

## Feminist Stylistics: An Analysis of Graphological Deviation in Afzal Khan's Memoir

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### Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to explore the way the postmodern feminist subversive text i.e. Afzal Khan's memoir *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girl Friends Pakistani Style* presents an alternative text while deviating at graphological level. The present research is based on mixed method. The research is mainly qualitative but quantitative data has also been provided for the confirmation of the data achieved through in depth analysis of the text of the memoir. Mills' three-part-model (only at the word level) and Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction* have been drawn on as a research tool to analyze the text. Mills' feminist stylistics aims to rectify the way the gender is represented in the phallogocentric texts into an alternative matriarchal language. *Style in Fiction* provides a platform to bring to light deviations. The analysis reveals that Fawzia Afzal Khan's memoir is embellished with graphological deviation. The analysis at word level brings to light deviation at graphological level in the form of spacing, capitalization, hyphen, slashes and borrowing. Moreover, the analysis further suggests Fawzia Afzal Khan has very dexterously and boldly challenged the male centric hegemonic historical narratives into an alternative female centric narrative both in content and form.

**Key Words:** Memoir, graphology, deviation, feminist stylistics.

### Introduction

The theorists emerging from Woolf to the so-called French school of feminists believe that language is the first condition for social change (Mills, 1997). They believe that language itself is patriarchal and major factor in the construction of female identity and subjectivity in male dominated societies thus language is the crucial factor in marginalizing the women and reinforcing patriarchal structures. So they call for matriarchal language in the form of new words, new sentences and new genres as an alternate to deconstruct and challenge the patriarchal language (Mills, 1997). As Fanon (1967) states, "Mastery of language affords remarkable power" So for the feminists of late 20th century language has become a deconstructive tool to empower themselves and they have invented new terms to transgress the manmade language (Spender, 1981). This is what the postmodern feminist transgressive writer Afzal Khan has done in her memoir *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girl Friends Pakistani Style*. Afzal Khan is a postmodern subversive feminist writer who claims that *language* itself is a metanarrative which needs to be deconstructed. She challenges the manmade language (Spender, 1981) into an alternative subversive language. She has tried to produce matriarchal language to deconstruct the patriarchal language. The memoir is saturated with graphological, grammatical and syntactical deviations. The present research is delimited to only examining the graphological deviations. My argument in this paper is that her memoir is embellished with subversive use of language at graphological level in the form spacing, repetition, slashes, parentheses capitalization and hyphen. Sometimes she italicizes the pages or passages. Such type of deviant stylistic devices can be found almost on all the pages of memoir except the footnotes and appendices. She seems to be appropriating the normative standards of English language into an alternative way. This way of creative writing is quite challenging and may suggest that even minor elements of language display a particular ideology and worldview of the author as has been presented in the table.

## Research Methodology

The present research adopted Afzal Khan's memoir *Lahore with Love; Growing up with Girl Friends Pakistani Style* as a primary text for analysis. Mills (1997) three-part model of feminist stylistics and Leech Short's *Style in Fiction* have been integrated to develop the theoretical understanding of the memoir. However, the research is delimited to only one level (i.e. at the level of word) in Mills three part model. Leech & Short have presented different levels for stylistic analysis such as phonological level, graphological level, morphological level, syntactic level and lexico-semantic level. The present research is further delimited to only graphological deviation. This invariably leads one to infer that this research is based on mixed method. It is predominantly both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher has conducted an in-depth study of the whole memoir to search out the words with deviant features such as spacing, capitalization, hyphen, parenthesis, borrowing and slashes. Then the researcher has found out frequency of the occurrence of these words in the memoir. After identifying the words with deviant features the researcher has interpreted these words while keeping in mind the Mills feminist stylistics.

## Research Questions

The overarching question of the present research is:

- In what ways does the memoir unearth the manmade language into alternative female centric language in the form of graphological deviations?

## Research Objectives

1. To examine and bring to light the graphological deviations in Fawzia Afzal Khan's memoir
2. To integrate Mills three layer model (only at the level of word) to highlight the significance of graphological deviation.

## Theoretical Framework

### Feminist Stylistics and Mills' Three- Level- Model

The focus of the present research is on Mill's (1997) feminist stylistics as a base for analysis of Afzal Khan's memoir *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girl Friends Pakistani Style*. The aim of feminism is to make social conditions less suppressive to females and on the linguistic level feminists attempt to exemplify how female gender is maltreated in male constructed texts and how language obliges men over women. Feminists' approach to stylistics is mainly linked with French feminist stylists such as Woolf, Lacan, Cixous, Irigaray, Kriesteva and Mills. The objective of feminist stylistics is to investigate the female experiences in literary works and in this way literature acts as a source for the foreshadowing of women's consciousness and the deconstruction of stereotypical representation of females.

