GENDER-BASED SOCIO-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF HONOUR KILLING IN PAKISTANI PAINTINGS

Mehvish Riaz
&
Muhammad Shaban Rafi
Department of English Language & Literature
School of Social Sciences & Humanities
University of Management and Technology, Lahore

Abstract

Episodes of ideological concern related to honour norms and construction of social meanings depicted through paintings are pertinent in foregrounding the social realities of Pakistan. This paper analyzes the grammar of paintings from the perspective of gender roles assumed in the context of honour. The grammar of the visual design of five paintings painted by male and female Pakistani painters belonging to different areas of Pakistan have been qualitatively studied in the light of the social semiotic framework suggested by Kress and Leeuwen (2006). The results show that women are represented as helpless, outcast and oppressed beings; while men have been depicted, indirectly through signs, as oppressors. Paucity of research in this area and implications of the analysis for gender studies, anthropological linguistics, violence studies and visual literacy, make it a significant contribution to the existing literature.

Keywords
Honour killing, social semiotic analysis, Pakistani paintings, gender representation, visual grammar
Introduction

Background to the study

Honour killing is a premeditated murder of a man or a woman either actually or allegedly involved in adultery or an inappropriate relationship, carried out to restore honour, not just for an individual but for a collective group (Dyer, 2015; Wikan, 2008; Pahor et al., 2016). In societies labelled as ‘honour’ societies, "what others think matters and vigilant attention to the possibility of losing face or losing respect is necessary" (Kalika et al., 2017, p. 274). These societies equate male honour with female sexual purity, a cultural mindset that has historically emerged as "an organized structure in memory" (Novin & Oyserman, 2016, 2). When family honour is vested in a woman’s behaviour, appearance, and sexuality, her life is threatened by unknown perils. This equation turns into a lethal weapon when used in a system where violence is employed as patriarchal backlash, particularly if a woman is perceived to have committed dishonorable acts (Pedja 2016, p. 132). Generally, acts of dishonour for a woman are perceived differently than those for a man. For women, these acts include “concern over remarriage,...the perception that the woman was cheating on her husband; the victim leaving the man she was engaged to be married to”; or the woman having eloped or suspected to have eloped with her suitor (Dyer 2015, p. 133). Other reasons include the woman’s family being unhappy about her choice of spouse, or when, instead of making a forced marriage, the woman desires or endeavours to gain more independence through job or studies (Dyer 2015, ibid). “Restoring the family’s honor, washing away the shame is seen as a social responsibility and the right of the insulted groups, the family and relatives” (Raza & Liaqat 2016, p.1). In this context, honour is a culturally specific patriarchal tool used to control female sexuality (Fulu & Miedema 2016, p. 484). Indeed, a person’s honour is believed to be a sacred value, its loss being equated with the loss of life (Doğan 2016, p. 55).

Overview of Pakistani society

Historically, Pakistani society has been male-dominated. Discrimination against women of all ages persists. Gender gaps remain deep and widespread. Laghari’s observation that in Pakistan “female childhood is harder than that of a male child because of the strict taboos” is well-made (Laghari 2016, p. 232) because an imbalance of gendered power relations clearly favours men (Murshid & Critelli 2017, 2). Moreover, according to Pahor et al (2016, p. 2), honour killing of women has evolved into a social norm. As stated in one estimate, at least 1000 persons lose their lives in the name of honour every year in Pakistan (Rahim 2017, 260). A variety of mechanisms, such as brutally slicing their bodies, strangling, burning, stoning, flogging whipping, or poisoning them are applied (Laghari 2016, p. 29). The database of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan for the year 2015
recorded an increase in honour-killing cases of females as compared to the statistics of the preceding two years. While 1096 women were killed in 2016, 1000 and 869 women were murdered in 2014 and 2013 respectively for so-called honour-crimes (HRCP Report 2016).

Due to layers of patriarchy, women are considered weaker than men are and are not expected to react in self-defence. Their deteriorated representation, which does not permit them to flourish beyond crude stereotypes, labels them as oppressed Muslim women, an all-encompassing term for stereotypical representations of Muslim women as ‘backward’ and ‘oppressed’ (Huda & Ali 2015, pp. 13-17; Van Es 2017, p. 2).

