



**SUBVERTING PATRIARCHY THROUGH *ÉCRITURE*
FEMININE
IN FAWZIA AFZAL-KHAN'S *LAHORE WITH LOVE:
GROWING UP WITH GIRLFRIENDS, PAKISTANI
STYLE***

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Abstract

This research paper explores linguistic techniques employed by Fawzia Afzal-Khan in her memoir *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girlfriends, Pakistani Style* (LWL) to challenge patriarchal norms and structures. The theoretical frameworks used for this research are drawn from structural linguistics including the works of Mills (1995), Spender (1980), as well as French Poststructuralists: Cixous (1975) and Irigaray (1985). Through analysis of the linguistic features of her narrative such as tropes, metaphors, imagery, wordplay, polyphony, genre-mixing, and code-mixing, the paper strives to illustrate the alternative writing style of the memoirist. The objective is to reveal that her linguistic and stylistic methods differ from the dominant structural and patriarchal writing styles, and mark her feminine individuality expressed thematically and stylistically in her memoir. The significance of our approach is that our analysis of her narrative is informed by a combination of the literary insights of the French feminists along with

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the ideas gained from the discipline of feminist linguistics and feminist stylistics. We hope that this paper goes some way in filling the research gap in the domain of Pakistani women's memoir-writing: an emerging arena of literary studies which is ignored and dismissed both in its literary merit and political significance.

Keywords

Structural Linguistics, patriarchy, poststructuralism, French feminists, *Écriture féminine*

Introduction

Afzal-Khan (born 1958) is widely known in Pakistan for her articles, books on culture and theatre, and plays, but particularly for her remarkable memoir, *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girlfriends, Pakistani Style*. The book provides parallel narratives of her personal life and the political journey of Pakistan, highlighting the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society, violence against women, and successive dictatorial military governments. Her memoir LWL is particularly distinguished due to its stylistic and linguistic innovation as Afzal-Khan employs various unusual techniques in it, breaking established patriarchally-structured linguistic patterns of writing. She explores new capacities of language by forming new words; creating puns on already existing words; using metaphors, figurative language, imagery, and an amalgamation of Urdu and English, thus enriching the repertoire of feminine and feminist writings by introducing an alternative style.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the ways in which Afzal-Khan deconstructs man-made language (Spender 1980) by coming up with an alternative feminine style or '*écriture féminine*' which is a term coined by Helene Cixous, in her article "The Laugh of the Medusa", literally meaning 'the female sentence' (Cixous, 1975). She discards classical stylistic patterns, which can be described as linear and strictly structured narratives, similar to what Aristotle describes in *Poetics* (1968) with regard to dramatic structure, as well as male writings in the form of a more formal and impersonal narrative style (Woolf, 1992). Afzal-Khan's style seems to be influenced by the feminist writings of Millet who discusses and criticizes male-centric writings in her book *Sexual Politics* by incorporating the examples of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer whose works perpetuated and were influenced by the concept of patriarchy (Millett, 1970).

The 'female sentence' or '*écriture féminine*', as opposed to a man-made, structuralist approach to language, is emphasized by the French feminists: Irigaray (1985) and Cixous

(1975) in particular, and other feminist critics in general, and can be defined as writing of a “more elastic fiber than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes” (Woolf, 1992). Afzal-Khan’s memoir can be easily described as a classic example of this kind of writing as her narrative does not follow a linear progression: it is marked by flashbacks, poetic prose, mixing of genres and codes; wordplay at the graphic, morphological and phonological levels; a potpourri of innovative linguistic styles which combine to generate a non-linear, feminine narrative, what has been technically termed *écriture féminine* by the French feminists and the female sentence by Woolf. The significance of this approach to the study of the memoir is that it combines insights from structuralist as well as poststructuralist schools. We draw on feminist literary criticism of the poststructuralist French feminists, along with the insights gained from the works of structural linguists’ work, to argue that she not only defies the structures of man-made language through her distinct feminine style but also endeavors to question and subvert patriarchal structures, thus showcasing her feminine-feminist individuality. The American feminist critic Showalter (2012) holds the view that the masculine sentence falls short when it comes to the description of feminine individuality and thought processes, and lacks the capacity to truly convey female emotions which in turn creates a need for women to produce their own individual writing style. She writes in her article “Towards a Feminist Poetics” for the need

to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories” and emphasizes that “Gynocritics begins at a point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture (Showalter 2012, 3).

