



Sarcastic Feminism: A Lexico-Syntactic Analysis of Judy Syfers' *I Want A Wife*

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Abstract

This work examines the relationship between language and the plights of women as espoused by Judy Syfers in her text "I Want a Wife". It seeks to establish the concerns of the writer and the choices she made in her agitation and struggle for women liberation. To achieve this, Feminist CDA approach was adopted in order to critically identify the implications of the writer's lexical items within the context of her language. This would enable us demystify her language and see how gender power is constructed; see where women are placed on the ladder of power and the effort the writer makes to ameliorate the social status of women. Thus, attention was given to lexis and syntax (noun phrase). This helped us to find out that the context in which the writer agitates for women liberation is within the family and its attendant responsibilities. It was discovered through the examination of syntax of the language that the use of sarcasm and rankshifting were paramount. Through rankshifting, the writer presented the enormity of women's plights, and condemns such man-made, imposed and killing plights using sarcasm.

Key words: Stylistics; CDA; Language, Feminism; Literary stylistics; Feminist stylistic analysis

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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, women were subjected to maltreatment, oppression and in some areas, they were made to experience inhuman treatment by men. Men used women as slaves and objects of satisfaction, denying them their fundamental human rights. A few women realised their dehumanized state and demanded a paradigm shift, asking for their rights and protection of such rights. Their activities led to a movement known as feminism. The radical feminists among women saw themselves being equal with men. So, they ask for equal rights, privileges and responsibilities. To them, what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. Language, being a veritable tool to both speakers and writers, is deployed by feminists to condemn all oppressive activities of men against women. They openly challenge any law, culture, custom, tradition or instrument of subjugation, dehumanisation and marginalisation that may be targeted at women-folk. The use of language to engage men by women in order to achieve equity and equality for women is the interest of linguists. This paper seeks to analyse Judy Syfers' *I Want a Wife*, with a view to describing the structures of the language used in the text and how the structures or patterns of the language contribute to the subject matter, coherence of the text or the personality of the author.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

It would be needful to first mention that Judy Syfers is a woman but as a feminist satirist, she chose to title her essay '*I Want a Wife*' as if she was a man. So, she adopted a male persona who was searching for a woman that would do everything for him. She implicitly argues that women are overburdened with excess of responsibilities with little or no appreciation coming from men. She expresses her displeasure with women doing everything at home while their male counterparts idle away. The

intention of the writer is to sensitise women in order to aid them realise what is happening to them and prompt women to take action that would liberate them from the bondage of slavery and oppression. Also, she intends to make men see the reasons why they should appreciate women and as well treat them (women) equally with themselves (men). She, also, wrote to the intending couples to enable them see the excruciating experiences that married women pass through as being evil and *infra dig*, and, consequently, eschew subjecting women to such horrendous experiences.

Judy Syfers opened the essay with introduction of herself as a woman and a wife. This is to support the fact that she has experienced all forms of maltreatment outlined in the text. This makes her claim not only factual but also credible. The persona was searching for a wife who would serve as a tool in his hands. With the intention to ridicule the desire of men, Syfers created an unrealistic picture of a wife that the persona wanted. The wife must be able to take care of his children, do shopping, take care of him and his guests, make love passionately but must not demand sexual attention when he is not in the mood. She must remain sexually faithful but should not hinder him from taking another wife if his sexual urge calls for it. In fact, the persona was in need of a wife that would go out of her way to ensure that he is 'satisfied'. Being a feminist satirist, she underscored that men and women are equal. Thus, women deserve equal rights as their male counterparts in the society. Sarcastically, she ridicules the selfishness, ingratitude, inequality and dehumanizing treatments that men subject women to for their (men's) satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mills⁷ opines that Feminist analysis aims to draw attention to and change the way that gender is represented, since it is clear that a great many of these representational practices are not in the interests of either women or men. Thus, feminist stylistic analysis is concerned not only to describe sexism in a text, but also to analyse 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.

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According to Mills⁷, most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and

differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women; that is, that it is patriarchal.

