

# Male Domination in Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip*

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**Abstract**—The difference between man and woman is not based on the biological aspect but on how society makes it. Women are formed by their community, where they are against discrimination. Moreover, the prejudices reveal language use, including in literary works. *Monkey Grip* by Helen Garner tells about a woman's condition and feeling for a man. This study aims to elaborate on feminism and stylistics, especially in identifying Australian female authors. By using stylistic analysis, this study revealed that man character dominated the woman character in conversation and did not care about his partner's feelings. Although the female character knew it, she was afraid to fight because of the male's domination and her love.

**Index Terms**—male, female, domination, language, style

## I. INTRODUCTION

Men and women do not only identify biologically but also reveal their characters and functions. Sex relates to biological attributes, and gender relates to socially constructed roles. Sex consists of male and female, while gender is about how male and female should be. God gives sex, but gender is formed by society. Being a woman means following how culture develops women. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) state that it seems reasonable to argue that the social world is the creation of both the male and female. This statement is in contrast with the reality that males dominate females. The difference between male and female is not based on the biological aspect but on how society creates it. The community puts men as dominant, whereas the environment does not put both men and women in the same position.

Biological differences cannot be the main factor in dominating men to women because a human being can adapt to the situation. Human beings will find a way to solve the problem of the body. Likewise, the previous statement is that a woman is not born but is formed. That is true that a woman was born with a sexual organ, and then society reforms the woman with her vagina and the characteristics that society has made.

Beauvoir (2010) states that male projects all females at once onto women. The term 'woman' has been defined, and how man has formed a woman's attitude. In that book, Beauvoir shows that man is a coordinate while the woman is a subordinate. The woman's position stays behind or below the man's. As coordinate or the center, a man takes the position to control the woman. In other words, a woman is defined as inferior who is weak and always gets discrimination against by men (Afiah et al., 2022). Men give many limitations to women, including the rules of society (Asri, 2018). If this situation keeps happening, women tend to be less independent and do not have power over their lives (Asriyanti et al., 2022).

A woman's identity is not based on the woman's perspective but on the man's perspective. The man who controls society defines women based on his point of view or man's necessity. It supports *misogyny*. Interaction and relation between man and woman reveal friction between man and woman identity. Furthermore, woman existentialism was forced by man existentialism. In the psychology of sexuality, this situation is mostly influenced by the human ego (Purwaningsih et al., 2020).

Sartre (2007) states that man shall attain existence only when he is what he projects himself to be. The man focuses on his necessity without caring about the woman's condition. Furthermore, man will explore woman's weaknesses to achieve his goal (project). In addition, man feels that their position is better than a woman. Woman's world is not represented what women want; it is full of discrimination. Woman existentialism should be a woman's existence against man existentialism that dominates a woman's body.

Discrimination against women started when society defined and limited woman's space. The woman has been limited by many rules legitimized as social judgment. For instance, the woman is limited to using language or forbade speaking like a man.

Spender in Cameron (1998) argues that language is literally 'man-made,' and that somehow woman cannot fit their ideas and expressions into a language because it has been constructed according to the needs of males. Furthermore, Lakoff (1973) writes about 'woman's language' with its characters. The hypothesis is that women have traditionally been discriminated against in society, among other things, because of the way they are taught to use language. The girls do not ask questions (they should accept things) and are not rough (they should be polite). Being a good woman means it the mandatory to speak politely or not rough; if women fail to do so, they could be considered bad women; this rule does not apply to men. That condition limits women from expressing their feelings and ideas. Whereas in society, interaction is needed to communicate or express their thoughts, women have lost this opportunity.

Furthermore, social interaction in a pragmatic way focuses on how the sender or speaker and receiver or listener interact with each other. Moreover, Arafah and Hasyim (2019) state that in a language system, the interaction in a conversation can only happen between the sender or speaker and the receiver or interlocutor. As a result, communication between men and women can never happen if men's domination still exists.