Afzal-Khan’s writing style is an apt example of this kind of transcendence from the already existing patriarchal structures of language.

Man-made language and structures were first challenged by the Australian feminist critic Dale Spender in her groundbreaking book *Man-Made Language*, wherein she argued that “it could be said that out of nowhere we invented sexism, we created the arbitrary and approximate categories of male-as-norm and female as deviant” (Spender 1980, 96). If male-centric language is considered to be the norm, Afzal-Khan’s linguistic techniques can be declared as a deviation from such phallogocentric standards as she largely employs female-centric metaphors and language that rebels against, reveals and questions existing social structures and narratives about women. Therefore, Spender’s argument is crucially relevant in the analysis of innovative language use in Afzal-Khan’s memoir. The remaining parts of this paper answer the following questions through citing illustrative examples from her memoir:

How does Afzal-Khan's language challenge and deconstruct the existing man-made language structures?

What are the poststructuralist techniques employed by the author which highlight her stylistic innovation?

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on both schools of literary criticism, i.e. structuralist and poststructuralist, to argue and expound in what ways, Afzal-Khan transcends structuralist usages and approaches by deconstructing man-made language in both content and form. Firstly, the views of structuralist feminists such as Spender, Mills and Showalter are discussed to highlight that structuralism is inherent in man-made language, which makes it patriarchal, and reduces its capacity to represent female experiences due to rigidity in both form (structures) and content (themes). Secondly and more importantly, our analysis heavily draws on poststructuralist feminism by quoting French feminists such as Cixous and Irigaray. The ideas of these critics are employed to support the argument that Afzal-Khan's narrative style is poststructuralist: she introduces innovative stylistic and linguistic techniques which transcend the dominant patriarchal writing style, itself strongly structuralist and marked by conformity in language and style, as well as rigid demarcation between genres. Furthermore, the paper argues that Afzal-Khan's memoir not only linguistically transcends traditional structures of narrative, but also contests them thematically and stylistically by mixing genres and bringing in tabooed subjects. Thus, both the form and content of the text are brought into discussion to bring home the idea that, in addition to deviations in terms of sentence structures and genres, the overarching theme that her narrative captures, is that of rebellion against patriarchy.

Another framework from linguistics used for this paper is based on feminist stylistics (Mills, 1995), which highlight how feminist concerns are linguistically woven into the text. Mills holds the view that feminine texts should necessarily reflect female individuality by crafting a female-centric stylistic pattern. In "The Gendered Sentence" (1995), she supports her argument by incorporating the ideas of French critics such as Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, who introduced the concept of 'Écriture Feminine' and hold the viewpoint that feminine literature is quintessentially different from masculine narrative (Mills, 1995). Irigaray specifically discusses the multilayered nature of female texts (1985), whereas Cixous emphasizes the physical capacities of women which should be celebrated through writing about them (2013). Along with the French feminists, the ideas of Virginia Woolf are also expounded by Mills as the former feminist critic describes how male writers use more formal and impersonal expression in writing which differs from that of women (1992).

The argument in this paper is also supported by Spender's ideas on feminist linguistics as she holds the view that language itself is a man-made entity which reflects the

'myth' of male superiority (1980). She also illustrates that language is not neutral; rather it shapes reality with hues of phallogentrism. She also brings forth the notion that the idea of male-as-norm is propagated through man-made language. Such views are highly compatible with Afzal-Khan's narrative as she challenges male-centric trends throughout her memoir. Showalter's ideas, propounded in "Towards a Feminist Poetics", are also drawn to support our argument. Showalter suggests that women's writings should be based on their own experiences and emotions instead of adapting male models and theories (Showalter, 2012). Afzal-Khan also constructs her narrative along a similar idea by molding language according to her own requirements and refusing to adapt existing male-centric models.