Mills⁷ defines Stylistics as the analysis of the language of literary texts, usually taking its theoretical models from linguistics, in order to undertake this analysis. Simpson¹⁰ states stylistics uses 'linguistic analysis to provide a window on the devices which characterize a particular work'. Stanley¹¹ opines that feminist research aims to be accessible, to enable others, to equip women with the skills and knowledge they need or want.

Leech and Short⁶ opine that literary stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. From the linguist's angle, it is 'why does the author here choose to express himself in this particular way.' It is line with this that Mills⁷ views feminist stylistics that it is concerned with why authors have chosen certain ways to express themselves rather than others, and how certain effects are achieved through language.

Mills⁸ describes Feminist CDA as a recent development under the broader branch of critical discourse analysis. According to Lazar⁵, motivations for the need of a feminist CDA was that key theorists of CDA (e.g. Fairclough, Van Dijk) have not been interested in analysis of gender, and also the need to combine those studies already done in the field of critical discourse analysis from a feminist perspective into a specific approach.

According to Jørgensen and Phillips⁴, CDA can be formulated as an aim to: "explore the links between language use and social practice. The focus is on the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social order and in social change." Citing Jørgensen and Phillips, Mills⁸ posits that CDA is a social-constructivist approach maintaining that representations of world are partly linguistic-discursive, meanings are historically and culturally specific and knowledge is created through social interaction while social construction of knowledge has social consequences. The term 'critical' in the name of the approach indicates, according to Fairclough², an approach that seeks to show up connections that may be hidden from people, such as the connections between language, power and ideology (Cited in Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²).

Feminist discourse analysts have named this process also as demystification - or denaturalization - maintaining that one of feminist CDA's aims is to demystify taken-for-granted or commonsensical assumptions of gender by showing that these assumptions are ideological and obscure the power differential and inequality (Lazar⁵, Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²). Feminist CDA is thus openly political, an emancipatory critical approach which is committed to consciousness-raising and social change through a critique of discourse (Lazar⁵; Jørgensen and

Phillips⁴, Talbot¹⁴). The openness about political agenda is not only a choice, but a necessity: like most feminist theorists, critical discourse analysts should “explicitly acknowledge the impossibility of impartial observation - for *all* analytical approaches” since also analysts’ language choices and position are sociologically and ideologically shaped (Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis which has been influenced by third-wave feminist and post-structuralist theories. Gender is understood as a fluid and multiple variable which is continuously constructed as a range of masculine and feminine identities - or femininities and masculinities - within and across individuals of the same biological sex. These identities are partly shaped by discourse, (Lazar⁵; Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²).

According to Mills⁸, gender is both socially and individually constructed (Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²; Weedon¹⁶) and it interacts with other aspects of identity - such as ethnicity, age, class, sexual identity - and with power relations, thus gender is not discursively enacted in the same way for women and men everywhere (Lazar⁵; Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²). The main interest of feminist CDA is, rather than trying to provide an overall theory of gender, focus on empirical studies, and the ways in which gender is actually constructed in authentic texts and situations (Lazar⁵; Sunderland and Litosseliti¹²). Although feminist CDA does not understand gender as merely a product of discourse, their focus is, however, mainly on the ways that gender is discursively produced. Since gender is dependent on context, in analysis the interest is on representations of gender (identities) and gendered power relationships in specific texts and their specific contexts (Lazar⁵).

The choice of this theory enables us to critically examine the issues raised by Judy Syfers and how she uses linguistic tools to vividly present the plights of women as they are subjected to by their male counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

Lexical items were selected from the text and their meanings, considering both their denotative and contextual meanings. This helped us to determine the specific context in which the writer based her agitations for women rights and condemnation of inhuman treatment of women by men. Doing this, words were isolated in order to establish the registers of which context they belong. Structurally, noun phrases were identified so as to see how women are named, presented and described. The choices made by the writer and the reasons for such choices were critically discoursed.

