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**SINZANG**

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COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

**Peleforo GON COULIBALY University**

**Côte d'Ivoire**

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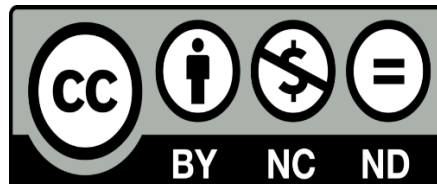
## INDEXING AND REFERENCING

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## EDITORIAL

Among the Senufos from the north of Côte d'Ivoire, the sacred grove is called "Sinzang". The first of these would date from the time of the patriarch and leader of Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). It is the tutelary space of the initiatory institute of the secret society: the Poro. These sacred forests exist in all the villages of the region and are highly protected and managed. The proof is that in their midst, adolescents perform the rite of passage leading them to the age of maturity. The "Sinzang" is also the centre of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Thus, the teaching of ancestral knowledge, ontology and cosmogony-contributing to the future spiritual, moral and social formation of the Senufo elite-is associated with this pantheon.

In line with this pedagogical and academic logic, the SINZANG Journal aims to promote African and Western humanities in Literature, Language, Communication and Education Sciences. To do this, it is part of a process of promoting the reflections and studies conducted by Teachers-Researchers and Researchers for the sustainable development of society.

As distinctive signs of "Sinzang", Jacqueline DELANGE, in *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifies among others the huts, earth cones and statues (masks). The visual identity of this magazine presents two masks, one symbolizing ancestral knowledge and the other Western science. The two facing the entrance of a sacred hut express the encounter of diverse knowledge put at the service of humanity. *In fine*, they export to other horizons, hence the idea of huts in perspective.

SINZANG is a pluridisciplinary and biannual peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is published in English and French but also accepts work written in German and Spanish. Moreover, depending on the requests made at the discretion of its review committee, it may issue special thematic publications and conference proceedings.

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## ÉDITORIAL

Chez les Sénoufos du nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, le bosquet sacré est communément appelé « Sinzang ». Les premiers du genre dateraient de l'époque du patriarche et chef de Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). C'est l'espace tutélaire de l'institut initiatique de la société secrète : le Poro. Lieux fortement protégés et aménagés à l'envi, ces forêts sacrées existent dans tous les villages de la région. La preuve en est qu'en leur sein, les adolescents effectuent le rite de passage les amenant à l'âge de la maturité. Le « Sinzang » est aussi le haut lieu de la transmission de la connaissance intergénérationnelle. Ainsi, l'enseignement du savoir ancestral, de l'ontologie et la cosmogonie- contribuant à la formation spirituelle, morale et sociale de l'élite Sénoufo de demain-est associé à ce panthéon.

S'inscrivant dans cette logique pédagogique et académique, la Revue SINZANG ambitionne de faire la promotion des humanités tant africaine qu'occidentale dans le domaine de la Littérature, des Sciences du Langage, de la Communication et de l'Éducation. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche de vulgarisation des réflexions et des études menées par les Enseignants-Chercheurs et des Chercheurs pour le développement durable de la société.

Comme signes distinctifs du « Sinzang », Jacqueline DELANGE, dans *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifie entre autres les cases, les cônes en terre et les statues (masques). L'identité visuelle de cette revue présentant deux masques, l'un symbolisant le savoir ancestral et l'autre la science occidentale. Les deux se faisant face à l'entrée d'une case sacrée expriment la rencontre de connaissances diverses mis au service de l'humanité. In fine, elles s'exportent vers d'autres horizons ; d'où l'idée des cases en perspective.

SINZANG est une revue pluridisciplinaire à comité de lecture et scientifique. Elle est bilingue : éditée en anglais et en français. Mais elle accepte également les travaux écrits en allemand et en espagnol. C'est une revue semestrielle, tenant deux parutions l'an. Au demeurant, elle peut procéder, selon les demandes ou les sollicitations formulées à l'appréciation de son comité de lecture, à des parutions spéciales thématiques et à la diffusion d'actes de colloque.