**Purpose of this research**

This research aims at a social semiotic study of Pakistani paintings on honour killings in order to examine the visual grammar or language of honour killings in the paintings. The study looks at three specific areas, how genders are represented, how social structures gain meaning on being painted, and how power dynamics and cultural ideologies work in so-called traditional or patriarchal societies.

**Research question**

Keeping this background in view, the present study focuses on the ideological concerns behind the representation of Pakistani men and women as oppressors and oppressed, dominant and submissive, hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine in paintings on honour killing (Sun 2017, p. 2627). This kind of study is also imperative because ideology is inevitably a production of representations; common-sense presuppositions about what is ‘real’ depend upon how that ‘real’ is described, as well as how it is put into discourse and interpreted (Hutcheon 1989, p. 44). Keeping the notions of “politics of representation” (Burgin 1986, p. 55; Hutcheon 1989; Hall 1997, p. 19) and “politics of visibility” (Evans 2015, p. 477) in view, the study also highlights how authentic or politicized the representation of gender is with respect to actual Pakistani culture. Precisely, it highlights the visual grammar according to a social semiotic framework by pinpointing the patterns, signs and symbols that represent men and women and their power relations in the context of honour killing.

This research began first by raising a significant question; which patterns of visual grammar related to the representation of men and women emerge in paintings made on honour killing in Pakistan? At the second stage, an attempt was made to seek answers to this query.
Significance of the study

The study helps to understand gender representation in the context of honour killing and develop, verify and localise image grammatology in the Pakistani context. It develops a counter-narrative against the ‘meta-narratives’ of patriarchy and submissiveness as well as their specific association with one gender or the other. Honour killing occurs in western cultures as well, but it is termed ‘domestic homicide’ (Dorjee 2015); therefore, it is essentially important to highlight honour killing as a culture specific phenomenon and suggest solutions accordingly. More importantly, the study highlights how signs related to oppression or victimisation and patriarchal control are associated with men, women or both.

Various researchers such as Alyousef (2016), Lirola (2015), Nawaway & Almasry (2016), Moji (2015), Li (2016), Irwin (2014) and Mohib (2016) conducted multimodal research on political posters, TV ads, texts created by students and Pakistani film discourse. Similarly, Neili (2017) did a social semiotic analysis of eight pictures of Syrian graffiti, Baykal (2016) examined construction of female looks through mascara ads, Ly and Jung (2015) studied the representation of people in two ads, while Ahour and Zafrani (2016) and Bakhtiari and Saadat (2015) analyzed gender representation in ELT materials and an Iranian EFL textbook respectively. This framework of research, however, has not been applied to Pakistani textbooks, ads, graffiti or paintings. From the perspective of honour killing in Pakistan, Pahor, et al. (2016) studied gender inequality as a cause of honour killing in Pakistan. Similarly, Hadi (2017) highlighted the relationship between patriarchy and oppression of women in Pakistan. Hence, the present research is a unique study on gender roles and honour norms because the social semiotic framework has not yet been applied to Pakistani paintings.

Research methodology

Five paintings, painted by two male painters, including Mr. Abdul Majeed Mangi and Mr Khuda Bux Abro, and three female painters, Ms. Farah Mehmood Adnan, Ms. Umna Nabi and Ms. Saba Saleem, belonging to different cities of Pakistan including Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi, Khairpur and Islamabad, were selected for this study. Selections were made from exhibitions, such as “In the Name of Honor” (2011), “No Honor in Killing: Making Visible Buried Truth” (2009) and In the Name of Honour Killing” (2014), organized from 2007 to 2014 on the issue of honour killing (see Appendix 1). Genres of selected paintings are abstract, surreal or portraits. To avoid bias, variables involved in the selection of paintings include the cultural and geographical background of the painters, gender of the painters, genre of paintings, timeline, exhibitions and patterns, signs or symbols used to depict gender roles in these paintings.
To analyze the paintings, a social semiotic framework suggested by Kress and Lueewen (2006) is employed. This framework suggests analysis of an image according to three metafunctions: Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual. Ideational metafunction is about the visual structuring of the image and relations formed by the represented participants in a painting through analytical, transactional, non-transactional, symbolic or narrative processes. It also targets how embedded structures and processes signify cultural practices. The actors, their goals and the recipients of the information signifying cultural truths and trends are identified through vectorial or non-vectorial representation of relations. Moreover, the symbolic value of curved forms, triangles, rectangles, lines, colour schemes, background and possessive attributes of the Carriers as actors is also determined.

