Unruly Voices/Disciplined Bodies: Games of Truth and Desire in Kishwar Naheed's Poetry

Nida Sajid
Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Minneapolis
509 22nd Street West, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55405, USA
Email: nidasajids@gmail.com

Abstract This article examines the poetry of a contemporary feminist poet from Pakistan, Kishwar Naheed (b. 1940). Using Michel Foucault's later writings, I look at the possibility of reading Naheed's poetry as acts of *parrhesia* where her aesthetic self merges with an ethical voice to create a literature of resistance against laws of patriarchy and the nation-state. I demonstrate how Naheed reshapes the positionality of the poetic "I" and, in the process, transforms poetry-writing into an act of "truth-telling" by creating an assemblage of dialogic voices. I further discuss how Naheed uses this poetic assemblage to specifically challenge the Islamization of Pakistan's legal system under the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988). Finally, I theorize feminist poetry from Pakistan as a discursive "game" of vacillitating truths and desires that women poets like Naheed employ to weave together issues of collective identity and individual performativity through intersecting narratives of gender, religion, and nation.
Keywords Kishwar Naheed; Feminism; Pakistan; Urdu Poetry; *Zina* Ordinance; *Parrhesia*

> We wish to be mute
> For those who clap do not use their voices
> A voice that is independent is the cry of Mansur
> When it is suffocated it becomes Nasir
> But at least the mute can scream
> Why is that so? How is that possible?
>
> (Naheed, *Distance* 20)

Kishwar Naheed, a feminist poet from Pakistan, ends her poem "Section 144" with these lines to open up the possibility of a voice without speech. Using a section of the Criminal Procedure Code as an allegorical device to describe the pervasive grids

of both patriarchal and state power, Naheed embarks upon a journey to search for a primordial voice that can convey collective dissent in the absence of a dissident community. Section 144 is a legal statute that prohibits public assembly of five or more persons in potentially disruptive situations, and it is frequently invoked by law enforcement authorities to disband protest gatherings. "Section 144" as a poem, however, names an uncanny assembly of voices that defy such laws by learning to speak beyond the sensory schema of the human body. Naheed first looks at a ninth-century Sufi mystic writer, Mansur al-Hallaj, in pursuit of a voice that speaks up against authority as a self-professed embodiment of truth. Al-Hallaj defied the conventions of his times to share his spiritual teachings with others and was publicly executed on the account of heresy by the Abbasid Caliph after a long drawn trial. The accusation of profanity against Al-Hallaj was based, among other things, on his claim that he was "Truth" — an assertion not available to mere mortals in his time. After Al-Hallaj, Naheed turns to someone closer home to show how protest gets stifled in authoritarian regimes. She draws our attention to the death of Hassan Nasir, a poet and political activist, after his arrest under the Security of Pakistan Act in 1960. As a leading figure of the banned Communist Party of Pakistan, Nasir was brutally tortured during police interrogation in Lahore, and succumbed to his injuries while in detention.

Despite suffering the punishment of corporeal death at the hands of a totalitarian law, both Al-Hallaj and Nasir are resurrected as unruly voices in Naheed's poem to signify the power of protest literature that can make the politically mute "scream". Naheed lyrically weaves together Al-Hallaj's spiritual claim to sovereign truth with Nasir's smothered rebellion to converse with the tumultuous politics of Pakistan in her own times. Naheed's writings, along with representing forced diktats of silence, constantly invoke personages in the act of practicing free speech in order to counter the "disciplining" impulses of historical discourse. One way to understand Naheed's need to rebel against conventions of history writing and search for a disembodied voice amid the historical spectrality of radical figures is through Michel Foucault's philosophical engagement with the relationship of an intellectual with truth and society. In many of his writings and interviews, Foucault tries to establish the ethical bind for intellectuals when they speak to governmental power and reflects on the following question: how do writers and intellectuals perform the function of "truth-telling" within the established grids of power and knowledge while addressing institutions and practices that produce and govern citizen subjects? In his early writings, Foucault conceptualizes truth, not as an ontological or transcendental reality, but as an "effect" of various techniques constituted in relation to language, power, and knowledge. While Foucault conceptualizes "regimes of truth" as historical

mechanisms that produce discourses with the function of being true in a specific time and space, he devotes much thought in his later writings and lectures to "games of truth" for articulating the agency of the subject. He hypothesizes two histories of truth, where the first kind is an "internal" history that "rectifies itself in terms of its own principles of regulation." In contrast to this regulated production of truth, Foucault writes,