Imagery of Blood and Red Color

Afzal-Khan's memoir can be analyzed in the light of Sara Mills' exploration of female "texts which are significantly different in terms of language from those of males" (1995, 65). Mills quotes Woolf in her article, stating that "for Woolf it is necessary that women craft their own type of language" which is the "female sentence" (1995, 66). The 'female sentence' in Afzal-Khan's memoir can be traced through the extensive use of metaphor and imagery associated with womanhood and her personal experiences, which give the text a distinct meaning and distinguished style. One of the extended metaphors in the book is 'blood' which is associated with the image of the color red, both having several personal, existential or socio-political connotations. For instance, she describes her childhood spent at the convent school describing the student's desire to be "beyond the red walls of the convent" (2010, 5). As the color red symbolizes passion, aggression or rage, it contrasts with the decorum and cloistered environment of the convent which suggests limit and balance. However, associating red color with the confinement of the convent also gives a sarcastic tone to the narrative as the author makes a tongue-in-cheek comment.

Similarly, blood, being red in color, is also used as a metaphor to connote passion and rage. For instance, the author's encounter with Bakri during a Spanish bullfight scene is filled by the zeal of both Bakri and the bull, controlled by a matador with the help of a red cloth during a bullfight. These underlying connotations are developed through the use of blood as a metaphor: "The bull writhes in misery, spurting blood and foam from its mouth, fixing her gaze on the lover's intent being" (2010, 98), which goes in accordance with Bakri's intense eyes on her "boring through [her] rib cage" (2010, 98). The passion of Bakri and the bull is juxtaposed on the basis of their similarity in losing themselves for the person in front of them: the matador in the case of the bull, and the author herself, in case of Bakri. Another similar connection between blood and the color red is drawn while describing her friend Madina's aggressive nature, suggested by mentioning the cherry trees at her house evoking color imagery, and describing her personality: "Madhu always did look as she had blood on her mind" (2010, 105).

The use of one image to generate various connotations marks Afzal-Khan's individualistic writing style. Carole Stone writes in the introduction of the book:

Blood as metaphor permeates Afzal-Khan's book. She learns about menstruation from Hajira, who is bleeding and in pain. This discovery is linked to other images of her country, notably the civil war that resulted in East Pakistan's becoming Bangladesh (2010, ii).

Analyzed from this stance, the image of blood serves as a symbol of both life and death. The reference to menstruation and "the soiling of [her] body that would lead to the pain of childbirth still to come" (2010, 31) suggests the phenomenon of procreation and extension of life. She describes her "fateful encounter with female blood, oozing out, uncontrollably, big dark clots plopping out of Hajira as she sits on [her] pink girlie pottie" (2010, 31). The given statement contains quite a concrete visual imagery of blood through the mention of big dark clots as well as auditory images in the form of plopping sound. The incorporation of this particular incident in the memoir can be analyzed in the light of the views of Cixous who strongly believes that women should write about their own selves and physical capacities to assert their individuality as they possess various bodily features that men lack. Cixous, in "The Laugh of Medusa" "stresses the multiple physical capacities of women: gestation, birth, lactation, etc." (Mills 1995, 58) in order to derive power from them. Afzal-Khan, in a similar way, uses this physical phenomenon to defy societal notions of shame attached to it and states: "Damn if I'll let the blood between my legs ever rob me of [my strength]" (2010, 33). The author, by highlighting such taboos associated with menstruation, attempts to rise above the socially dictated forms of narrative, and thereby, maintains her individuality by writing about female reproductive capacities. The construction of a female sentence is evident in this example as the author emphasizes her physical features with strong imagery and does not shy away from giving a visual description of a taboo topic.

This chapter about Hajira and the discovery of menstruation is paralleled with a political narrative about the 1971 war with East Pakistan which references bloodshed associated with death. Afzal-Khan parallels 'herstory' with the history of her nation, bringing together personal concerns and political ones by describing the separation of East Pakistan and the "role of Pakistani army in looting, killing, raping the other side of India" (2010, 10). Therefore, in the second chapter, the image of 'blood' carries contrasting meanings suggesting both life and death. In a similar way, her direction of Federico Garcia Lorca's play entitled *Blood Wedding* (2010, 112), later in her life, also illustrates an identical notion: 'blood' generally suggests death or bloodshed whereas 'wedding' symbolizes extension of life. The incorporation of this particular play extends the metaphor of blood in the memoir carrying multiple connotations. Therefore, reference to the oxymoronically titled play extends the blood metaphor with its conflicting connotation. Using one image for numerous

connotations, which include personal, political and social struggles, marks Afzal-Khan's peculiar style. It can be said that she "crafts her own type of language" (Mills 1995, 66) which defines her creative style.

