



## DICHOTOMOUS IPSEITY: MULTIVALENT TRANSGRESSIONS IN WOMENS' POETRY ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

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**ABSTRACT-** Language is not merely a mode of articulation, it is also a dwelling place (*Monolingualism of the Other*1), constituting an individual's self. At the same time, language has been a powerful tool for exercising repression (Hendricks and Oliver 5). With power being integrally connected with patriarchy, patriarchal structures have exercised this manipulation through language in constructing identity or ipseity. Through its "juridico-discursive" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 183*) functioning, patriarchy has, through all ages, silenced a woman by imposing its own criterion of feminine fulfillment and pushing her to the position of an object. Hence, when women writers enter the domain of writing, the act in itself becomes a transgression as a woman endeavours to reclaim her voice and her physical being through this literary intervention with the help of language. Yet, this struggle is not uniform as it deals with a multiplicity of force relations that determine and undermine the multivalent forms of resistance which function as indicators of the dichotomy within the notion of a woman writer's sense of the self or ipseity as she engages with language which has been a domain of patriarchal power. Using the Foucaultian notions of censorship and repression in conjunction with the relationship between patriarchy and the feminine mystique as its philosophical underpinnings, this study endeavours to investigate how specifically women poets, across various historical eras and cultures, have tried to cross or negotiate with these unsettling obstacles. Through a close reading of five poems by five women poets belonging to different eras and cultural contexts, this article analyses how their use of various modes of expression become indicators of the multivalent forms of transgressions that they engage in and how these resistances can be valorized through their modes of creative expression.

**Key Words:** Women poets, ipseity, power relations, patriarchy, resistance.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language, power and patriarchy \_ these are three interbraided concepts which have established the discursive plain for the formation and contestation of different subject identities. With language being a potent tool in the hands of the powerful patriarchy across various cultures and times, it has played a pivotal role in the construction of the identities of women as objects of the overbearing patriarchal discourse. In addition, it has also played an important role in silencing their voices and imposing "gendered hegemonies" (Lykke 14) through what Foucault has termed as its "juridico-discursive" (*The History of Sexuality Vol.1 83*) functioning, i.e. in the domains of religious and legal jurisprudence. Across many centuries, men have traditionally ruled over the domains of law, religion and education, with a "Beadle" (Woolf 11) possessively, even fanatically, guarding the gravelly path towards enlightenment that was reserved for the male scholars alone. Knowledge, reality, duties etc, all came to be dictated by socio-political systems that were inherently patriarchal in texture and structure.

In the context of the "dichotomization of gendered individuals into women and men" (Patil 850) through language, Dale Spender offers pertinent insights. In the words of Christina Hendricks and Kelly Oliver:

*According to Spender, men form a dominant group that has controlled language in its own interest, constructing sexist categories and meanings through which all speakers of the language view the world. The inhibiting nature of these categories makes it difficult to change the perception of women as "inferior" to men. Spender argues*

*that the categories set up by male dominated language make claims to objectivity and truth, as if they were simply "the way things are." Clearly, it is in the interest of the dominant group for their views to be regarded as transcendent truths, untouchable and inalterable. Yet Spender maintains that there is a feminine alternative: she claims that women's language organizes the world differently than the dominant male one . . . (6)*

One of these forms of remodulating the perception of the world from a female perspective is that women do not always view the world through the masculine/ feminine binary. This enables them to view each other as they are without recourse to the dualistic mode of viewing the society which privileges one category and marginalizes the other. On the other hand, if they do view gendered relations from a dualistic lens it is because this mode of perception has been imposed upon a woman through patriarchy.