> it seems to me that there are in society (or at least in our societies) other places where truth is formed, where a certain number of games are defined — games through which one sees certain forms of subjectivity, certain object domains, certain types of knowledge come into being — and that, consequently, one can on that basis construct an external, exterior history of truth. (*Power* 4)

As a part of this "exterior" history of truth, Foucault revisits the Greek term, *parrhesia*, and theorizes "free speech" as follows:

> parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). (*Fearless Speech*, 19)

Parrhesia, therefore, can be seen as a game of truth where "the speaker uses freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, the moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy" (*Fearless Speech*, 19). According to Foucault, *Parrhesia* is a kind of a role or an activity where the speaker says what she believes to be true, leading to a precise correspondence between truth and belief. Consequently, it is in the act of *parrhesia* that a *parrhesiastes* — the one who speaks freely in the face of authority — asserts absolute freedom to counter the disciplinary power of the state.

Like Al-Hallaj and Nasir who appear as parrhesiastic voices despite the decree of silence in her poem "Section 144", Kishwar Naheed is also a poet and an activist who has constantly engaged with the questions of truth, power, and justice, notwithstanding the presence of censorial forces in both her domestic and public life.

For example, in her semi-autobiographical work, *Buri Aurat ki Katha* (*A Bad Woman's Story*), she creates a parrhesiastic game by weaving together private reminiscences of living in purdah, getting married and having children, eye-witness accounts of repressive policies of local and national politics in South Asia, the violence during the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the Bangladesh liberation movement, and her own experiences of living under different military regimes in Pakistan. Beginning her narrative with a polyphonic assembly of women, Naheed writes, "In the old chronicles you never find details of incidents, only the judgement and the punishment, to teach a lesson to others" (*Bad Woman* 4). This statement is immediately preceded by a fictional dialogue between Eve and Safia Bibi, a blind girl who was punished with imprisonment and lashes in Pakistan as she was unable to prove the sexual violence behind her pregnancy. Hearing this punishment for a victim of rape, Eve discloses the complicity of patriarchy and law in perpetuating gendered violence by asking Safia Bibi, "Who punished you? Were you alone in this act, absolutely alone?" (4). In *Buri Aurat ki Katha*, much like her other writings, Naheed intersperses the private and public unfolding of events with spectral presences of historical and mythical women who speak freely to each other and to their times about their ostensibly "sinful deeds" in a feminist voice that refuses to be silenced by the label, "bad woman". Naheed's *katha* (story) further collects fragmentary traces of an unrequited love from Laila of an Indo-Persian romance and mythical motherhood from Yashodhara of a Sanskrit epic to make *Buri Aurat ki Katha* a unique "autobiographical *assemblage*", in which "there is no logic to a distinction between the autobiography and the archive or between the history of the self and the history of polities and communities with which it is in dialectical relationship" (Burton 186).

In this article, I read Naheed's poetry as acts of *parrhesia* where her aesthetic self merges with an ethical voice to create a literature of resistance against laws of patriarchy and the nation-state. Foucault, in his essay "Self Writing", engages with the question of how truth figures in the formation of the ethical subject in language. Borrowing an expression from Plutarch, Foucault claims that writing, as an element of self-training, has an *ethopoietic* function i.e. "it is an agent of the transformation of truth into *ethos*" (*Ethics* 209). Writing of the self, as a result, becomes a site for the production of the ethical subject through the material production of discourse. Taking his discussion of ethics further through the concept of *parrhesia*, Foucault asserts in his lectures that a "parrhesiastic activity also endeavored to elaborate the nature of the relationships between truth and one's style of life, or truth and an ethics and aesthetics of the self" ("Discourse and Truth"). He clearly points how "*Parrhesia* as it appears in the field of philosophical activity in Greco-Roman culture is not primarily a concept or theme, but a *practice* which tries to shape the specific relations individuals have to

themselves" (*Fearless Speech* 106). The act of "truth-telling" assumes an interlocutor (thus, making the "parrhesiastic pact" both intersubjective and dialogic); nevertheless, it also exists in the interstitial spaces between collective and individual practices that empower the borders of selfhood itself. In other words, a person practicing *parrhesia* does not only transform her relationship with power, state, and society, but also with her own voice and self.