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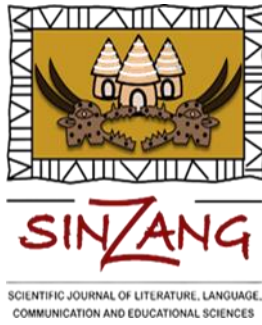
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## FEMINIST DISCOURSE AND THE RESHAPING OF FEMALE IMAGE IN KILANKO YEJIDE'S *DAUGHTERS WHO WALK THIS PATH*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to reveal the feminist strategies used by women to subvert male hegemony, especially their proclivity to reduce women to sexual objects. Through the lens of feminist criticism, we successively dealt with female's subjugation to rape; their struggle to resist male whimsical desires and finally their actions for the reshaping of their image. The study has shown their victory in leading a fight for the change of their conditions in phallogocentric societies of Africa.

**Keywords:** *image, phallogocentric, rape, reshaping, resist.*

### DISCOURS FÉMINISTE ET RESTAURATION DE L'IMAGE DE LA FEMME DANS *DAUGHTERS WHO WALK THIS PATH* DE KILANKO YEJIDE

### RESUME

L'objectif de cette étude est de révéler les stratégies féministes employées par les femmes pour subvertir l'hégémonie masculine, spécialement leur tendance à réduire les femmes à des objets sexuels. A travers le prisme de la critique féministe, nous avons successivement traité de la subjectification de la femme au viol ; leur combat pour résister aux désirs impulsifs et charnels des hommes, et finalement, des actions mises en place pour restaurer leur image. Cette étude a démontré la victoire féminine en menant le combat pour le changement de leurs conditions dans des sociétés phallogocentriques d'Afrique.

**Mots-clés :** *changement, image, restaurer, phallogocentrique, viol.*

### INTRODUCTION

In most parts of the world, women still suffer from violence, bushing due to their sex and stereotypes that are stuck to their image. Social opinion considers women as inferior to men. Thus, this second-class citizen of the woman justifies a series of oppression, perpetrated against her by men. Thus, patriarchy underlines traditional and cultural victimization of female gender through set of beliefs and habits that are imposed by patriarchal norms. That is to say, this research belongs to a feminist study.

As far as feminism is concerned, it is an outstanding movement through which writers used to point out females frustrations and their subordinations in patriarchal societies. So, feminist thinkers used to identify the sources of women's sufferings. Female subjugations are caused by the cultural and social realities they experience every day.

In fact, male and female different cultural status create a sort of gap between both. Feminist writers analyze those statuses as a binary opposition between man and woman. That opposition takes into account the two divergent positions that are attributed to both characters. It hermetically shows the superior position and the inferior one. That is to say higher and important places in the society are for male sex while woman is characterized by the notion of inferiority. According to L. Tyson feminist investigation, the norms established in the society are in favor of male gender. She argues that patriarchal ideology considers male sex as naturally strong, wise and rational. In the meantime, the female gender is assumed to be weak, irrational (L. Tyson, 2006:85). For this reason, certain feminists think patriarchy is a means of psychological programming of society in order to legitimize female subordination. With all these characteristics taken into account, the woman is categorized as a second class citizen in phallogocentric society.

To expose such degrading treatment against themselves, some female writers decide to write in order to denounce their plights. So then, our corpus entitled *Daughters Who Walk This Path* is a perfect example. It takes part of that framework because it portrays woman physical sufferings and ill-treatment undertaken by men against them.

This article based on this corpus intends to highlight the struggle of women to change their living conditions for the better by reshaping their own image. Our work is theoretically based on feminism. According to T. Moi (1989, p. 117):

'Feminist criticism', then, is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical, a practice committed to struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature, at least not if the latter is presented as no more than another interesting critical approach on a par with a concern for sea-imagery or metaphors of war in medieval poetry.

With this the feminist theory in spotlight, the work will be centered on three elements: first, oppression against women. Second, female resistance through body control. Third, the reshaping of female image.