Lakoff, as cited in Bucholtz (2004), argues that in every case, language users both draw on and create conventionalized associations between linguistic form and social meaning to construct their own and others' identities. Hasjim et al. (2020) add that if someone thinks about something, he will say something based on the meaning he understands. Sometimes the utterances are hard to understand because they can cause multi-interpretations. If so, a semiotic approach must be applied to obtain meaning through the signs or symbols used from the speaker's environment (Hasyim et al., 2020). Furthermore, language is described in some ways and expressions that refer to the social condition. In the same spirit, Arafah and Kaharuddin (2019) also state the relationship between socio-cultural and language, identifying how specific cultural norms and values are useful to improve intercultural interactions. Cultural values must be important as these values can influence the character of people (Mokoginta & Arafah, 2022).

Stylistics is a part of linguistics that focuses on the style of language. Stylistics explores language usage (Simpson in Nurgiyantoro, 2017). It means that language is useful for giving direct meaning and more than it. A word can convey more information than its meaning. In addition, the connotation is a symbolic or social meaning constructed by the public (Arafah et al., 2020). Moreover, Sahib et al. (2021) assume such different behaviors are more likely to motivate the speakers' competence in the embedded language.

Doing stylistics enriches our ways of thinking about language, and, as observed, exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts (Simpson, 2004). Anthropological linguistics proposes that a text/discourse will be meaningful and give complete information if observed in its context (Arafah et al., 2020). It indicates that male existentialism also dominates how the language is used. Stylistics is used to identify literary works where language is used to describe human life. It shows that literary work is an expression to describe using words or writings (Fadillah et al., 2022). The social situation around the author has a consequent impact on how the author uses the style and context of his work (Suhadi et al., 2022).

Literary works should not be understood by denotative meaning because it has many relations to other aspects. Literature does not always share secret meanings easily. Therefore, every reader should explore it deeply. An author uses literary work as a medium to write as a response to the common problems of society (Siwi et al., 2022). Novels, as literary works, can be a medium of male domination. Fiction can be half of the fiction if it relates to the fact. A literary work is seen as a document of society (Abbas et al., 2020).

Moreover, oral tradition must be preserved; otherwise, it will disappear (Sahib et al., 2019). Literature not only entertains the reader but more than that, literature can be a guideline for understanding many phenomena deeply (Abbas et al., 2020). Therefore, literature is one of the phenomena that describe the reality of human life (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). To sum up, literary works take part in social life to reveal and describe the reflection of human beings in real life (Arafah et al., 2021).

Some previous studies related to this current research relate to existentialism, feminism, stylistics, and Australian literature. Based on the researchers' exploration, some previous researchers used feminism and existentialism to show woman's cases. The first research is *Australian women's letters between 1788 and 1840* by Arafah (2011), who analyzed 574 women's letters from different social backgrounds. Those letters revealed domestic themes such as family, business, and friendship. The number of letters represented Australian woman writers. It indicates that Australian women have written their feelings even though those letters talked about privacy issues, and it is still about domestic issues. The letters were written in the colonial era. This research can be a foundation and comparison between Australian women writers in 1788 and 1840 with Australian writing around 1977. Moreover, it will help the researcher see Australian women's language style in expressing their ideas and feelings.

Second is Abbas (2013), in her research entitled *Dancing with Australian Feminism: Helen Garner's Postcards from Suffers Viewed from a Buginese perspective with A Partial Translation into Indonesian*. This research investigates feminist ideas in Garner's works viewed from a Buginese perspective. Garner's selected works analyzed are *Postcard from Surfers*, *La Chance Existe*, *The Art of Life*, *All Young Bloody Catholics*, and *Civilization and Discontents*. Abbas found that Australian and Buginese women have issues stemming from male domination. Here, Abbas focuses her research on the Buginese standpoint while dialoguing with Australian feminism. It shows that Garner talks more about the issue of man to woman. This analysis connects how women resist male domination in Australian literary works and see it from a Buginese perspective. Cultural perspective decides the way of facing discrimination and against it.