Kishwar Naheed's "Speech Number Twenty-Seven", likewise, is a poet's provocative demand for the right to speech without fear. Naheed opens the poem with the following stanza to establish the poet's prerogative to admonish the repressive policies of the nation-state and the individuals who represent it:

> My voice is the voice of my city.
> My voice is the voice of my age.
> My voice will influence generations.
> What do you think it is,
> that you call my voice a clamour?
> How can you call my voice
> the voice of madness?
> How can you think
> the coming storm a mere illusion? (Naheed, *Distance* 22)

In this poem, Naheed articulates a poetic subjectivity that can embody resistance against a world riddled with the absence of political will. This need to address apathy in her poetics, as Mahwash Shoaib rightly points out, "consists of daring to confront global, national, social, and canonical norms in a lyrical manner that imagines a new threshold of being" ("Dictionary" 155). As the poem "Speech Number Twenty-Seven" unfolds, Naheed claims that she is no prophet for her times, but she can still plainly see politicians who sit in the back seats of limousines practicing their public speeches. For these representatives of the state, speech is no longer a means to question power, but a rhetorical tool to placate citizens with the illusion of justice. Their disparaging and cynical attitude towards any possibility of political change is apparent in the fact that they memorize each speech by its number and simply repeat it in public without ever bothering to know the issues concerning the audience. In a world where speech is nothing more than a neatly numbered clamour of sounds, the poet's voice in "Speech Number Twenty-Seven" opens up a possibility of a political revolution by speaking truth and mirroring the indolence of authority figures.

Naheed frequently combines descriptions of political repression with almost utopian visions of truth in order to transform the poetic space into an imaginary

experience of absolute sovereignty. Shoaib succinctly explains Naheed's need to engage with the politics of her times and assert her poetic sovereignty in the following manner:

> When dissent is silenced through coercion, self-serving laws of sedition and, ultimately, self-censorship, even control over vocabulary is lost...This becomes no more evident than in the eleven-year military rule of General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan, when writers were jailed, flogged, exiled, or banished to publishing oblivion if they dared to voice opposition against the military state. Naheed persistently memorializes in her poetry these opposing voices that are in danger of being silenced. ("Dictionary" 161)

Naheed herself states in an interview, "The whole atmosphere, the events, the brutal murders all effect one's idiom and scenario. It is not just the past few years: at first there was the worst law and order in Zia's times ... then 9/11 took place and, thereafter, there has been continuous brutal action" (Shoaib, "Interview" 174). In this climate of disillusionment, Naheed sees the poetic space not as a means for escape from the political realities of Pakistan, but as the very site to combat them. She writes in *Buri Aurat ki Katha*, "In my poetic journey Pasternak, Mayakovsky and Osip Mendelstam reassured me that 'Poetry is not another name for fulfilment. Let your poems absorb the truth in the same way as truth absorbs everything'" (124-25). For instance, in a poem titled "First-Class Needs of Third Class Citizens", she constructs the desire to speak as an essential practice of freedom, knowing too well the consequences of such rebellion in oppressive regimes. Despite a keen awareness of the fact that any form of opposition will invite the accusation of sedition, she writes

> Speaking is our necessity
> whether we speak licking the dust.
> My innocence pleads for itself
> with mouth buried in earth...
> how many people with a voice
> Are still alive in our city?
> Their heads must be chopped for decoration. (*Distance* 46)

Referring to military regimes as a conglomeration of "third-class citizens", Naheed calls living under martial law an exile for people who are deprived of even the "effort to speak". In this atmosphere of terror, Naheed's exhibits her knowledge of how the act of truth-telling is always laced with risk in another poem titled "Soliloquy":

Condemn me!
For writing the book without lunacy,
for writing the interpretation of
dreams with my blood...
Condemn me!
For censoring the crucifix of the foe,
for being the light of burning beacons
within the range of the wind. (*Distance* 40)

In this poem, Naheed illustrates how a poet can use the space of literature to become a *parrhesiastes*, where she can speak as loudly as possible without knowing who will be her audience or whether anyone is listening to her. In so doing, she performs a significant function of parrhesiaistic criticism, where, according to Foucault, it is not as imperative to demonstrate truth to someone else as to criticize the interlocutor or the speaker herself. In order to criticize her own complicity with structures of power as an intellectual, she constructs the poem as a soliloquy asking for condemnation from an imaginary and invisible interlocutor who has the authority to censure or punish her.