Interpersonal metafunction deals with the way represented participants interact with the viewers; meaning is associated with shot, the angle, size of the frame and point of view. This metafunction highlights how an audience has been involved through the frontal horizontal angle of the shot and how either interactive or represented participants have been given power over each other through a vertical angle. It also deals with the level of modality created through colour saturation, differentiation, depth, modulation and contrast. “The term modality comes from linguistics and refers to the truth value or credibility of linguistically realized statements about the world” (Kress and Leeuwen 2006, p. 156).

Textual metafunction suggests the social connotations of making an actor salient in the image, through the placement of elements in relation to one another, on the top, bottom, left, centre or the right side of the image. It refers to what is new, what is already given, what is ideal or real to understand the relevance and novelty of information in relation to a particular culture or phenomenon. Xu (2005) asserts, “Identity discourse is a culture specific process. Identity may not be every culture’s concern...What is ‘good’, ‘right’ or ‘true’ in one culture may not necessarily be the same in another” (pp. 168-170). Therefore, to understand the deep meanings related to honour killing and their implications for the identity construction of Pakistan, paintings have been analyzed on the basis of the above-mentioned metafunctions.
Results and Discussion:

Figure 1:

Representation of women under feudal control in Sindh, Pakistan

![Image of painting]

Ideational metafunction

The above painting is personal and dynamic. The locative circumstance is outdoor, where a girl displaying helplessness through her possessive attributes such as long loose hair, wearing pink coloured traditionally approved *shalwar qameez* but no *dupatta* (head scarf) or shoes, is shown as being thrown into a vortex that serves as a background. An axe and two guns point at the girl, and five aggressive devilish looking dogs, with tongues sticking out of their open mouths and teeth visible, surround the girl.

The processes involved in the making of this painting are “exhaustive analytical” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 95) and “reactional” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, p. 67). Dogs, axe and gun as actors are actually reactors, and the girl is an actor, recipient and “phenomenon” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 67). The reactors’ goal is to kill and consume her. The participants, due to the posture of the girl, are interactors, because the process is bidirectional where the girl seems “helpless, hopeless, and isolated from others” (Stout et al., 2018, p. 7). The whirlwind as a manifestation of “biomorphic abstractionalism” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 55) represents traditional patriarchal values, honour norms, male power and dominance that the society has accepted as natural phenomena. The interactive participants in this narrative and presentational painting have transactional relations,
which are being realized through vectors being formed by the girl’s outstretched arms and the glances of the dogs and direction of gun and axe. The triangles being formed by the axe and the open mouths of the dogs, pointed at the girl, connote “action, tension and conflict” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 55). The axe and the mouths of dogs have the capacity to “pierce, infiltrate or destabilize” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 59) a person. In the painting, they seem to focus on the lone young girl because honour is vested in her body and “the only parameter remaining constant is the fact that women are punished, even murdered in case of violation of the border line of honour by them” (Kalika et al. 2017, p. 275). The straight lines formed by the rod of an axe and the gun represent law and order which imply that the girl is being targeted for committing something unlawful, and now “she must die;...only blood cleanses honor” (Hadi 2017, p. 297).

**Interpersonal metafunction**

Painting is an offered image, which invites the interactive participants to ponder the issue of honour killing. Moreover, the indicative mood of the painting is conveyed through the woman’s raised hands, which compel viewers to defend her and condemn honour norms. The frame places the female figure at the centre at a close social distance in a medium long shot, while she is at a far personal distance from the gun, an axe and two dogs. The interactive participants identify her as a victim, but on an impersonal and objective level. Her back turned to the viewer signifies the co-existence of detachment and vulnerability; because “to expose one’s back on someone is also to make oneself vulnerable, and this implies a measure of trust, despite the abandonment which the gesture also signifies” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 138). The relationship, thus, of the actor or carrier with the interactive participants is that of ambivalence. She trusts them, but is aloof because she is the sole bearer of torture and torment. The painter belongs to Khairpur, Sindh in Pakistan, where it is common for feudal lords to keep dogs and weapons; moreover, the whirlwind or well also signify their association with Sindh as predominantly a desert area.

