



The Impure Woman: A Psychodynamic Exploration of Female Subjectivity in Kishwar Naheed's A Bad Woman's Story and Hélène Cixous' The Laugh of the Medusa

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ABSTRACT

This research provides a psychodynamic exploration of female subjectivity in Kishwar Naheed's *Buri Aurat ki katha* (2009) translated by Durdana Soomro's *A Bad Woman's Story* (2010) and Hélène Cixous' *"The Laugh of the Medusa"* (2009) within the framework of Freud's psychodynamic theory. The psychodynamic perspective emphasizes the impact of childhood experiences on adult personality, highlighting unconscious psychological processes like wishes and fears. The study aims to unravel the intricate psychological shifts and female subjectivity depicted in the literary works, examining how the authors employ narrative strategies to challenge traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Drawing on Freud's psychodynamic theory, the research seeks to provide a new perspective on the psychological dimensions of the characters and themes in these literary works, shedding light on the complexities of female identity and empowerment. By analyzing the psychological underpinnings of the characters and their interactions, the article aims to offer insights into how the authors navigate the complexities of female subjectivity and the impact of societal norms on individual psychology. Ultimately, this inquiry contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychodynamic nature of the female characters in *A Bad Woman's Story* and *The Laugh of the Medusa*, offering fresh insights into the psychological complexities of female subjectivity within the context of postmodern literature.



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INTRODUCTION

In the realm of literature and feminist discourse, the exploration of female subjectivity has been a central theme, delving into the complexities of women's experiences, desires, and societal expectations. This research embarks on a psychodynamic analysis of female subjectivity in the works of two distinguished writers, Kishwar Naheed's 'A Bad Woman's Story' and Hélène Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa'. Understanding the intricacies of female subjectivity holds profound significance in unravelling the layers of women's experiences, providing insights into the societal constructions that shape and constrain their identities.

By employing a psychodynamic lens, this study aims to decipher the subconscious forces at play, offering a nuanced perspective on the impure woman trope within literature. Kishwar Naheed's 'A Bad Woman's Story' and Hélène Cixous's 'The Laugh of the Medusa' stand as seminal works in feminist literature, each contributing a unique narrative on female subjectivity. Naheed's exploration of cultural constraints and Cixous' celebration of women's writings through *écriture féminine* provide rich material for a psychodynamic examination of the impure woman archetype. This research seeks to unravel the psychological dimensions embedded in these literary creations, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between societal expectations and individual desires.

Kishwar Naheed, a Pakistani feminist author, poet and activist, actively participated in protests against state-imposed crimes against women. She wrote about the rigid constraints of a political system and aimed to redefine women's status through her writings, presenting women as liberators and trespassing marginality boundaries (Masood, 2014). Kishwar Naheed, a famed Pakistani writer, is a staunch feminist who raises her voice against the oppression of females living in a patriarchal society. Both in her memoir *A Bad Woman's Story* and her poems, Naheed picturesquely puts forth such females who strive to attain their individuality by confronting their belittling at the hands of chauvinistic male members of society. A society that disregards women's rights under the Qur'an and exhibits undignified behavior towards them is an example of a "traditional tribal structure" (Babur, 2007).

Naheed, through her female characters, highlights not only the prejudice with which women are treated in Pakistan but also the ability of women to rise from their submissive positions. Fahmida Riaz, a feminist poet and contemporary of Naheed, acknowledges that Naheed's literary representation of women "explored [the] themes related to women that were not touched by poets, such as physical violence meted out to women, oppression under the guise of protecting women and female circumcision (Riaz, 2012).

Naheed signifies that women need to stand up for themselves if they are to make their mark in the progressive world because no one is going to help them, and the authoritative males will continuously try to maintain their power over them. Male chauvinists argue that Islam grants women more rights than any other religion, despite their religious beliefs; they continue to face oppression, violence, and injustice. "—toward all downtrodden and oppressed classes of people, appears to be weighted in many ways in favor of women, many of its women-related teachings have been used in patriarchal Muslim societies against, rather than for, women" (Hassan, 2000).

