



## The Image of Woman as a Heroine in Hala Alyan's "Sweet Tea" and Grace Paley's "A Conversation with My Father" in Terms of Sarah Mills's Feminist Model: A Stylistic Study

Asst. Lect. Murtadha Ali Hussein Al- Araji

Department of English Language, Al-Qadisiyah University, Ad Diwāniyah, Iraq

Email: [murtadha.hussein@qu.edu.iq](mailto:murtadha.hussein@qu.edu.iq)

Mobile: 07802219894

### Abstract

Patriarchal ideology has tended to offer extremely restricted and conventional roles for literary heroines those that are passive, emotive and/or subordinate to a male authority. These tendentious and pervasive forms of representation are aspects of broader cultural discourses, most of which serve to marginalize women's voices and assign them fewer social sites. Feminist linguistic theory has thus been as much concerned with mapping these tendencies of representation as with providing alternative readings that prioritize female experience, agency, and resistance. This study provides a feminist stylistic analysis of Hala Alyan's Sweet Tea and Grace Paley's A Conversation with My Father, using Sara Mills's model to examine how linguistic features both reflect and challenge gendered ideologies. Through quantitative of pronoun use, transitivity, modality, lexical choice, and grammatical structure, the study illustrates that both stories undo patriarchal narrative conventions, but in different ways. The study suggests that feminist agency can be written not just in what is said, but in how it is said, in form, in structure, and in voice. Thus, both stories demonstrate how women writers employ stylistic resistance to undermine dominant narrative ideologies and recover female subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Feminist stylistics, narrative resistance, modality, transitivity, lexical choice, gender and language, women's writing.

صورة المرأة كبطلة في "شاي حلو" لهالة عليان و"حوار مع أبي" لجريس بالي من خلال نموذج

سارة ميلز النسوي: دراسة أسلوبية

م.م. مرتضى علي حسين الاعرجي

جامعة القادسية/كلية التربية/قسم اللغة الانكليزية

Email: [murtadha.hussein@qu.edu.iq](mailto:murtadha.hussein@qu.edu.iq)

Mobile: 07802219894

### ملخص

لقد شكلت الإيديولوجيات البطريركية تاريخياً تمثيل النساء في الأدب، حيث حصرت البطلات في أدوار تقليدية ومحدودة تتميز بالسلبية والعاطفية أو الخضوع للسلطة الذكورية. هذه التمثيلات هي جزء من خطابات ثقافية أوسع تُسكت أصوات النساء وتقيد مواقعهن الاجتماعية. لقد اهتمت النظرية اللغوية النسوية بنفس القدر بتحديد هذه الاتجاهات في التمثيل كما اهتمت بتقديم قراءات بديلة تُعطي الأولوية للتجربة النسائية والوكالة والمقاومة. تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً أسلوبياً نسوياً لروايتي هالة عليان "الشاي الحلو" وجريس بالي "حديث مع والدي"، باستخدام نموذج سارة ميلز لفحص كيفية عكس الخصائص اللغوية للإيديولوجيات الجندرية وكذلك تحديها. من خلال تحليل كمي لاستخدام الضمائر، والفعلية، والموضعية، والاختيار المعجمي، والتركييب النحوي، توضح الدراسة أن كلا القصتين تلغيان تقاليد السرد الذكورية،



ولكن بطرق مختلفة. وتقتصر الدراسة أن الوكالة النسوية يمكن التعبير عنها ليس فقط في ما يُقال، بل في كيفية قوله، من حيث الشكل، والتركيب، والصوت. وهكذا، تُظهر كلتا القصتين كيف تستخدم الكاتبات النسويات المقاومة الأسلوبية لتقويض الإيديولوجيات السردية السائدة واستعادة الذاتية الأنثوية. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأسلوبية النسوية، المقاومة السردية، المودالية (الصيغة)، التعدي (التعدية)، الاختيار المعجمي، النوع الاجتماعي واللغة، كتابة المرأة.

## 1. Introduction

Patriarchal ideologies have historically shaped the construction of women in literature, placing women characters in restrictive, stereotypical positions most often passive, emotional, or subservient to male power (Mills, 1995:3; Showalter, 1985:9). These representations have been part of broader cultural discourses that sideline women's voices and limit women's social roles. Feminist literary theory has thus been as interested in mapping these patterns of representation, as it has in providing alternative interpretations that place female experience, agency, and resistance at their core.