A LEXICO-SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

Lexical Choices

Lexis are the words that the writer used in presenting his message. Here, the words would be classified and the registers would, as well, be identified and discussed accordingly. Such simple words chosen by the author include: *friend, food, guests, life, jealousies, cook, coffee, clothes, mood, love, fresh, monogamy, replace, comfortable, job, want, home, wife, schools, ex-wife, duties, vacation, good, classes, needs, zoo, doctor, studies, entertain*.

The target audience of Judy Syfers is all females, young and old, literate and illiterate, married and single. Hence, she made choice of accessible words whose meanings can be understood by all women, having known that many women are granted opportunity to acquire formal education up to tertiary level. The words above are simple enough for anyone who speaks English to understand and grab their literal meanings. The author has the choice of using difficult and high-sounding words but she decided to stoop in her choice of words in order to successfully reach her target audience. Her primary desire is to nudge women awake so as to demand freedom from shackles of marginalization and maltreatment which were hitherto experienced by women in their matrimonial homes.

Studying the words used by the author, it is clear that she used the registers of family. The *registers of family* in the text include: *family, cook, clothes, grocery, shopping, wife, children, babysitting, food, coffee, love, birth, sexual, home, divorce, meals, ironed, mended, house, wash, care, bed, fed* etc. The words above are used in sentences in the text as follow:

- i. I want a **wife** who will take **care** of the details of my social life.
- ii. I want a wife who will **wash** the **children clothes** and keep them **mended**.
- iii. I want a wife who will keep my **clothes** clean, **ironed, mended**, replaced when need be and will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it.
- iv. I want a wife who is sensitive to my **sexual needs**, a wife who makes **love** passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied.

The choice of these words enables the writer expose the ills that are meted to women in their matrimonial home. The registers are related to family and all issues related to it. The words helped her to reel out the endless responsibilities of women as expected by men. She outlined the harrowing experiences of women and how men demonstrate their ingratitude and callousness.

Pronouns

The writer preponderantly uses first person pronouns - **I, me, my, mine, and myself**. ‘I’ occurs 67 times, ‘me’

occurs 11 times, 'my' is used 31 times, 'mine' appears 2 times while 'myself' occurs 2 times. The implications of these lexical items on the text show that the subject matter is credible; since it is reported by someone who has a direct firsthand experience. The information is neither distorted nor doctored. Being an eyewitness account, the subject matter is, therefore, original.

In addition, the writer, by the pronominal choice, has sarcastically painted the picture of men as being selfish and wicked, having no regard for women or giving them any right. She presents men as people who believe that every good thing should come to them. In fact, it means that the man is everything while the woman is nothing - a hint on patriarchy. This could be the reason why feminine pronouns are obviously not used by the writer to imply that apart from a woman's name, **wife**, no other thing, name or reference should be attributed her. Syfers sarcastically condemns this patriarchal disposition of men.

Verbs

The verbs used in the text include both **lexical** and **modal auxiliary verbs**. Lexical verbs are verbs which carry the actions performed by the subject or received by the object in a sentence.

Lexical Verbs

Lexical verbs are action words or words that give the state of being (Farinde and Ojo³). The lexical verbs in the text include the following:

- i. I **want** a wife who will **keep** my house clean.
- ii. I want a wife who **cooks** the meals, a wife who is a good cook.
- iii. I want a wife who will **plan** the menu, **do** the necessary grocery shopping, **prepare** the meals, **serve** them pleasantly, and then **do** the cleaning up while I **do** my studying.
- iv. I want a wife who will **work** and **send** me to school.
- v. But I want a wife who will **listen** to me when I **feel** the need to **explain** a rather difficult point I have **come across** in my course of studies.
- vi. And I want a wife who will **type** my papers for me when I have **written** them.

