

**RE-WRITING WOMEN CHARACTERS: AN INTERTEXTUAL
STUDY OF SELECT LITERARY TEXTS**

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CONCLUSION

This section attempts to sum up the observations, ascertainment, and investigations of the previous chapters of the present project which is focussed on the intertextual study of the select literary texts based on the re-invention and re-writing of woman characters portrayed in them. Feminist theory in collaboration with the theory of intertextuality is the axis in the project around which the study is conducted. The research project aspires to analyse how the feminist writers by their innovative and creative approach with the assistance of dynamic aspects of intertextuality revolutionise and re-frame the women characters to subvert the hegemonical discourses perpetuated by the patriarchal ideologies woven around them in the previous texts. The project investigates and exposes the gendered politics lurking behind these dominating discourses by harking back to the literary texts written earlier. The thesis has succeeded in achieving its aim of establishing that by adapting and appropriating the literary precursors, these select feminist writers in the study have successfully achieved their objective of reviving women characters of these texts by infusing a resilient spirit and a zeal of writing or telling their stories to destabilize the male-oriented discourse which has cemented and defined their image permanently.

Feminist writers are in the pursuit of breaking the traditional stories and myths which are shaping and fortifying the women's identity in stereotypical moulds. The myths, stories and literary discourses that are instrumental in permanently ascertaining women's images according to gendered definitions set by the patriarchal whims need to be revised from a critical and fresh angle. Constant percolation and reiteration of these stories have damaged women's image and have become a part of the collective consciousness of a community. They are implemented in everyday life to define the role women are to play in society. Feminist writers in their attempt to retrieve women's identity from the framework of being the 'other' or an 'inessential being' have started visiting and re-reading the literary texts and myths to expose the politics lurking behind the storytelling either oral or written. It is always the powerful group that holds the narrative agency in its hands and thus presents a story imbued in its ideology. The male-dominated group has always sketched women as extreme 'other'- as inactive, silent, seductress or goddess who cannot nurture human ambitions

and her deportment is also superhuman. Both ways women are denied a holistic existence.

The 1960s saw the birth of feminist scholarship along with various other literary and political movements. With the rise of students' unrest many feminist activists associated with women's liberation got involved in the students' movements also. Dubois et al say "The critical perspective that would later lead scholars to challenge disciplinary research methods began in criticism and rejection of the standard classroom curriculum, where the neglect of women was suddenly obvious" (4). With this the feminist movement began to challenge the traditional modes and approaches to knowledge which have excluded women till now. By this time it was obvious to them that it was not enough to fight for the rights of women rather inclusion and re-presentation of women on the intellectual and academic level was a must. It was a coincidence that the feminist scholarship emerged almost parallel with postmodernism. Both allied together to combat established citadels of narratives. As an intellectual endeavour, postmodernism has much in common with feminism. With French philosopher, Jean Francois Lyotard's definition of postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiii), the notions of transcendent, reason, objective knowledge, autonomous self, progressive history was challenged. Similarly, feminism came out with the scepticism towards transcendental reason and the "engendering of historical narrative" (Seyla Benhabib 18). Having an agreement on these philosophical notions, feminism and postmodernism joined hands to counter the marginalisation of women in the politics of re-presentation.

Postmodernism waves off the notion of the autonomy of literary works and emphasize their historicity. Intertextuality plays a vital role in breaking the autonomous stature of the texts, bridges the gap between them and plugs loopholes within the text. The present study observes that intertextuality highlights seemingly similar aspects as well as the points of departure between the hypertext and the parent text. John Frow in his essay "Intertextuality and Ontology" states:

Concept of intertextuality requires that we understand the concept of text not as a self-contained structure but as a differential and historical . . . texts are therefore not structures of presence but traces and tracings of otherness". (45)

As the text rejects the notion of being a reservoir of a single pre-determined and ultimate meaning, it opens itself for an endless play of signifiers. This leads to numerous interpretations in the same text. For the effective intertextual relations between the texts, an understanding between the author and the reader becomes necessary “for the co-authorship from the reader” (Kundu 13). All the selected writers in the project have appropriated the textual space of the books written earlier which are carrying the imprints of the dominant discourse (patriarchal in this study) by re-visioning and writing back from the point of the marginalised and oppressed.