In linguistics, feminist stylistics as advocated by Sara Mills (1995:3) constitutes a powerful methodology for the analysis of linguistic processes in terms of the representation of gender. Feminist stylistics is an extension of conventional stylistic analysis insofar as it examines not only how literary effects are produced but also how texts occupy ideological positions in regard to gender. Stylistic analysis has more to do with such language aspects as lexical choice, transitivity, modality, pronoun usage, passive and active voice, sentence structure, all of which contribute to the character development, as well as interactions with power, voice and subjectivity. According to Mills (1995: 44), the stylistic analysis of texts can reveal even the most subtle yet oppressive ideological assumptions regarding the roles and agency of female characters.

This study adopts Mills' feminist stylistic model to examine the woman as heroine that is, active, agentive, and multidimensional in two culturally rich short stories by women authors: *Sweet Tea* (2015) by Arab-American poet and fiction writer Hala Alyan, and *A Conversation with My Father* (1972) by Jewish-American author and feminist Grace Paley. Although both authors come from distinct sociopolitical contexts, their works are deeply concerned with female identity, intergenerational conflict, trauma, and narrative agency. Alyan's *Sweet Tea* probes diasporic memory and the psychosocial effects of gendered cultural norms, typically embodied in Arab women's experiences in diaspora (Majaj, 2008: 75-76). Paley's *A Conversation with My Father* is a metafictional probing of narrative that also features a female protagonist who resists her father's patriarchal ideology and narrative determinism (Templeton, 1999:34).

Despite the increased number of feminist literary critiques of both writers, few have utilized systematic quantitative linguistic techniques to examine the ways in which their word selection acts ideologically. This study addresses that gap by utilizing a feminist style methodology in combination with a quantitative linguistic analysis. The primary goal is to investigate the ways in which



linguistic features, particularly syntactic and discourse-level structure work to construct or problematize women's position as subjects rather than objects within the narrative. Because, as Mills (1995:7) points out, linguistic form is never neutral, and even subtle grammatical anomalies can betray a text's ideological construction of gender and power. The main focus of the study is given to the syntactic/stylistic elements, namely voice, modal verbs and personal pronouns with a special attention to the indicators I/Myself and She, in order to calculate the degree in which the female character is presented as empowered, agency, a woman with a voice, resistant, To see if these are only formal choices, but if they also have an obvious social and political consequence in which a woman must be represented as a heroine, a person who makes decisions, choices, acts with intent, and fights the mechanisms that seek to silence her (Lazar, 2005:7 Sunderland, 2004:9).

Finally, the study contributes to the development of feminist stylistics with its use of both qualitative- and quantitative-based analysis to offer a full, data-driven account of how gendered identities are shaped linguistically in texts. It argues that these stylistic decisions are central to fiction's broader ideological work, and that such analysis can contribute to our understanding of how fiction represents and changes readers' and authors' understandings of gender, authority, and agency.

## 2. Literature Review

Feminist Stylistics by Sara Mills was a pivotal point in the history of the use of linguistic instruments to alleviate the ideological underpinning of feminine representation in literary texts. According to Mills, the problem of gender arose from the so-called neutrality of language; pronouns, sentence flow, transitivity, and modality all have consequences for representing characters as subjects and objects. Drawing upon Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar, she combines stylistic and ideological analysis, enabling close examinations of how language constructs female agency. Simpson (1993, 2004) developed this work further by examining point of view, modality, and the construction of the female body.

The early 2000s witnessed the growing use of feminist stylistics and discourse analysis to literature and the media. Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis(2005) presented a model of studying gender, power, and ideology over texts., pressing the necessity to examine its structure and physical and social setting. Sunderland (2004) proposed a parallel method through gendered discourse, with the emphasis being laid upon how routine patterns of language uphold societal gender norms. These books point out stylistic elements are not just aesthetic options; they are social ideas behind.

Baker (2006) and Toolan (2012) employ corpus-based techniques to track linguistic behavior, i.e., use of pronouns, types of verb, sentence complexity. Examining the same from a feminist view, this type of data provides a



convenient tool for studying the systematic representation of women's agency across texts.