Another interesting technique that is emblematic of Afzal-Khan's innovative style is the amalgamation of spirituality and sexuality through the metaphor of blood being a bridge between two ideas in the chapter titled "Blood and Girls". This chapter brings forth her encounter with Shia "crowds of mourners, men receiving the sacrament, letting the blood flow freely between their gashes" (2010, 82), which adds an element of spirituality through religious belief and the practice of purgation and mourning through physical pain. She writes in a verse "exotic blood of/ beautiful boys/ bursts through the/ tears of mothers" (2010, 83), where blood is a symbol of their devotion. Contrary to that is her description of the mourners' skin. with much emphasis on physicality: "young flesh, old flesh, hairy flesh, smooth flesh, taut flesh, sagging bellies, pounds and pounds of masculine meat so near and yet so far, I wasn't to put my hands down under the skin beaten raw and red" (2010, 93) Sexual connotations are implicit through strong masculine body imagery; the color red again connotes zest. Though blood and the color red are prominent in both her observations of the same incident, both are brought forth with contrasting implications. Similarly, the mention of 'blood' in her desire to "take [her] fingers and dip them deep inside the red-hot liquid and sign [her] name in blood Fawzia was here" (2010, 93) symbolizes the author's elation and enthusiasm with an aspect of life which she, being a woman, was not allowed to explore; she declares "before the blood burst forth/ splattering my white kameez/ and I thought/so this is ecstasy" (2010, 86). Thereby, the complex metaphor of blood again suggests defiance of social impositions that confined her as a woman through the powerful imagery of her white shirt being splattered with blood.

Multilayered and Poly-phonous Narrative

Double meaning is generated not only through the metaphor of blood but also by an unusual as well as creative technique of splitting ordinary words with a hyphen or using parenthesis to offer more than one connotation. This technique is reminiscent of Irigaray, who while elaborating on the female sentence, observes:

One must listen to her differently in order to hear an 'other meaning' which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized (Mills 1995, 69).

Afzal-Khan's practice of embracing words, yet avoiding their fixed, limited meaning, can be observed through this technique in which she interweaves a whole theme around one word.

For instance, she discusses the landscape of the USA by formulating the word “Land(e)scape” (2010, 124) which brings forth diasporic concerns. It highlights how as an expatriate her migration to the USA becomes an escape from her own land, termed as La(w)hore (2010, 136). Lahore, rewritten by Afzal-Khan as La(w)hore (2010, 136), is another significant and meaningful formulation by adding the Spanish article ‘la’ to whore which stands for ‘the’ in Spanish meaning ‘the whore’. It depicts her cynicism as it refers to a land which is associated with female subjugation, patriarchy, and grotesque memories of Islamization, authoritarian socio-political scenarios and the disastrous climaxes of her friends’ stories.

Ila(w)hore also satirizes the hollowness of the elite class of Pakistani society. Incorporating the term ‘whore’ in Lahore suggests her sarcastic tone, which contrasts with the title of the memoir, *Lahore with Love*, a phrase that generates positive connotations for the city; yet an in-depth reading of the text reveals the implicit irony. The term is also associated with her own identity as she writes about herself: “playing/ the same old whore I did back then/ La(w)hore hasn’t changed much ...” (2010, 136). On the one hand, the term draws on her connection with the city; on the other hand, it highlights her indifferent approach to its crises being showcased to a western audience for whom the book is ostensibly written. Thus highlighting her linguistic ingenuity, this example illustrates how she uses and manipulates language structures to bring home her individual point of view. This can be further strengthened by Stone’s statement that Afzal-Khan “educates us about the history of the country she left behind and so ardently loves and hates” (2010, iii). Therefore, it can be said that while satirizing the city of Lahore, Afzal-Khan does not shy away from satirizing her own self when she admits to “playing the whore” to the West.