Naheed sees writing as a space for articulating both her subjective experience and also a collective truth interlaced with ethical responsibility. According to her, poetry has been a source of both personal pain and comfort, but it continues to provide her with the means to engage with the life of others in writing and beyond (*Bad Woman* 122-26). However, she refuses to accept any partition between private and shared experience in her writing and asks, "Can you call it a personal experience when a prisoner is being flogged and a microphone is placed before him to relay his screams to the crowd gathered outside the jail, and when I too am part of the crowd?" (qtd. in *Distance* xi). Naheed continues to describe the effect of events in Pakistan on her, and admits that she suffers from both personal and collective pain and anger. In order to articulate these emotions, she writes in "Nightmare":

The goat awaits slaughter
and I wait for the morning
for every morning I am slaughtered at my desk
for telling lies.
This is my price...
I and my country were born together
but we both lost our vision in our childhood...

> In my country women look at the crescent moon and pray...
> Perhaps, to attain a better afterlife for liars like us. (*Distance* 48)

The significance of this poem resides in the fact that Naheed refuses to believe in either her power or moral courage to tell the truth. In a sense, the poem serves as a warning to people against intellectuals who claim to have the moral authority or the social privilege to articulate resistance. She writes how "rusty" times can turn almost anyone into "petty officials" with "rusty tongues" that only know empty words to represent truth in writing. For Naheed, poetry can provide refuge to truth, but it can always be dismissed as fiction or a "lie" by those threatened by it. In order to elevate truth past personal belief, opinion, or cynicism, it is absolutely essential for a poet to understand the inadequacy of an undivided "I" and to look beyond her own self to experience the personal.

Naheed's engagement with the question of selfhood can be interpreted through Foucault's later writings on ethics and subjectivity. While the project of studying the nature of power relations remained central to Foucault's theoretical investigations, his later work tried to look at the technologies involved in the formation of the subject and its ethical implications. In one of his lectures at Dartmouth, he says

> Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity, maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. And in this case, one of the main political problems would be nowadays, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves. ("Two Lectures" 222–3)

As this quote suggests, one of the main concerns of Foucault's later career was to reconcile technologies that constitute subjects through power-knowledge relations with those technologies of the self through which individuals practice resistance and freedom. In this context, he developed his ideas about the "care of the self" or a set of ethical practices for challenging disciplinary power. Although Foucault has been accused of formulating an almost solipsistic ethics by over-emphasizing the importance of autonomy in one's actions, it is crucial to understand that he did so with the intention of illustrating how individualities merge together to form collectivities and intense social relations. He makes his position clear in an interview:

> The care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with

> others insofar as this *ēthos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others... And the care of the self also implies a relationship with the other insofar as proper care of the self requires listening to the lessons of a master. One needs a guide, a counsellor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you. (*Ethics* 287)

Instead of instituting a narcissistic subjectivity, Foucault underscores how reflexive practices comprising the self can not only broaden the processes of subjectivation, but they can also constitute a potential site for engaging in reciprocal relations with others and creating a collaborative political community. In this sense, the act of speaking frankly in a parrhesiastic act also constitutes an ethical gesture towards the other and amounts to a technology of the self for resisting regimes of truth.

This intersubjective aspect of Foucault's theorization of the care of the self has played a significant role in feminist theory as it assists feminist scholars to analyze processes of subject production and relations of power marked by gender. Patricia Amigot and Margot Pujal, for instance, develop the Foucauldian paradigm of exploring the tension between subjectivation and domination in the following manner:

> First, we believe that the processions of the constitution of subjectivity and its production of embodied effects that sediment hegemonic technologies pass, precisely, through intersubjectivity. Second, this claim brings us to think intersubjectivity as the space of possibility for transformation in relations of power. The rules that regulate the workings of truth are never individual or transcendent; they are actuated and re-actualized in practices whose regulation exceeds that of individuals. An intersubjective practice that problematizes configured sexual identities and displaces regimes of truth in which they are inscribed fractures and permits resignification and transformation. Intersubjective practice in this way becomes a site of "empowerment" and a site of possibility for the use of liberatory practices for groups of women. (664-65)

According to Amigot and Pujal, Foucault's explorations of the intersections between collective identity and individual performativity can help feminist writers identify the gendered technologies of both power and the self in order to create subversive strategies for performing collective resistance against the laws of patriarchy.