## 1. MALE RAPE AS PHYSICAL DISTRESS AGAINST WOMEN

Feminist writers assume that the non-consensual or forced sex perpetrated by a man on a woman is a treatment to exerting violence. Indeed, they also explain that in phallogentric societies, the abduction of a woman especially for sexual purposes is an evident form of oppression against woman folk by man. The fact that the male gender forces sex upon the female gender without their consent is a condemnable act of violence. Thus, the condemnable act of coitus forced by a man is likened to an act of aggression. Here, I notice two cases of rape that are explicitly emphasized in the novel. Morayo, the protagonist and her aunt Morenike are the two female characters, victims of sexual molestation. The two scenes of rape have some diverging characteristics and some common points. The first case of rape that the narrator exposes is a scene of rape that I define as a passive rape. We can read it as follows:

My legs were thrown apart. I felt a sharp pain go right through my center. As Bros T pushed into my unwelcoming body, my spirit floated high up to the ceiling. Looking down, I saw a child with a familiar face on the bed below. Her terror-filled eyes stared away into nothingness, her mouth open wide in a silent scream. Then, as quickly as I had left that trembling body, I was back inside. I felt a pain deep inside me. Bros T panted and grunted for an eternity, until he suddenly jerked and then was still. Without one word, he got up from my bed, pulled on his trousers, and staggered out of the room (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 68-69).

The above-cited sentences of the narrator describes clearly the soulless and traumatizing rape scene of the female character “Morayo”. In that section, the narrator uses some tools that enable us to characterize this scene of rape as a passive and non-violent rape. In fact, he uses for example the passive voice in order to reveals a male perpetrator who exploits his prey and a female victim who undergoes actions without any resistance. That is why he writes: «My legs were thrown apart» (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 68-69). This sequence shows that there is no confrontation from the female victim; she is undergoing the actions of her aggressor. Therefore, we can consider the non-resistance and the non-defense of the victim, as a silenced and pacific rape, because she seems to accept the male domination exerting on her body. In addition, the narrator uses an oxymoron figure to better highlight the passive nature of that scene of rape. By describing this scene, he says: «her mouth open wide in a silent scream» (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 68-69). By this sentence, he wants to show the suppressed pain that the female character feels during the oppressive act that she experiences. As a matter of fact, that “silent scream” she fills is compared to a pain that even cries and shouting cannot express.

In this second scene of rape, the narrator describes the battle between Morenike and the rapist. At the opposite of the first female character, this second scene presents a woman fighting with her perpetrator. Indeed, contrary to the first scene of rape, I notice that there is a form of violence and brutality in the second scene. Each violent shot that she receives symbolizes the fact that she has to be submitted to her male perpetrator. We can see that in the following sentence: «he slapped her across the face» (K. Yejide, 1975:, p.108). The violence that the narrator describes reveals the insubordination of the female victim. So, in order to demonstrate his empowerment upon his prey, the male bully insults, he beats and finally he rapes.

Rape describes the different features of a sexual abuse. Those characteristics are violence, brutality, insensitivity, lack of consent and softness. Those features indeed implicate corporal, psychological pain that the female victim endures. In our case, those elements are well depicted. The use of verbs like: “clamped, jabbed, snapped, slapped” reveals the non-consent of the female victim and the brutality of the aggressor.

In fact, when analyzing both cases of rape presented in our text, we can say that sexual abuses seem to be one of the principal means of demonstration of power and authority for male folk in our narrative. This perception of male folk is influenced by phallogocentric society that the narrator describes in the text. That society, according to oxford dictionary is a society which considers the phallus or penis as a symbol of authority and domination. That ideology goes along with African cultural system which is patriarchy. It means that the upbringing of both genre male and female is based on that life standard of African conception. Consequently, that society naturally embraces man superiority while female gender is attributed the second place. That second place portrays woman as weak, emotional, sensitive, and unable to lead and make decisions. That is why the feminist thinker L. Tyson (2006, p. 85) describes patriarchy «as any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles». In others terms, it is a culture which centers man while putting woman at the periphery.

