the Poem “A Women Speaks” (1984)

The focus of this section is the presentation of the quantitative analysis. The table and figure below include statistical distribution and means of the linguistic tools under analysis: *Table 1: Shows how The Textual Tools in the Poem "A Woman Speaks" are Distributed Statistically*

Linguistic Tools	Frequency	Percentages
Naming	32	24.2%
Representing events/actions	10	13.2%
Presenting the ideas of others	0	0
Hypothesizing	14	10.6%
Equating and Contrasting	0	0
Presenting time, space, society	21	15.9%
Total	77	58.3%

The table above reveals Lorde’s strategic deployment of linguistic tools to construct and assert Black feminist identity. The predominance of naming devices (24.2%, 32 instances) aligns with the study’s theoretical framework regarding self-presentation and identity formation in African-American feminist literature. This high frequency of naming reflects Lorde’s conscious effort to reclaim and establish Black female identity in a society that, as discussed in the study’s theoretical section, historically attempted to render Black women invisible. The significant presence of time, space, and society markers (15.9%, 21 instances) demonstrates how Lorde situates personal identity within broader social contexts, supporting the study’s discussion of how Black women writers navigate both racial and gender oppression. The deliberate representation of events/actions (13.2%, 10 instances) and hypothesizing (10.6%, 14 instances) serves to construct agency and possibility – crucial elements in feminist stylistics. Notably, the absence of “presenting other’s speech” and “equating and contrasting” (both at 0%) suggests a rejection of external validation, aligning with the study’s discussion of how Black women writers seek to define themselves outside of white patriarchal frameworks. The total coverage of 58.3% indicates a carefully constructed linguistic strategy that embodies the feminist stylistic principle of using language as a tool for social and personal empowerment.

7.2 Text.2/ Qualitative Analysis of Text (2) “Who Said It Was Simple ” (1973)

The other poem to be analyzed here is “Who Said It Was Simple ” which was published in 1973. This poem signifies the themes of self-identity and feminism. It reveals the voice of a woman who experiences oppression, sexual harassment, and other types of pain. The poet talks about problematic girls who represent the Black and certain ladies who represent the White that oppressed the black community for ages and view them as minority. The structural and pragma-semantic analysis of the poem above is divided into two parts:

• Structural analysis

1. **Naming and Describing:** *There are so many roots to the tree of anger, that sometimes the branches shatter, Sitting in Nedicks, the women rally before they march, discussing*

the problematic girls, An almost white counterman passes, a waiting brother to serve them first, and the ladies neither notice nor reject, the slighter pleasures of their slavery, But I who am bound by my mirror, as well as my bed, see causes in colour, as well as sex, all these liberations.

Concerning the various noun choices used in the poem, the analysis of these nouns shows how the self is represented in relation to oppression and suffering by using different images. The use of the nouns "roots, tree (a structure with many branches representing complexity), anger" acknowledges the complexity of anger. This anger has multiple "roots," which means that the speaker's anger is deep, layered, and complicated. These roots represent various forms of oppression and racism that the speaker faces. Other nouns like branches, Nedicks, women, girls, counterman, brother, ladies, slavery (means lack of freedom which symbolizes oppression), mirror (usually symbolizes self-reflection and identity) ...etc are used to indicate the speaker's identity as a black oppressed American person. The poem highlights the complexities of identity and oppression in relation to race, gender, and class. The poem is a call for deeper awareness and a more inclusive approach to social justice, recognizing the complex nature of oppression and the need for solidarity across different marginalized groups.

2. **Representing Actions/Events/States:** Transitivity processes is the focus of this part of analysis. Many procedures are used to analyze identity poems and self-representation to convey ideological consequences. These processes will be examined using Simpson's transitivity model within Jeffries' (2010) model of critical stylistics, as follows:

- **Mental Process:** (L:10) and the ladies neither *notice nor reject*, (L: 14) *see causes in colour*, (L:16) and *sit here wondering*. These lines mostly rely on the use of different verbs related to mental or cognitive processes. The use of such verbs indicates the oppression that the black face and how the black try to express their identity in an oppressed society. Thus, taking the context of the poem into consideration, it becomes clear that the white women do not notice or acknowledge the racial discrimination happening in front of them. The counterman chooses to serve them before the Black man. Moreover, The speaker sees the "causes" of her struggles as being tied to both race ("color") and gender ("sex"). This highlights the intersectionality of her experience in such oppressed society. Then, the speaker reflects her identity. She is "wondering" which version of herself will "survive" the different movements or "liberations" that could be used to fight for justice.