The last is *Entextualization and Genre Transformation of Kajang Death Ritual Speech* by Sahib et al. (2017). She focused on how language style is used in a community (Kajang). She aims to investigate the *Kajang* death ritual speech. Then, she found a different language style used in daily language and *Kajang Death Ritual*. People use everyday or common language (ordinary) in daily language, and in *Kajang Death Ritual* it is used extraordinary or literary language. In this research, Sahib wrote that ritual speech had hidden meanings where it contained a wish and advisory. She uses indexical mediation by relating denotational text and interactional text. Sahib explored ritual sentences and their meaning (reality). Language or sentence does not only convey its meaning but also behind the text. Stylistics can identify and explore language or sentences deeply so that readers can understand more than a text.

The above previous researches use feminism and stylistics to identify a novel. In this current research, the researcher will combine feminism and stylistics to identify a novel. Pierce (2009) mentions that Garner's *Monkey Grip* (1977) is generally regarded as marking the emergence of the feminist perspective. *Monkey Grip* was marketed as the book that would change women's lives and was eagerly read by many: Garner's writing always calls on identificatory reader politics (Webby, 2000). Garner's first novel *Monkey Grip*, published in 1977, takes a new issue of women's voices that differs from Australian women's letters around 1788 and 1840 (based on Arafah's book). This study investigates male domination using stylistic analysis, especially for Australian literature. The researcher will see how the language (style) uses to describe male domination in the novel *Monkey Grip*. Moreover, the novel will be analyzed as an Australian novel unfamiliar to Indonesia.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### A. Feminism

Feminism is based on the term 'feminine,' which discusses women. Moore in Barry (1995) suggests that feminism, women, and femininity are political positions. Feminism is women's voice where women got difficulties in all spheres of human life (Asri et al., 2022). The system of human life does not give the same chance between women and men. It inspired John Stuart Mill and his wife, Harriet Taylor, to write *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Their work is regarded as a classical liberal argument for equal rights (Humm, 1992). Women need to organize their voices against men's domination.

Feminists believe that differences between women and men are products of gender identity. Gender identity is about the symbol of gender; for example, the way women speak is a symbol of women, whereas women have a different way of speaking with men. There was a separate sphere for each gender's activities and authority (Suleman et al., 2021).

Feminism is women's voice where women got difficulties in all spheres of human life. Feminism is the way to express the truth of women's feelings. The forms of women characters are very hard to change because the concept of that perception has become public perception. In understanding feminism, men can join together with women to overcome women's problems. A man who writes about women is John Stuart Mills. John Stuart Mill's basic opinion is that there is no justice if a community or gender dominates another (Arivia, 2003). Mill believes that when people want to take the liberty, the people have to get equality for both men and women. Men and women have to cooperate, for example, in the family. His wife, Harriet Taylor, in Rowbotham (1992), argues that equality and democracy are the keys to the emancipation of women. The rights of men and women are different, so women's rights are not men's.

### B. Stylistic

Language as a communication tool delivers a message from the speaker or author to the listener or reader. At the same time, social function talks more about how language describes social conditions in individual and social interactions. Language factors (writer, text, context, and reader) cannot be separated from each other to achieve the language's goal. The language reflects the character, environment, and cultural aspects of the people who use it (Takwa et al., 2022). That is why language usually has a code and contains context-related messages. The context of a certain situation relates to the use of language in a social life where the society expresses thoughts using a socio-cultural context (Takwa et al., 2022). Some communication misunderstandings because those factors are not united, including the language of literary works, which is not the same as ordinary language. The phenomena of misunderstanding language come from the meaning of certain words that do not make sense and cause a change of interpretation (Iksora et al., 2022). The researcher or reader needs to identify more because sometimes the language of literary work has a different meaning from its text. It relates to Riffaterre's (1978) statement that a poem says one thing and means another.