The present study through the discussion of theorists like Derrida, Barthes, Bakhtin, and Kristeva have observed that texts are non-linear, constantly dissolving boundaries to assimilate or to be assimilated in other texts. Intertextuality constantly emphasises and reminds of the potentiality a text carries in its plurality, denying the autonomy of monolithic discourses, opening itself for reader’s interpretation and rejecting presuppositions. As the theory of intertextuality itself rejects a single definition, a single meaning in any text, so the interpretations in the present study cannot be declared final. With every reading, the texts are subject to further interpretations and open themselves to fresh ideas and invite new meaning. The most revolutionary aspect of the implementation of intertextuality is its becoming instrumental in reversal and subversion of the dominant discourses which are “always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic voices which exist within society” (Allen 209). The feminist writers in these selected texts have challenged the definitions of women established by male-oriented discourse in a male-contrived language. By applying the theory of intertextuality all these writers have attempted to allow their women characters to re-configure new definitions and carve out new identities for themselves. Luce Irigaray has found mimesis to be a potential method to resist the traditional feminine roles:

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself – in as much as she is on the side of the ‘perceptible’, of ‘matter’- to ‘ideas’, in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make ‘visible’ by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to

remain invisible: the cover up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. (*This Sex Which is Not One* 76)

In recent times many old texts have been studied, analysed and re-written in order to give a new perspective particularly to the women characters depicted in them. For this reason four pairs of texts were identified which were transformed according to their contemporary cultural developments with the use of new methods and techniques. Except for *S* in which the harsh truth about women who defy social norms and their plight is depicted, all the other texts provide a fresh interpretation to the character of women. They realise themselves and succeed in telling their stories by disregarding the pressures of patriarchal society.

Parody and irony are the most effective tools to unearth reality and these have proved to be the most potent in the hands of the feminists who use these to re-read the writings of the past. These have been generously used by John Updike and Githa Hariharan as well. As the chief function of parody is to expose the politics of representation so Updike and Hariharan have employed it to foreground the real motive hidden beneath the innocence of the tales of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Arabian Nights*. Parody interrogates the notions of original, rare and unique forms of production. Updike through the employment of parody establishes that Hawthorne would have little realised that his tale of sin, guilt, and redemption would have epic consequences in settling down as a myth and thereby a guidepost for American society in defining their everyday life. Through a humorous parodic manner, he takes the reader closer to reality by unveiling the veneer layer of hypocrisy tucked under morality. *When Dreams Travel*, however, does not playfully expose the politics of power rather creatively it smashes the ‘truth’ created about femininity by the male chauvinistic discourses. The tales of *The Arabian Nights* take the reader to a long flight of exotic locations where their imagination is ignited by the sexual and promiscuous adventures of women. *When Dream Travels* through the revision of stories dismantles this identity with which women are presented. The ‘naturalisation’ of women’s conduct as adulteresses is altered with that of creativity and their desires become a guiding force in the attainment of their freedom.

It was found that along with irony, magic realism, metafiction, and non-linear narratives the writers have successfully re-framed women characters by generating among them gender consciousness. By breaking the time-space continuum they

recognise patriarchal strategies of the entrapment of women into submission and subordinated roles. Through the mode of magic realism Hariharan and to some extent Divakaruni also break the barrier between reality and magic and immediately transport the reader to the happenings of the past. To re-invent women, it becomes necessary to re-visit the past. Theresa Man Ling Lee in her essay "Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Politics of Representation" avers "The vision of a liberated woman, which is at the very core of feminism, is simply inconceivable without going beyond the historically given" (40). Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions*, Bertha/Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Dunyazad in *When Dreams Travel* through their dreams, visions, memory, and mirrors travel to the lanes of the past in the parent texts. Like shadowy figures, they assess the trauma of occurrences of the past and unlike the participants in the previous discourses, they just ponder over what troubled them and try to liberate themselves in their new versions. The mirror enables the protagonists of *When Dreams Travel* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* to travel unhindered to their past at any given moment. This is one dynamic strategy that feminists employ to plunge into the past to give it a facelift. The mirror acts as a fantasy and as Veronica L. Schanoes says "... just as fantasy as a genre frees the reader and the writer from the constraints of the realist story" (195) so does the mirror. Describing the importance of mirror in women characters' lives she says:

The mirror offers a place of exploration, representation, and display for women's inner landscapes, their experiences, understandings, and desires . . . far from imprisoning women in a superficial appearance – based identity determined by patriarchal values, mirror are major sites in which women explore and express their inner selves and experiences, sexual and otherwise. (101-102).