Gheni (2021) discusses gender representation in stylistic analysis, and transitivity of gender issues and messages inferred and revealed when reading and evaluating a text. Furthermore, the component of transitivity and how meaning is encoded and received by various transitivity patterns will be addressed. The study indicated that transitivity patterns are employed as a tool to investigate gender representation as well as to define the ideational meaning encompassing sensory realization of the world. The study of the possibilities of transitivity in the selected romantic scenario discovered that there are nineteen processes in total, with the woman having five processes as an actor and the man having fourteen, the most. The male is apparently the active agent actor, conscious and aware of what he does, and the female is in contrast apparently passive in her quality, will, and as an affected or recipient agent. Furthermore, feminist criticism aims to produce a new message and image of the woman's place, as demonstrated by the critically significant role played by the readers' assumptions and textual contextual variables in the interpretation process.

Suleman et al (2023) investigated the use of feminist stylistic analysis in Virginia Woolf's novel, *A Room of One's Own*. Utilizing the theoretical framework of feminist literary studies, this paper examines how Woolf uses style and language in communicating her feminist argument. The study used close reading and textual analysis of extracts from the novel, aided by feminist theories of power, gender, and language, in examining the meaning and importance of such stylistic decisions. It discussed the interface of feminist theory and literary criticism, as well as the imperative of using feminist stylistic criticism to literature. The study concluded that Woolf's language and style are essential to her feminist position in challenging dominant gender roles and patriarchal power relations.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Mills' 1990s paradigm problematizes the assumed objectivity of traditional stylistic analysis by claiming that ideological connotations of linguistic choices must be emphasized (Mills, 1995:1). Mills provides a paradigm for investigating textual structure and textual organization and how textual structure supports or resists patriarchal discourse based on views from feminist literary criticism, critical discourse analysis, and systemic functional linguistics. Mills (1995;1) defined feminist stylistics as a specific style of analysis.

'Both the 'feminist' and the 'stylistics' parts of this phrase are complex and may have different meanings for readers. Nevertheless, the phrase itself is one which best sums up my concern first and foremost with an analysis which identifies itself as feminist and which uses linguistic or language analysis to examine texts. Thus, feminist stylistic analysis is concerned not only to describe sexism in a text, but also to analyses the way that point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly closely related to matters of gender, to



discover whether women's writing practices can be described, and so on.' (Mills 1995, p. 1).

Traditional stylistics is more focused on how literary effect is created through language, such as point of view, tone, and imagery, rather than the way these devices are ideologically positioned, particularly in terms of gender (Simpson, 2004). Feminist stylistics, on the other hand, contends that stylistic devices are not ideologically neutral and that issues such as: 'Whose voice is privileged? Who speaks? need to be considered in literary studies. Who is the subject being addressed? How does agency get linguistically distributed or withheld?' (Mills, 1995, page 21). Feminist stylistics then has as its goal to reveal the gendered patterns that are behind the texts' surface.

### **Mills' methodology focuses on three primary levels of analysis:**

1. Lexical level refers to the words and vocabulary used to characterize male and female characters, including adjectives, nouns, and occupational phrases that may have gendered overtones.
2. Sentence structures, such as transitivity patterns (who does what to whom), voice (active vs. passive), modality (use of modal verbs such as can, must, and might), and pronoun usage (e.g., dominance of "he" vs. "she").
3. Discourse level: the overall narrative structure and reader positioning, such as who has narrative authority, which characters initiate or manage talks, and how the reader is pushed to agree with specific viewpoints (Mills, 1995:26).

These characteristics are analyzed not in isolation, but in relation to the female character's ideological positioning within the narrative. Habitual passive voice construction in female character description, for example, can imply a lack of agency, whilst active constructions can be used to draw attention to subjectivity and resistance.

Mills (1995) applies Halliday's transitivity methodology (1994) to analyze agency in clauses to identify whether women characters are presented as action takers (agents) or those who are acted upon (patients or goals). Transitivity analysis is most appropriate for feminist research since it quantifies grammatical patterns of power and gives insights into how social meaning is influenced by linguistic form.