- **Material Process:** these processes refer to actions in the physical world. Throughout the poem, the poet uses different verbs to express such processes. (2) *that sometimes the branches shatter*, (3) *before they bear*. (4) *Sitting in Nedicks*, (5) *the women rally before they march*, (7) *they hire to make them free*, (8) *An almost white counterman passes*, (9) *a waiting brother to serve them first*, (12) *But I who am bound by my mirror*, (17) *which me will survive*. The above verbs of material processes, like *shatter*, *bear*, *sitting*, *rally*, *march*, *hire*, *make*, *passes*, *serve*, *bound*, and *survive*, are intentionally used by the poet. Black Americans' experiences in their oppressed society are represented in these processes. The verbs "shatter" and "bear" signifies breaking or destruction, the results of anger or systems of oppression can prevent growth or can destroy any ideas before they fully develop. In line (4), the verb "sitting" specifies a passive action where the poet refers to white women that are gathering in. Whereas the verb "rally" indicates gathering in some place for a common cause. The verb "march" is an action verb which refers to an organized walk. With the verb "hire", the poet refers to the black women who are hired by white women who see themselves as progressive or liberated. The action verb "make" means to create or change the state of those women. Likewise, the verb "passes" suggests movement of a person of ambiguous racial identity to serve white women while black man is waiting in line. The use of the verb "serve"

indicates racial discrimination where the counterman serves white women before the black man, in case the white women do not notice or acknowledge the happening in front of them. The verb "bound" indicates restriction or limitation, by self-imposed or by external forces. With the use of the verb "bound", the poet reflects her personal identity which is restricted or limited in her oppressed society. The verb "survive" means that the speaker tries to achieve social justice to make oppressed people free.

• **Verbal Process:** Verbal processes are usually expressed by using verbs like *say*, *tell*, and *discuss*. Such verbs typically improve the reader's virtual auditory perception of particular images. Verbal processes are actions usually involve communication. In Lord's poem "Who Said It Was Simple", the use of the verb "discussing" in line (6) *discussing the problematic girls* is an illustration of verbalization processes. Here, the poet refers to identity of black women (i.e. problematic girls) who are hired by white women where these white women see themselves as progressive or liberated. They see themselves as superior to the black women in race and social class.

3. **Presenting the ideas of others:** Different linguistic tools are used with regard to the study of feminist stylistic analysis including narrative reported speech, direct speech, and indirect speech. These tools draw attention to particular ideas or thoughts through the use of certain verbs like "say", "tell", "speak", and "shout". In "Who Said It Was Simple", there is no use of such verbs.

• **Pragma-Semantic Analysis:**

Hypothesizing: There are certain ideological connotations associated with the use of modality in texts. According to Halliday (1985) "Modality helps in presenting ideas hypothetically and the receptor is left to believe or disbelieve". Hypothesizing can be represented in different forms: I. Modal auxiliary verbs: need, must, ought to, dare, will, would, shall, should, can, could, may, and might. II. Lexical verbs: hope, wish, imagine,... III. Modal adverbs: most likely, perhaps, obviously, definitely, of course,... IV. Modal adjectives: likely, possible, sure, definite, certain, obligatory, forbidden,.. V. Expressions with conditions: (if...then...). to express desire, duty, or confidence or uncertainty. The analysis of "Who Said It Was Simple" shows the use of the modal auxiliary verb "will" in *which me will survive* which indicates the future continuity of the speaker's identity. The speaker is questioning which version of herself will achieve social justice in her oppressed society. The poem analysis shows the use of the lexical verbs "shatter, bear, rally, march, discussing, hire, passes, serve, notice, reject, bound, see, sit, wondering, survive" to convey tension, social dynamics, and personal identity. Attitudes or degrees of certainty, obligation, or possibility are usually expressed by modal adverbs. In Lord's poem "Who Said It Was Simple", there is such use of modal adverbs. In (L2) that *sometimes* the branches shatter, the modal adverb "sometimes" indicates uncertainty or variability in the frequency of an event (i.e., the branches are shattering). In (L8) *An almost white counterman passes*, the modal adverb "almost" modifies the degree to which the counterman's appearance is white, indicating that he is not entirely white. In (L10) *and the ladies neither notice nor reject*, the modal adverb "neither" indicates a negation or refusal regarding the women's awareness or rejection of the situation. Modal adjectives are usually used to express possibility, necessity, or certainty. Through the poem's analysis, there is one modal adjective. In (L6) *discussing the problematic girls*, the word "problematic" is a modal adjective modifying the noun "girls" conveying a sense of difficulty, reflecting the complexities of the social dynamic of the black in white oppressed society. Concerning conditional construction, there is no explicit use of "if"-clause.