Sigmund Freud's psychodynamic theory is a comprehensive framework that explains psychological forces shaping human behavior, thoughts, and emotions, encompassing conscious, preconscious, unconscious, id, ego, and superego. Freud proposed that personality develops through psychosexual stages, defence mechanisms, dreams, the Oedipus complex, and free association (Freud, 1920). He believed that successful navigation of these stages is crucial for healthy personality development. However, Freud's theory has faced criticism and evolution over time, with contemporary approaches often incorporating modifications and revisions to his original concepts. The practice's theory is rooted in early childhood influences on personality, trauma repression, and instinctual drives towards sex and aggression as survival modes. (Freud & Strachey, 1989).

On the other hand, "The Laugh of the Medusa" by Hélène Cixous is a feminist text advocating for women to reclaim their voices and embrace their unique experiences: "Woman must write her self" (2009, 2). It promotes "*écriture féminine*," a form of writing

that transcends traditional male-dominated structures. Cixous encourages women to write freely, without conforming to literary conventions, and celebrate their bodies, desires, and creativity, defying societal constraints and promoting a radical transformation in women's self-perception.

“with many of her writings, Cixous’s ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ revises sexual differences between men and women from past to present, anticipating a future radical change in the perception of this notion which would only take shape if woman takes back a body that is hers, from the masculine repressing language, in order to employ it as a cause and effect of a new genre of writing which Cixous introduces as the feminine writing. (Cixous 2010)

This research explores the psychological changes women undergo when confronting marginalization in a patriarchal society, using the image of women from Hélène Cixous's essay "The Laugh of Medusa." It aims to examine the infrastructure of a patriarchal society and explore how different women react differently in different cultures to their belittling at the hands of misogynistic males.

This research explores the intricate realms of female subjectivity in Kishwar Naheed’s "A Bad Woman’s Story" and Hélène Cixous’ "The Laugh of the Medusa." The study employs Freud's psychodynamic theory as a critical framework to examine the psychological landscapes portrayed by these esteemed writers. Through a nuanced analysis of narrative strategies, characters, and themes, the research unravels the complexities surrounding female identity and empowerment within the context of postmodern literature. The application of the psychodynamic lens to characters' interactions and societal norms provides new insights into the profound psychological dimensions of female subjectivity, contributing to a deeper understanding of the inherent psychodynamic nature present in these literary works. The article draws on various sources, including academic journals and research papers, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tracing the change which occurred in the behavior and temperament of women in the twentieth century, this research highlights how the concept of feminism gradually developed and became more perceptive of the male-dominated society. Women steadily kept on gaining confidence and by the end of the twentieth century became brave enough to defy the existing order of patriarchy. They started raising their voice against marginalization and delved deeper into the struggle of building their subjective identities. It was at this time when females started raising their voices that French feminists like Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva appeared in the catalogues of Feminist discourse. Being prominent members of the Third Wave of Feminism, they did not negate the earlier two waves; rather they extended the concept of Feminism according to their own sensibilities.

It is pertinent to mention that Hélène Cixous, an established French feminist, in her essay “The Laugh of Medusa” not only depicts the ruthless and insensitive behavior of bigoted males but also asserts the fact that women need to stand up for themselves in order to raise their status in a patriarchal society, since no one is going to do that for them. Cixous describes the attitude of self-centered males as that of those who believe that everything should be according to their ideology. Everything for them revolves around the superiority of their genitals over that of women, which eventually leads those males to subjugate women. Hence, Cixous not only highlights the “parental-conjugal” subjugation of women living in a

patriarchal society but also signifies how men believe that their continent is “dark” (Cixous 876).

Cixous urges women to write about themselves, their body and their struggles. She illustrates that women need to write, “Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you ...” (Cixous 877) According to Cixous, women are much more unique than men and are much more capable than the brutal and chauvinistic males, because they have a little goodness of a mother in them all the time. They have something, which the males lack i.e. the good mother’s milk, which she describes as the “white ink” (Cixous 881). Lastly, Cixous puts forth in her essay the idea of a “New Woman” (Cixous 878).

According to Cixous, the woman who confronts patriarchy head-on is the “New Woman” of the society; the woman who has the capability to fight against her subjugation by writing about it. Therefore, in this research, Hélène Cixous’ feminist discourse as described in her essay “The Laugh of Medusa” provides comparative analyses to investigate Kishwar Naheed’s memoir through the lens of the psychodynamics theory of Sigmund Freud.