Naheed too, in her poetry, excavates new modalities for subjectivation by reconciling her poetic self with multiplicity of voices and, in the process, creates an intersubjective space that performs the function of *parrhesia*. While her writings point to the power of literature over public and official discourses of truth, her poetic self-reflectivity reveals the unstable nature of truth-telling itself and presents a dialogic

collectivity of contesting desires. As such, her poetry becomes a site for articulating a "parrhesiastic pact" — especially between women — that refuses to give into the totalizing claims of either the self or the other. In a poem titled "I and I", Naheed writes

> I am not a woman alone;
> many are imprisoned within myself.
> One woman,
> Who joined Adam to her blood...
> Another,
> Who entered the world of man,
> Carried his burden and hers...
> Another,
> Who would not be
> *Yashodara*, or *Noor Jahan*, or *Mumtaz*...
> Another,
> Who wrote tales of bravery in the day,
> Of cowardice at night...
> And another,
> Who even now is like a steam engine:
> Keeps drinking water,
> Vomiting smoke
> And keeps going, keeps going, keeps going. (*Illegitimate Voice* 86-7)

Here, the poetic self splits into many fragmented selves — some named, other nameless — to release Naheed's voice from the egotistical confines of her selfhood to connect with multiple singularities. Each "I" in the poem is incomplete in itself, waiting to be completed by another "I"; in this process, each self comprehends the need of the other to complete its unfinished story. In her poem, "The Hand of Fate", Naheed again evokes an incessant cycle of birth and death to articulate a feminist ethics that connects disparate histories of oppression and resistance. Describing her own poetic self as a "mother", Naheed draws together real and fictional lives of women into a feminist revolution:

> A mother like me gave birth
> To a princess, tall like a date palm,
> Who was burnt by the fire of sword,
> And sacrificed her life.

> A mother like me gave birth
> To a wretch like me
> Who has lived drop by drop
> And killed death herself. (*Illegitimate Voice* 49)

By alluding to the nameless mothers who gave birth to women like Meera Bai, Cleopatra, Noor Jehan, and Sassi, she imagines her own self as an embodiment of a primordial motherhood that gives birth to such voices of rebellion, even if they are repeatedly condemned to death and punishment. As Neluka Silva acutely points out in her discussion of feminist poetry from Pakistan: "Since the process of childbirth is inextricably linked with, and takes place within, the female body, it brings into play a range of questions and issues pertaining to the body and its symbolic signification, for instance, as well as its deployment in spatial and national discourse" (38). Like many of Naheed's other poetic works, "The Hand of Fate" uses the symbolism of motherhood and childbirth to bring together multiple singularities and create a transnational genealogy of feminist resistance. The metaphor of the reproductive female body straddles the boundary between the real and the imagined to resist the disciplinary power of nationalist or religious discourses.

Naheed's poetry frequently brings the parrhesiastic "I" in conversation with a collective "we" to articulate a feminist ethics and empower women against the patriarchal laws of the nation-state. She reshapes the positionality of the poetic "I" and, in the process, transforms poetry-writing into an act of "truth-telling" by creating an assemblage of dialogic voices. These voices play a vacillitating "game" of repressed aspirations and liberated desires by weaving together issues of collective identity and individual performativity through intersecting narratives of gender, domesticity, religion, and nation. Naheed uses this poetic assemblage to specifically challenge the Islamization of Pakistan's legal system under the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), who promulgated new laws for the establishment an Islamic system of trail and punishment. The Zina Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence related to adultery, fornication and rape, in particular, institutionalized gender discrimination, eroded women's rights, and strengthened patriarchal beliefs and practices in Pakistan. Naheed describes the ramifications of the Islamization of state laws in the following manner:

> 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. Brothers accused sisters of Zina, and in gobbling up their inheritance felt their manhood vindicated. Fathers got their daughters accused of Zina to prevent them

> from marrying of their own will so that they could lay their hands on the dowry which would make their own lives comfortable (*Bad Woman* 33).

Shahnaz Khan, in her study of women incarcerated in Pakistani jails under the zina laws, states that the state practices associated with the zina laws render the arrest and imprisonment of women natural and normal: "Women are intimidated into becoming docile bodies and participating in unequal relations with their families, their husbands and their employers" (96). In her poem "Charge Sheet 1990", Naheed captures how Zina Ordinance has become a political tool in the hands of a patriarchal society to undermine women's rights:

> The lock on my door has been loosened
> But the door remains closed.
> The cloth over my eyes has been removed
> But I still cannot see anything.
> The seals around my lips have been broken
> But I have lost the gift of speech...
> From adultery to a half-witness
> All abuses are meant for me...
> I am free or in bondage
> From adultery to a half-witness
> My charge-sheet is pretty long! (*Distance* 94)