In a similar vein, she breaks up the word ‘mother’ into “m/other” (2010, 90), which is highly symbolic of her relationship with her mother as well as her motherland. The word itself suggests affection and attachment, whereas incorporation of ‘other’ within the structure of the word *mother* signifies detachment and distance, symbolizing the othering of her mother, and by implication, her distant relationship with her motherland. This latter connotation of the word is complemented by the description of her mother in a poem when she sees her with a man “purring sleekly/ like a cat/ his whiskers dipped/ in mother’s milk” (2010, 91), and who later tells the author “you didn’t see anything/ there was nothing/ to see” (2010, 92). Therefore, her detachment from her mother is creatively depicted through the splitting of the word mother as m/other. In this example, the ‘other meaning’ is evident as she casts off one specific connotation of the word ‘mother’ to ‘avoid being fixed and immobilized’.

Similarly, Afzal-Khan uses the technique in formulating the word s/kin in “so this is what it means/ to be a stranger to my s/kin” (2010, 86). The verse represents her alienation from her local customs and practices as a foreigner, while at the same time, she also feels an

association with them during the Shia procession. Being ‘a stranger to my skin’ suggests oblivion regarding one’s own essence of self, and the lack of association with one’s own roots, native land and people as emblemized by ‘kin’ in skin. Thereby, the term carries in itself the entire dilemma of the identity crisis of an expatriate who is torn between her local and foreign identities. Such play upon words (and sounds) by splitting them phonologically and morphologically adds new dimensions of meanings to the text: an underlying, ironic, tongue-in-cheek twist to the narrative which runs throughout the text and marks her unique, alternative style. Table 1 provides a list of words that highlight her experimentation with language structures. This creative technique of splitting words lends an ambivalence and multilayered texture to the narrative.

Table 1: Experimentation with word structures

Land(e)scape	Landscape, escape
M/other	Mother, other
S(w)allow	Swallow, wallow
W(h)ole	Whole, hole
La(w)hore	Lahore, whore
S/kin	Skin, kin
B(h)ollywood	Bollywood, Hollywood

Irony and sarcasm can also be traced in Afzal-Khan’s multilayered sentences which carry more than one meaning underlying apparent description. Irigaray defines this kind of language as one “in which ‘she’ goes off in all directions and in which ‘he’ is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning” (Mills 1995, 69). One example of this style is the following two-line sentence which offers a contrast between confinement and desire, apparently describing a scene of the convent girls’ getting lollies from the ice-lolly man; the sentence is highly saturated with sexual undertones containing sarcasm toward the strict life of the convent. She writes: “hot, sweating bodies demanding relief in the shape of lollies which refuse to hold their firm cold shape, but instead, melt away before the imploring tongues of hysterical girls get in even their first virgin licks” (2010, 6). The emphasis on physicality and the use of connotative words such as ‘virgin licks’ give a symbolic quality to the description. Moreover, it can also be a clue to the idea of unnecessary strictness in the convent which triggers fascination for an outside world, according to the author. Similarly, she writes: “Oh how we learned to use those tongues to suck the sour-sour juices right out of the milky white flesh cradled inside the hard green skins umumumyummmeee ...” (2010, 6) which offers similar connotations in a style that is aptly representative of the natural stream of thought and emotions expressed as they are first felt. Therefore, ‘going off in all directions’, her narrative style in this example not only brings forth the description of lollies, convent life,

and the weather, but also suggests the sexual maturation of the young girls and their desires being symbolized through simple act of licking lollies.

Through such multiplicity of meanings in her narrative, Afzal-Khan also deconstructs male-centric language by sarcastically commenting on it as, according to Spender, the myth of male superiority is one that the “fabric of our social organization has been woven to support and substantiate it and nothing less than a restructuring of our beliefs and values is necessary” (1980, 90). Afzal-Khan carries out this restructuring by criticizing social narratives about women. For instance, Afzal-Khan discusses the concept of ‘Moddessa pads’ (2010, 30) highlighting its symbolic significance as a “subliminal message exhorting women to be models of modesty” (2010, 30). Behind the apparent description, the words are laden with sarcasm regarding the idea of menstruation as a taboo which a woman should be ashamed of, and which should be concealed from the individuals in her surroundings to be modest. It also suggests that women should be modest creatures, which is a social narrative in a patriarchal society directing females to be humble and down-to-earth. However, this implicit sarcasm can be regarded as one in which, as Irigaray states, ‘he is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning’. The suitability of such attributes for women is mocked through this sarcastic description as she deviates from the norm in her own manner, declaring: “I did not wish to belong to what they describe as ‘the norm’. I was the ‘norm’ at least in my society and culture” (2010, xvi), which is the social circle of the people of her own generation. This particular sentence also complements her writing style, through which she defies established styles of writing which, according to Spender, are ‘man-made’, and formulates her own distinguished linguistic standards to assert her individuality.

