



Applying Stylistic Approach on *The Woman Destroyed* by Simone de Beauvoir

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Abstract

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Woman Destroyed," released in 1967, delves into existentialist philosophy and feminist ideology through three interrelated novellas. This abstract examines the stylistic characteristics, thematic connections, and critical feedback of the work. Beauvoir's narrative language deeply engages readers in the inner lives of her characters, shedding light on their existential struggles and cultural influences. Scholars have analyzed "The Woman Destroyed" for its in-depth exploration of feminist discourse and existential themes, including autonomy, existential distress, and feminist solidarity. Beauvoir's symbolic imagery, such as mirrors and the colour red, enhances the examination of gender and societal limitations. Moreover, her straightforward and unembellished language adeptly conveys the emotional upheaval of the characters, encouraging readers to sympathize with their existential struggles. "The Woman Destroyed" is a significant reflection of Beauvoir's legacy as an innovative thinker and writer, connecting with readers of all ages through its stylistic choices and subject depth in exploring the human experience.

Keywords

Simone de Beauvoir, The Woman Destroyed, Existentialist philosophy, Feminist critique, Narrative voice

INTRODUCTION

Simone de Beauvoir, a prominent contributor in existentialist philosophy and feminist theory, wrote "The Woman Destroyed" in 1967. Beauvoir's work was intricate network of three interconnected novellas that delve into the difficulties encountered by women when confronted with cultural norms and existential crises. The Woman Destroyed is not only a collection of emotional stories but also a strong criticism of the societal expectations placed on women. The writing style of this book promotes reader engagement in advocating for personal freedom and authentic self-discovery (Simone De Beauvoir (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), 2023). It is crucial to acknowledge the groundbreaking work achieved by Beauvoir in her book "The Second Sex" (1949). She introduces the concept of "The Other" in this book as a tool for understanding women's experiences. Women are relegated to roles of inauthenticity based on their relationship to men (Beauvoir, 1949). Women are often portrayed as the subordinate and non-essential opposite of the dominant "One," typically linked to masculinity. The protagonists in "The Woman Destroyed" grapple with societal expectations to adhere to conventional feminine roles, while still desiring personal freedom and an own identity separate from societal norms. This existential predicament is the main theme of the story.

Simone de Beauvoir effectively uses narrative voice in "The Woman Destroyed" to depict the complex interior lives of her characters. Each novella in the book is narrated from the perspective of a different female protagonist, allowing readers to deeply engage with their innermost ideas, emotions, and conflicts (de Beauvoir, 1968). De Beauvoir skillfully portrays the originality of each character by using separate narrative voices, revealing their distinct experiences and opinions. In "The Age of Discretion," the protagonist Monique's stream-of-consciousness narration offers readers a candid and unfiltered look into her existential distress and dissatisfaction with the limitations of marriage and motherhood (de Beauvoir, 1968). In "The Monologue," the protagonist's introspective observations reveal her inner conflict between desiring independence and conforming to cultural expectations of femininity (de Beauvoir, 1968). "The Woman Destroyed" has gotten a thorough and intricate critical reception so far. Novellas' contribution to feminist discourse is a

key focus of a prominent approach. Beauvoir's critique of conventional femininity is underscored by scholars like Moi (2008), who stress her defiance against the societal expectations around motherhood and marriage. Butler (1986) critiques the constraints of Beauvoir's theory while also acknowledging its value in raising significant inquiries about women's autonomy.

Researchers have also explored the existential themes present in the novels. Iris Murdoch analyzes the protagonists' experiences using existential theory, emphasizing their struggles with anxiety, freedom, and the quest for meaning in a seemingly ludicrous world (Pondrom, 1968). Simons (1999) delves with existential problems related to age, loss, and mortality, focusing on how the characters confront their own mortality. Recent study has highlighted the interconnectedness of the stories and the capacity for women to feel a sense of solidarity with each other. Anne Vanden Berg (2010) proposes that the relationships between characters offer unique connections and support that surpass the constraints of patriarchal systems throughout that age. Sandford (2018) argues that these novellas offer a perspective on feminist unity that surpasses traditional notions of femininity.

NARRATIVE MULTIPLICITY

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Woman Destroyed" is a significant piece of literature that thoroughly explores several aspects of feminine identity and the obstacles presented by cultural conventions. De Beauvoir uses a specific narrative perspective to deeply include readers in her protagonists' inner world, creating a strong sympathetic bond and allowing for a detailed examination of their experiences. De Beauvoir's use of first-person narration is a potent stylistic decision that infuses the tale with a sense of directness and closeness. De Beauvoir's technique of providing readers with direct access to the protagonists' thoughts and emotions fosters a feeling of shared vulnerability, encouraging readers to interact with the characters' emotional experiences.