Therefore, the perspective of the painting is targeted at feudal landlords who rule the people mostly in rural areas and exploit the oppressed, especially women. Reckdenwald et al. (2017) note that Homicide is more prevalent in rural areas (p. 2). The painting, therefore, is subjective and “perspectival” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 130).

The horizontal and frontal angle of the painting connotes involvement by directly engaging the viewer and the producer with the issue of honour killing. The high frontal angle of the painting on the girl signifies the power of the interactive participants over represented participants. This angle signifies that they have to take pity on, or sympathize with her, due to her ordinary and low stature in society. The low oblique angle in case of the dogs and weapons manifests them as symbolic of condemnable possessors of power in Pakistani culture. Modality manifested through the texture is high because everything has
been painted in detail. Modality of the representation of dogs, axe and guns is high; but the modality of the whirlwind due to medium colour saturation, modulation and differentiation falls between medium and high.

**Textual metafunction**

Salience in this spatially composed painting is maintained by placing the female at the centre; however, the gun and the axe have been placed above her to signify the assertion of male control over her life and rights. Dogs placed on her left and right sides and at the bottom of the frame, connote the decisive role of overarching traditional norms. “Specifically, both societal and familial norms that support the use of violence against women are termed as cultural norms; this misappropriation of ‘culture’ allows the maintenance and acceptance of violence against women across tribal, religious, and class divides” (Murshid & Critelli 2017, p. 2) in Pakistan. The larger size and multiple sharp colours of the all-pervasive whirlwind, painted as the background, show the level of acceptance of honour norms, their magnitude and impact on the lives of women, their role in shaping social realities as well as the controlling attitude of men towards women. The “Given” in the painting is the attitude of dogs, the ideals of patriarchy and manhood; while the “New” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p 180-181) is the destitute disposition of the bareheaded girl. Moreover, she alone is a human character; while all other participants represent barbaric inhumanity. According to Arat and Hasan (2017) “Aggressive and violent behaviour is typically associated with manhood… however… masculinities are multiple, socially constructed and sustained through a complex system of symbols, identities and forces”, instead of being biological (p. 2). Painting is “polyphonic” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 172) because it weaves together signs from animal world, weapons, human existence and nature.

**Figure 2**

Bearing the burden of patriarchy
Ideational metafunction

The setting of this picture is outdoor, aerial and celestial. A slight-built, curvaceous woman, draped in a flowing white robe, emerges as a wave against the background of a pitch-black circle, which is fore grounded against a light greyish-blue celestial horizon spread over canvas. The processes involved are exhaustive analytical, transactional, and narrative" (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, pp. 50-55). Relations between the interactive participants are instrumental, transactional and locative" (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 59-63); first because, the woman is holding the turban as a tool. Her arms directed towards the turban form a vector, thus signifying her as an actor and the turban as a goal. Second, the overlapping of poetic verse, the contrast of background and foreground through the colour contrast of the white dress with a black circle, of red text with grey background have been maintained. The downward gaze of the woman, directed outside the black circle, and creases of the frill of the woman’s dress forming multiple vectors with the world outside the black circle, signify the desire to escape and be liberated. The vector formed by her gaze makes her a reactor who is pondering and yearning for the phenomenon i.e. freedom. Vectors are also formed through the ends of the text hiding behind the black circle, which causes a rupture, thus directing and targeting the content of the woman’s life.