Spaces, Hyphens and Parenthesis in Language

Another defiance of the linguistic norm is Afzal-Khan’s formulation of words without spaces. This kind of linguistic innovation can be analyzed in light of Virginia Woolf’s notions of the female sentence described by Sara Mills: “she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it” and “the female sentence is of a more elastic fiber than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes” (1995, 66). This natural shape of her thought or emotions can be traced in the simplest phrases of the memoir such as “whoknowswhat” (2010, 16), bringing forth a very casual, conversational style of expression to offer the readers a real flavor of the speaking trends of her generation. It also adds a natural flow to the narrative, lacking a formal mode of expression generally associated with male writers according to Woolf, as Mills states: “Woolf seems to be arguing that males write in a more formal mode than women, using nominalizations rather than verbs or adjectives” (1995, 66). Afzal -Khan deliberately employs an informal style to establish her own linguistic standards. Similarly, another such phrase is used while describing herself as “an actorsingerpoetactivistmemoirist”

(2010, 163). This technique illustrates the idea propagated in this section as she raises existential questions about herself, wondering who she really is. The amalgamation of all these identities – as an actor, singer, poet, activist, memoirist – can be taken as various aspects of her feminine self, which is the larger, essential identity that she holds on to. Apparently, these roles mark a fragmentation of her personality, yet she combines them to continue to exist in the same self-proclaimed freedom which she once exercised with her girlfriends. Moreover, the combination of these five words mark the representation of her natural thoughts which she offers to her readers without ‘crushing or distorting’.

Afzal -Khan also gives graphic descriptions in the shape of her words which is specifically representative of her style. For instance, she describes the beautiful blend of colors of birds in a poem by literally blending the colors “greenbluered” and then their separation as “se pa ra ting” (2010, 134), which gives a visual and phonological description of the term by literally dividing or separating the syllables of the word. Therefore, a pictorial effect is added to complement the written idea. Such descriptions add elasticity to her narrative and make it ‘capable of stretching to the extreme’.

Table 2 provides a list of all the words which are combined by removing spaces between them to offer their true flavor:

Table 2: Deviance from space between words

whoknowswhat	Who knows what
actorsingerpoetactivistmemoirist	Actor singer poet activist memoirist
greenbluered	Green blue red
Ohmy	Oh my
Tighttighttight	Tight tight tight
Happysad	Happy sad
Festeringfestering	Festering festering
Sisterfriendsexysoulmate	Sister friend sexy soul mate
Eatingdrinking	Eating drinking
chadorbeardpassionall	Chador beard passion all

In addition to such phonological and graphic experimentation with words, extensive use of hyphenated words is another unusual stylistic technique to give her narrative a tinge of her real emotions. For instance, she describes Madina’s father as “a man with an uncommonly stubborn, don’t-give-a-shit-about-what-anyone-thinks streak” or a “khar-dimaghpathan” (2010, 109). The former adjective constituted by combining eight words gives a thorough image of the man’s personality, and Afzal -Khan’s description displays keen observation.

Similarly, she mockingly gives a local Urdu expression to a term she has coined herself as “Janat-ul-Amrika” (2010, 124). This phrase carries in itself a whole narrative of the *gora*-complex and xenocentrism prevalent in Pakistani society, whereby foreign culture is considered to be superior as compared to the local: native individuals generally aspire to be foreign residents or look up to those who have a foreign nationality. No matter what ‘vague shape’ her narrative takes, Afzal-Khan, through such hyphenated words, is able to maintain the ‘natural shape of her thought’.