The choice of lexical verbs in the text enabled the writer to reveal the actions that men expect their wives to perform which, among other things, include to cook, work, listen, plan, prepare and serve meals, remain faithful to her husband, arrange for the feeding of her children, sponsor her husband to school. In fact, she is to do everything in order to satisfy her husband. This implies that men do nothing except to read and wait for their wives to serve them in all spheres of life. This shows the height of servitude that women are subjected to without any assistance from men or a demonstration of commendation from men. Any sign of inability on the part of the woman to carry out all responsibilities as outlined

would unfailingly make the man to sack his wife as "... *I want the liberty to **replace** my present wife with another one.*"

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Modal auxiliary verbs are verbs that have multiple interpretations, depending on the context of their usage (Farinde and Ojo³). That is, their meanings are context-based. The modal auxiliary verbs chosen by Syfers are as follow:

- i. I want a wife who **will** take care of the details of my social life.
- ii. I **would** like to go back to school so that I **can** become economically independent...
- iii. A wife who **will** pick up after me.
- iv. I want a wife who **will** remain sexually faithful to me...
- v. I want a wife who **will** plan the menus...
- vi. ... I **cannot** miss classes at all.
- vii. My wife **must** arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job.
- viii. It **may** mean a small out in my wife's income from to time...

The modal auxiliary verbs used in the text include - **may, will, can, would, cannot, must.**

'May' occurred 2 times, 'can' was used 4 times, 'would' was chosen 2 times, 'cannot' appeared once, 'must' occurred 2 times, while 'will', which has the highest frequency distribution, occurred 22 times. The preponderant use of modal auxiliary verbs has pragmatic implication of the subject matter. The use of the auxiliary verbs suggests that the actions contained in the various lexical verbs are not optional to women.

On no account should a woman fail in her responsibilities of catering for all members of family, including ensuring absolute satisfaction of their guests. Women are expected to carry out the outlined actions as a matter of compulsion, otherwise they risk being '**replaced**' with '**another person more suitable as a wife than I already have.**' In short, her stay in the marriage strictly depends on her ability to do everything. The use of these words implies that man has absolute power over woman. It is the so-called absolute power that the feminist satirist targets for ridicule.

Article

The choice of article '**a**' over article '**the**' is of stylistic significance to the text. The articles were used as follow:

- i. I am **a** wife.
- ii. I **a** mother.
- iii. Why do I want **a** wife?
- iv. I want **a** wife who will take care of my physical needs.
- v. I want **a** wife who will take care of **the** details of my life.

vi. I want a wife who... takes them to **the** park, **the** zoo, etc.

vii. I want a wife who takes care of **the** children... when **the** children need special care...

The writer frequently used article 'a' as a pre-head modifier to the noun 'wife'. Article 'a' occurred **55** times while article 'the' occurred **22** times. The occurrence of article 'the' was not to modify 'wife', which the persona is searching for but the specific activities that woman should perform and also other people that man consider to be significant such as their children. The preponderant use of article 'a' implies *singularity* and *indefiniteness* as the type of woman whose picture is created does not exist anywhere.

The writer has, by implication, painted the picture of the man as someone who is stupid, embarking on fruitless ventures. Painting the picture of man in this light reveals the height of her dislike for man, presenting him as a hater of woman. Also, the repetition of 'a' especially using it with 'wife' in the text is stylistically significant. It is important in the sense that it gives the text cohesion. That is, it gives unity to the text because it links one sentence to the other, making the ideas in the text to flow from the beginning to the end.

Syntactic Analysis of the Text

The aspect of syntax that this segment of the paper is interested in is noun phrase because it is the most frequently used among other phrases. Phrase is also known as group, where a phrase (group) is a group of words headed by the word after which it is named. In English, there are phrases such as noun phrase, adjectival phrase, verb phrases, prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases.

Noun Phrase

A noun phrase is a group of words performing any of the nominal functions which include: subject of the verb, object of the verb, complement of the verb, complement of the preposition and noun in apposition. It has (M) H (Q) composite structure, where 'M' is modifier, 'H' is head-word and 'Q' is qualifier. 'M' and 'Q' are optional while 'H' is obligatory.