Mills (1997) says that the aim of feminist stylisticians is not to examine the artistic function of language as posed by Short and Leech rather it is to look at the other aspects of language such as the author's preference for certain language choices to portray a phenomenon while leaving the others and author's implicit motive behind these choices.

In this way, the researcher is going to do feminist stylistic analysis of Afzal Khan's memoir. For that purpose the researcher will adapt Mill's three part model (Mills, 1997 p.83 to 159) based on the analyses at the level of word while leaving two other levels such as phrase and discourse level.

### Graphological Level

Leech proclaims graphology to exceed orthography. It involves the representation of whole writing system. : "punctuation and paragraphing, as well as spacing" (Leech, 1969). Graphology

can be deployed as a device of meanings and aesthetics. Deviant use of capitalization signifies the spoken emphasis for the capitalized term as we will observe in section 5 of the present research. Leech and Short state that graphological deviation is one of the trivial and superficial features of style. Sometimes, it helps to build a colloquial style. This level of analysis involves focus on spelling, capitalization, spacing, hyphenation, italicization and paragraphing. Moreover, graphological elements in the texts are more conspicuous, blatant and eye-catching even a text deviates at graphological level or not. So the graphological level recognizes the overall writing system of the text not only to bring to light the poetic qualities of the text but to also bring to light the vital message of the author. In this way, we will come to know the reason behind the use of graphological deviation in the memoir.

**Analysis at the Level of World: Graphological Deviation in Fawzia Afzal Khan’s Memoir**

| Graphological Deviation | Hyphenation                                 | Repetition                  | Additional phonemes | Spacing          | Slashes        | Parenthetical  | capitalization              |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Frequency</i>        | <i>99 times</i>                             | <i>7 times</i>              | <i>2 times</i>      | <i>52 times</i>  | <i>5 times</i> | <i>3 times</i> | <i>11</i>                   |
| Examples                | Side-stepped                                | <b>Big big eyes</b>         | Vaarry              | Upup             | m/other        | LA(W)          | M-U-R-D-E-R                 |
| //////////              | Ab-normal                                   | <b>But...but</b>            | Waat                | Unibrow          | Mad/m edea     | B(h)olly wood  | B-R-O-T-H-E-R---N-A-M-E-D-Z |
| //////////              | No-place                                    | <b>Falling,falling</b>      |                     | Umum umyum mmeee | And/not        | (w)hole        | EVER                        |
| //////////              | Dis-ease                                    | <b>Fasterin g-fastering</b> |                     | Where whathow    | Mad/ea         |                | BE                          |
| //////////              | Zig-zag                                     | <b>Big big</b>              |                     | Whyfore          | s/he           |                | WOMEN WITHOUT ME            |
| //////////              | Sam-looking                                 | <b>Sour-sour</b>            |                     | Windchill        |                |                | HIM                         |
| //////////              | Swear-upon-god-and-hope-to-die-mullah-types | <b>Okay okay</b>            |                     | Ohmygod          |                |                | HER                         |

|            |                        |  |  |                            |  |  |                                      |
|------------|------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| ////////// | God-forsake            |  |  | Upupup                     |  |  | BE                                   |
| ////////// | Looked-forward         |  |  | Whoknows what              |  |  | MY BITE IS WORSE THAN MY BURF COMING |
| ////////// | Hazel-colored          |  |  | Screwing machine           |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Red-pase               |  |  | American style             |  |  | NOTHING                              |
| ////////// | Tightly-knit           |  |  | Thwack thwack thwack       |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Pipsqueak-jesus Christ |  |  | Lackluster                 |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Paratha-anda           |  |  | I really can't             |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Cake-and-pastery       |  |  | Pretty boy                 |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Urdu-medium            |  |  | Sister friend sex soulmate |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Lower-class            |  |  | Hooallahoo                 |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Out-of-touchness       |  |  | Cackle cackle chortle      |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Nineteen-year-old      |  |  | Days without you           |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Law-abiding            |  |  | Chador beardpassional      |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | By-now                 |  |  | Arrey yar                  |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Also-divorced          |  |  | Jerking off                |  |  |                                      |
| ////////// | Stuck-up               |  |  | Rumination                 |  |  |                                      |