Moreover, in the same line of reflection rape exists in patriarchal setting because women are considered as incomplete human being because of their biological differences. This under-classification is at the root of women physical distress. Men folk indeed have developed the ability to treat female folk as an-easy-object to manipulate that they can entrap and play with. Such mentality is based on patriarchal

stereotypes implemented in perpetrator mind. In effect, the scene of rape of Morayo depicts this mentality in the following lines: «It is time a real man makes you a woman» (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 68). This excerpt shows that for men, women necessary depend on a male assistance. That explains the proudness and the insensibility of each perpetrators in our rape scenes. For men, women are not too different from those female animals like tigress, bitch and wildcat who need to be tamed. Thus, men considered themselves as the masters who possess the ownership of women. That is why de Beauvoir in her feminist work states that woman body is «a prey for him» (S. de Beauvoir, 1946, p. 441). This expression comes to justify the fact that Morayo represents an object for her perpetrator. An object that someone can steal. So, the male character Bros T, who considers himself as a lion or a dog decides to protect his zone through the rape. Consequently, the value of this female in the narrative of this fiction is reduced to a mere thing. In the story of Yejide Kilanko's writing, the antagonist "Bros T" rapes without any regret because the rules of patriarchal constitution are in favor of the male gender. For him it is a proper way to take control on Morayo. Then, sexual oppression he exerts on her enables him to acquire a certain honor. Therefore, as far as Morayo is concerned, she has just to undergo without any word because her cultural and social environment is a defense system built for men so even her family member will not come to rescue her.

Furthermore, the analysis of phallocentric perception about women folk permit us to notice that female image is stick to two sexist terms: sex and submission. These terms reveal that men folk consider their honor between woman's legs. That is to say, physical violence that men exert upon women permit them to demonstrate their manhood in the society. It is in that same line of reflection that the feminist thinker A. Thiam (1986, p. 124) explains that:

Women, there is a common denominator in your lives: phallocratic violence. It is this violence which makes you think that you don't amount to anything on your own, without the other, the one who has got 'something between his legs', the one with the phallus.

A. Thiam reveals that phallocentric violence creates in women a feeling of dependence toward men. That dependence on men transforms them in victims of patriarchal alienation. Yet, to make this situation change, women will fight to improve their condition. They will strive to get out of the constrictions of patriarchy.

## **2. FEMINIST BODIES: RESISTANCE THROUGH BODY CONTROL**

To assert their resistance to male hegemonic ways, women offers to fight using their bodies as a powerful strategy. This feminist confrontation implicates female body control. In fact, feminist reformist actions in society are not limited to a verbal resistance but also a corporal resistance. They decide to react physically because words are not enough in order to express determination. That is why female proceed firstly by a verbal resistance and secondly by a physical resistance because it is proper to add actions to words in order to be more effective. In patriarchal setting, sexuality concept has always been attributed to male folk. In another terms, men are the only one gender who has the right to generate sexual drive and satisfy them. So men used to oppress women by controlling their body. In fact, in the corpus, the female character used to be considered as a prey to her perpetrator Bros T. Both characters reflect positions occupied by each male and female in the society. As every men in the patriarchal society he proceeds by every means to molest her sexually. However, view the awareness of women concerning their value and importance in the society, their mentally has changed. Thus, Morayo establishes that resistance by refusing her body to men. Considering herself as subject and not a sexual object, she can decide about her own body. A male opinion does not count. That is what the narrator emphasizes in the following passage:

I wanted to be able to decide what happened. The irony was that when I lost interest in men during my famine seasons, it only intensified the chase. The fact that I did not need their sweet words or attention drove them crazy. I was like a new frontier they wanted to conquer. But if there was any conquering to be done, I was determined to be the one doing it” (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 204).

Here, rather than men, it t is the woman who conquers and decides about what can happen or not. Female consciousness allows them to take the control of their body in order to stop any sexist conduct that men can perform face to her. Thus, the era of victimization has gone. Through Morayo character the narrator implicitly explains that barriers of self-access that male folk builds through sexist ideology are broken. Then now it is for woman to decide for her own sexuality. In the same vein B. Hooks (1984, p. 47) argues that:

Before we can resist male domination we must break our attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness. Working together to expose, examine, and eliminate sexist socialization within ourselves, women would strengthen and affirm one another and build a solid foundation for developing political solidarity.