Turban and woman are interactors, because communication is reciprocal due to the vector formed by the tail of the turban flowing down towards the woman and falling on her right side, thus signifying control and dominance exerted by the male figures as well as patriarchal norms of honour that the turban stands for. The structure of a wall associated with the turban also manifests its symbolic significance as both a protective shield and a barrier for the woman. The turban (pagri), a men’s head covering, is a sign of honour, dignity and social status as well as a token of headship in Pakistani culture. Pagri uchhalna (tossing up the turban), pagri badalna (exchanging the turban), pagri ko daag lgaana (staining the turban), pagri rolna (to roll the turban/ to degrade it) are idiomatic expressions in Urdu and Punjabi. Thus, male headgear is the sign of male authority. To dishonour this token of male authority and headship is to damage the reputation, and to publicly defame, the respectability of a family, particularly its males. Due to a conversion process going on in the painting, the turban is a relay with respect to the moon, which has been used as a background to signify night and highlight the role of a turban in the life of the woman. The turban is an actor with respect to the woman who in turn becomes its goal in exercising power.

The portrait of a beautiful young woman, wearing a stainless white flowing dress and a ghoonghat (a veil covering head and half or full face of a woman, especially married women or newly-wed women), and carrying the turban over her head is a carrier whose possessive attributes connote delicacy, decency, respect, conformity to norms, and a
“subordinated position” (Hadi 2017, p. 297). In essence, the painting showcases female subservience to male guardianship and authority. The symbolic attributive process, through her determined posture signifies the importance of subjugation to norms to ensure respect and protection for her; but her stooped head signifies the pain and burden of responsibility that conforming to the norms entails. The black circle, representing the darkness of night blanketing the woman as a limiting experience, connotes suffocating ways to restrict the woman from making choices freely and “explicit or implicit pressure from the community or extended family members to restore the family honor” (Doğan 2016, p. 64). The round shape of the moon further reinforces and regulates the sense of control and establishes the honour norms that encircle a woman as natural, hence, justifiable. The calligraphic text, representing the celebrated poetic verse: Wajud e zan say hai tasveer-kainaat main rang!!! Issi ke saaq say hai zindagi ka soz e darrun (This universe gets its colours and scents from the woman, her existence gives warmth and pathos to the human heart) is by Allama Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938). The verse signifies glorification of the role of women and the need to associate value, essence, respect and beauty of existence to females. Encompassing the entire painting horizontally, this versified homage to woman is the painter’s goal. It signifies the much-cherished dream to associate or equate the beauty of the universe (Kaainaat mein rang) and the driving force of life (Zindagi ka soz e darrun) to the image and presence of women. It symbolises the respect that women must be offered.

Interpersonal metafunction

The indicative mood of the painting as an offered image is targeted at making the viewer take action, release the woman from the shackles of traditional ideologies caused by gender inequality, share her burden or set her free. The frame, in a medium long shot, places the woman at the center of the black circle. Her public distance from the interactive participants, signifying detachment, her stooped head and eyes signifying helplessness and seclusion, influence the viewer but on formal, impersonal and objective grounds. The shot in this perspectival and subjective painting, in case of the turban, is extremely close and her determined demonstrative pose demanding appreciation, but her lowered eyes alienating her from the interactive participants create a relationship of ambivalence with the viewer. The frontal horizontal angle makes the representation realistic, involving and relatable. The angle is slightly high which connotes the insignificance of the woman. The angle for the text and black circle, however, is low and frontal, thus making the traditional ideologies prominent. Within the circumference of the circle, the textual references turn into white smoke, waves, lotus flowers or galaxies like plain silver structures connected to the girl
through the layers of her dupatta. So, the painting is didactic, because it represents the contrast between what is and what ought to be. Sound colour saturation, differentiation, depth, brightness and modulation and appeal to the sense of sight enhance the modality of the painting. The background is slightly decontextualized through ellipses, and the modality of the poetic verse in red colour is high, thus signifying the importance of implementing ideals based on equality and female strength, not collective social neglect of these ideals. The painting is polyphonic due to combining the astronomical, human, floral textual and cultural signs.