|            |                    |  |  |                         |  |  |  |
|------------|--------------------|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| ////////// | Guitar-playing     |  |  | Cuntlike                |  |  |  |
| ////////// | Drop-dead          |  |  | Pleasepleaseplease      |  |  |  |
| ////////// | Joke-cracking      |  |  | Bholuboy                |  |  |  |
| ////////// | Raven-haired       |  |  | Ladylord                |  |  |  |
|            | Green-eyed         |  |  | Whitecarpeted           |  |  |  |
|            | Arm-in-arm         |  |  | Hatehate                |  |  |  |
|            | Post-vacation      |  |  | Smugface                |  |  |  |
|            | Extra-credit       |  |  | Notbooks                |  |  |  |
|            | Mustard-colored    |  |  | Bookshelf               |  |  |  |
|            | Seven-up           |  |  | BEcapitalmidline        |  |  |  |
|            | So-called          |  |  | Counterurses            |  |  |  |
|            | High-firing        |  |  | Wavething               |  |  |  |
|            | Cross-legged       |  |  | Sonofabitchwhatsgotthen |  |  |  |
|            | Broad-chested like |  |  | Gigglygalote            |  |  |  |
|            | A tree-trunk       |  |  | Besplattered            |  |  |  |
|            | People-love        |  |  | Wheatgrain              |  |  |  |
|            | Love-besotted      |  |  | Cardaman                |  |  |  |
|            | Husband-to-be      |  |  | Puppydog                |  |  |  |
|            | Go-o-o-o           |  |  | Happysadfaces           |  |  |  |

|  |                        |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|--|------------------------|--|--|----------------------|--|--|--|
|  | Half-guilty            |  |  | Eatingd rinking      |  |  |  |
|  | Postmoon soon-humidity |  |  | Whyoh why            |  |  |  |
|  | Pale-skinned-lizard    |  |  | Greenbl uered        |  |  |  |
|  | Paisley-bordered       |  |  | Ohmyla dy            |  |  |  |
|  | Half-smile             |  |  | Actorsi ngerpoe t    |  |  |  |
|  | Full-sleeved           |  |  | Redbla ck            |  |  |  |
|  | Chador-like            |  |  | Activist memoir ists |  |  |  |
|  | Rent-free              |  |  | Sights mellsou nd    |  |  |  |
|  | Wife-to-be             |  |  | Tighttig httight     |  |  |  |
|  | Fair-minded            |  |  | Khattak hatta        |  |  |  |
|  | Sad-eyed               |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Artsy-partsy           |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Scarf-like             |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Flat-chested           |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Almost-thirteen-year   |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Wood-and-glass         |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Begum-sahib            |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Grown-up               |  |  |                      |  |  |  |
|  | Red-green-yellow       |  |  |                      |  |  |  |

|  |                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | Chutney-egg              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Leave-takings            |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Forty-two-year-old-mind  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Twenty-odd               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Kurtz-like               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Kohl-lined               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | a-remble                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Dust-laden               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Blood-red                |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Sing-song                |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Side-long-glances        |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Breast-overripe          |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Figure-hugging           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Twenty-four-year-old-son |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Good-natured             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Thick-lashed             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Ten-year                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Bell-bottoms             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Gold-embroidered         |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Beehive-coiffed          |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | s-e-x                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | Hasting-on-the-hudson |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Girl-child            |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Still-lactating       |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Sons-of-bitches       |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Anti-female           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Still-beautiful       |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Aram-say              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Self-flagellation     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Wife-who-won't        |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Give-him-any          |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Man-in-blue           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Ever-so-sainty        |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | No-nonsense           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Non-muslims           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Pro-democracy         |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | To-do                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Chocked-up            |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Graphological deviation occurs in the memoir in the form of unusual use of hyphen. There are certain words in English language which are hyphenated. As column 3 in the above table indicate that Afzal Khan has deliberately subverted the normative rules of English grammar and English language. She has inserted hyphen within words which are usually not hyphenated. Moreover, Afzal Khan's hyphenation of certain words which are present in the above table also creates a particular effect. For example, hyphenated word 'dis-ease' in the sentence "it is the dis-ease of paradox which I now wish to share with you, in the spirit of a friendly exposure" (Khan, 2013, p.xx) creates a particular effect. The insertion of hyphen in the word disease as dis-ease creates a semantic pun. Dis-ease can be taken as uneasiness created by the paradoxical nature of the state

of Pakistan. “*I hate to go-o-o...*” (Khan, 2013, p.49). Here, Afzal Khan has inserted hyphen in the additional vowel sounds with the word go because she may want to put a stress on the verb go. Insertion of hyphen in the letters of the word sex as ‘s-e-x’ again indicate the emphasis which is put on the word sex because sex is a taboo in the society of Pakistan. But Afzal Khan’s memoir deconstructs this taboo and her friend Saira overtly shares her first sexual encounter with her friends without using euphemisms. So it can be said that Afzal Khan’s insertion of hyphen is there to put emphasis on certain words.