Dunyazad travels back to the story world of *One Thousand and One Nights* through a mirror and explores what is not being revealed about women in the guise of the glamour of its stories – the sufferings, the exhaustion, the fear, the rapes of the newly married brides, their murders and the pathetic life of women confined in the walls of harem forever.

Bertha alias Antoinette also maps the impossible journey and navigates the vast Sargasso Sea from the attic in England through a looking glass and her memory. It is the looking glass that reminds her who she really is and through her elusive and

frail memory of the warm and passionate surroundings of her island she is able to hold on to her past and connects once again with her 'self.' Her dream in the final and the third act of *Wide Sargasso Sea* propels her to mingle with her people and to connect with her place of affection (Coulibri) and she jumps from the roof. Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions* re-visits the events of the great epic *Mahabharata* to comment upon them critically and to locate the problematic areas. The emphasis in these re-writings is not on the events of the past rather on the reaction of these women characters who were participants in the previous discourses and now they are looking back with a fresh and a new perspective. Draupadi realises her mistake in expecting love from her five, virile and macho husbands when she ponders over the happenings of *Mahabharata* especially the infamous dice game scene in *Sabha Parv*. In her critical assessment of the game scene, she senses that they are more concerned with their reputation than their wife. Once she actualises her position as 'Nathwati Anathwati' she detaches herself emotionally from them and becomes the agent of her life to avenge herself.

Women subvert oppressive structures of male dominance in the texts selected in the present study. The feminist writers have not returned to the celebrated texts rather they have employed re-vision as a means of exploring 'self'. Altering their position from the 'object of desire' to 'subject of desire' they have re-written the stories of women characters highlighting their repressed desires. By replacing their concocted and constructed image with their actual image which these women characters alone could present, these writers have re-generated them from asymmetrical gendered identities. As a potential threat to the patriarchal structure of society women's sexuality has been repressed in the texts written earlier. Those who dared to step out of the prescribed set norms have been stigmatized or branded as adulteress or debauch or morally depraved women in the society and accused of belonging to Eve's clan, instrumental in the great fall of man. Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and Flaubert's Madame Bovary have met a tragic end for defying the socio-moral codes of society. Hawthorne's Hester emerges as the greatest example of this discourse. But the postmodernist writers adapting the previous books have openly accepted women's sexuality as an expression of their 'self'. Bertha Mason, a passionate Caribbean Creole represents her climatic association with West Indian culture through her sexuality in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She is depicted as a passionately

aggressive girl, unhesitating in expressing her sexual desires to her husband. Rochester – the white colonial male, a Victorian-moralist, cold in his approach representing cold England, presents her as an amorous girl with loose morality and he finds himself unable to match her passion.

In the male-oriented stories, women are depicted as centred around domestic activities, having little textual space for their feelings. However, modern women deal with them differently, as Hariharan shows Dunyazad, the eternal silent sister of Shahrzad of *The Arabian Nights*, exhibiting her feelings openly in *When Dreams Travel*. The text replaces her silence and translates it into her desires which she experiences when she accompanies her sister every night to her bed-chamber to consummate her marriage with sultan Shahryar. In the re-framed story of *When Dreams Travel* the widely propagated discourse of male chauvinism, objectification of women and their oppression through their repressed sexuality is ruptured.

Shahrzad, the dynamic storyteller although hailed as a chaste and modest wife also wishes for a different life. Draupadi, the ebullient woman breaks the aura of the archetypal woman and reveals her sexuality. Although her sexual desires are not revealed openly, the sparse mention of her desires in the intertextual writing *The Palace of Illusions* hints at her being sexually aggressive. The previous text has hidden her sexuality and her marriage to five husbands beneath the divine will and the working of a boon she received in the previous birth. Divakaruni, however, hints that she wishes to enjoy this relationship with the approval of the guardians of the society without any shame or guilt. If men can defy the moral barriers of society by engaging in polygamy and having sexual pleasure with multiple partners then women can also partake in polyandry without any guilt. In the entire study, it is the representation of Sarah who surprises the most as she rebels by shedding the puritanical morality in *S* as the most assertive woman. In the rest of the novels, all the women characters express their sexuality in muffled undertones. But Sarah, representing modern liberal American society flouts the sexual – moral codes by openly riding on the roller coaster of her sexual adventures and thereby she mocks at the presentation of her literary predecessor, Hester. She is involved in various sexual relations with her ashram inmates including her spiritual guru. Not only does she involve herself in these relations she also openly declares through her letters and tape the entire sexual encounter with Arhat Mindadali, her guru. It is through her presentation that Updike

not only reverses the popular American myth of puritanical morality rather he smashes it to pieces by re-presenting her in promiscuous shades, declaring her to be rebellious to justify the liberal American approach of freedom and individuality.