Textual metafunction

In this painting, salience of the text has been created through calligraphic patterns of the verse flowing from one end of the frame to another and their placement against a light background. Woman is salient due to being placed at the centre. The turban is made salient by placing it above the girl and against the pale background of the moon. The moon is salient due to its position at the top within the circle. The circle derives its salience from its large size, from being placed on the high edge of the flowing text and being placed against a light grey background. The poetic verse setting a norm indicating how women should actually be treated is made salient through placing it all over the canvas, making a circle of it opposite to the dark circle of honour norms and giving it a red colour. Salience of all the participants in different ways emphasizes their roles and incumbency in the honour-based culture. The similarity of margins blurs the Given and the New. Given in the painting is the essence of poetic verse, which the interactive and represented participants clearly know but take for granted; New is the darkness of the vicious circle of honour norms and killings and the plight of woman who, due to her beauty, delicacy and helplessness, attracts the viewers’ attention. On the other hand, in relation to the text on the right side, the circle including the woman is Given and the verses with their resolving and reforming character are the New. The painting presents women as “hyperfeminine, submissive, dependent, and sexually available to men;...[while]... men are, frequently assigned a dominant role in gender relations and are associated with hypermasculine characteristics” (Sun 2017, p. 2627). As margins are close to identical, it also urges the viewer to cherish the neglected ideals of womanhood, beauty and strength; while protecting the women from the “Real” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 186) of the honour-norms practically causing distress and deaths of women.
Figure 3

Plight of women under male dominance

The setting in this abstract painting includes 35 moustaches painted over a veiled woman, enveloped by a piece of fabric and placed at the centre of the painting. The locative circumstance foregrounds woman against a background of multiple-coloured, random and overlapping brushstrokes.

The image is conceptual, dramatic, dynamic and personal (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, pp. 45-46). The blue colour of the fabric, covering the woman, and the meshed space allowing one eye to look through, represents the everyday familiar image of Pashtun or Afghan women with restricted mobility under male surveillance. The thirty-five thick dark and greyish moustaches, with their ends curving haughtily upwards, narrate the saga of women’s lives. Men of all ages, whether in their youth or in old age have power over women. It places moustaches over the veiled woman whose one eye only is shown, and that too is placed behind bars, thus restricting her from exploring the world freely. Showing only one eye on the canvas is symbolic of the restrictions placed by male religious dogmatism, so that if a woman has to step out of her home, she must peep through only one eye. The processes are symbolic attributive and analytical transactional (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, pp. 50-55); the gaze of the woman forms the vector.

The moustaches representing restraints, horizontally placed over the woman, also form vectors. In honour-culture, these moustaches, symbolizing men, signify support and protection; but as the paintings aim to condemn honour killing, the moustaches indicate
barriers, control, oppression, and thus exploitation. Thirty-five moustaches, nine white and twenty-six black, connote the decisive attitude of society in upholding male-dominance over women. The triangular shape of the woman is a vector that draws attention to her and underscores the intense female potential and desire to “pierce, infiltrate or destabilize” (Kress and Luewewen 2006, p. 60) the ambient darkness of patriarchal norms represented through her veil as well as the black and mustard colours surrounding her. The straight lines of bars placed over her eye signify law and order; which means that in the context of honour, what the society and the perpetrators do to women is lawful and justified. The square covering her eye, thus signifying social limitations, refers to the “inorganic crystalline world...a world that we have made ourselves” (Kress and Leeuwen 2006, p. 53). Moustaches are actors placed over the veiled woman who is the recipient; while the actors’ goal is to inhibit, control and regulate power.

The woman is also an actor because a vector is emanating from her gaze and the process is bidirectional. Her stunned gaze with a wide opened eye begs for freedom and social support. The moustaches, as interactors, are also a goal of the woman because in order to survive, compliance with the patriarchal norms and “tolerance of abuse” (Madhani et al. 2017, p. 76) by remaining silent becomes essential for her. The movement of moustaches in the same direction marks equality of status among the perpetrators. Woman’s possessive attributes, such as the veil connoting invisibility, seclusion and conformity to norms, bars connoting oppression, one eye connoting limited exposure and worldview, signify a place “where women are universally and brutally oppressed” (MacDonald 2016, p. 13). Her placement against a black background mingled with hard multi-coloured hotchpotch brushstrokes signify her contemplative attitude (green colour) towards male-dominance (blue colour) and the ruthlessness of social attitudes and norms (black colour) towards her. They depict her not as “a person or specific moment but a generalized essence” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 106). The colour contrast between black and white shows the contradiction between what is and what should be; a contradiction between social norms and her rights.