Noun Phrases with Rankshifted Clauses at Qualifier

Instances of noun phrases especially with rankshifted clauses at qualifier in the text are as follows:

i. I want a wife **who will take care of my physical needs**.

ii. I want a wife **who is a good cook**.

iii. I want a wife **who will work and send me to school**.

iv. I want a wife **who will keep my house clean**.

v. ...I want a wife **who will not demand sexual attention**...

vi. I want a wife **who assumes the complete responsibility for birth control**...

vii. I want a wife **who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly..., a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied**.

viii. I want a wife **who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties**.

The writer chose complex noun phrases which have their qualifiers as clauses. Most of the sentences have 'wife' as head, 'a' as pre-head modifier and adjectival clauses (**who**-clauses) as post-head modifiers (qualifiers). Here, two things are evident - one, there is repetition of the noun phrase 'a wife'. The repetition has its stylistic import which includes directing the attention of the readers to the major focus in the text. Repetition is employed to ensure that the message is cemented in the memories of those who read the text. It also gives unity to the text, linking one sentence with another, therefore making the ideas in the text to run from the beginning to the end. On the other hand, adjectival clauses **rankshift** at qualifier because they exist under grammatical units of lower status, phrase (a wife). The choice of adjectival clauses enables the writer to qualify (describe) the noun, 'wife' in terms of the activities that the woman is expected to be capable of carrying out.

'...**who will take care of my physical needs**' in sentence 'i' above describes 'wife' in terms of her readiness to provide or make arrangement for the physical needs of her husband. In sentence 'ii', she is presented as someone who should be able to prepare delicious meals for the entire family and their visitors '**... who is a good cook**'. Sentence 'iii' paints her picture as a woman who must be prepared to work so as to earn some income that would not only cater for his children in his absence owing to his educational pursuit, but also provide for the man's financial needs to enable him realise his educational dream '**...wife who will work and send me to school**'.

He goes further to state another attribute that he needs in the woman which is neatness that must reflect in the degree of the neatness of his house '**... who will keep my house clean**'. She must also be a woman who does not demand anything, not sexual attention from her husband even when she is in dear need of it '**... who will not demand sexual attention**'. This implies that the woman should always wait to receive whatever her husband decides to give her but not be the one who make the request, not even to call her husband's attention to it.

However, the man is unquestionably free to have sexual intercourse with her at his desire. Either before or after the sexual intercourse, it is the absolute responsibility of the woman to ensure that the sexual activity does not result in pregnancy because he has got enough children '**... who assumes the complete responsibility for birth control**'. Though he does not need more children, either the woman likes it or not, either she enjoys it or not, either

she is tired or not, either it is beyond what her sexual strength could carry or not, the man wants a wife **'who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly..., a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied'**.

Despite the magnitude of her responsibilities, she must remain calm, focused and determined in carrying out her duties. The responsibilities must be conscientiously delivered without any iota of murmur or complaints in relation to excessive duties because it her duties and she must accept that fact in good fate and joyfully **'...who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties'**.

In addition, the frequent use of rankshifted relative clauses could mean more than just qualifying the noun **'wife'**. The profuse use of rankshifted relative clauses could be that the writer implies that man is lazy and abandons his responsibilities to his wife, thereby becoming nominal head. Just as rankshifted clauses belittles themselves reducing their rank to exist under structures (phrases) which are of lower rank, man hides and survives under the hard and extra-ordinary effort of his wife instead of assuming his full responsibilities as the man who has a higher authority over his wife.

Moreover, the longest noun phrase is contained in sentence 35 which is the longest sentence in the text:

I want a wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who makes sure that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hors d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it.

This sentence has 62 words with 10 subordinate clauses; and all the clauses are rankshifted. The clauses can further be functionally categorized into relative clauses, nominal clauses and adjectival clauses, all rankshifting under one noun phrase, 'a wife'. The relative clauses include:

- i. ...who takes care of the needs of my guests...
- ii. ...who makes sure that they have an ashtray...