"The Age of Discretion" features Monique as the protagonist, whose frank narrative reveals the conflict between cultural norms and her own wishes. De Beauvoir explores the issue of women being "destroyed" by society conventions through Monique's internal conflicts, highlighting the intricate nature of feminine identity. Shifting the perspective to Madeline in "The Monologue" emphasizes the variety of female experiences, showcasing the complex issues women encounter. De Beauvoir explores themes of age, regret, and the balance between personal aspirations and society expectations through Madeline's perspective, enhancing the complexity of the narrative.

De Beauvoir uses an epistolary structure in her last novella, "The Woman Destroyed," which lets readers see how Monique's ideas change over time. The depiction of Monique's mental distress through letters and journal entries highlights the fragmented character of her self-perception, encouraging readers to immerse themselves in her challenges and introspection. Furthermore, de Beauvoir's fragmented narrative form, which incorporates diary entries, letters, and inner monologues, enhances the intricacy of the narrative. Readers are prompted to question the protagonist's perspective due to temporal alterations and the blending of fact and fiction, leading to critical contemplation on topics of reality and subjective (Bair, 1986; Fine, 2020).

SYMBOLIC DEPTHS

The three novellas that together make up "The Woman Destroyed" by Simone de Beauvoir expertly use symbolism and imagery to delve more into the book's core topics and characters. De Beauvoir explores the intricacies of gender, relationships, and existential challenges by using reoccurring symbols like the mirror, the apartment, nature, and the color red (Stavro, 2007).

The mirror symbolizes self-reflection and the inner conflicts of the main characters. Monique's collision with her own reflection in "The Age of Discretion" depicts her struggle with age and the deeper existential anxiety that comes with her. This emblem goes beyond just the characters' physical look to include their emotional and psychological states, emphasizing their internal conflicts (Fine, 2020).

The apartment in "Monologue" also represents society expectations and limitation. The disorder reflects the inner turmoil and emotional distress of the characters, symbolizing the confinement of family life and the restrictions on women's independence (Kruks, 2005). De Beauvoir powerfully demonstrates the influence of cultural standards on individual identity and fulfillment inside the apartment context.

In "The Woman Destroyed," nature, namely portrayed through the beach, the sea, and shifting seasons, acts as a setting that mirrors the emotional upheaval experienced by the protagonist, Monique. The tide's ebb and flow reflect her emotional fluctuations, while the seasons shifting represent the cyclical aspect of life and relationships (Mano, 2019). De Beauvoir uses environmental imagery to underscore the inevitability of change and the fleeting quality of human experiences (Mano, 2019). The colour red, whether in clothing or makeup, symbolizes the characters' resistance and assertion of their wants and identities against societal norms. It also represents significant moments of personal growth and defiance against cultural norms.

LANGUAGE UNLEASHED: RAW EMOTION AND UNFLINCHING HONESTY

Simone de Beauvoir's use of simple and direct language in "The Woman Destroyed" mirrors the intense inner turmoil felt by the main character, Monique. De Beauvoir effectively conveys the deep suffering and disappointment in Monique's mind by avoiding traditional poetry techniques and choosing a straightforward approach (Bair, 1986). The lack of punctuation in "The Monologue" heightens the protagonist's frenzied mental process and inner distress, offering readers a

raw look into her turbulent psyche (Kruks, 2005). Repeating lines like "I am destroyed" and "I am lost" intensifies the urgency and desperation experienced by Monique, emphasizing her splintered identity and the cultural influences causing her emotional breakdown (Stavro, 2007).

De Beauvoir's precise and vivid writing in the novellas reflects Monique's existential agony and inner turmoil, encouraging readers to explore her existential crisis as she wrestles with problems of identity, meaning, and freedom. De Beauvoir successfully communicates intricate thoughts and emotions with conciseness and elegance using introspective language and exquisite diction. She immerses readers in Monique's experiences and makes them feel for her hardships by carefully choosing her words, which creates an atmosphere of intimacy and immediacy.

De Beauvoir's vocabulary effectively expresses the psychological and emotional challenges faced by the female characters in "The Woman Destroyed." Her work is rich in introspective features, providing profound insights into the characters' inner thoughts and emotions. It effectively portrays the complex nature of the feminine experience within society norms. De Beauvoir's rich and visceral descriptions depict the characters' psychological struggles with a painful portrayal, conveying a tangible feeling of misery and disillusionment felt by Monique and others.