In earlier studies Joanne Cordóóne and Stine Jørgensen Bjarner, two critics have also taken Cixous’ article “The Laugh of Medusa” as a framework to analyze their respective works. However, both critics left behind certain loopholes while exploring Cixous’ feminist concepts. Cordóóne in her study titled “Speaking up for Catherine Moreland Cixous and the Feminist Heroine” (2011) failed to discuss Cixous’ idea of the “Dark Continent” (Cixous 878), an idea that the researcher pledges to discuss.

Similarly, Stine Jørgensen Bjarner in his study titled “Narrative Entrapments in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee: A Postmodern Feminist Reading of his Three Female Narrating Personas” (2006) despite talking about women’s ability to use their language failed to highlight women’s subjugation something which the researcher aims to do.

Similarly, another critic Marjean D. Purinton in his article ““The Laugh of Medusa” and “Laughing Anne”: A Feminist Reading of Joseph Conrad’s Play” (2002) takes Cixous’ article “The Laugh of Medusa” as a theoretical framework to analyze Joseph Conrad’s play “Laughing Anne.” Purinton in this article minutely highlights how the constant laughter that the female protagonist of Conrad’s play indulges in is a strategy that she employs in order to disrupt the social order of the society, where she is treated abhorrently by the chauvinistic males, who believe that they are of the superior sex.

Purinton further signifies the idea of Cixous’ “Dark Continent” by stating that Anne’s laughter helps her reject the dark place that is assigned to her by the sadistic male members of the patriarchal society. However, Purinton despite highlighting the struggle that Anne indulges in order to build her subjective identity fails to highlight how she had been parentally and conjugally subjugated in the society, something which the researcher pledges to do in his research. Purinton’s study is based on how laughter as a strategy can be used by women to dismantle patriarchy. As he aptly remarks regarding Anne’s laughter:

“Anne’s laughter constitutes what Cixous identifies as a “place other than silence (251); signifying with her body, Anne physically materializes what she is performing in the waves and outbursts of laughing. As we have seen, Anne’s laughter signals powerful disruptions in a worldview of masculine rationality articulated in symbolic language.” (Purinton 81)

Another critic who minutely talks about the concept of women retaliating against male power and creating their own identity is Gillian M.E. Alban. Alban in his study titled “Medusa as Female Eye or Icon in Atwood, Murdoch, Carter, and Plath” (2013) uses Cixous’ article “The Laugh of Medusa” as a reference point to state that women have now risen up against their subjugation and they are no longer going to remain silenced. They are just like Medusa in the sense that they evoke a feeling of fear in their male counterparts because they are no longer the submissive beings that misogynistic males trained to follow their orders: “Medusa’s strength is projected through her eyes, tongue, and lips, whether buccal or vaginal. Instead of excised tongue or clitoris, women are now using their plural tongues ... refusing to be silenced” (Alban 167).

Alban, however, despite significantly portraying the steps that women take in order to assert their subjectivity over the male members of the society fails to highlight how it was their parental conjugal subjugation and their confinement in the Dark Continent that forced them to raise their voice. This idea of subjugation leading to resistance is the one that the researcher intends to explore in his research, an idea that has not earlier been discussed in the context of Kishwar Naheed’s memoir *A Bad Woman’s Story*.

An article titled “Kishwar Naheed and Religious Nationalism in Pakistan” (2019) by Samah Mohamed Ibrahim Awad, explores religious nationalism in Pakistan, highlighting its role in independence and nation-state development. It examines the gendered impact of this twin force on Pakistani women, particularly through the control of their bodies, roles, and sexuality, which transforms personal choices into national concerns.

Aisha Haleem in the article “Traces of Standpoint Theory in Select Poems of Kishwar Naheed” (2023) that South Asian literature, particularly by Pakistani-Urdu poet Kishwar Naheed, has been instrumental in promoting feminism in the region. Naheed’s work addresses issues of female subjugation and deprivation, highlighting the feminist Standpoint theory and Marxist theory’s emphasis on experiences. Naheed’s “transgression” poetry challenges chauvinist revivals, rejecting the limitations of false spirituality and illustrating the oppressed yet rebellious feminine personality.