Hooks advices above are the strategic means that female folk implement in order to react face to men sexual misconduct in the society. If female consciousness is transformed, they will reach a goal. Which is to change their status of sexual victim. From a status of victim or sexual object, she can notice that the character of Morayo controversially change the situation. That is noticeable in her next love affairs with her boyfriend called Ladi. The character of Ladi represents a religious person that disagrees premarital sex. Paradoxically, Morayo decides to satisfy her sex drives whatever the situation. She is no longer that vulnerable girl that just undergoes male sex drives. Her mind now has been made up not to be controlled by men sexist authority but to control and dominate even in sex. We notice it in the following quotation:

That night, looking at Ladi's earnest face, I vowed to make him so mad with desire that he would forget every word he'd just said. When Ladi gave me a chaste kiss on my cheek, saying, "Good night," I just smiled—and laughed inside. We were either going to play this game by my rules or not at all. (K. Yejide, 2012:, p. 213)

This excerpt shows the determination and the speed at which that female character wants to accomplish the purposes that she has fixed for her own. Men position concerning sexual realities has changed. Instead of being the master and the center of everything, the character of Morayo has overturned the situation. In the setting presented above, the narrator, through the female character uses a metaphor in order to qualify the present situation. She compares that to a game in which she over control everything and in which the male character "Ladi" is her sexual prey. She controls everything when saying that: "We were either going to play this game by my rules or not at all." Therefore, she imposes her sexual desires to her male partner who is supposed to do the contrary. So, the accomplishment of that desires becomes a victory for her. That is noticeable in the following lines:

But I was not ready to listen to his pleas. Before Ladi came along, I had resigned myself to the fact that there would be no one special for me. Who could truly want me. If Ladi truly wanted to marry me, he had to experience and like all of me, and this was my chance to finally show him. Before long Ladi's resistance melted. Soon, the only sounds in the room were the howling of the wind and our soft moans. Afterwards I fell asleep with a bright smile of victory on my face. Ladi was mine. (K. Yejide, 2012, p. 218-219)

The victory that is prominent here marks the power that feminine folk earn when struggling in order to stop subjugation they undergo through sexism. As women liberate themselves from sexual prison, one can notice through the character of Morayo

that she is no longer that sexual object that her tormentor Bros T who used to molest and traumatize her in the past. Now that she fights for own rights, from the boredom of female sexual routine. Thus, women go from an inactive sexual object to an active sexual subject. B. Hooks (1984, p. 150) highlights that: «Women's liberationists' insistence that women should be sexually active as a gesture of liberation helped free female sexuality from the restraints imposed upon it by repressive double standards, but it did not remove the stigma attached to sexual inactivity» .From Hooks' insights, the freedom that women reach may pave the way for a reshaping of their image.

### **3. A RESHAPING OF FEMALE IMAGE: THE OVERTHROW OF MALE HEGEMONY**

The reshaping of the female image takes place in the context of the overthrow of male hegemony. Through their actions, women progressively construct a strong new image of themselves. K. Yejide's text presents an overcoming up on oppression principally psychological oppression to which female folk were programmed. Through different characters, we can interpret fear; doubt and trauma that characterize women were the results of oppression and plights that constitute their daily life. It consists of a liberation of limitative stereotypes in which patriarchy imprisons them. Those stereotypes cast women as irrational people. In the life of Morenike character, the narrator present us the progressive way through which she overcomes male folk hegemony. From an image of a vulnerable girl delivered to the mercy of male folk sexist behavior to an image of a brave woman trying to transform female mentality in order to extend female field of fighting. That is seen in the following passage:

My sisters and mother, let us show that we are not children to be bought with food. Whatever we eat today, we will purge tomorrow. But our problem we remain the same. This is our chance to fight for our children's future." She put her arm around their shoulders. "Come, let us cast our ballot for a new beginning" (K. Yejide, 1975, p. 176).

The sentences above sensitize females who have been affected by the consequences of male sexist abuses. Through the words of the character, the narrator uses comparison to aware the feminine world that male consider women to "children" that can be corrupt by "food". That comparison takes its source from traditional gender roles according to which they have been programmed mentally. For her it is time to liberate themselves from those chains of alienation and manipulation. B. Hooks (1984, p. 47) argues that: «Before we can resist male domination we must break our

attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness». For her, an overcoming state of women from their suffering requires to disrupt any “attachment” to sexism. That means that women have been entrapped by men sexist tradition which role is to asleep them it order to better exploit them. The breaking of those chains of alienation will be a great step for the destruction and suppression of that oppressive mentality.