Furthermore, de Beauvoir's employment of a stream-of-consciousness narrative technique deeply involves readers in the characters' inner thoughts, enabling a close examination of their thoughts, anxieties, and wants. The technique used in "The Monologue" reflects the characters' shattered self-perception and establishes a strong emotional link between the reader and the inner agony of the protagonists.

Additionally, tone becomes a major literary tool in representing the characters' developing experiences in the course of the novellas. The changes in tone reflect the internal changes of the characters, indicating important times in their emotional development. The tone evolves from resignation to resentment and revolt as the protagonists challenge society norms.

THEMATIC RESONANCE: STYLE AS A MIRROR TO MEANING

Simone de Beauvoir's artistic decisions in "The Woman Destroyed" extensively intertwine with the novel's subject fabric, mirroring existential concerns, feminist analyses, and wider societal matters. The characters' existential concerns are reflected in the austere and violent language, as they try to find meaning and purpose in a universe that seems indifferent (Fine, 2020). The repetitive words and fragmentary tales mirror the disjointed lives of women under patriarchal control, in line with feminist ideologies (Bair, 1986). The straightforward language in the story acts as a form of social criticism, revealing inequities that lead to the protagonist's downfall and forcing readers to face difficult truths (Mano, 2019).

De Beauvoir's artistic decisions are in harmony with existentialist concepts of personal freedom and accountability. Monique's introspective style emphasizes her existential dilemma, focusing on the absurdity of existence and the need for meaning (Fine, 2020). Monique's challenges within patriarchal boundaries reflect a feminist analysis, highlighting the restricted roles and societal expectations placed on women (Bair, 1986). De Beauvoir's writing style sheds light on societal challenges such as the dehumanizing impacts of modernity. Mano (2019) argues that urban landscape descriptions are a critique of materialism and the gap between the two, drawing attention to the hollowness and superficiality of city life. De Beauvoir creates a captivating story that connects with readers on various levels by skillfully blending style and theme.

CHARACTER PORTRAYALS

"The Woman Destroyed" by Simone de Beauvoir is an engrossing look at the female protagonists' inner struggles and intricacies. Beauvoir explores women, relationships, and societal expectations in depth through detailed character depictions and stylistic components, providing profound insights into the human condition.

Monique is shown as the main character in the first section, dealing with deep feelings of emptiness after her children leave and her husband cheats on her. Beauvoir adeptly explores Monique's inner thoughts, exposing a conflict between society expectations and her desire for personal fulfillment. Monique's inner conflicts are powerfully portrayed through contemplative soliloquies, as she wrestles with problems of identity and purpose. Beauvoir employs a stream-of-consciousness narrative technique to offer readers a close depiction of Monique's emotional distress, emphasizing the conflict between societal norms and individual wishes. Monique's journey provides a profound reflection on the limitations placed on women by conventional gender expectations, encouraging readers to sympathize with her exploration of self-awareness.

Beauvoir introduces Françoise in the second half, a woman who is intelligent and dealing with the difficulties of age and changing relationships. Françoise's persona is defined by a deep feeling of isolation and disappointment as she deals with the intricacies of aging. Beauvoir effectively depicts Françoise's inner struggles and the influence of society norms on women's self-esteem through her interactions with others. Beauvoir combines introspective storytelling with speech to reveal Françoise's character, showcasing her intellectual pursuits and relationships. Françoise's narrative delves into the complexities of growing old, solitude, and the quest for significance, highlighting Beauvoir's skill in portraying the diverse aspects of a woman's existence.

The conclusion focuses on Anne, a young lady caught in a turbulent romantic relationship while dealing with society norms. Anne's character embodies a rebellious nature and a desire for personal authenticity, but she is ensnared in a harmful relationship. Beauvoir explores Anne's inner thoughts, uncovering the intricate emotions related to love, desire, and self-realization. Beauvoir uses Anne's character to vividly express intense emotions by employing symbolism and

metaphor to highlight her psychological conflicts. Anne's journey serves as a universal examination of love's complexity and the pursuit of personal independence, striking a chord with readers on a profound emotional level.

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS

Simone de Beauvoir's style decisions in "The Woman Destroyed" play a crucial role in revealing the inner conflicts of each character, resulting in a deep and engaging reading experience. Beauvoir skillfully blends the external and psychological worlds of her characters using stream-of-consciousness narrative, introspective monologues, and rich descriptive language, enabling readers to identify with their struggles and conflicts.