Modality in feminist stylistics refers to the way obligation, permission, ability, or possibility is conveyed. Modal verbs like must, may, can, and should convey the levels of control or constraint put on characters (Simpson, 2004:104). Women in fiction tend to be represented with modals of necessity or restriction, whereas male heroes may be represented with modals of volition or permission, reflecting unequal social relations.

The other central component of Mills' theory is reader positioning, which identifies ways in which texts position readers in particular attitudes, sympathies, or judgments. The analysis determines whether the story invokes sympathy for female resistance, or quietly reinforces patriarchal ideals by



looking at how the heroine is positioned (e.g. focalization, internal monologue, speech acts).

This theoretical paradigm is appropriate for the current study, which investigates how the image of a woman as a heroine is linguistically produced in *Sweet Tea* by Hala Alyan and *A Conversation with My Father* by Grace Paley. Through Mills' lens, the study will focus on the following: How transitivity patterns emphasize or diminish female agency. The use of modality to express empowerment or limitation. The use of personal pronouns and voice (active or passive) to establish subjectivity. The heroine's discourse is syntactically sophisticated. Reader's identification with the heroine through the narrative perspective.

#### 4. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative stylistic method based on Sara Mills' framework of feminist stylistics in examining how women are represented as heroines in two short stories. The method borrows from linguistic analysis and feminist theory in understanding how syntactic structures and discourse choices represent female agency, resistance, and subjectivity in literary texts.

Two short stories were chosen particularly due to the thematic and cultural relevance to the study of women's representation:

Hala Alyan's *Sweet Tea* (2015) is a fiction of memory, exile, trauma, and dislocation from the standpoint of an Arab-American feminist.

Grace Paley's *A Conversation with My Father* (1972) is a metafictional novel with a female narrator who stresses conflict between generations and challenges patriarchal convention of narrative.

These are English-language narratives focused on women and representing variable but intersecting experiences of gender and voice. The texts were subjected to manual clause separation, linguistic coding, frequency counts, comparative tables, and interpretation within the paradigm of feminist stylistic theory. Each text was segmented into isolated clauses, and each clause was coded for transitivity, modality, and voice. Two stories were compared to assess the authors' linguistic construction of the woman as a heroine.

### 5. Analysis and Discussion

#### 5.1. Lexical Choices

##### A conversation with My Father

Lexical Category	Approximate Frequency
Pronouns	90
Nouns	35
Verbs	30
Adjectives	15
Adverbs	8



**Table 1: Lexical Choices in “A conversation with My Father”**

The high frequency of nouns and verbs indicates the text presenting action, dialogue, and structure major themes in the father’s and daughter’s conflict. The same elements are underlined by adjectives and adverbs that mark emotional and ideological positions. In relation to the latter, the father’s attachment to ordinariness as “simple” story is a traditional gender-based aspect. It is determined by gender-pronouns, especially the ruling “I” and “he,” indicating power relations and the negotiation of authorship. The female narrator cedes possibility as she continues to negotiate male power.

**Sweet**

Lexical Category	Approximate Frequency
Pronouns	80
Nouns	25
Verbs	22
Adjectives	10
Adverbs	5

**Tea**

**Table 2: Lexical Choices in “Sweet Tea”**

Although the gendered and emotion-structured choice of words of both authors is present in both Hala Alyan’s “Sweet Tea” and Grace Paley’s “A Conversation with My Father” perform in many stylistic differences, it is still well-felt. The former’s narrative is interwoven with interior and, so to speak, sensory wording. The cups, the tea, even the skin, or the porch create a benign intimization, to enhance the preexisting vibrant sensations of intimacy and memory and loss. As for the verb system, it is primarily affectively driven : “remembers,” “left” and “cried” dramatized the life of the narrator, emphasizing her vulnerability and the inner life of emotion. The use of pronouns, especially in the combination of “I” and “you,” also contribute to the confessional nature of the word usage. Paley’s discourse is both intensely personal and self-reflective, as well as intellectual and deeply intertextual. Her choice of phrasal parts naming words including “story,” “plot,” “metaphor,” and references to Chekhov and Turgenev establish a meta-fictional concern with narrative authority and gender. Her father, using dry conceptual language “potassium deficiency” “heart” “nitroglycerin” to talk about his life fits into the masculine fictitious stories of male associations with reason and science. The author writes using a memory, with her father, but the moment Paley narrates the story, she is torn between her story, and the father demands a specific set of reality frames: “But you’re a writer; what is realism?” These two narratives demonstrate how word



usage, through the margins expressed feminist complaints involve narrative and authority.