Articulating itself through language, literature too has been a similar system or plain wherein notions of masculine superiority have been indelibly embossed. In addition, with language being the "*root of the Law*" (Baker 369), as has been highlighted by feminist theorists like Kristeva and Irigaray, women have been pushed to the periphery of the major religious and legal discourses. Cynthia Baker, commenting on the theorizations of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, summarizes an important commonality between the theoretical assumptions of both, i.e., the "*phallogocentric*"(369) system has excluded women throughout the ages for their self-perpetuation. Judith Butler expresses this point in the following manner:

The juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a critical genealogy of its own legitimating practices. (324)

This marginalization was further supplemented by "*Biological determinism*" (Lykke 23) which is defined as

*a thought figure that constructs biology as a determining factor as far as social, cultural and psychological character and position are concerned. Since the foundation of natural history and modern biology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, biologically determinist arguments have been used as powerful political tools. They have been mobilized to legitimize social and cultural inequality, exclusion, subordination, exploitation and power differentials not only between women and men, but also between differently racialized groups, different ethnicities, classes, cultures, nations, mother tongues, sexualities, dis/abilities, ages and so on. (Lykke 23)*

With biological difference reinforcing male hegemony in multiple social and political normative schemes that reinforce the unequal division of sexes, women have had to contend against repression, exclusion and censorship on various planes.

Deracinated from any plane where a woman could acquire loquacity, literature has been a domain where women were treated as objects, with an ipseity or I-ness formed through a patriarchal educational and religious discursive system. This ipseity, however, remained problematic as the notion of womanhood emanated out of the patriarchal discourse. To reiterate once again, language remained the major device for the enforcement and supplementation of this male-dominated vision and women throughout history and across many regions of the world had recourse to the same language engaged by patriarchal structures in order to shed their inarticulateness. However, language is not merely a mode of articulation but also a space of existence, a "*habitat*" (*Monolingualism of the Other* 1) constituting one's own ipseity since "It is me" (*Monolingualism of the Other* 1), and also of the things around an individual. Language thus provides the space through which one's identity is contoured. Hence, one of the reasons why a woman writer's I-ness displays a schism is that the patriarchal language provides a patriarchal space of existence which marginalizes women. Therefore, while living within a patriarchal dwelling, women once again become inarticulate or misunderstood migrants who are uneasy within a foreign domain.

As they resist the patriarchal discourse, one of the problems that begins with women's ipseity is that they engage with the patriarchal codes of language in order to vocalize their sense of deprivation and unrest. Since language constitutes identity in accordance with the dictates of a patriarchal power network, hence what this study finds problematic is that when a woman writer comes to inhabit the patriarchal language, a rupture emanates within her own ipseity as she struggles to modify the masculine language to articulate the concerns

of her own gender. In my optics, this leads to the assumption that since the patriarchal language is the language of those who hold power, so by trespassing into this sacrosanct domain, a woman writer commits a transgression in order to resist and undermine patriarchy. If so, the questions that arise are whether her transgression is uniform or multivalent and what does this transgression/s indicate about her I-ness as she intervenes within the masculine language and changes it according to her own requirements.

In order to investigate these questions, I have incorporated five different women poets who are not only spatially distant but are also temporally apart, ranging from ancient Greece to contemporary Pakistan. The ensuing narrative study primarily delimits itself to an analysis of the earlier mentioned hypothetical underpinnings particularly in relation to the different modes of repression that a patriarchal system exercises through language. Since repression is multi-modal, resistance through transgression will not be uniform either. One poem composed by each of the selected poets has been brought under scrutiny. What has determined my selection of these poems is the explicit and underlying dichotomy within the sense of the "I" that these poems reflect vis-à-vis the permutable patriarchal norms and conventions. The reason for this form of selection is to investigate the multi-variance in the modes of transgression engaged in by these women poets across different cultures and times. The selected poems include "I have not had one word from her" by Sappho, Carol Ann Duffy's "Little Red Cap", Denise Levertov's "Stepping Westward", Ilona Yusaf's "amazons" and "Fearful Women" by Carolyn Kizer. In order to investigate the multiple modes of transgression and resistance against repression, I have further delimited my analysis by identifying four common fields within these poems as the writers engage in intervening within the patriarchal modes of expression and engage with them to highlight their resistance. These four fields, in their interaction, constitute the patriarchal power structures which are being resisted by the women poets who have been selected for analysis in this study. These common fields include:

- a. Heteronormativity.
- b. "The negative relation" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 83) with power which imposes rigid strictures upon individuals regarding their sexual and social roles and threatens them with ostracism.
- c. "The cycle of prohibition" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 84) which, according to Foucault, is imposed by power (in this case patriarchal power) through the imposition of various taboos that create repression.
- d. This cycle is supplemented by the "logic of censorship" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 84) which imposes its own punitive measures and injunctions regarding what is permitted and what is not. Therefore, in this context, the "said" and the "unsaid" (*Power/Knowledge Interviews* 194) are equally important. In order to explore resistance against this mode of repression, the language of the selected poems will be submitted to a close reading regarding the connotative associations of the various images, symbols and lexical items as found in the selected poems. However a text, being a subject of a dominant discourse, which Foucault defines as a "repressive presence of what it does not say" (*Archaeology* 28), is also constrained by this repressive presence. Hence the "not-said" is a "hollow that undermines from within all that is said." (*Archaeology* 28) and it manifests itself through tropes such as irony, innuendos and implicatures. Hence, these elements as found in the selected poems will also be subjected to scrutiny.

These four interplaited "structures of domination" (Butler 323) have been in place throughout the ages vis-à-vis the "women's common subjugated experience" (Butler 323) and the notion of "sex" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 83) which, for the purpose of this investigation, I have taken in both the connotations of "socio-cultural gender" (Lykke 32) as well as "sexuality" (Lykke 32) as recommended by Judith Butler. Hence, Foucault's notions of these modes of repression are not merely relevant to the sexual orientation of the subjects of patriarchal power structures but also have a connection with their gender which is constructed through a "cultural-natural network" (Lykke 22). In addition, negotiating with these modes of repression is not smooth; rather it institutes fractures within the ipseity of the women poets, creating an ambivalence regarding the extent and patterns of their rejection of their secondary status within the patriarchal order. Moreover, this problem is further aggravated by the fact that patriarchy tends to simply alter its mask and imposes what Betty Friedan terms as the "feminine mystique" (40) which posits that "the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity" (91). However, patriarchy through the controlling mechanisms enlisted above, enforces its own notions of feminine fulfillment, and that essentially the patronizing patriarchal mind set has not changed as Walby talks about "new forms of patriarchy" (200) while Spender presents this observation in the following words:

*Alot of people are saying things have changed. I'm not a cynic and I'm not a pessimist, I don't, see any change in the shift of power. What I see is a new orthodoxy [ . . .]. The men here are sufficiently sophisticated that they would be quite upset to be called sexist because that's not a nice thing to be. So they're very careful. But the only thing that's changed is that they're very careful. [ . . .] I don't see any shift in power, I really don't. I think there are a lot of men who feel they were quite tolerant about sitting there last night listening to me and who think they deserve a reward for it (Spender, Daumer&Runzo 16).*

It is through this mode of underlying sessilitygoverning the patriarchal discourse that men view not only women but also their intellectual outpourings which reinforces the feminine mystique in multiple forms, particularly in connection with the prescribed roles of women. According to the patriarchal philosophy,these prescribed roles lead to the fulfillment of their selves as "wives and mothers" (Friedan 57). It is this fixity of prescribed notions which provides a plane for women writers to engage in resistance and transgression through language usage in their creative compositions. With these theoretical assumptions in mind, my study analyses how, through their engagement with the patriarchal modes of expression, these writers make an effort to discard the feminine mystique in a trans-temporal and trans-territorial plane.

## II. DATA ANALYSIS

Patriarchy has imposed its own edicts regarding the acceptable gendered roles of women through multiple interactive modes of repression. These modes act as obstacles within a relay race as women, and women writers in particular,deal with them by engaging a language that has already been appropriated and shaped by patriarchy and is responsible for disseminating what is considered to be the normative or accepted view of reality.