In the article “Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies the Impure Woman (Marginality and Detachment in the Poetry of Kishwar Naheed)” (2014), Arshad Masood Hashmi describes about Pakistan has seen a significant marginalization of women over the past five decades, often due to Sharia laws. Non-conformist feminist poet Kishwar Naheed, a prominent activist, actively participated in agitations against state-dictated atrocities targeting women. Her poetry challenged the patriarchal order and portrayed women as liberators, trespassing boundaries and soaring to new heights. This paper questions the validity of laws and social practices that marginalize and imprison women, highlighting how Naheed’s and Cixous’ writings contributed to their social rebirth.

Psychodynamics is rooted in Freud, and its significance in understanding characters’ motivations, conflicts, and complexities. It then critically examines key Freudian concepts, such as the structural model of the mind, the id, ego, superego, and psychosexual stages of development, and their application to the portrayal of female characters in the essay “The Laugh of Medusa” by Helene Cixous and the novel of “A Story of Bad Woman” by Kishwar Naheed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore female subjectivity in Kishwar Naheed's 'A Bad Woman's Story' and Hélène Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa'. Primary data will be extracted from literary texts, while secondary data will be sourced from existing critiques and psychoanalytic analyses of Sigmund Freud. Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring themes related to female subjectivity and psychodynamic elements, guided by Freudian concepts like the id, ego, superego, and psychosexual development. The research framework will be grounded in Freud's psychodynamic theories, focusing on the structural model of the mind and psychosexual stages of development. A comparative analysis will be used to draw parallels and distinctions in the portrayal of female subjectivity. Ethical considerations will be followed, and reflexivity will be maintained. Findings will be validated through peer review and discussion within scholarly communities.

Discussion and Analysis

The concept of the 'impure woman' is a recurring theme in the literary works of Kishwar Naheed and Hélène Cixous. The term 'impure woman' refers to the marginalization and detachment experienced by women in patriarchal societies. "We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen ... we are black and we are beautiful" (Cixous 878). This quote encapsulates the essence of this research, in which the researcher aims to analyze the evolution of subjugated and repressed women. Females living in a male-dominated society are constantly looked down upon and are made to believe that they are nothing more than the dirt on which the superior males can step.

However, it is a noteworthy fact that women, after constantly facing subjugation in their lives, start raising their voices to make an identity of themselves and to defy the established order of patriarchy. Such women are termed the "New Women" of the society, and the researcher in this research intends to highlight the characteristics of such women: "It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her-by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, to be more than herself." (Ibid)

Unconscious desires refer to the hidden, often unacknowledged, psychological impulses, wishes, and fantasies that shape an individual's thoughts and actions. These desires, rooted in the subconscious, may contrast or align with societal expectations, creating a complex interplay between inner motivations and external norms. Societal expectations, on the other hand, encompass the cultural, social, and gender norms that dictate acceptable behaviours and roles within a given community (Freud, 1920). These expectations are often deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness and influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. In the exploration of female subjectivity, societal expectations can manifest as prescribed gender roles, cultural norms, and stereotypes that impact women's self-perception and behavior (Haleem, 2023). In the chosen works, the impure woman archetype serves as a lens to examine how unconscious desires clash with or conform to societal expectations.

Naheed's narrative may delve into the suppressed desires of a woman challenging cultural norms, while Cixous' work celebrates the liberation of women's desires through writing. The psychodynamic approach applied in this research aims to unveil the subconscious motivations behind the impure woman trope, exploring how these desires either resist or succumb to societal expectations. Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to a

deeper understanding of female subjectivity in literature, unravelling the intricate dynamics between unconscious desires and societal pressures portrayed in the selected literary works.

Naheed's narrative may be examined through the lens of suppressed desires challenging societal norms. Applying Freud's stages of psychosexual development allows an exploration of how the (impure woman's) character reflects unresolved conflicts and desires rooted in early experiences, the finding of an object is, in fact, a refinding of it" ("Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", 1905). Analyzing the impact of cultural and societal expectations on female characters provides insights into the conflicts between internal desires and external norms. Women, "their roles and above all their control, are at the heart of the fundamentalist agenda"; women's conformity to the "strict confines of womanhood" that are set by the nation's religious codes helps maintain and reproduce the "fundamentalist version of society" (Saghal, 2000).