## 5.2. Sentence structures

### 5.2.1. Grammatical Choices

#### A Conversation with My Father

Grammatical Category	Approximate Frequency
Past tense verbs	30
Modal verbs (would, could)	10
Subordinate clauses	12
Short sentences	5
Long sentences	5

**Table 3: Grammatical Choices in “A conversation with My Father”**

A Conversation with My Father uses a variety of sentences between long, short sentences and terse exchanges, which copes with the story's dialogue-driven narrative and intellectual debate.

#### Sweet Tea

Grammatical Category	Approximate Frequency
Past tense verbs	20
Modal verbs (would, could)	18
Short sentences	8
Subordinate clauses	4
Long sentences	2

**Table 4: Grammatical Choices in “Sweet Tea”**

Sweet Tea relies almost entirely on short and simple forms to create a sense of vulnerability and a lack of barriers between the realization and the expression of the feeling. In the grammar of Alyan's Sweet Tea, reliance on the simple past tense, brief clauses, and parataxis are noticeable: “You said the tea was too sweet.” “I told you that's how my mother used to make it”. The above-mentioned is a responsible tone of confession with focus on the essence of



experience instead of the details. On the contrary, Grace Paley’s *A Conversation with My Father* uses more complex grammatical forms, such as subordinate clauses, quoted speech, and pauses, to convey the complexity of the interaction

Reported speech and modals ("would," "could," "should") saturate the story and enact negotiation, resistance, and disobedience. The narrator's grammar enables her to challenge the father's given narrative assumptions. Whereas Alyan employs grammar to contract and densify memory and emotion, Paley employs it to argue and resist patriarchal authority. As such, both authors utilize grammar intentionally to reflect the narrator's position as a woman striving to express agency despite emotional and narrative constraints.

### 5.2.2. The use of Pronouns *A Conversation with My Father*

Pronoun	Frequency
I (Female Narrator)	30
His	25
He	20
You	10
Him	5

**Table 5: Pronouns in “A conversation with My Father”**

The grammatical function of the female narrator is of pivotal importance in feminist stylistics. She is the focalizer around whom the whole story revolves and who interprets all, including her father's insistence and another woman's story. She is a multifunctional figure: she narrates others' stories but also swings her own voice against that of her father. Although narrated by a female, men hold referential dominance (His, He, Him) total 50. Speech and judgment are in control by the father, reflecting metafictional authority. The son dominates in the internal narrative, dealing with drug addiction, transforming, and holding authority over his mother.

Although the mother is the topic of the story, she is typically introduced indirectly, and rarely speaks or acts for herself. She is characterized by the narrator's and father's dialogues, rather than by her own voice. This is indicative of what Mills refers to as discursive marginalization. She is at the topic of the narrative yet is marginalized textually.

### Sweet Tea



Pronoun	Frequency
I (Narrator - female)	25
His	15
They	8
We	6
Me (Female)	6
He	5
She	5

**Table 6: Pronouns in “Sweet Tea”**

The writer uses "I" quite frequently, which is a sign of autonomy and commanding mastery of the narrative. "He" is used less frequently; there are male characters but they do not dominate or occupy center stage in the story. The "they" refers to outside authorities who are imposing social control on the woman's choices (e.g., community or family). At the same time, the use of "we" speaks of the phenomena of "we-being-together" as always already in disintegration, closeted, of splintered or transitional identities. Pink tags in Paley's and Alyan's use of pronouns offer points of vantage onto narrative voice and gendered power dynamics. The paramount signifying pronoun in "Sweet Tea" is the first person singular, which is both an introspective and an affective pronoun. Through excessive use of "I," the woman's subjectivity and her personal history as experienced subject form Sweet Tea's "narratorial voice". Her use of "he" is sporadic and invokes the deaths of the brothers. This pattern of pronoun use, further, implicates Paley's emphasis on "her crowd being huddled around," and the stories of "the cab driver" and "girl" portray the women as always defined toward, not in themselves. Alyan's "her" makes it impossible to freeze the frame of the frozen face; the narrative voice never settles into a determinate entity, to the end of the passage, where the threat becomes totalized. Gerald MacNamee discusses the pronoun.