Repetition of same word is a sort of deviation which is not allowed in the normative rules of English language. Mills (1997) argued that women are often portrayed as emotional, passive victim of circumstances and devoid of any agency. On the other hand, male characters are depicted as active agents making decisions and taking actions. One of the concerns of feminist stylistics is to examine the level to which a character is the passive victim of circumstance, or is actively in control of the environment, making decisions and taking actions (Mills, 1997, p.144).

The double and triple use of the words in the memoir as indicated in the table column 3 above is enforcing the effect of certain words. It does not seem to be ungrammatical in the context of the memoir. “I say no, and Bakri weeps. I am disgusted by the sight of a big man weeping big tears out of his big big eyes” (Khan, 2013, p.48). Here the poetic repetition of the word ‘BIG’ is quite ironic. In patriarchal society of Pakistan, tears are considered women’s weapon. On the other hand a man is not supposed to be emotional and shedding tears. But the Big man Bakri is not only emotional rather he also sheds tears. On the other hand, Afzal Khan is the one who uses her agency in rejecting Bakri’s proposal while letting him weep.

Another form of graphological deviation in the memoir is the addition of extra phonemes. Oh, this is toooo delicious for words. Whaaaaatistha matter, sweet ladies and good gentlemen of Lahore; you seem very distracted this morning” (Khan, 2013, p.27 & 116)

It seems to be a spontaneous outburst from the pen of the memoirist to blur the line between written and spoken discourse. It can be an attempt to show another way to reveal her agency and authority.

The 5<sup>th</sup> column in the table indicates graphological deviation in the form of spacing. The merging of words to make a single word is also a part of the campaign by feminists of 20th century to create matriarchal language. For example, herstory is a neologism invented in the late 1960’s as part of a feminist critique of traditional historiography. In the same way ladylord is also an alternative term for landlord. The merging of multiple nouns to create a single word e.g. sisterfriendsexysoulmate, actorsingerpoet and activistmemoirists may suggest the multiple subject position of women of colour and indicating that there is not a single monolithic identity of women of colour as defined by white feminists (Mohanty, 1991).

The 6<sup>th</sup> column in the table indicates deviant use of slashes. A slash is used in text to separate alternatives (written/spoken). Throughout the memoir, the memoirist has inserted slashes not for alternatives but either to split a single word or any other words of her own choice. For example, the creation of s/he intended to replace ‘generic’ he. Such linguistic terms are part of the campaign for non-sexist language in English. The reason for doing so is to put an end to sexist language and acknowledge everyone on equal basis through the language used (Mills, 1997, p.101).

The 7<sup>th</sup> column in the table reflects the deviant use of parenthesis. Parentheses ( ) are used to enclose additional, non-essential information to clarify, explain, or add a side note in a sentence. Feminist stylisticians claim that there is stereotypical assumption the frequent use of parenthesis in women’s writings suggest that women use a less authoritative style than that of men.

But Afzal Khan's use of parenthesis inside the words rather than statements may suggest that she is showing her own authority on the use of language and reflecting her own style. This innovative and deviant use is ironically showing her authority on the use of language.

The 8<sup>th</sup> column in the table represents deviation in the form of capitalization. According to Sara Mills one strategy to combat the patriarchal construction of language is to capitalize the certain words to disrupt their meanings. This strategy has also been employed by Afzal Khan in the construction of herstory of Pakistan throughout the text of the memoir. She has capitalized certain words and sentences as indicated in the table above to create a subversive effect and general change in the usage.

### Conclusion

To conclude we can say that Fawzial Afzal Khan has a very unique writing style. The deviant use hyphen, repetition, additional phonemes, spacing, slashes, parenthesis and capitalization unearth the different forms of graphological deviation in her memoir. It also reveals a deliberate endeavor on the part of memoirist to write in a style non-confirming to the standards of writings. She has tried to create an alternative narrative in matriarchal language. Moreover, this way of creative writing is more interesting and effective for the reader than the plain and simple style. This new manner of depicting and developing herstory of Pakistan aims towards a deeper meanings.

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