1. Equating and Contrasting: Concerning the analysis of Lord's poem "Who Said It Was Simple", there is no explicit use of equating and contrasting tools throughout the poem.

3. Presenting Time, Space, and Society: This section of analysis relies on the use of many deixis categories, including person, temporal, spatial, and society. According to the poem's analysis, there is a number of deixis that are used by the poet as follows: (1) *There are so many roots to the tree of anger*, ('there' is a place deixis), (2) *that sometimes the branches shatter*, ('sometimes' is a time deixis), (3) *before they bear*, ('before' is a time deixis while 'they' is personal deixis), (4) *Sitting in Nedicks*, ('Nedicks' is a place deixis), (5) *the women rally before they march*, ('women' is a social deixis, 'before' is a time deixis while 'they' is personal deixis), (6) *discussing the problematic girls*, ('girls' is a social deixis), (7) *they hire to make them free*, ('they and them' are personal deixis), (8) *An almost white counterman passes*, ('counterman' is a social deixis), (9) *a waiting brother to serve them first*, ('brother' is a social deixis whereas 'them' is a personal deixis), (10) *and the ladies neither notice nor reject*, ('ladies' is a social deixis), (11) *the slighter pleasures of their slavery*, ('their' is a personal deixis), (12) *But I who am bound by my mirror*, ('I, who, and they' are personal deixis), (13) *as well as my bed*, ('my' is a personal deixis), (16) *and sit here wondering*, ('here' is a place deixis), (17) *which me will survive*, ('me' is a personal deixis), (18) *all these liberations*, ('these' is discourse deixis).

The analysis of the poem shows that the poet depends mainly on the use of two kinds of deixis: personal and social deixis. Personal deixis are used to specify the poet's ideas and thoughts concerning the presentation of her identity. While social deixis are used to indicate the difficulties that the black undergo inside the oppressed white society. These deixis like "girls, counterman, ladies" are used to indicate social ranking in American society. That the black are usually considered subordinate because of their colour. Place deixis are indicators of location, i.e. the society in which the black are live in. Time deixis refer to a temporal actions for example "the women rally before they march" and change a state of the speaker that the speaker is wondering which version of herself will achieve liberation.

The Quantitative Analysis of the Poem "Who Said It Was Simple" (1973)

The focus of this section is the presentation of the quantitative analysis. The table and figure below include statistical distribution and means of the linguistic tools under analysis:

Table 2: Shows how The Textual Tools in the Poem "Who Said It Was Simple " are Distributed Statistically

Linguistic Tools	Frequency	Percentages
Naming	18	19.1%
Representing events/actions	16	17.2%
Presenting the ideas of others	0	0%
Hypothesizing	4	3.7%
Equating and Contrasting	0	0%
Presenting time, space, society	23	24.4%
Total	61	64.8%

The above table shows Lorde's talent in employing feminist stylistic means to dismantle social hierarchies and thus, sustain collective identity. The emphasis on 24.4%, 23 instances time, space, and society which takes the first position perfectly fits the research concerning how Black women writers put forth personal experience in the background of the social issues. The prominence of naming (19.1%, 18 cases) as well as representation of actions (17.2%, 16 occurrences) form the base for the argument put forward by the paper on the exemplary manner in which identity is achieved through language and action. The limited usage of hypothesis

(3.7%, 4 cases), showing the more direct and straightforward method in the process of identity formation, the study, however, continues to be how Black feminist writers, from the tentative, became more self-confident, moving to the confident self-expression stage. Among the speech patterns examined in the study situational conversation between/against/other-based (both 0%) dominance withdraws Lorde's antithesis of comparative identity building, thereby analyzing through the data the extent to which Black women writers refuse to see themselves in white patriarchal society. Though the sum of 64.8% speaks to additional coverage and, therefore, a more focused use of the linguistic arsenal seems to be a more effective delivery strategy to the direction of identity & social justice themes. According to the overall study, feminist stylistics is not only an analytical approach but also a mechanism for social change in Black women's poetry." A higher total coverage (64.8%) is an indicator of more important vocabulary being used, implying that the style has adhered to the subjects of identity and social justice.