The privileged position of heteronormativityalso stands as one such mode of repression. Heteronormativity, language and hegemony stand as mutually inclusive concepts (Engel, Dhawan& Varela 1) as heteronormativity is seen to be in compliance with the patriarchal power structures. In this context, patriarchy is defined as social norm where the needs of the father are given precedence vis-à-vis a reverence for his interests and decisions on the part of the children and the wife ("Resistances to Patriarchy"38). This control is supplemented by the father's control over the body and the destiny of his wifewhich is supplemented by exploitation, suppression and oppression of women ("Resistances to Patriarchy" 38; Walby 20). This form of domination is "socially institutionalized" (Walby3) as it encapsulates many dimensions of gender relations labeling some as licit and others as illicit. In this context, same-sex relations stand out as not merely taboos but also incur scathing ostracism. However, if one were to go back in time toSappho (625-570 BC), one finds a challenge to this mode of social institutionalization. Despite her being heterosexual, her poem "I have not had one word from her" articulates a woman-woman relationship, a taboo when viewed through the optics of the patriarchal social and cultural lens. Explicitly highlighting the amorous relationship between women, the text endeavours to free itself from the shackles of patriarchy and the dualistic mode of self-definition; however, a close reading of the text reveals an ambivalence at the same time. While Sappho proclaims her love for another womanin explicit terms: "*Frankly I wish I were dead*" (Sappho), the verse is characterized by ambivalence as she almost assumes the role of a traditional male lover at the opening of the poem, yet, through a shift in the imagery, the song reclaims the female voice. Women, thus intrude into the masculine voice and dislocate it to grant loquacity to their own voice. In this regard, she is markedly reminiscent of Isabelle Allende's*The House of the Spirits* which begins the tone of G.G Marquez but dislocates and effaces his voice completely to become only Allende's voice.

The poem "*I have not had one word from her*" displays extensive floral imagery referring to "violet tiaras" (Sappho), "braided rosebuds" (Sappho) and pouring "myrrh" (Sappho) with pronounced feminine overtones that come in marked opposition to the warrior Greek culture within which she was embedded.While comparing it with the Homeric epics, one becomes aware of the scarcity of war-imagery and masculine characters that had energized Homer's militaristic epics. Sappho tends to be turning towards an essentially female world where war has not intruded. Yet at the same time, the reference to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, sex, marriage and fertility shows Sappho's denial, within the selected text at least, of the heterosexual relationship which Aphrodite has come to symbolize vis-à-vis her relationship with Adonis.Here, Aphrodite is not worshipped as the goddess of heterosexual love but simply as the goddess of love only (both heterosexual

and homosexual) as Sappho unabashedly proclaims her love for another female companion. While this may speak of a problematic inference that Sappho draws regarding her preferences, it also speaks of her undaunted courage to grasp at patriarchal religious symbols and deities and to engage their powers for the fulfillment of her non-normative desires. In doing so, while the poem does engage patriarchal symbols and language, it rather vociferously asserts the female autonomy. Religion is served, the goddess of love is placated but only on Sappho's condition. However, this kind of an assertion is undermined by the notion of parting.

*When she left, she wept  
a great deal; she said to me, "This parting must be  
endured, Sappho. I go unwillingly" (Sappho)*

A superficial analysis of the poem would irrefragably reveal lesbian overtones, and the desire for the woman to attain her autonomy through a same-sex relationship, yet the heteronormative order asserts itself through the parting motif that is suggested to be irreversible and creates an anxiety within her:

*I said, "Go, and be happy  
but remember . . . whom you leave shackled by love" (Sappho)*