Kishwar Naheed in her memoir "A Bad Woman's Story" highlights a sort of parental subjugation. The memoir presents before the readers a society, in which not only parents dictate the way women dress but also women are not even allowed to make independent decisions. For instance, while describing her childhood in the memoir, Naheed signifies that as a child she was always supposed to cover her head and was not even allowed to talk to her male cousins, "I was seven – made to wear a burqa – I would keep stumbling; 1 – stopped from meeting all male cousins – ordered to cover my chest with the dupatta ..." (Naheed 105)

The veil emerges as a potent symbol, embodying Freudian notions of repression. Naheed utilizes the veil as a recurrent motif, suggesting it conceals more than just the physical form. Freud's theory of the unconscious mind and the id finds resonance here, interpreting the veil as a symbolic manifestation of suppressed desires: "that is connected with the difference between the two sexes; but this you may find too general and too colorless" (Freud, 1920). The colours associated with the protagonist's attire and surroundings in Naheed's work offer a layer of symbolic representation. Applying Freud's theory of colour symbolism allows for a nuanced exploration of the protagonist's emotional and psychological states, revealing the unconscious facets of her psyche.

Moving to Hélène Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa," dream sequences become pivotal elements representing unconscious desires. Freud's assertion that dreams are the 'royal road' to the unconscious takes centre stage, providing a lens to analyze the protagonist's repressed desires (Sibi, 2020). The dreams in Cixous' narrative serve as manifestations of the unconscious, offering glimpses into the depths of the impure woman's psyche. The exploration of dream sequences aligns with Freudian principles, contributing to the broader understanding of female subjectivity (Freud, 1920).

In both narratives Naheed's and Cixous', characters serve as psychodynamic entities, embodying various facets of the protagonists' unconscious minds. Naheed's characters interact dynamically, reflecting the complexities within the protagonist's psyche. Freudian analysis allows for the interpretation of these characters as representations of different aspects of the unconscious, portraying inner conflicts and desires: "Our hysterical patients suffer from reminiscences. Their symptoms are the remnants and the memory symbols of certain (traumatic) experiences." ("The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis," 1909). However, in "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous advocates for the embrace of female sexuality, challenging societal norms. Freudian insights into sexual repression enrich the analysis, unveiling the liberation of repressed desires in Cixous' narrative. A comparative

approach to the symbolic representations in Naheed's and Cixous' works reveals both common themes and unique expressions. The Freudian psychodynamic lens becomes a powerful tool for unravelling the impure woman's psyche, contributing to a nuanced understanding of suppressed desires, challenges to societal norms, and the broader discourse on female subjectivity.

According to Cixous, a woman's subjugation starts right from the home where she takes birth, i.e., her subjugation is not only conjugal but also parental. The parents of a woman child are bound by the established norms of society that make sure that a woman never steps out of the line that has been drawn by the self-obsessed males. Parents being the representatives of their houses in the society exert their force to subjugate their female children to make sure that their characters are established in a manner that the society desires (Cixous 832).

Naheed strongly criticizes Pakistani society for its stereotypical beliefs about women's education. One such notion is that educated females become head-strong and as a result, they do not follow the rules and regulations approved by patriarchal society and try to go beyond the boundaries set by their brothers and fathers. Hence, in another sort of parental subjugation, the parents being the custodians of their girls' honor before their marriage stop them from education, as it is highlighted in the memoir: "With regard to the education of girls it was the same deference to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: 'Girls should only be taught to read the Qur'an by sight [without comprehension] – and Behishti Zavar'" (Naheed 8).

Cixous further highlights that the subjugation that women encounter in their lives is not only parental but also conjugal. The spouses of females find their subjugated condition quite fascinating. For them, women are of the inferior sex and do not deserve the same respect as they do. Thinking of themselves as the rightful custodians of a woman's honor, such men constantly humiliate and degrade their wives to establish their authority over them. In such a society rules change when applied to women, while they are accepted when applied to men. As Naheed aptly remarks regarding such a biased infrastructure of patriarchal society: "A man may strike a woman to his heart's content but if the wife raises her hand in retaliation this is an insult to his manhood and is regarded as exceeding the limits for the wife." (Naheed 104)

Furthermore, Naheed in her memoir highlights the idea of how even the political domain is used to constraint women as she emphasizes how during Zia-ul-Haq's regime women were exploited by their husbands in the name of Hudood Ordinance: "During the 14 years from 1979 to 1993, husbands sent their wives to jail on allegations of Zina, so they could marry a second time without hindrance" (Naheed 33). Hence, all the above-mentioned incidents that Naheed highlights in her memoir that how women are exploited at the hands of both their fathers and their husbands. This is one of the reasons she expressed her willingness to take steps out of the house to raise voices for their rights and put questions on their existence (Haleem, 2023).