8. Results

The analysis of the selected poems, both qualitative and quantitative, reveals Lorde's strategic use of certain textual tools to convey her feminist and racial identity. Prominent among these is Lorde's employment of naming and describing. By using specific names and descriptors that reference Black American identity and experience, she serves to center and validate the Black female perspective. This linguistic centering of the marginalized voice is a key component of Lorde's feminist poetics.

Besides, to highlight the social boundaries and distinctions between Black and White Americans, Lorde employs person and social deixis. Through these deictic markers, she foregrounds the persistent marginalization faced by her community, creating a stark contrast between the "us" and "them" of racial categories. In doing so, Lorde refuses to allow the White perspective to remain the unspoken norm, instead insisting on the visibility and legitimacy of the Black experience.

In contrast to these more overt identity-affirming strategies, Lorde uses equating/contrasting and hypothesizing sparingly, preferring clear, declarative statements to directly articulate her situation and identity as a Black woman. The relative absence of prioritizing, negating, assuming, and exemplifying suggests Lorde's intentional avoidance of more subtle or indirect linguistic strategies. Instead, she opts for a direct, unapologetic approach to representing her identity and experiences.

Overall, the results demonstrate Lorde's skillful use of feminist stylistic tools to amplify the voice of the Black woman, resist racial discrimination, and assert her own powerful sense of self and community. Her language reflects a deliberate strategy of centering, validating, and empowering the marginalized perspective. Through her strategic deployment of textual features, Lorde crafts a poetic voice that is at once defiant, proud, and unwavering in its commitment to Black female identity and liberation.

9. Conclusions

In the selected poems (*A Woman Speak*, and *Who said it was Simple*), Lorde uses linguistic and stylistic devices to establish her own identity and present her self-image. Identity poems are a significant kind of poems because they reflect the self as both an individual and a collective containing concealed ideologies, political positions, and social attitudes at the same time.

As an African American woman, Audre Lord utilizes her poetry to convey the harsh treatment and domination of black women as a result of white American society's racial discrimination. Thus, a feminist voice is used by Lorde to criticize this reality in her poetry by emphasizing the powerless of black women who faced several difficulties due to the dominating of the white culture through figurative language. In the same vein, Lorde's poems "*a woman speaks, who said*

it was simple" illustrate the bad treatment and damaging preconceptions that black women face as a result of interactions between the two cultures: black and white.

However, Lorde shows the identity as a woman and as a Black. Black women are portrayed in her poetry as strong and confident. Challenging the traditional viewpoints that portray them as weak and submissive, Lorde presents a new outlook of black women as powerful and capable.

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Appendix (1): “A Woman Speaks” (1984)

1. Moon marked and touched by sun
2. my magic is unwritten,
3. but when the sea turns back
4. it will leave my shape behind.
5. I seek no favor
6. untouched by blood
7. unrelenting as the curse of love
8. permanent as my errors
9. or my pride
10. I do not mix
11. love with pity
12. nor hate with scorn
13. and if you would know me
14. look into the entrails of Uranus
15. where the restless oceans pound.
16. I do not dwell
17. within my birth nor my divinities
18. who am ageless and half-grown
19. and still seeking
20. my sisters
21. witches in Dahomey
22. wear me inside their coiled cloths
23. as our mother did
24. mourning.
25. I have been woman
26. for a long time
27. beware my smile
28. I am treacherous with old magic
29. and the noon's new fury
30. with all your wide futures
31. promised
32. I am
33. woman
34. and not white.

Appendix (2): “Who Said It Was Simple ” (1973)

1. There are so many roots to the tree of anger
2. that sometimes the branches shatter
3. before they bear.
4. Sitting in Nedicks
5. the women rally before they march
6. discussing the problematic girls
7. they hire to make them free.

8. An almost white counterman passes
9. a waiting brother to serve them first
10. and the ladies neither notice nor reject
11. the slighter pleasures of their slavery.
12. But I who am bound by my mirror
13. as well as my bed
14. see causes in colour
15. as well as sex
16. and sit here wondering
17. which me will survive
18. all these liberations. |