### 5.2.3. Transitivity

#### A Conversation with My Father

Participant	Processes as Agent (Doer)	Processes as patient (Receiver)
Narrator (I)	22 (e.g., said, wrote, read, tried, answered)	6 (e.g., was asked, was told)
Father (He)	15 (e.g., said, asked, judged, objected)	3 (e.g., was misunderstood)
Son (He)	10 (e.g., became, wrote, moved, said, left)	4 (e.g., was jabbed, was taken)
Mother (She)	10 (e.g., became, explained, read, grieved, worked)	8 (e.g., was left, was weeping, was judged)



Girl (She)	3 (e.g., jabbed, offered, took him)	-
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**Table 7: Transitivity in “A conversation with My Father”**

The three characters include the narrator, a highly agentive and narrative character; the father, not physically active but verbally dominating; and the mother, an agentive and passive character whose agency is de-emphasized through the judgments of the father, son, and society. The son, who is one of the central characters in the story, is initially passive but becomes highly agentive. But he also judges the mother, and this helps bring about her marginalization.

### Sweet Tea

Participant	Processes as Agent (Doer)	Processes as patient (Receiver)
Narrator (I)	7 (remembered, told, cried, sat, helped, felt)	3 (was told, was left)
You	3 (said, left, called)	2 (was told, was loved)
She (Mother)	2 (let, made)	-

**Table 8: Transitivity in “Sweet Tea”**

The female narrator possesses the greatest linguistic agency, portraying her emotional labor and process of remembering. The male character ("you") performs fewer actions but exercises emotional control he's the one who left, who didn't call, and who causes emotional fallout. The mother is a teenage but active figure in the past (she "never let" and "used to make" tea), her presence is cultural and emotional instead of current.

The passive forms ("was told," "was left") indicate how the narrator is frequently acted upon by emotional events, even though she is active in recounting her story. This supports Sara Mills's theory that female characters within texts can be active grammatically but passive or restricted in their power socially or emotionally.

Transitivity patterns in Sweet Tea by Hala Alyan and A Conversation with My Father by Grace Paley illustrate the gendered allocation of agency and emotional authority. In Sweet Tea, the female narrator performs the majority of the linguistic and mental processes—remembering, reflecting, crying, and telling demonstrating great grammatical agency. Her acts, on the other hand, are frequently internal or emotional, and she is continually the victim of others' decisions, particularly those of the male figure ("you"), who disappears and never returns. This balance of doing and being impacted depicts a feminist



picture of a woman coping with memories, grief, and loss. In contrast, A Conversation with My Father features a female narrator who is a storyteller and a thinker but whose agency is consistently challenged by the father, who orders, criticizes, and judges from a position of narrative and ideological superiority. While both narrators are busy recounting events, the men in each story (Paley's father, Alyan's disappeared lover) supply the emotional or narrative frame through actions with more social or emotional significance. Transitivity analysis of both stories thus reveals how women can have surface-level narrative agency while being entrapped in deeper levels of patriarchal control, judgment, or abandonment.

#### 5.2.4. Modality

##### A Conversation with My Father

Types	Frequency
Possibility	8
Obligation	6
Ability	4

**Table9: Modality in A Conversation with My Father**

Obligation and possibility modals, i.e., "You should finish the story" and "It might be better that way," express external pressure and internal conflict on narrative closure and expectation, particularly on the part of the father figure.

##### Sweet Tea

Types	Frequency
Ability	6
Possibility	5
Obligation	4

**Table 10: Modality in Sweet Tea**

In Alyan's story, modal verbs like "I can't sleep" and "I could leave" suggest an ongoing negotiation of freedom.

### 5.3. Discourse level

#### 5.3.1. Speech Acts

Type	Sweet Tea	A Conversation with My Father
Assertive	10	15
Directive	1	6



Commissive	2	4
Expressive	6	5
Declarations	0	1
Total	19	31

**Table 11:Speech Acts in both stories**

In Sweet Tea, the narrator feels more (e.g., sadness, remembering) and issues fewer commands, narrating a woman whose interactional skill is less than her emotional work. A Conversation with My Father has more assertives and commands, especially of the father, to bring out the gender power asymmetry of narration, the female narrator may reclaim discursive control through commissive and modifications to demonstrate that she is a capable writer on her own.