The idea of the 'Dark Continent' as explored by Hélène Cixous in "The Laugh of Medusa" can also be identified in Kishwar Naheed's memoir under discussion. Constantly deeming women to be selfish and insignificant, the male members of the society believe that their continent is dark, "they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black..." (Cixous 877). Male members treat women in the same way in which the white Europeans treated African slaves. Just like Africans were treated as objects that white people could use as they pleased, the prejudiced males of the society similarly treated women. They

become mere objects for men, as Naheed poignantly highlights this objectification of women: “the girl who was ‘it’” (Naheed 31).

Furthermore, for men, women’s continent is as dark as the color black because, for men, women belong to an unknown territory. Males, who have been unable to dissect the vast psyche of women, claim that their continent is dark and try to confine it by the physical force that they exert. The concept of *purdah* that Naheed describes in this memoir is a way in which men try to confine women in the Dark Continent. Men do not let their women leave the house without covering themselves, confining them to their Dark Continent:

“As far as *purdah* was concerned there wasn’t much difference between Hindu and Muslim households. All the Hindu women would go out wrapped in thick *chaddors* ... white sheets would be tied around *tongas* and this is how Muslim and Hindu women would go out.” (Naheed 11)

“White sheets” here symbolically represent the confinement of women in their Dark Continent. According to Cixous, the male members of society can confine women to only some extent because one day the female community will rise and mark its distinct self on the history of the world. They will establish their identities as distinct from the prejudiced male members of society, who never want to walk side by side with women, who are also living beings with emotions and sentiments. Coming out of their dark confines, the courageous women of the society subsequently confront those male members of the society who want to confine them to their houses.

Such women have left behind the Dark Continent and have started raising their voices to explore all those possibilities of life that had been denied to them by the narrow-minded males. According to Cixous, such New Women think about their own selves and write about their own selves. They do not let anyone hold them back. Cixous, in her article “The Laugh of Medusa”, encourages such courageous women to write i.e. she does not want them to lose their hope, rather she wants such fearless women to become the hope of other females as well: “Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it.” (Cixous 876)

The above-mentioned idea of Cixous can be significantly highlighted in Kishwar Naheed’s memoir “A Bad Woman’s Story,” in which Naheed paints the picture of a strong woman who when confronted with patriarchy and subjugation (“parental-conjugal” subjugation), raises her voice. She questions the authority of male members of the society and by writing, marks her existence in the book. She writes her own story (her story), taking away from men the ability to remove them from the book.

In this context, this complete memoir marks the struggle that a woman goes through to make her distinct identity flourish. Naheed’s character poignantly symbolizes all those women who have the courage to fight patriarchy and who take a step forward in marking women’s individuality by writing about their experiences. As Kishwar Naheed in this memoir aptly remarks regarding her own writing and how it helped her against all the hatred that is doled out to women in a patriarchal society:

“My writing offered a shield in front of all these hatreds. My pen made a dam to hold back the flood. A house came up inside the house. My own house, the house of dialogue between me and my- self, in which pen and paper became my friends to console me and make me smile.” (Naheed 101)

This quote poignantly signifies how Naheed used writing to create her individuality and succeeded in not only dismantling patriarchy but also in writing the story of all the repressed women of Pakistan. As Huzaifa Pandit in her research titled “A Feminist Reading of Selected Poems of Kishwar Naheed” highlights how Naheed’s writing is only associated with women and their history: “Her work is rooted in the experience of subcontinent feminine – its issues, challenges and concerns ...” (Pandit 107).