In the previous monolithic discourses of patriarchal mechanism the women have been presented in the subordinated roles, shadowy figures behind the men in their lives, confined to domestic activities and above all denied speech to express their thoughts. The feminist writers find that the expression of women's feelings is necessary if they are to step out of their subjugated role of the second sex. If men can create women's image the same language can be utilized to reverse the image in the hands of women. Arpita Mukhopadhyay in her work *Feminisms* argues:

Language can become a tool in women's hands to assert and empower themselves. By using language according to their desire, women can dismantle the monolithic, unitarian discourse promoted by the masculinist perspective. (76)

Language in the form of writing or speech empowers the subjects. Feminist writers in their mission to revive women characters by altering their identity created and contrived in the male-dominated discourses sanctions them écriture feminine. Through écriture feminine, in the form of speech or letters, all women characters in the present project subvert the patriarchal discourse. Denial of speech means denial of a chance to justify one's actions. Hester, a woman of immense potential and personal strength is not given a single chance to let out her intense feelings and sufferings in *The Scarlet Letter*. Whereas Sarah the postmodern re-invented version of Hester dislodges the earlier discourse of feminine reticence and forbearance through her letters. She does not allow the 'garbage' to accumulate within her and availing every single chance she rants and hurls her criticism towards Charles – her husband, her mother and others whom she finds culpable for her present situation. Words in either form written or spoken are always considered male prerogative and are at their disposal to be used or abused. So this very act of writing letters on the part of Sarah indicates rebelliousness and signals women's liberation from the stifling morals. In consonance with the contemporary American spirit of liberty, Updike unburdens her from her predecessor's silence by lending her freedom to speak.

Jean Rhys through *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposes how Bertha Mason/Antoinette's identity is completely erased in *Jane Eyre* due to her complete

silence. Rhys writes back to the androcentric imperial literature in which Bertha is wronged by the effacement of her background, her history, and her identity.

Postcolonial writers like Rhys infuse a new life in their characters by re-framing them in entirely new hues attributing them an opportunity to tell ‘the other side of the story’. The dynamic process of intertextuality goes on marking the gaps and fissures that Rhys locates as a reader of *Jane Eyre* and re-installs Bertha Mason by lending her narrative agency in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Bertha Aka Antoinette narrates two parts of the story and through her side of the story, she succeeds in tilting the readers’ sympathy towards herself which Rochester claimed in the previous discourse. It is Rochester who provides the scanty information about her in *Jane Eyre*. The male sensibility always depicts women in derogatory terms. So Rhys finds her confined to the cardboard world of Bronte as a mad Creole West Indian woman. Rhys sets out on a mission to revive the lost Antoinette and implants her on the centre stage as the main character who is narrating her story and thereby retrieves her from the ignominy she suffered for almost one hundred and twenty years.

Similarly, Draupadi in *Mahabharata* reveals a different story when she is given an opportunity to tell ‘her story’ in *The Palace of Illusions*. Draupadi holds the reins of narrative agency in her hands and does not permit any patriarchal intervention to overshadow hers. Vyasa has set her in a very ambivalent position in the epic story. In *Mahabharata*, Draupadi remains mute and reflects her compliance with her husbands at all crucial junctures in her life but in *The Palace of Illusions*, she asserts herself and does not tolerate anybody narrating her story. She is the mistress of her story and blasts out her repressed emotions and this time not tripping over aggression she comments and justifies her silence over certain occasions in her life. By becoming the agent of her life story she challenges patriarchy and its discourses.