These are the two rankshifted adjectival clauses in the noun phrase. There are three adverbial clauses which are:

- i. ...so that they feel comfortable... (adverbial clause of reason)
- ii. **...when necessary... (verbless) adverbial clause of time)**
- iii. **...as they like it. (adverbial clause of manner)**

The five chosen nominal clauses (that-nominal clauses) are as follow:

- i. ...that they have an ashtray...
- ii. ...that they are passed the hors d'oeuvre...
- iii. ...that they are offered a second helping of the food...

- iv. ...that their wine glasses are replenished ...
- v. ...that their coffee is served to them...

From critical study of the noun phrase pattern, it is observed that the adverbial clauses and nominal clauses rankshifted under the two adjectival clauses. The two adjectival clauses describe the woman in terms of her qualities based on the physical activities she must carry out while the first adverbial clause gives reason for taking care of the needs of his guests. The reason is that it would offer his guests the needed comfort. The second and third adverbial clauses give precision as to the time **'...when necessary...'** and manner **'...as they like it'** the action should be carried out by the woman and it is immaterial whether she is strong, healthy and happy to do it or not; whether it is comfortable for her or not.

The five nominal clauses rankshifted at the complement in the relative clause, **'...who makes sure that they have an ashtray...'** The syntactic analysis of the relative clause is:

S P C (RCL)
...who /makes sure/ that they have an ashtray...

The nominal clauses are substitutes for **'that they have an ashtray...'** which is also a rankshifted clause (RCL) at complement. The choice of rankshifted clause is significant to the subject matter. Noun phrase, a wife carries two rankshifted adjectival clauses and the two (2) adjectival clauses have eight (8) other beta (subordinate) clauses (adverbial and nominal) rankshifting under them. The weight which the head-word, 'wife' syntactically carries linguistically represents the weight of responsibilities on the shoulders of the woman. The woman is expected to solely do all the works at home no matter how tedious it is.

Noun Phrases Rankshifted as Qualifiers

There is another category of noun phrases in the text which include the following:

- i. I want a wife who will take care **of my physical needs.**
- ii. I want a wife who will take care **of the details of my social life.**
- iii. I want a wife who will take care **of the babysitting arrangements.**
- iv. I want a wife who takes care **of the needs of my guests...**
- v. And while I am going to school, I want a wife to take care **of my children.**
- vi. I want a wife who takes care **of the children...**
- vii. my wife will arrange and pay for the care **of the children** while my wife is working.

viii. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathise with my pain and loss **of time from school**.

ix. I want a wife to keep track **of children's doctor and dentist appointments**.

x. I want a wife who will not bother me with **rambling complaints about a wife's duties**.

The noun phrases in sentences i-vii are all headed by the noun 'care'. The repetition of the noun, care steers the attention of the readers (women especially) to the message that woman is always expected to primarily and unfailingly oversee the welfare (care) of everyone especially children '...**of my children**' in the family. However, in order to clearly pass her message without leaving any iota of doubt in the mind of anyone, the writer qualifies the noun, care.

But here, she copiously uses prepositional phrases with special preference for **of-phrase**. The choice of prepositional phrases to qualify the nouns used enables the writer to describe whose care should be taken because it is paramount to man and whose care is of no concern to the man. She achieves this by using of-phrases to state woman's duties and who benefits from it. Predominantly, the care or welfare of his children is of highest interest to man, so **children** with **baby** appears all together four times in four different prepositional phrases in data above.

They occur in sentences iii and v-vii: '**...the care (of the children)...**' on the other hand, the non-appearance of a noun for the woman at the qualifying position implies that the woman's welfare is no significance to man. No one cares about her! No one cares about the woman who cares for everyone at home and even visitors. And owing to the enormity of responsibilities assigned to the woman, she does not also have time to care for herself.

Beyond describing nouns in terms of who enjoys her own care, the prepositional phrases rankshift under noun phrases at qualifier which is presented thus:

- i. ...care **of my physical needs**.
- ii. ... care **of the details of my social life**.
- iii. ...care **of the babysitting arrangements**.
- iv. ...care **of the needs of my guests...**
- v. ...care **of my children**.
- vi. ... care **of the children...**
- vii. ...the care **of the children...**
- viii. ... my pain and loss **of time from school**.
- ix. ...track **of children's doctor and dentist appointments**.
- x. ...rambling complaints **about a wife's duties**.