Her extensive use of hyphenated words to generate different meanings is evident in the following list:

Table 3: Use of long hyphenated words

Don't-give-a-shit-about-what-anyone-thinks
Janat-ul-Amrika
Khar-dimagh
Swear-upon-god-and-hope-to-die
Not-too-subtle
Red-green-yellow
Oh-so-married
Wife-who-won't-give-him-any
Ever-so-saintly
Oh-so-dashing
Prejudiced-in-favor-of-self
She-who-must-be-obeyed
She-who-was-not-I

Another method of maintaining her individualistic style is the formation of lengthy sentences and parenthetical references used in between, to add personal comments, which are often loaded with sarcasm, to a descriptive chunk of the memoir. These parenthetical exclamations serve as ‘asides’, often giving the narrative a dramatic quality or personal commentary on a subjectively reflected incident. For instance, she writes a twelve-line sentence about the arts college with parenthetical exclamations in it: “The artsy fartsy faculty who supposedly threw lascivious pool parties (where?) ... and there introduced them to drunken orgies and other such shameful (*tobah tobah!*) yet obviously exciting (*tobah, tobah, perish the thought!*) behavioral phenomena utterly unknown and (virtually) unimaginable to the rest of ... us” (2010, 38). Thematically, this description, like many incidents of the

author's early life, not only gives an autobiographical account of her life but also records the ethos of a generation in a society which is not so liberal as the West, where liberalism is generally criticized, and which is a subject of critique throughout the memoir. However, stylistically, it marks her individual style of writing which again makes a social commentary on its prevalent practices. This style goes in accordance with the idea of the American feminist critic Mary Hiatt who, according to Mills, discusses the "frequency of the use of parenthetical statements ... which she assumes would be stereotypically more characteristic of female writing" (1995, 71). Afzal-Khan also celebrates her female writing style by using such statements which are quintessentially different from 'man-made language'.

Code-mixing of Urdu and Punjabi Words into English

Afzal-Khan, like many other postcolonial writers, appropriates language by incorporating Urdu words or Punjabi expressions into her writing. However, what marks her distinction is her bold treatment of such words and use of taboo language, such as expletives, which women writers do not usually incorporate in their writings, as well as the blend of all three expressions – English, Urdu, Punjabi – to offer the audience a true flavor of her life in Lahore among its native people. For instance, she mentions a few Urdu abuses prevalent in the local society which are aimed to disrespect women such as "*behen-chod, madar-chod – arrey, arrey – don't you have mothers and sisters, you fucking sons-of-bitches*" (2010, 81), and in the same paragraph, she paints a picture of a Shia procession showing reverence for their women saying: "*araam-say, bhai, yehhamaribehenainhain*" (2010, 82). Her incorporation of such expletives depicts a society in which language itself is emblematic of patriarchy, as Spender writes: "Language is not neutral. It is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas. It is itself a shaper of ideas, it is the programmer for mental activity" (1980, 94). Afzal-Khan's use of such linguistic expressions makes a tongue-in-cheek comment on social structures where respect for the female is not based on her own individuality; men are abused by disrespecting their women, not their selves, and the women are respected only by being associated with their men as they are considered as "*hamaribehnain*" (Afzal-Khan 2010, 82) or 'our sisters'.

Similarly, Urdu phrases are also used to incorporate the ethos of the society as she mentions an Indian song: "*churalyahaidilkojotumnain*" (2010, 123) to offer an insight into local trends and popular culture. In the light of the above illustrations of her linguistic ingenuity and subversion of patriarchal language structures, it can be argued that Afzal-Khan's writing style –in keeping with the thematic concerns of her memoir—is simultaneously emblematic of both her feminine self as well as her feminist-activist identity (ies), as it marks her own distinct feminine and feminists' linguistic expression. It fulfills the task of female writing which, according to Showalter, should be "to find a new language, a new way of reading that can integrate our intelligence and our experience, our reason and our suffering, our skepticism and our vision" (Showalter 2012, 7).