The thematic strand of connectivity among all the selected texts in the present project of écriture feminine continues with *When Dreams Travel* to bind all texts together. The protagonists of *When Dreams Travel* – Shahrazad and Dunyazad step down from the stage of *The Arabian Nights* stories to step into the story world of *When Dreams Travel* where they can narrate their own version of the stories. The perennial silent sister of Shahrazad, Dunyazad visits *The Arabian Nights* world on a de-tour and unveils the politics behind storytelling. Alan Sinfield opines that the production of stories as the reservoir of cultural knowledge is never innocent. To

penetrate the trap of innocence beneath stories Hariharan gives the gift of the gab to Dunyazad. She along with Dilshad sets on the task of reviving Shahrazad from the old order of stories. Dunyazad in her versions of stories gloats over memory and reveals what happens ‘off-Stage’ whereas Dilshad in her share of storytelling narrates the stories of women’s desires. In the churning process of intertextuality, old stories are twisted and turned to highlight feminist concerns. In Dilshad’s tales, all women characters are eagerly coming forward to tell the stories from their angle. Although it is Shahrazad who spins and weaves stories of *The Arabian Nights* and enthrals the despotic tyrant with her magical words her orality is converted into textuality by Sultan’s Wazir – a male hand. Hariharan discovers the problem here and this time women’s orality is not interpolated by any male member. Dilshad not trusting men lest their stories might get concocted decides to jot down their stories herself. Thus écriture feminine becomes a potent weapon for all the characters chosen for the study to unleash their suppressed feelings without any hindrance which empowers them to present their side of the story.

The intertextual writings demonstrate that women have been denied a wholesome identity. In the oppressive patriarchal discursivity, women are either hailed as mythical superhuman beings or embodiment of perfection with little or no flaws or they are being presented in fiendish colours as the very epitome of the devil which does not show any sign for further development. All the previous texts under study have presented women as either martyr, saint, mythical or dehumanised madwoman. The selected feminist writings have pulled out women from this discourse of extremity and installed them as multi-dimensional human beings with their plus points, frailties, weaknesses and their strengths as only humans are allowed to commit errors and rectify them. All these re-written women characters are battling with their fears, apprehensions, and insecurities to come to terms with the world.

Divakaruni let Draupadi step out of the bondage of the mythical garb in *The Palace of Illusions*. Divakaruni sub-titled her novel as “Panchaali’s *Mahabharata*” which in itself explains that the novel is about the inner strife of this iconic heroine which she experiences for being implanted in extraordinary situations. Draupadi breaks herself free from the mould of a mythical woman possessing astonishing qualities through the metaphoric Palace. The palace is symbolic of her innermost desires, ambitions, and feelings which she nurtures in her naivety and with its dismantling the process of her

maturity begins which culminates with the mass destruction in the great war. In her feminist pursuit, Divakaruni has attributed her extraordinary strength as a woman. In the trajectory of her maturation, she realizes her follies and breaks herself free from the notion of ‘special woman’.

Updike in his endeavour to make Americans realise their mistake in following Hawthorne’s model of puritanical morality and considering Hester the very icon of patience shatters the aura of sainthood around her by treating her ironically though Sarah. She humorously but realistically upholds the idea of woman as a holistic being when she tells her brother in a letter “But one of the things you as a male will never have to know is how much a woman can suffer – jealousy, humiliation, panic, sense of betrayal . . .” (S 235). Unlike her literary ancestor Hester who remains cocooned in her stoicism throughout, Sarah is an inhabitant of this real-world, experiencing real events and exhibiting a variety of emotions. Like Hester, her personality is not static and she does not wait till the end to reveal her feelings. Her multivalent personality is visible in her adopting multiple names like S., Ma Prem Kundalini, Sarah P. Worth, Sally, Mummy, Tia Sarah, Sarah nee Price, K. Sis, etc. that signify her defying any single role to define her. She emerges as a new liberal woman who aspires to live on her own terms.