The language of the poem strives to assert a female-centered world through an open defiance of heteronormativity, as the employment of innuendos through the rose buds and the twined crocus implies. As one delves into what Foucault has termed as the "unsaid" (*Power/ Knowledge Interviews* 194), the poem shows a desire for a forbidden love that is articulated and comes out of the realms of silence. Yet at the same time, in inexplicably submitting itself to the separation, the woman surrenders her desire in order to accommodate to this unexplained contingency which becomes a source of rupture within the notion of her ipseity. This notion of ipseity, in Sappho's case, is endeavoring against all odds to define itself in relation to another woman. The poem thus defies the "logic of censorship" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 84) which plays itself out through an endless interplay of taboo, law and censorship (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 84). Yet, transgression also emanates out of it as Sappho cavorts with the licit and the illicit also through the patriarchal modes of domination imposed by religion. Albeit she is drawn not only within the shackles of an illicit love, she is also drawn within the shackles of patriarchy indicating a major rift at the heart of the poem. However, it would be rather unfair to outrightly state that owing to this rift or schism within her ipseity, the poem is not leaving any imprints on the patriarchal canvas. As a matter of fact, it opens up a rupture by engaging the accepted modes of expression to vocalize her unorthodox desires. Thus, Sappho does prepare a groove for the creation and discussion of illicit sexuality and gender roles.

In this connection, she bears a marked literary kinship with Sor Juana, a Mexican nun of extraordinary intellectual capabilities of the sixteenth century. She wrote within the "baroque aesthetics", (Klaren 5) which were transfused into the circulatory system of the Latin American body politic. The same aesthetics make their presence tangibly felt if the stylisation of Sor Juana's poetry is closely scrutinised. What is of paramount importance to note here is that Sor Juana too penetrates into a realm of writing that was set in place by men such as Pedro Calderon, Luis de Gongora and Quevedo, however, she "inscribes herself within Baroque Peninsular writing conventions, yet she also changes them, appropriating them for her own ends and making them entirely her own." (Prendergast 38), in a manner similar to Sappho. Dislodging the patriarchal voice (Echevarria 221) through her rejection of heteronormativity, Sor Juana harnessed this liminal space and redefined it as a woman identified space, creating what Helene Cixous calls "*l'écriture féminine*" or "women's writings" (Cixous 875). This became a space where she could "recode women's social spaces and symbolic formations [...] by embarking on a new quest for gender-sexual identity" (Klaren 8) and to "reconfigure gender roles" (Bergero & Marchant 522) so that a woman is able to proclaim her love for another woman, just as Sappho did.

However, while Sor Juana and Sappho displayed a rather explicit resistance against heteronormativity and the "negative relation" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 83), Denise Levertov's "Stepping Westward" reflects



resistance and transgression from another dimension to reflect her ipseity. In engaging a title : "Stepping Westward" that had previously been used by Wordsworth who had composed a poem of the same title, she engages in "negotiations with poetic authority and tradition" (Kinnahan 201). Through the engagement of this title, Levertov, Levertov modulates a masculine voice to present a woman who is "stepping westward" which "seemed to be/ A kind of 'heavenly' destiny'" (Wordsworth). Wordsworth's narrator is inspired by an old woman's voice with its "human sweetness" (Wordsworth) that transcends time and space, inspiring the narrator to embark on a journey to explore the world. However, Levertov appears to take up the narrative from what could be that same woman's point of view. Both the old lady and Wordsworth are indeed headed "Westward" as the sun of their lives is setting, slipping below the horizon demarcating the realms of life and death. However, while death is accoutered in the effulgence of the twilight, the idea of death in the original poem does not carry overtones of melancholy. Denise Levertov's "Stepping Westward" is also steeped in the same tone of "joy" (Gilbert 201). Hence, on the surface level, the tone set by a male writer continues to provide the stylistic texture to Levertov's poem. Interestingly, what constitutes the core of a dichotomous ipseity in Levertov is that her resistance is radiating outwards in two antipodal directions, against patriarchy as well as against the feminist notions of the feminine emancipation which advocate the notion that a woman's role is defined, through various tactics by the patriarchal order. Throwing down the gauntlet before patriarchal notions of constancy and "chastity" (Wollstonecraft 4) she declares:

If woman is inconstant,  
good, I am faithful to  
ebb and flow, I fall  
in season and now  
is a time of ripening. (Levertov)

Through this voice of deviation and transgression, the metaphor of fruition and fulfillment \_ "ripening" \_ Levertov presents her defiance of the accepted notion of aging, by cheerfully embracing the senescence that comes with age. In this context, she piques the patriarchal notions of womanhood that stress upon the fact that a woman is desirable as long as she bears children or is beautiful. In addition, the "male prejudice" (Wollstonecraft 77) that sets the ripe age of a woman at twenty, with her decline beginning after her 30s, reaching a "jumping-off point at forty" (Friedan 51), this narrator embraces senescence by inverting the symbols of withering away associated with aging and replacing them with images of fertile maturity. Hence, she challenges the patriarchal assumptions of ripe womanhood.

However, she also challenges the assumptions of the feminists that posit that a woman is glaciated within the feminine mystique, with her revolving endlessly around the patriarchal center. She proudly owns the stasis of the North Star as it remains a symbol of guidance. Upholding the mystique, she proclaims her pride in the notion of fulfillment that comes with self-effacement. Her ipseity thus comes to be posited in opposition to both the patriarchal and the feminist creeds, entering into a "subjecthood" (Kinnahan 9) articulating the multiple, albeit contradictory, dimensions that go into the construction of womanhood \_ "the category of woman based upon an experiencing of reality particular to a woman's consciousness" (Kinnahan 9). Her transgression is therefore directed at the negative power of two contrapositional discursive formations, exposing a power of her own that challenges assumptions on both sides of the divide.

Intriguingly, by proclaiming her being as a woman, the cleavage within her I-ness, symbolized through the sweet and salty images, she presents a holistic image of womanhood. This holistic image celebrates the maternal, the life-giving component of her life, as embodied through the North Star and gift-bearing images that are connected with the mythological goddesses who gave multifarious gifts. These goddesses include Demeter, Aphrodite, Athena, Isis, etc all who have enriched humanity through various gifts including life, fertility, harvest, wisdom etc:

If I bear burdens  
they begin to be remembered  
as gifts, goods, a basket  
of bread that hurts

my shoulders but closes me  
in fragrance. (Levertov)

She celebrates the generosity of a woman as she suffers to give ease, bears burdens of multifarious types to give relief, and eats while she works. Yet, what comes to the fore is that the narrator is aware of both the phallogocentric and gynocentric discourses. However, she displays what Foucault has termed as "*epimeleiaheautou*" ("The Hermeneutic of the Subject" 93), a valorous "concern with oneself" ("The Hermeneutic of the Subject" 93). In becoming an active hermeneutic self, she challenges two self-validating "true discourses" ("The Hermeneutic of the Subject" 100) within which her compositions are placed and finds a unique niche for herself within the established codes of heteronormativity.

However, while many feminist critics have perceived the dichotomy as an expression of anxiety vis-à-vis the question of their alignment with either the phallogocentric discourses or the feminist discourses, Levertov, in this poem skirts the borders of both discursive domains: "a reflective and critical capability arising from the negotiation of several subject-positions at once" (Kinnahan 129). The reflexive pronoun "myself" (Levertov) proclaims her subjectivity which is posited against both of them. Interestingly, instead of fearing erasure, she celebrates it. Taking on board Derrida's concept of a trace, her self-erasure becomes a more pronounced signifier of her presence through her absence. In Derrida's terminology, the trace is "the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself" (*Speech and Phenomena* 156). In referring beyond itself, Levertov's narrator does not merely dislodge the negative relation with phallogocentric voice but also with the gyno-centric voice. Yet, the dichotomy lies in the fact that she embraces them both, and at the same time rejects them as well to give a complete picture, in her view, of what it means to be a woman.