In this poem, Naheed draws the reader's attention to the fact that state laws related to women's bodies do not only lead to corporeal punishment or physical incarceration for crimes they did not commit, but they also force women to regulate their own behaviour and moral conduct out of fear of the possible repercussions of their actions. As Shahnaz Khan notes, "Powerful signifiers of nation and religion render ideas about zina, or illicit sex, a significant regulator of normative morality. Challenging them means not only questioning religion but also the symbolic force that created and continues to sustain the state of Pakistan" (89). Despite the risk involved in speaking against the Islamization of legal system, Naheed uses the poetic space to challenge the moral force of zina laws by raising important issues pertaining to women's rights in Pakistan. In a poem titled "We Sinful Women", she creates an autonomous domain of expression for women to counter the hegemony of state laws and patriarchal norms:

> It is we sinful women
> who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns

> who don't sell our lives
> who don't bow our heads
> who don't fold our hands together...
> It is we sinful women
> who come out raising the banner of truth
> against the barricade of lies on the highways
> who find stories of persecution piled on each threshold
> who find the tongues which could speak have been severed. (*Distance* 74)

Naheed intertwines protests against religion, state, and family through a collective "we" to reiterate the inability of the modern nation-state to counter traditional patriarchy and ensure basic human rights for women. The Law of Evidence introduced in 1984, for instance, states that the testimony of two women is admissible only as one reliable source. In other words, the testimony of a woman is considered half that of a man's in the court of law. In the absence of laws that protect women against gendered violence, "We Sinful Women" gives us an assembly of defiant women who refuse to remain silent and commit the "sin" of speaking against their country and religion. As Amina Jamal explains, women of the urban educated classes looked to the modernizing state to implement women's rights till 1977, but their faith in the modern state was shaken during Haq's regime: "after the introduction of state-sponsored Islamization and the attendant moves to reassign women's place in social and political life, women's struggle for rights and freedom had to be waged against a confrontational rather than reformist state" (67).

Around the time Haq imposed martial law and declared military rule in Pakistan, Foucault gave a series of lectures at Collège de France where, among other topics, he discussed the concept of biopower. According to him, biopower is a technology of power for managing human beings as a group and taking control over entire populations. In his other work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault speaks of biopower as a political technology that brought "life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (143). Amigot and Pujal read Foucault's concept of technologies of the self in conjunction with his elucidation of biopower to offer possibilities for analysing how women are feminized through a range of public/private discourses and transformed into docile bodies for reproducing not only human life, but also patriarchal norms and values. They write,

> Power, in its demarcating and discursive construction of objects/subjects, and in other interrelated practices, establishes specific historical processes of

> subjectivation. Discourses of women's nature and disciplining and normalizing practices are especially relevant with regard to the production of "proper" feminine bodies and subjectivities. The concept of regimes of power/knowledge provides a way of looking critically at canonical narratives and discourses, whether scientific, religious, or quotidian. (650-51)

This particular feminist reading of biopower is also very useful for analysing how the state laws, religion and patriarchy function as technologies to control gendered populations in Pakistan and how women create different modalities for resisting the disciplining impulses of these regimes. As Silva observes in the context of feminist poetry from Pakistan, writing about the body and soliciting freedom by women and for women "has a clear political imperative within a landscape of religio-social repression and patriarchal authority, since the body is simultaneously a surface on which social law, morality, values, and lived experience are inscribed" (34).

Naheed's feminist poetry, therefore, illustrates various techniques through which the state exercises control over women's lives and turn them into subjugated bodies. In the poem "How Crazy are Those who Love you so Much," she draws our attention to social mechanisms that produce normative ideas regarding gender and sexuality, and how these cultural discourses transform women's bodies into a symbolic expression of male honor and respectability. Describing the love of a husband towards his wife, she writes,

> With words of chastity he adorned my hands,
> chained my feet like prisoners,
> and called it modesty...
> He says: 'What more can you ask for?
> Walls of marble, clean and shining
> to keep you safe. The gold lock and chain
> on big, solid black mohagony doors
> at least show that it's all for you,
> for your security, for your love.' (*Distance* 26)

In this poem, Naheed constructs the private realm of "home" as a site for not only producing prescriptive notions of morality for women, but also creating a liminal space for them within the nation-state. She continues writing,

> How lovingly and hopefully built,
> this home full of ideals and dreams!