The style of the author has a meaning. Wellek and Warren (1976) identify James Thompson's works, stating that a particular type of nature description practiced in the eighteenth century implies a specific philosophy, the argument from design. This statement indicates that stylistics contains a whole of literary works related to social background. By reading literary works, researchers and readers can catch the style of that period. That is because the literature strand aims to reveal the study of personal, cultural, societal, and aesthetic values (Sunardi et al., 2018). In the next explanation, Wellek and Warren (1976) suggest that if we can describe the style of a work of an author, there is no doubt that we can also describe the style of a group of works. Herman Nohl in Wellek and Warren (1976) adds that stylistic traits can be associated with the types of philosophy. Feminism and existentialism are philosophical movements that exist in literary works. The style of language reveals it.

Moreover, language contains an ideology where the sender and receiver interact with each other. Language ideology is also embodied in a fundamental and implicit sense within everyday practices of institutions (Schieffelin et al., 1998). So, language as media of ideology can identify the ideology of the author or writer by analyzing language use in work. Then, the readers can interpret another meaning. It is in line with conversational implicatures in which the words have something beyond the literal meaning (Yulianti et al., 2022). That is why Arafah and Hasyim (2021) mention that message reading (linguistic and connotative) produces a layer of meaning for readers. Therefore, the chosen words paying attention to the grammar give a better understanding to the readers (Anggrawan et al., 2019).

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will take the data from one source as the main source. It is a novel entitled *Monkey Grip*, written by Helen Garner and published in 1977 by McPhee Gribble. The novel consists of 245 pages. The researchers will read the novel carefully and then write important points about feminism and existentialism, especially about the stylistics of the novel.

In this research, the researcher arranged steps of collecting data such as follows:

1. Read and reread the novel carefully. Rereading means deep reading about the issues of a woman in this novel. This step also ensures that there are clear and suspicious issues of women.
2. Present the data based on the stylistics analysis. The researcher presented the data in words, phrases, or sentences noted in the novel.
3. Then, identifying the data by using feminist existentialism. The researcher analyzed the data based on existentialism and feminism in this part. Existentialism focuses on how humans should exist for themselves, without discrimination by other people. Here, existentialism will analyze the position of a woman or woman existentialism in the novel *Monkey Grip*. So, this research combined existentialism and feminism to describe the data based on the novel.
4. Describe feminist existentialism based on the stylistic analysis. After getting the data about feminist existentialism, the researcher identified the data as classified into words, phrases, or sentences. This step saw how discrimination against women was. It is from the style of language used in the novel. Moreover, the researcher described how women showed their existence against man's discrimination. Then, the researcher revealed relations between stylistics and feminist existentialism in the novel. It showed how the author put her ideas about feminism in the styles of language or how the style of language (stylistics) described the issues of feminist existentialism.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Findings

1. *He told me about a woman he was working with within a play he had begun to rehearse.*

*'I would like to fuck with her,' he remarked.*

*She was a junkie too: I saw her once: thin, white, with red plaits on top of her fine head.*

*'I would be jealous, I suppose,' I said unwillingly.*

*'I know. However, that would not stop me,' Javo said without the harshness the words might have carried.*

*Though I would think of that; I would think of it (Garner, 1977, p. 72).*

In this conversation, a man character (Javo) asks a woman character (Nora) about his desire to fuck with another girl. Nora is his girlfriend, but Javo does not care about their relationship or Nora's feelings. Nora mentions that she would be jealous, but Javo ignores it and says, *'I know. But that wouldn't stop me,'* This sentence also shows the power of a man who knew about his girl's feelings but ignored them. Even though Nora said she was *jealous*, her feeling could not do anything. It does not change anything. Moreover, Nora cannot do anything because she loves Javo.

A Male's sentence is direct, while a woman avoids being assertive.