This accounts for the differences in the way different women writers have engaged with patriarchy through their own modes of expression. The contemporary Pakistani poet Ilona Yusuf is a case in point. Taking on the mythical "Amazons" (Yusuf 71), the mythical female warriors, as the primary metaphor to express the idea of resistance, Yusuf symbolically vocalizes her resistance to male subordination and the feminine mystique. With the Amazons setting up a "feminist space" ("Women-Only And Feminist Spaces: Important Alternatives to Patriarchy" 13) which is characterized by the empowerment of women in an egalitarian society and the acceptance of all forms of women's bodies, Ilona Yusuf uses them as a trope to express her dissatisfaction with the feminine mystique. Interestingly, in the case of Ilona Yusuf this analysis takes on board another dimension, i.e., of locale. Her work is primarily based upon Pakistan where women's writings in English stand as an inchoate but rapidly expanding genre. Pakistan is markedly patriarchal, be it in the form of the capitalistic mode of existence governing its cities or the traditionalist or feudal modes of existence characterizing its rural areas. Where rigid patriarchy remains the norm, the symbol of the "Amazons" stands as an out rightly defiant and even valorized image of female chivalry in the face of

a litany of things  
a lifetime of wrapping up and tidying  
sorting and putting a sea of things away  
the clothes the meals the children's timings and everyone's emotional baggage too  
unloaded onto her shoulders (Yusuf 70)

A close reading of this poem reveals a defiance not merely through the idea of the Amazons, but also by discarding and disregarding the rules of punctuation and capitalization that have come to dictate the order and syntax of the English language, just as patriarchal and chauvinistic prejudices have governed the order of a woman's life. Yusuf thus fulfills the criterion set by Helene Cixous that "It's not to be feared that language conceals an invincible adversary, because it's the language of men and their grammar." (887). The poem stands as a marked expression of the feminine mystique imposed on a Pakistani housewife as she daringly questions how feminism, like its earlier discourses, did not lead to the deliquescence of the mystique that has caused women to live within a supposedly charmed circle. More importantly, she actually seeks an articulation and evaluation of what Friedan has termed as "the problem that has no name" (5) as she engages in strictly routine household chores:

so can this century of

dissent dissection  
 discussion  
 break the charmed circle  
 of ages gone by  
 give the phoenix  
 time to rethink  
 woman  
 or will it be just one  
 forlorn forgotten chapter  
 in the book of time  
 an ephemeral resurrection  
 of the Amazon? (Yusuf 71)

While feministic discourses have been further sub-categorised as on the basis of geographical, ideological, cultural as well as racial parameters, this study does not, however, take this dimension into account owing to the fact that the aim of patriarchal systems all over the world have relegated a woman to a peripheral position, inducing a rimation or cleavage within their notions of ipseity as they universally contest the dominant discourses regarding womanhood. In Yusuf's case, the symbol of the "Amazons"(71) \_ which is the only word in the whole poem spelt with a capital A \_ gains a greater significance since it cuts across time and space and binds women in a Global Sisterhood. Moreover, a close scrutiny reveals that the poet does not take into account any symbol associated with patriarchy, rather she takes the symbol of a matriarchal system or space thus defying the woman's removal from "the symbolic" (Ziarek324).

However, an alternative reading of the same conclusion also articulates a cynicism that the issues of women will be pushed under the carpet and that the resurrection will take place as time advances. This emanates out of an acute awareness of the constraints imposed upon feminist discourse by patriarchal structures. This form of a dichotomy further becomes an indicator of the dichotomy within Yusuf's ipseity in connection with the intransigent male-centered discourses. Yet, this awareness does not in any way demean the effort of a woman writer to reclaim her voice. As a matter of fact, while this rupture induces a rift within her orientation to the male, it also bears witness to an act of daring, i.e., of an infraction in the male domain in the way she incorporates gyno-centric symbolism.