It's been tested with screams,
making sure that if a sound
dare penetrate some crevice
It will turn to foam, exhausted,
and nothing will get through. (*Distance* 26)

Naheed illustrates how the domestic space lends itself to patriarchal deception by portraying a picture of perfect conjugal bliss, where the "pure" and "selfless" love between a man and a woman provides the foundation of marriage. With greater emphasis on intimate, dyadic husband/wife relationships and the mutual dependency of conjugal relations, such representations condense a woman's world to the home by maintaining a gendered division of public/private spheres. Naheed, however, constructs "home" as a space of imprisonment instead of conjugal bliss, since it is always open to patriarchal control with the "panoptical gaze" of customs and traditions ensuring regulated behavior.

In order to show the complicity of social customs and cultural traditions with the nation-state, Naheed frequently draws the reader's attention to the patriarchal practice of *purdah* in her poetry. Literally meaning curtain or veil, *purdah* is a complex set of norms and practices regarding space, body and sexuality that defines a woman's place within a given social structure. Hanna Papanek defines the *purdah* as a system "related to status, the division of labor, interpersonal dependency, social distance and the maintenance of moral standards specified by society" (8) and theorizes the purdah system as following:

> …acting at various social and psychological levels, [purdah system] can be conceptualized in terms of two interacting and closely related principles which may be called 'separate worlds' and provision of 'symbolic shelter.' In a way, they are parallel, rather than mutually exclusive…the first, separate worlds, relates most closely to the division of labor in terms of actual work allocated to different categories of people…symbolic shelter deals with a division of another kind, the complementary and asymmetrical relations between the sexes…[it] becomes a significant mechanism for limiting affect to a specific group through the use of social control mechanisms. Dominance and dependency are integral to its operation. (7-8)

The basic values of *purdah* such as modesty and propriety are appropriated by the state in Pakistan to give shape to a domestic discourse that normalizes a patriarchal family system with gendered separation of spheres of activity. In discursive efforts to

push women into the private sphere of the family and home, as Amina Jamal points out, "proponents of Islamization frequently use the terms 'girl,' 'daughter,' or 'ward,' thereby denying women's legal status as adult individuals who have the capacity to give consent or to enter into contract" (73). To illustrate the erosion of women's rights with the nation-state's appropriation of customary practices of a traditional patriarchy, Naheed writes in a poem titled "I am not that Woman":

> Remember me, I am the one you hid
> in your walls of stone, while you roamed
> free as the breeze...
> I am the one you crushed
> with the weight of custom and tradition...
> I am the woman
> whom you bought and sold
> in the name of my own chastity...
> I am the one you married off
> to get rid of a burden
> not knowing
> that a nation of captive minds cannot be free.
> I am the commodity you traded in,
> my chastity, my motherhood, my loyalty. (*Distance* 34)

In her theorization of *purdah* as symbolic shelter, Papanek notes, "What is fundamentally implied in the concept of symbolic shelter is that something or someone needs to be protected, in a given space and time, from forces originating elsewhere. This task requires a very profound differentiation between persons who need protection and those who provide it, and it is here that the deepest inequality is assumed" (35). Naheed also echoes Papanek reading of purdah in *Buri Aurat ki Katha*, "The word 'protection' has been attached to the female sex. Protecting her love, shelter, future, position in society. It is fate to be protected by a man" (*Bad Woman* 176). In "I am not that Woman", she questions the meaning of protection and shelter in the name of patriarchal laws when all they do is reduce her entire identity to a traded commodity.

To conclude, as a literary parrhesiastes who refuses to be turned into a docile body or silenced by the forces of censorship, Naheed creates an ethical bind for those with the freedom to write and represent the pain of the other. To a large extent, we can read her poems as gendered practices of aesthetic subjectivation that answer to Foucault's injunction about how the care of the self needs to be interpreted through

the practice of autonomy as an ethical act: “Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (*Ethics* 284). In a poem titled “Ants Consume the Elephant”, for instance, Naheed’s feminist self converges with her poetic self to traverse both the domestic spaces in Pakistan and the global history of violence and oppression. By imbricating both language and self with a poetic ethos, the poet weaves together subjection of individuals with possibilities of collective resistance through her own self-reflective perambulations in the discursive universe of feminist ethics:

> On whom should I write a poem now
> That girl
> who cannot marry
> of her own accord
> and those who point fingers,
> her own blood,
> are petitioners of justice
> That darling
> for daring to express her own will
> is wandering between dungeons
> and sees ahead the person who had reared her
> in the form of an assassin
> On whom should I write a poem now
> The city of Kosovo
> where a mother
> has found all her six beloved children
> in the same grave
> Or should I go see in Albania
> in unknown faces
> the same
> crying, lamenting motherhood
> Weak colors fade
> but the color of a mother’s sorrow stays fresh
> who will remove it
> who will forget it
> On whom should I write a poem now (“Selections” 95)

Naheed’s poetry often presents itself as an assemblage of parrhesiastic voices and unrecorded histories that opens up a new space for the reader to imagine “the

possibilities of re-membering voices lost in the discourses of power, those of marginalized women and the disenfranchised silent majority" (Shoaib, "Dictionary" 153). Though the personal experience of living in Pakistan as a woman has been the subject of many of her poems, Naheed constantly engages in imaginative "border-crossings" in search of a language that can voice political and ethical concerns beyond the domain of her immediate experience. In another poem titled "The Poem that Doesn't Melt in Europe", Naheed merges her poetic self with the pain of the other to create a vocabulary of shared suffering and represent the imbalance of power between nations of the global North and South:

> I was once sorrow, epitome of sorrow
> before seeing
> the crying sobbing women of Bosnia...
> I was once hunger
> before seeing
> humanity in Rwanda eating its own excrement
> in Somalia shredding the hide of camels...
> Darkness, helplessness and barbarity all have their own stench
> This stench is not for those nations
> waiting
> for the end of the last man who asks for his rights. ("Selections"83)

As Jahan Ramazani rightly points out, "when the intercultural tropes, allusions, and vocabularies of poetry outstrip single-state or single-identity affiliations, they can exemplify the potential for generative intercultural exploration" and "evoke noncoercive and nonatavistic forms of transnational imaginative belonging" (339). This sense of belonging, in Naheed's poetry, points toward the possibility of creative "truth-telling" that liberates poets from the repressive demands of an authoritarian schema of representation and facilitates the formation of an alternate, albeit imaginary, model of citizenship.

Works Cited

Amigot, Patricia and Margot Pujal. "On Power, Freedom, and Gender: A Fruitful Tension between Foucault and Feminism." *Theory & Psychology* 19.5 (2009): 646–669

Burton, Antoinette. "'An Assemblage/Before Me': Autobiography as Archive."*Journal of Women's History* 25.2 (2013): 185-188.

Foucault, Michel. *Fearless Speech*. Ed. Joseph Pearson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001.

---. *Power*. Ed. James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 2000.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Tr. Robert Hurley. New York: Random House, 1990.

---. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997.

---. "About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth." *Political Theory* 21.2 (1993): 198–227.

---. *Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia* (six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, October–November 1983). Ed. Joseph Pearson. Compiled from tape-recordings in 1985 and re-edited in 1999. Web. 18 Nov. 2014. <http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/>

Jamal, Amina. "Transnational Feminism as Critical Practice: A Reading of Feminist Discourses in Pakistan." *Meridians* 5.2 (2005): 57-82.

Khan, Shahnaz. "Zina and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women: Feminism, Race, Trans nationalism." *Feminist Review* 75 (2003): 75-100.

Naheed, Kishwar. *A Bad Woman's Story*. Tr. Durdana Soomro. Karachi: OU Press, 2009.

---. "Selections from the Poetry of Kishwar Naheed." Tr. Mahwash Shoaib. *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 1.1 (2009): 82-96.

---. *The Distance of a Shout*. Ed. Asif Farrukhi. Karachi: OU Press, 2001.

---. *The Scream of an Illegitimate Voice*. Trs. Baider Bakht, Leslie Lavigne and Derek M. Cohen. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1991.

Papanek, Hanna and Gail Minault. *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*. Columbia: South Asian Books, 1982.

Ramazani, Jahan. "A Transnational Poetics." *American Literary History* 18. 2 (2006): 332-359.

Shoaib, Mahwash. "'A Dictionary to Define My Dreams': The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetting in Kishwar Naheed's Poetry." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 39.3/4 (2011): 153-170.

---. "Vocabulary of Resistance: A Conversation with Kishwar Naheed." *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 1.2 (2009): 172-179.

Silva, Neluka. "Shameless Women: Repression and Resistance in *We Sinful Women: Contemporary Urdu Feminist Poetry*."*Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 3.2 (2003): 28-51.

责任编辑：郑　杰