2. *I began to talk at length, angry and despairing, but I could never say more than two sentences before his breathing became louder and slower, and he nodded off (Garner, 1977, p. 84).*

This data reveals an angry woman who could not do anything because she feared Javo. Nora said she was *angry and despairing*; it is normal for a woman who is disappointed with her partner. Although she was angry because of her disappointment, Nora could not do more than speak two sentences. She just waited for her boyfriend's sign. *"his breathing became louder and slower, and he nodded off;* this sentence indicates that Javo controlled Nora and she did not have good power against it. Javo's body language is enough to make Nora silent. Javo's gesture closed Nora's mouth.

She was angry and talked at length, but she also said she could never speak more than two sentences, which means she just talked in her heart without saying it. She did not have the power to say everything she hated about her condition.

3. *Gracie slept with me, and in the middle of the night, I woke up and put my arm around her small body. It was the first time I had missed Javo's body (Garner, 1977, p. 88).*

Nora started to love Javo and all about him. Her feeling will be a gate for Javo's domination in all of Nora's life. A woman's (Nora) love for Javo would make Javo dominates Nora's decision, feeling, attitude and life. A woman's

feelings could be one reason a woman gets discriminated against because women cannot think they are in a bad situation. Generally, the man knows that when a woman loves someone, she will not care about domination or discrimination, so the man will use it to force the woman.

4. *I want to be with you, laugh and mooch around, and travel if we can. However, I am not getting anything back; I am running out; I need love. Moreover, if you do not want to give it anymore, will you please say so? I am telling you, Javo! I am lonely! Are you reading me?* (Garner, 1977, p. 96).

This data indicates that Nora needs affection and love from Javo. She is *lonely* and needs a decision from Javo about Javo's love. It was described in the sentence *that if you do not want to give it anymore, will you please say so?* Her question *will you please say so?* It never came out of Nora's mouth because she was not brave. She was afraid that if she asked Javo, he would be angry, and Javo would leave her.

5. *'What makes me saddest,' I said, 'is how you are physically close to me. It is not just that I want to fuck with you. I cannot touch you in the ordinary daily run of things* (Garner, 1977, p. 119).

Again, the woman character, Nora, adored the man character or Javo. Nora was sad because she did not get what she wished from Javo. She hoped more than a fuck'; it was like touching or living together *daily*. "*I cannot touch you*" this sentence refers to Nora's condition, who did not have power even if Nora had given her body 'to be fucked'. She could not do anything, but Javo could do everything he wanted.

6. *I wanted to pierce his bravado and ask him for the truth, but these days his ego was invested in keeping that brave smokescreen well in place* (Garner, 1977, p. 164).

Nora's anger is strong, but her braveness is too weak against Javo's ego. Her weakness was described, *but these days, his ego was invested in keeping that brave smokescreen well in place*. Nora says that she would "*ask him for the truth,*" then she cannot do that because her braveness is only in her heart without action. "*that brave smokescreen well in place*" clearly reveals that Javo is still controlling her.

7. *'Of course, it does.'* (Remembering him saying, *'Do you feel horny? Because I don't.'* Bang, the door slammed in my face) (Garner, 1977, p. 168).

*'Do you feel horny?* This sentence is a character of the male's language. The women speak more politely (super polite) than men, and women avoid slang and profanity. A question about Nora's sexual desire (horny) is from Javo. He asked her directly about 'horny'. Then, he replied, "*Because I do not,*" that sentence symbolizes rejection. Javo asked and replied at the same time. His answer made Nora shy, "*Bang, the door slammed in my face*" this sentence indicates that Nora felt unhappy and could not get what she wanted.

8. *He hugs me again; I am comforted by his body all down my back. I get out of bed and take off my nightdress, thinking partly of fucking, partly of the foolishness of our skins not touching through all the layers of my sickness. I turn my front to him, and we lie along each other close and comfortably* (Garner, 1977, p. 168).