Noun phrases and prepositional phrases belong to the same grammatical unit or status. Regardless of that fact, prepositional phrases rankshift to exist at qualifier in noun phrases. With this syntactic pattern, the writer presents the heavy and inexhaustible tasks that a woman is expected to fulfil. She cares for the man's physical needs, the details

of his social life, the needs of his guests, all the needs of his children; soothing his pains and consoling him for '**loss of time from school**' but never to complain concerning her duties which all other women are also doing - '**about a wife's duties**.'

A woman serves all the people at home but receives no attention, reward, praise or appreciation of any kind from man. She is more or less a slave to man. In the noun phrase '... **care (of the details (of my social life))**', the prepositional phrase '**of my social life**' rankshifts at qualifier in the noun phrase headed by '**details**' while '**of my guests**' rankshifts at qualifier in the noun phrase '**care (of the needs (of my guests...))**'. The choice of rankshift enables the writer to describe nouns, creating image of activities and things by adding information as much as she wants so as to present, to the minutest details, the responsibilities of a woman.

FINDINGS

The following findings were made:

- i. The major concerns of the writer are the plights of women in their matrimonial homes: suffering, servitude, marginalization, oppression, divorce, unhappiness, etc.
- ii. The writer vividly uncovers the untold burden that women carry in their marriages and condemns the ingratitude of men and their failure to assist their wives in carrying out some house chores.
- iii. Reducing women to nothing while men are everything is laughable.
- iv. Taking women as those who would do everything for men without having time to take care of themselves is unacceptable.
- v. Women should demand satisfaction and happiness in their marriages because they are their rights.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident that the writer's preference for rankshifting is to give her the ample opportunity to enumerate the workload of wives and create consciousness or awareness to all women. On the other hand, the use of sarcastic language by Syfers helps her to politely but firmly, without mincing words, reject in totality all the marital challenges orchestrated by men to keep women in perpetual bondage, all for their selfish gains. This touches on the age long contentions around the subject of patriarchy as obtainable in many societies, especially, the African society. An article on Feminism in the *Encarta Encyclopaedia* opines that: "Feminists have argued that sexual and domestic violence are not isolated incidents but are central to the subordination of women by patriarchy.

Cruikshank¹ noted that for Feminist thinkers, "patriarchy signified the cultural and social domination of women by men." Patriarchy is cultural and what obtains in one clime may be different from another. Cruikshank¹ further posited:

...feminists believed that with time and some prodding societal attitudes would catch up with the legal and political equity women had achieved. Other, more radical feminists argued that patriarchy would not diminish, and women should either live in separate societies or secure legal and political protection from men's violence against women, which they believe is prevalent. Still others believe that the differences between the sexes are determined by the culture of a society, and therefore can change. They believe that winning political equality alone will not alter cultural beliefs about the roles of the sexes and that feminists must take action if they want to change those attitudes.

Women should no longer be regarded as tools or property; neither should they be seen as sex objects, domestic slaves or baby-making machines. Syfers, through her work, has called out men not to keep women in bondage for their selfish gain or subjugate them as they also have right to satisfaction and happiness in their homes, marriages and in the society at large. The issue of women subjugation is not limited only to the domestic frontier. It extends to almost every other ramification of human endeavour as Uchem and Ngwa¹⁵ concluded:

...the inferiorisation and demonization of women is not very much different from a new form of slavery. Despite the spirit of hard work displayed by most of these women (especially the rural women), they are still faced with domination and discrimination in every facet of life, and are often subjected to demoralizing acts against their own will. These acts of subordination go a long way in creating an atmosphere of disillusionment, low self-esteem and self-pity among some women, thereby subjecting them to a continuous life of fear.

There is a need, through conscious and spirited efforts to begin to see women indeed as wives but much more.

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