In *When Dreams Travel* Dunyazad in her exploration of the memories of past lifts the tiara of martyrdom from Shahrazad to acquaint the reader with the extreme and strenuous circumstances the brave and intelligent storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights* had gone through. To paint her in martyr’s colours her utter human emotions are swept under the rug in the parent text which *When Dreams Travel* exposes. In Dunyazad’s dreams and visions, Shahrazad is shown panting, exhausting, sweating and suffocated contrary to the image of a martyr who is just narrating fantasy tales without ever realising her limitations as a human being. She undergoes labour pain and simultaneously prepares herself for her nocturnal task to keep the blade of the sword at a bay by narrating stories. She craves for a different life away from the constricting, stifling atmosphere of the palace where she is imprisoned in harem during the daytime and in the bed-chamber during the night. Defying the illusion of the glamour that surrounds martyrdom and unsettling the readers of the previous texts by changing the ending, the modern women writers have tried to establish the significance of women’s identity. Hariharan gives a glimpse of

Shahrazad's life when she is dependent, old, grumpy and flabby lying all alone. The text lifts the veil of shining hues of martyrdom to re-present her in human colours of which the earlier text maintains silence.

Out of all the discussed texts in the present study, it is the *Wide Sargasso Sea* that has presented Bertha/Antoinette in the most outlandish way in proving her human identity by fetching her out of the discourse of madness. Although her fate is sealed in *Jane Eyre* Rhys most innovatively and creatively resurrects her from the ashes of Thornfield Hall and transports her in her native land to destabilise the discourse of a fiend, 'hyena', 'zombie' and a madwoman. As a reader Rhys " . . . breaks open a text, sneaks into the space of a previous one; thereafter appropriates it by erasing the earlier inscriptions and re-inscribing it, thus using the textual space as a palimpsest" (Kundu 33) and gives Bertha a human form. Bertha/Antoinette is shown insecure in a loveless world, as a child experiences alienation and a sense of loss with a slippery identity. She longs for love and affection and pins her hopes on her husband – Rochester. He denies her money and fails to fulfill her expectation in providing her happiness and security which he had promised before marriage. She is always on the brink of losing herself in a hostile society but never mad. It is her marriage that proves fatal for her and she drifts towards silence. Her silence becomes her protest and a way of resistance to the hegemonic oppression of patriarchal norms and law. *Wide Sargasso Sea* alters the discourse of madness to discourse of subversion in the final act and metamorphosis Bertha into a resilient character. Thus all the characters exhibit the traits of complex human beings, defying the identity which is assigned to them according to patriarchal ideology in the primary texts. They all are placed in extraordinary surroundings, searching for their identity. In the process of their search, they grow or fall victim to the circumstances and cannot form a single notion of their identity.

Feminists all over the world admit that heterosexuality has restricted woman's growth and has made her depend upon man. She can carve her niche as an independent and liberal woman when she rejects heterosexuality or the defined and limited framework of relations within which she is expected and conditioned to act. Dunyazad and Dilshad defy patriarchal norms by rejecting heterosexuality and turn lesbian lovers to each other. For feminist writers, lesbianism is an act of revolt and

rebellion through which women find comfort and solace in each other. Rejecting the authority of Sultan, Dunyazad and Dilshad find better alternatives in each other.

Shahrzad also proves to be a rebel and the novel indicates her elopement with a young lover. When Sarah in *S*, gets a chance to break herself free from the traditional bondage of marriage gets involved with Alinga, her ashram mate in a lesbian relation and for the first time experiences a bond free of the master-slave equation. Intertextuality in combination with feminism provides the readers an opportunity to look at the same story with a magnifying glass to identify the areas in the previous text where some another story is simmering underneath to what appears to eyes. Divakaruni's feminist sensibilities have given new interpretations of the Draupadi-Karna relationship. Instead of hatred, they are stuck in a love-hate matrix in *The Palace of Illusions*. Both have strong personal integrity and both feel a strong pull towards each other. The feminist writers are writing stories with the purpose of pulling down the citadel of patriarchy. To grant gendered identity to the woman is mainly done to turn them subordinate to men. Divakaruni does not temper with the actual epic events nonetheless tears apart the façade of gendered identities. Once Draupadi is free from the confinement of the feminine body after her death she feels liberated, without any patriarchal checks and controls and moves in a formless utopian world where there is no gender differentiation.