This data shows the domination of males; the female character was fascinated by the male's body and his touch. Nora was happy with Javo, "*comforted by his body*"; she thought about "fucking" and felt comfortable with Javo's body. This data tells us how Nora, as a woman character, likes a man and needs it very much. She needs a man's body and touching.

9. *I am too miserable to fuck. I can only fuck when I am happy* (Garner, 1977, p. 168).

Here, Javo showed his mood again. He did not care about Nora's feelings. Nora hoped that Javo would hug her because she felt lonely. She needed Javo's touch. Javo said he was "*miserable,*" so he could not make love because of his mood. If he loves Nora, he should care about Nora's feelings and give her a touch, even a little hug.

10. *Why couldn't I let him go and wish him well? Why did I always need a man to be concerned with, whether well or ill?* (Garner, 1977, p. 219).

Nora asked about her condition, why she could not be free from Javo and why she always needed a man. "*Why did I always need a man*" was a clear statement that, so far, she is tied to her feeling that a man dominates her. Because of her feelings for the man, she lived in a condition where she could not leave him to go and always needed him by her side. The word "need" means that Nora cannot stand alone.

11. *Like a husband protecting a wife battling with feelings too strong for her* (Garner, 1977, p. 227).

Here the word "*protecting*" puts the woman/wife as an object to be protected and the man/husband as a subject who will protect. The object is weak, so she (wife/Nora) could be protected because she cannot protect herself. She needs a man who has the power to protect her.

## B. Discussions

Based on the analysis above, the researcher gets that there are two types of male domination in this novel. First, it is revealed in conversation that a man uses language to express his domination, and how a woman uses language to show her feeling. Second, it is revealed in Nora's (a woman's) feelings or her condition.

Javo used a language style that describes his power in *'I know. However, that would not stop me,* and *'Do you feel horny? Because I do not'*. Those sentences show the male's power to control the situation and ignore the female's feelings. He said it without caring about the female condition. The language indicates a man's position in the conversation; he only did what he wanted and dominated the woman's decision. Although the woman dislikes what the man's character did to her, she cannot fight for it because she is afraid. It reveals that *I began to talk at length, angry and despairing, but I could never say more than two sentences before his breathing became louder and slower, and he nodded off.*

Generally, male domination in conversation describes his power to control the woman's character. Javo used Nora's weakness (feeling) to dominate her. Javo knows that Nora loves him very much, so he uses that chance to do what he wants for Nora. He came to Nora when he needed sex, money, sleep, and eating. Javo sometimes says Javo loves Nora, but in contrast, Javo does not care about Nora's condition. If Javo loves Nora, he should show and do the best for Nora, not only caring about his feeling and ignoring her. A good relationship contains loving and caring for each other. Men and women should give affection and attention to his/her partner; there is no domination between them. "Love" is not only a word but more than it. It also appears in action.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This study describes two parts of discrimination in the novel *Monkey Grip* by Helen Garner; it reveals in conversation and the woman's condition. In the conversation, the main character, Javo, appears to have the power to decide his life and dominate Nora's life. Javo will come to Nora if he needs a life, food, place for sleeping and sex, but he does not care about Nora's condition. Moreover, it happens because of Nora's feelings for Javo. Nora loves Javo, but he ignores all of the things about Nora's feelings and her condition.

Javo's dominations are shown in language styles. He used words, phrases, or sentences Nora could not rebut directly in Javo's face. *'I know. However, that would not stop me,'* this sentence clearly describes Javo's control over Nora. He ignores Nora's feelings even actually it hurts Nora. The utterance *"Why did I always need a man?"* indicates Nora's condition that she always needs a man to protect (*Like a husband protecting a wife*), to give a touch (*I am comforted by his body*), and to be loved (*I need love*), but in the same time a question about *"Why did I always need a man?"* brings a new issue of woman introspection.

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