### 5.3.2. Turn Taking

Story	Speaker/Turn Type	Number of Turns	Interruptions
A Conversation with My Father	Daughter	18	2
A Conversation with My Father	Father	12	4
Sweet Tea	Narrations	12	0
Sweet Tea	Direct Address	7	0

**Table 12:Turn Taking in both stories**

The daughter takes more turns and speaks for longer periods, showing discursive dominance. However, the father continues to interrupt, wanting to regain control of the tale and reinforce conventional storytelling (and, by extension, patriarchal ideals). The daughter's repeated usage of "okay" and "but" indicates a bargaining posture in which she simultaneously accepts and rejects her father's demands, a significant feminist tension in the novel.

### 5.4. Discussion

Both Sweet Tea and A Conversation with My Father address women's complicated experiences of love, loss, and ownership of narrative to comparable degrees, but from fairly different aesthetic and ideological positions. Using Sara



Mills' feminist stylistics, which examine the relationship between linguistic choice and gendered meaning.

The next difference is the use of pronouns. Sweet Tea uses primary ones according to expression of feeling and emotional reliance – the first and the second person, meaning “I” and “you”. Such an address is not only the author speaking about her internal world, but also the relational and affective burden, the work which is most often given to be assigned to gender – usually, to women. On the contrary, A Conversation with My Father switches between “I,” “he,” and “you,” producing a more dialogic relationship between father and daughter – but also tension, in terms of authority. Even the case of pronouns use is a struggle of ownership over the story, a specifically feminist issue of who “gets to tell the story,” with which words.

Alyans and Paley’s stories expose the role of women in their stories. Alyan’s narrative reads as passive, is passive, consisting of “remember,” “cry,” and “feel” statements. In comparison, Paley’s narrative exhibits distinct transitivity: the woman narrator who acts and responds delineates a more negotiated space of agency. Modality similarly functions differently in Paley and Alyans stories. Paley’s extensive use of modal verbs to assert possibilities and hypotheticals and Alyan’s sparse use of modality demonstrate the emotional sureness of the narrator with grief and disillusion.

Lexical choices reinforce the feminist perspective, Alyan's body and house mirroring women's embodied selves, while Paley's narrative engages literary reference, philosophical terminology, and intertextual dialogue, crafting a more cerebral battle over gender, tradition, and power. Grammatical style also articulates narrative control and gendered voice. Alyan's spare, unflinching sentences are an adumbration of the shattering of trauma and the limits of what may be spoken by women grieving alone, but Paley's more complex sentences are a woman's insistence on the right to complain against narrative closure. Her syntax is a feminist rebellion against imitative "endings" that demand complexity and possibility.

Paley's narrator utilises dialogue to resist patriarchal closure, whereas Alyan's narrator employs monologue to survive relational erasure. Despite their stylistic differences, both narrative formats reveal the complicated ways in which women negotiate voice and silence in a gendered environment.

## 6. Conclusion

Sweet Tea and A Conversation with My Father are feminist show hegemonic feminist narratives by means of their linguistic use. Alyan and Paley utilize grammatical and lexical forms to counter patriarchal narrative presuppositions regarding voice, character, and tale. Alyan's Sweet Tea utilizes linguistic minimalism to proclaim her being through affective memory and linguistic proximity, enunciating another form of agency based on memory, sentiment, and occupying home space as an appropriate locus of female subjectivity.



The narrator in Paley's narrative, on the other hand, subverts patriarchal narrative structures through style complexity, declining to tell a "plain" story and insisting on indeterminacy, openness, and transformation. Both stories utilize style as a site of feminist resistance and make it evident that probing the sentence and discourse forms is a means to unmask gendered assumptions.

Thus, the study concludes that feminist agency is present in every one of these stories in style rather than character construction and content themes. Either the domestic lyricism of Alyan's or the argumentative patterns of Paley's, both writers use style to subvert quiet, finality, and male-defined narrative control. They are redefining how to write a woman's novel for herself.

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