Stream-of-consciousness narration grants readers direct insight into the characters' thoughts and emotions, enabling a candid and unadulterated examination of their inner worlds. This stylistic method effectively conveys the intricacies of the characters' psychological states by reflecting the fractured and chaotic nature of human mind. Beauvoir creates intimacy and immediacy by immersing readers in the characters' stream of consciousness, leading to a deeper understanding of their difficulties and conflicts.

The characters' inner turmoil is further explored through introspective monologues, which reveal their most secret desires, worries, and insecurities. Beauvoir explores existential anxiety and identity conflicts in her characters, emphasizing the conflict between society norms and personal satisfaction. Beauvoir allows readers to identify with the characters' emotional struggles and reflect on fundamental human topics by revealing their deepest thoughts.

Beauvoir uses detailed language to eloquently describe the physical and emotional environments where her characters live. Beauvoir effectively establishes a vivid atmosphere in the novel by providing thorough depictions of things, situations, and sensory sensations, engaging readers in the story's environment. The symbolic meaning of objects and surroundings in a story often mirrors that of the characters' inner lives and the social limitations they encounter. The layering of meaning enhances the story by encouraging readers to delve deeper into the ideas and motifs of the book.

EXISTENTIALIST

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Woman Destroyed" is an in-depth look at existentialist concepts; it follows the lives of three women, Monique, Helene, and Sylvie, as they navigate the tangled web of free will, personal decision-making, and existential despair. The novel's stylistic features intimately blend with existentialist philosophy, demonstrating the deep link between narrative choices and existential issues. Existentialism centers around freedom, and "The Woman Destroyed" powerfully illustrates the outcomes of personal decisions. Monique, the main character in the initial narrative, struggles with the consequences of her choices, exemplifying the existential concept of radical freedom, where people are destined to be free. Monique's internal conflicts emphasize how freedom can be both freeing and burdensome, reflecting existentialist ideas. The narrative focuses on the characters' decisions and the existential consequences they face. Helene has an existential dilemma in the second story due to her lifelong dedication to her family. The story explores the existential idea that individuals choose their futures via their acts, highlighting the significant influence of personal choices on one's life through Helene's self-reflection.

The story is filled with existential agony as Monique, Helene, and Sylvie struggle with the anxiety and misery that comes from realizing their independence and responsibility. The work focuses into existential dread, highlighting the characters' quest for purpose in the face of existence's emptiness, which mirrors significant philosophical concepts. Beauvoir's artistic decisions amplify the existentialist themes of the text. The fractured structure reflects the disjointed essence of existence, highlighting the concept that life consists of separate events and decisions. First-person narratives offer viewers an unfiltered and personal view of the characters' psychological conflicts, reflecting existentialism's focus on individual experiences. Beauvoir's language enhances existentialist concepts through thoughtful and meditative sentences. The characters' lived experiences are brought to life for readers through vivid imagery and sensory details, which heightens the emotional impact of their existential quandaries. Moreover, the depiction of intricate, multifaceted female characters mirrors existentialism's focus on personal genuineness. Beauvoir emphasizes the existentialist idea that humans need to face the reality of their existence and be accountable for their decisions by delving into their ideas, feelings, and challenges.

CONCLUSION

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Woman Destroyed" is a masterful work that skillfully weaves together existentialist philosophy, feminist analysis, and deep human experiences. The novel explores feminine identity, societal expectations, and existential challenges via three interconnected novellas. Beauvoir skillfully employs narrative voice, symbolism, and stylistic aspects to create an engaging and engrossing reading experience that pushes readers to delve into the characters' inner worlds and contemplate universal themes of freedom, choice, and authenticity.

The critical acclaim for "The Woman Destroyed" highlights its lasting importance and relevance in literary and philosophical spheres. Scholars have recognized the novel's deep understanding of the human condition and its exploration of the difficulties in balancing society expectations and personal goals, from feminist perspectives to existentialist viewpoints. "The Woman Destroyed" resonates with audiences of all ages because to its complex and diverse narrative, providing deep insights into the intricacies of womanhood, relationships, and the journey of self-discovery.

Eventually, "The Woman Destroyed" serves as evidence of Simone de Beauvoir's lasting impact as an innovative intellectual and author. Beauvoir's detailed portrayal of women's lives and her bold examination of existential topics encourage readers to face the complexities of life with bravery, compassion, and honesty. "The Woman Destroyed" is a powerful example of literature's ability to shed light on the complexities of human existence and encourage deep self-reflection and personal development in a society filled with demands and uncertainties.

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