The following list of Urdu words displays her postcolonial feminist appropriation of language:

Table 4: Code-mixing

Fuhush	Risqué
Shareef	Noble
Aurbhidukhhainzamanaemeinmuhabbatkesiva	There are sorrows other than heartache in the world
Khatta-khatta	Sour
Aram se, bhai	Gently, brother
Ye humaraibehenainhain	These are our sisters
Churaliyahaidilkojotumnain	Since you have stolen my heart
Tandoori	Oven-cooked
Bas abjao	Just go now
Jora	Dress
Tumachayaadmi ho	You are a gentleman
Na roZainab, naro	Don't cry Zainab, don't cry
Bajjikigalaankardey ho	What are you talking about big sister
Kisamjhiyaaimeinoo?	Who do you think I am?
Desi	Local
Amriki	American
Chipkalis	Lizards

Mixing Genres

Feminist critics also trace the history of women's writings highlighting the fact that female writers preferred to write prose which was considered to be the "least concentrated form of art" (Woolf 1992, 49). Virginia Woolf uses the example of classical female writers, namely, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, and Emily Bronte in her essay entitled "Women and Fiction" to emphasize that "a woman was trained to use her mind in observation and upon the analysis of character. She was trained to be a novelist and not to be a poet" (1992, 49). This is so because poetry was considered a more complex form of literature often associated with male authors. Afzal-Khan, being a postmodern feminist writer, proves her ingenuity by mixing various genres and structures in her memoir. Her writing contains an amalgamation of poetry, prose, and drama. Such complex expression raises her above existing stylistic trends

and defies the notion of women being producers of less complex and less creative forms of art. For instance, she interweaves various poems in her narrative which highlight her distinctive style. One such example is given below:

But remember
Dear departed
There always shall be
That question to consider
When our souls clash again

What shall we both do
Having written our ghazals
Always already
So hopeless, so silly
Imagining Forever
Being Mad about Me (2010, 99)

The poetic chunks often complement the episode being narrated or bring forth the author's intense emotions while maintaining the rhythm of the narrative. Similarly, in the chapter titled "Mad/Medea", some incidents are narrated in dialogue form. One such example is given below:

FAWZIA: What's the matter with you has the cat got your tongue?

BAKRI: I wish the earth would/ s(w)allow me (w)Hole/ chadorbeardpassionall.

FAWZIA: Arreyyaar what is this/ love/ shove/ ishq/ vishq/ get a-hold getagrip/ this love-in-cholera isn't/ all there is. (2010, 123)

The narration in dialogue form disrupts the smooth order of the story and requires analytical effort on the part of reader to comprehend the narrative. It gives a dramatic form to the episode where the characters are directly playing their roles in front of the reader and are not described through the author's subjective lens.

The technique of blending different genres is used, not only through the incorporation of poetry and prose, but also poetic prose which consists of various poetic devices and adds to the overall rhythmic flow of the narration. For instance, she writes: "I think perhaps Madina will always be Viola in my mind, an image of fresh-faced violence, an innocently masked fury lurking not too far from the surface, ready to unleash a volley of abuse" (2010, 107). This sentence carries alliterative patterns through the extensive use of 'f' sound in *fresh, faced, fury, far* and *from*; similarly, the 'v' sound is repeated thrice in this sentence in *Viola, violence* and *volley*; and both 'f' and 'v' serve as fricative sounds giving the prose a poetic touch. This kind of writing style introduced by using different linguistic

methods is emblematic of Afzal-Khan's literary individuality as she, in Irigaray's words, "goes off in all directions" (Mills 1995, 69), stretching the possibilities of language and style.

Summing Up

We have analyzed Afzal-Khan's memoir *LWL* through the lens of feminist linguistic criticism. After highlighting her experimentation with language structures at graphic, phonological, syntactic and stylistic levels, we have argued that she introduces a poststructuralist writing style by challenging conventional English writing. By bringing forth postmodern feminist issues in a phallogocentric society, Afzal-Khan's narrative parallels personal and socio-political concerns by often adopting a sarcastic tone for the confining bounds of social impositions for a woman. Her writing rebels against the stereotypical notions about women formed by society, and she maintains this rebellion at both the thematic and stylistic levels in her narrative. Hence, our research shows her distinct linguistic style as a postcolonial feminist, which complements the thematic concerns of her book, and makes it an important addition to the repertoire of poststructuralist feminist discourse. Through our analysis, we hope to have illustrated that Afzal-Khan not only contests existing patriarchal structures but also comes up with an alternative style of feminist writing which falls under the category of 'écriture féminine' or the 'female sentence'.

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