The selected texts and their re-written characters display a sense of sisterhood with other women during their process of growth. Feminists like Simone de Beauvoir argued that women comply with men in subjugating women. As a counter-discourse to the patriarchal mechanism of subservience, feminists like Alice Walker talk of sisterhood for a better world of understanding among women. Dunyazad and Dilshad defy social hierarchization to develop a beautiful understanding with each other to revive Shahrazad and Satyasama. All these four women share their passion for storytelling and act on the concept of sisterhood to empower each other. Sarah, although herself a defaulter in flouting the societal rules in various ways yet she pulls her mother and daughter in a bond of sisterhood when she tries to warn them of the mire they are going to be stuck in due to their involvement with men. For her, all men not women are 'shunyas' (zero) and shams and liars and wishes to save her mother and daughter from falling prey to their charm. Draupadi defiled as 'kritya' or arrogant, grows and turns out to be a better human being when witnessing mass

destruction in the war. More than her much-sung husbands it is she who comes forward and empathizes with the widows of the war. In a pure act of sisterhood, she attempts to organise their life once again and understanding their pain as a woman addresses them to reach out to their bruised souls. The feminist writers are creating a discourse where a woman can understand another woman to make the world free of male domination.

All the women characters studied in the present research project are women who are conscious of themselves and set out in the quest for their identity. Some of them grow and realise their potential during their journey and some of them in their attempt to grasp a fluid identity trip and fumble. Sarah's attempt proves to be futile like Hester. On snapping her relations with Charles in her pursuit to be independent, she falls victim to another man—the bogus guru. The two worlds—New England and the Arizona ashram—the utopian land—fails her just as the New England community fails Hester in her quest for identity in a better world. James A. Schiff observes:

Like the Puritans and pilgrims before her, Sarah has attempted to begin a new life, yet her quest has been plagued by paradoxes, anger and deception. She too fails to become the “destined prophetess” . . . whom Hester imagines for womankind. As much as she strives to shed skins and reinvent itself, she discovers that there is a fixed and constant self.
(Updike's Version 119)

Simultaneously, her quest for more than ‘occupation Housewife’ does not end in futility. She emerges as a newly liberated woman. Her breaking the domestic boundaries, and acting independently in the distant lands, her volubility, her involvement in multiple sexual relations, her attempt to bridge the gap between her mother and daughter through a sense of sisterhood all lend her freedom which the feminist writers are seeking for the new woman.

Like Sarah, Dunyazad, Dilshad and Shahrazad step out of constricting patriarchal noose by knowing what they desire. Their “self-centring” process itself proves to kickstart the process of their re-generation and of creating “a woman identified environment” (Daly 315). All women characters chart their journey to define their identity through écriture féminine. Society restricts women’s mobility to control their sexuality. These women in *When Dreams Travel* through their speech

and fertile imagination travel to far off forbidden lands to women and thus their speech comes to their rescue and becomes their survival strategy.

Draupadi denies mythical identity and from the secondary role in *Mahabharata*, she occupies the centre stage and becomes the ‘sutradhara’ of her story. A resplendent woman she challenges and subverts the legacy of pain and refuses to submit to the patriarchal wishes to define herself. She emerges as a dynamic, assertive and rebellious being who is capable to make decisions about herself by doing away with the traditional outlines within which her identity is framed earlier.

Bertha Mason/Antoinette’s silence becomes the most important tool to combat oppressive patriarchal structures like marriage. Being a resilient spirit she does not concede to bend before the degrading and unjust demands of her husband. Therefore, unable to compromise on her dignity she prefers silence than to beg before him for love and attention. This silence which was interpreted as a sign of madness is not shown to be her weakness rather it reflects her anger. Although by the end of the novel she is bereft of everything, she is sans money, family, background, her people but one thing which Rhys endows her as a tool of subversion is her warrior spirit to claim her ‘self’.

All the texts which have been analysed for the present study make a consensus that re-writing of women characters has suffused them with a new life. By attacking the patriarchal discourses from various directions they all have emerged as rebellious and assertive who are unwilling to yield before the hegemony of patriarchy. The writers who are on a mission to uplift the marginalised, oppressed and peripheral characters to convert this world a better place to live in, utilise the revolutionary and dynamic aspects of intertextuality to their advantage. The feminist writers in their zeal to dismantle the monolithic literary discourses to free women from the fetters of patriarchy and being the ‘other’ or ‘inessential’ beings employ the theory of intertextuality to present women’s side of the story from their angle. Though bound within the framework of their literary predecessors, the characters of these texts act subversively and take the narrative agency in their hands and do not allow anybody to meddle with their version of the story. All these characters do not accept male intervention in telling their stories. This act of looking back with a fresh perspective from women’s angle arouses the complacent reader from the sleep of acceptance of the hitherto set stories and notions which is the chief function and motive of the theory of intertextuality.

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