**Interpersonal metafunction**

Through her gaze directed towards the interactive participants in this “demand image” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 119), the veiled woman impels them to take action and necessitates condemnation of the helplessness, stasis and bewilderment that she experiences. The mood is indicative, the shot of the frame is medium close at close personal distance and the angle is low and frontal horizontal. Mood, angle and shot
heighten the involvement of the interactive participants and give her power over the viewer by moving them and giving them a chance to identify her as a victim. Colour contrast, saturation and modulation increase the modality of the painting but present a different version of what is ‘real’ due to abstract lines and unique colour differentiation. Representation, due to falling between abstraction and pictorial detail, is medium but on an abstract level, the modality of representation is high. The frontal isometric perspective developed by the repeated structures of moustaches and the abstract coding orientations directed to the honour culture also increase the modality by emphasizing the level of control over female body and choices.

**Textual metafunction**

Salience has been created by placing the female figure in what Kress and Leeuwen describes as a “strong dominant centre...surrounded or flanked by relatively unpolarized marginal elements” (2006, 195), thus representing her as the “core issue” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 195). Her portrait stands for the entire female community suffering from honour norms and male aggression. The painting has three salient features, which make it a key to the understanding of anti-women honour codes of patriarchal societies. First, moustaches hover above the woman who is made invisible by placing her within the cover; second, the woman’s lone eye placed behind iron bars and her concealed body signifying isolation and caging; and finally, the background with its deep assorted hues represents force. However, the woman is the most salient actor and reactor in the painting. Moustaches are Given as compared to the woman who represents the major theme – the contestable phenomenon of being protected by the veil, one eye and bars or being oppressed by it- but viewing her in comparison to the moustaches. Moustaches are also new of the painting as they indicate the driving force behind honour killing. Overall, “the Margins are identical or at least very similar to each other, so that there is no sense of a division between Given and New and/or Ideal and Real elements” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 196). On one hand, moustaches are Ideal and woman is the Real. The image, therefore, represents the deeply ingrained and celebrated ideal of patriarchy and the reality of female suffering, suppression, isolation and retreat; while on the other hand, woman is ideal and the moustaches are real, idealising the glory and exquisiteness of womanhood; and denouncing the male dominance as a menace and affliction, respectively. The painting is polyphonic due to combining signs related to law enforcement, physical appearance and colour schemes.
Figure 4: Escalation of subjugation through norms of honour

![Image of painting showing three stages of a girl]

**Ideational metafunction**

The setting includes three girls standing in three different sections of the painting; and it seems like all three of them reveal a different stage of the same girl’s life. They have been fore grounded against a plain pitch-black background.

The painting is personal, dynamic and dramatic. The processes involved are “symbolic attributive” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 105) and “temporal analytical” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, p. 94) and the pattern is narrative presentational. In the three vertical blocks, the size of the interactive participant can be seen to be increasing; however, the participant is actually degenerating or deteriorating in the sense of losing freedom. The participant on all three stages is a portrait of a female who is half-visible but half-hidden behind the straight lines that signify law and order. The vectors formed by the bent arm of the girl on extreme left side signify an effort to connect to the future with a sense of curiosity and to explore the world and live fully. The vectors in the blocks in the centre and the right side are formed through tape wrapped around two girls, forming helical vectors. This wrap signifies spirals, social determinants of honour, that serve as barriers for women wanting to live their lives freely and fully.

The tape with text inscribed on it is both vector and participant (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 59). The goal of the painting is to show the exploitation of the girls who are
depicted as mummified bodies due to their ‘dishonorable conduct’ (Dilmac 2016, p. 302). The locative circumstance joins the three versions of the girl through overlapping of the same structures: vertical blocks, black background, barefoot, half-visible tape-wrapped bodies with text inscribed on them, hidden faces, wearing shalwar qameez but no dupatta and standing static and helpless. The older or the tallest of the three, is more intensely mummified and restrained. She represents the living dead. The narrative inscribed on the body of the girl represents the social narrative that determines her course of life from birth until death. The posture of the girl on the extreme left of the canvass, as well as her unconventional modern attire, shows that she took a fatal step, which led her to be killed or mummified. As society disapproves such steps, she is therefore punished by death. Red colour in the dresses of the first and second females stands for death as the destiny for their waywardness. The tape works as an actor and signifies the stigma that the girl in black brought upon herself by opening the door, thus making a decision or taking a step without male approval. This stigma, in an honour culture, leads to death.