In addition, women’s way of overcoming of oppression is presented in the novel through the construction and adaptation of a progressive new female self-esteem and new social identity. In fact, through the life of female characters like Morayo, the narrator present a loss of identity and low self-esteem of women. In Morayo life, the narrator emphasis mental changes that occur in a past life of a vulnerable girl that has been victim of sexist alienation. Psychological troubles due to male soulless actions have provoke a decrement in female folk life. That sexist ideology encourages “women woman-hating, and both consciously and unconsciously we act out this hatred in our daily contact with one another” according to B. Hooks. L. Tyson (2006, p. 86-87) also asserts that: «The point here is fairly simple: patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women’s self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally, and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive».

In fact, for those feminists, patriarchal ideology participate to sorts of deformation of female folk mentality about themselves. However, female awareness about the importance of education has been a source of motivation in order to impose themselves in the social life and increase their self-esteem. The narrator presents in the following sentences the extraordinary work that the female character produces:

I just received a grant from the Women’s Learning Partnership to partner with BAOBAB on their skills building initiative.” She sat back at her desk. “I have been very impressed by your performance and composure during my classes. Your analytical paper on the social, economic, and political status of women in contemporary Nigerian society was simply outstanding. That is why I want to offer you a research assistant position for the rest of the year.” Morenike’s mouth dropped when Dr. Lot told her the stipend. She would be able to help her mother with expenses for Damilare. She fought back her tears. “Thank you very much, Ma. I accept (K. Yejide, 2012, p. 139).

That intellectual work imposes to her environment a new female image contrary to the negative one that sexist society presented in the past. So, the hard work of that female character marks a difference between the ignorant past woman obedient and

submissive and an intellectual and well-educated woman. That is why de Beauvoir mentions that:

It is through work that woman has been able, to a large extent, to close the gap separating her from the male; work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom. The system based on her dependence collapses as soon as she ceases to be a parasite; there is no longer need for a masculine mediator between her and the universe. (S. de Beauvoir, 1946, p. 813)

For de Beauvoir education has been and still is a great means that allows female folk to break blindness and introduces female folk into the world to which she has been private for years. Now that great step create enough boldness in women mind in order to brave world challenges. Moreover, another aspect of female overcoming of domination is presented in a self-reconciliation of the woman with her internal person. In fact, considering the extent of the impact of male hegemony on female life, women have been confronted with a psychological crisis. For example, when we consider the female characters Morayo and Morenike, the sexist environment that surround them confines the female image to sexual object, which binds them to male whimsical desires. However, that female character inscribes herself in a logic of self- re-birthing. In the following passage, we can see a female character encouragement to another female in order to ensure the security of mental health. She explicitly and clearly posits that:

My dear, please remember to be kind to yourself. I know we both tend to be so hard on ourselves. One thing lam sure of is that you will need that kindness in the many days and years that are still to come for you (K. Yejide, 2012, p. 327).

She participates in a woman self-reconciliation in order to heal her internal person that patriarchy has deformed through time and circumstances. She teaches female folk how to live naturally considering their physical appearance; not as a curse as society stereotypes reveal. However, that body is as important as that of men and should be respected. The present feminist discourse is a sort of therapeutically established language that women use in order to nurse the female psychological state of mind that was destroyed by patriarchal discourse.

By using words by the feminist author H. Cixous, L. Tyson (2006, p. 100) describes the new female language as «a new, feminine language that undermines or eliminates the patriarchal binary thinking that oppresses and silences women». That feminist new language is a means of reshaping their mind for the more female psychology is strengthen that generates a new strong woman that can confront

patriarchal discourse with boldness and insurance. While patriarchal ideology implicitly imposes silence to female folk, the new feminist language that Cixous emphasizes comes to challenge that male strategy. Through that new means woman can dismantle and deconstruct all patriarchal discourses and find their limits.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has successfully shown the male-perpetrated oppressed geared against women, female feminist strategies to resist men domination and their reshaping of their image. What prevails here is to emphasize women's efforts to change their difficult situation. To change things, women should commit to their own freedom ideals. They should not rely on any one to make things better but themselves.

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