This milk of women is termed by Cixous as the white ink which symbolizes both women’s uniqueness and their generosity. This generosity of women makes them more compassionate as compared to men and makes their writing, a writing of flesh and blood, as is quite obvious from the writing of Kishwar Naheed. It is her generosity that Naheed uses her ability to write as a platform to provide comfort to all the women who encounter abuse at the hands of males. For them, her writing is a landmark because her writing highlights their issues and is different from the “marked writing” (Cixous 879) of men whose writing according to Cixous always revolves around the superiority of their genitals.

Cixous states that men also use writing to repress women, “this is a locus where the repression of women is perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously ...” (Cixous 879). By writing about women and be representing their stories, Naheed breaks this locus through her writing. In terms of Cixous, such women are “bisexual” because their writing incorporates the features of both masculine and feminine writing. In this sense, Kishwar Naheed proves to be a bisexual writer also because in her memoir she highlights the mentality of males and also gives voice to the struggle of females; she endeavored to liberate womanhood from the pervasive cycle of deceiving darkness and illiteracy (Naheed 55).

Hélène Cixous lastly, connects all these ideas into the idea of a “New Woman” (Cixous 878). According to Cixous, the New Woman of the society is the one who comprises all the attributes of a woman discussed above. She is the one who is not afraid of the male community. She is the one who raises her voice for herself and ‘writes’ to mark her identity in a world dominated by misogynistic males, and that is exactly what Naheed desires to be in her book “A Bad Woman’s Story”. Lastly, she is the one who gains control of her choices. Kishwar Naheed, the narrator of the story falls in the category of being called the New Woman of the society. She makes her own choices in her life and rises above masculinity by writing about herself and about other women. Kishwar Naheed in her interview fittingly gives voice to this idea of her being the New Woman of society in the following words:

“It is only us – the poets and writers of Pakistan – who have Never let down the oppressed and the condemned in our society. We have kept alive the struggle for individual liberties and Realization of human rights of common people.” (Khalique, Herald, 2017)

Medusa is considered to be a Monster in Greek Mythology. In the beginning years of her life, Medusa was a maiden, devoted to a life of celibacy. However, she forgot her celibatic lifestyle when she fell in love with Poseidon. She married him by breaking her vows of celibacy and was thus punished by Greek Gods. Her hair was converted into snakes and her gaze turned people into stone. In Greek Mythology, she is always mentioned with a tone of disgust. Cixous in this article, however, analyzes Medusa’s character from a different perspective.

Just like Medusa, who is observed with disgust, the general community of females is also looked down upon with disgust. However, Medusa when faced with such a confrontation laughs. “The laugh of Medusa” when analyzed from the perspective of the general female

community becomes a laugh of triumph. Female members of the society, who are always subjugated by the male members, enjoy the last laughter as their repression instead of making them meek makes them strong enough to rebel against the chauvinistic males.

Applying Freudian Psychodynamic theory to these works provides insightful implications for understanding female subjectivity. Naheed's "A Bad Woman Story" allows for an exploration of the psychological turmoil within the protagonist, shedding light on the impact of cultural constraints on female subjectivity. The intersectionality of cultural and gendered experiences becomes evident, emphasizing the need to consider both dimensions in understanding female subjectivity. On the other hand, Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa' aligns with Freud's theories in unraveling the process of liberating repressed desires. The psychodynamic lens aids in exploring the collective unconscious shared by women, contributing to the construction of a unified feminine identity.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the flaws in patriarchal structures, revealing the stark contrast in privileges between genders. It highlights how patriarchy strips females of subjectivity and confines them to predefined roles. However, it also highlights a transformative narrative in the contemporary social thought represented by Kishwar and Cixous's in their writings, where women are increasingly challenging patriarchal norms and rewriting their stories through self-expression. Particularly, Kishwar Naheed's journey exemplifies the transformative power of writing, leading to acceptance and respect for women.

This psychodynamic exploration of women subjectivity in Kishwar Naheed's 'A Bad Woman's Story' and Hélène Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa' uses Freud's psychodynamic theory as a lens. The narratives of these women defy societal norms and reveal suppressed desires, conflicts, and complexities within the female psyche as expressed in the theory of psychodynamics by Sigmund Freud. Naheed's 'A Bad Woman's Story' exemplifies the transformative power of self-expression, while Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa' encourages women to inscribe their stories with their unique experiences, resonating with Freud's emphasis on the subconscious breaking free in postmodern era.

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