Poem Little Red Cap, an educated woman becomes an anathema within androcratic environment. Taking on the masculine dogma: *"An educated woman is a danger./ Lock up your mate! Keep a submissive stranger"* (*"Fearful Women"*), yet the underlying meaning vocalizes a woman's rage undermining the dominant male voice through the usage of irony. Continuing with her overt resistance by using a "scepter" and a "mop" as synecdoches for the roles assigned to both genders, the mop stands as a valorous symbol of defiance, as the final heroic couplet brazenly challenges the notion that men are the upolders and inheritors of knowledge. While the title of the poem is "Fearful Women", this notion stands out as a verbal trap, as if luring the unsuspecting male reader into a text where he will not hear about fearful women, but about fearless ones. Kizer does perform a literary transgression by being vociferously articulate, yet she is able to assert a brave ipseity of a woman that survives despite being wrenched apart and not because she is weak or enervated. Rather it is because of her giving nature that she has been subordinated. The idea of a charitable woman, celebrated by Levertov and claimed by Kizer, bespeaks of a common thematic despite a markedly different engagement and utilization of language to contest the feminine mystique.

### III. CONCLUSION

The analyses of the various poems composed by Sappho, Denise Levertov, Carolyn Kizer, Ilona Yusuf and Carol Ann Duffy interestingly does not reveal any uniformity in the modes in which these poets use language to counter and challenge the patriarchal order. Sappho and Sor Juana tantalizingly exclude a masculine presence, "the opposite signifier" (Cixous 887), defining their amorous selves in relation to another female, dislocating the masculine center which has traditionally defined a woman's ipseity. While both are hindered by separation imposed due to patriarchal norms and requirements, to read their acceptance of this parting as



a capitulation before the patriarchal order would be a flawed assessment. To suppose that the absence of the male is strongly signified through his absence and the separation motif would be an over-generalization that is countered by the observation that women's writings are valorized precisely due to the fact that they are constantly being restrained by various patriarchal modes of control as Dale Spender has highlighted in her work *Man Made Language*. While patriarchal structures govern the making and proliferation of meanings, women writers tend to subvert the "male-as-norm" (*Man Made Language*) formula of classifying the world. The important factor that valorizes these writings is that the women writers, in different modes, engage the arsenal provided by the patriarchal discourse to counter it. Whether through a re-engagement of innuendos and symbols signifying female characteristics as found in the patriarchal literary traditions, or by using masculine images to criticize male chauvinism and domination, the writers invest their own meanings within the traditional male-dominated phenomenon of signification. Inverting or erasing the domineering male positions that are characterized by aggression, women either delete the male presence from their writings or they use language to redirect the masculine aggression towards the males themselves. These poems by women are valorized not because they are able to completely re-configure the patriarchal discourse to make it gender-neutral, rather they aim at infiltrating the phallogocentric discourse and modifying it both through a surreptitious and blatant usage of language according to their own objectives. In doing so, a woman poet's ipseity tangentially skims the circumference of patriarchal discourse but is also drawn away from it as she re-directs the vector of her own I-ness not merely in relation to the males but also in relation to her own individuality. She, however, does not emerge as revolving around a male centre. The rupture that opens within her I-ness is indeed problematic as she is forcefully drawn towards a phallogocentric centre, as the language that she applies seems to instill patriarchal meanings and connotations in her writings. These insidious connotations which are revealed through the unsaid that contours her writings is a hindrance, granting a malleability to her meanings. Yet she centrifugally draws away from this centre as well. This antipodal movement from the androcentric centre is not without the expenditure of energy, rather it is an arduous struggle as the woman poetry aligns herself along the axis of her own ipseity. It is this struggle which valorizes her modes of expression as they counter the intimidating and silencing force of the phallic voice that surrounds them. What comes to the fore through this analysis is that a woman poet does not employ a singular mode of resistance since not only is patriarchy capable of mutating and taking on different shapes facilitated through the fluidity of language, the resistance engaged in women poets through their use of language is also variegated and diverse. This study, however, invites further analysis into the different modes of resistance by tracing any particular pattern of modifying the patriarchal language by female poets in their compositions as they undermine the patriarchal structures of discourse.

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