Interpersonal metafunction

The lowered head, bare feet, inability to move, offer the interactive participants a chance to feel for her, de-stigmatize her, un-wrap the tape sticking to her and take action to extricate her. The frame figures the participants in a medium long shot and frontal horizontal angle to involve the interactive participants in her distress and identity crisis and to highlight the issue as actually existing in the real world. However, the viewer, due to lacking eye contact and viewing half bodies, is detached but can contemplate her position as a victim. The perspective of the painting is subjective, which, “implies the possibility of expressing subjective attitudes towards represented participants, human or otherwise” ....the viewer can see what there is to see only from a particular point of view” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 71). The angle moves from a scale from high to low, thus imparting power and influence to the girl as she grows or as her suffering continues to aggravate; but as the shot is medium long, so the power is not one that a viewer may wish for. Moreover, this movement also implies a fictional viewer who may be the society or her family to whom she has caused dishonour and for whom her character is gaining negative power.

Texture is unconventional but representation on an abstract level is real. Moreover, the modality due to colour schemes, modulation, saturation, contrast, depth, differentiation and brightness is high. Coding orientation is sensory and abstract but comprehensible by the interactive participants. The painting is polyphonic because it derives from sign systems related to aliens, the living and the dead; and incorporates abstract and portrait as representational modes.
Textual metafunction

The demarcation lines make all three figures salient due to colour contrast with the black background. Their unique possessive attributes such as varied size, facial orientation, colour contrast and placement from left to right also make them salient. The largest on the extreme right margin and the smallest wearing a black dress and shoes are more salient; while the one at the centre draws attention due to her placement. The little girl is Given while the tallest representing the living dead is the New that draws attention to honour killing. “New can become Given for the next New” in a horizontally oriented layout (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 185). In any case, the third portrait, placed with the right margin is the New, which signifies the issue under consideration. As it is a painting with horizontally aligned layout, so there is nothing Ideal and Real. It manifests helplessness, loss of identity and life in all zones of the painting without idealizing anything. The painting being composed as a linear text imposes a syntagmatics on the reader (viewer)” (Kress & Leeuwen 2006, p. 208), thus forcing the viewer to interpret the painting according to the order already established in the work.

Figure 5

Representation of women living through seclusion, loss and deprivation

Ideational metafunction

The locative circumstance foregrounds a woman against a circle made of floral patterns, which has been placed at the lower left corner of a door, which has been blocked by broken bangles placed topsy-turvy in the form of semi-circles, and further fore grounded against the door, which takes plain mustard coloured canvas as its background. There are
scrap from Urdu newspapers with words such as zakhmi (injured), tashaddad ke baais (due to physical torture), ko qatal kerdiya (was murdered) written on them.

In this dynamic, personal and dramatic painting, the processes involved are transactional and exhaustive analytical; while patterns are narrative and representational. The vectors are emanating from the large structures of broken bangles, which as actors, have been placed above the woman, blocking her way and piercing her body; while the girl is a recipient, and the goal of the bangles is to cause distress, helplessness and restraint. Bangles, in Pakistani culture, have a strong association with marital status, happiness and love, while many idiomatic expressions are associated with the doorstep as well. Broken bangles signify loss of identity, happiness, acceptance or love and protection that society offers. Similarly, crossing the doorstep implies leaving the clan or crossing one’s limits. A daughter sitting at the doorstep of her father’s house connotes her inability to get or stay married. In fact, idiomatically, anyone sitting on anybody’s doorstep conveys a sense of wait, loss and a burden or unwanted responsibility on the owner of the house. The rectangular shaped door signifies a man-made system of norms and values that labels women by differentiating between them on the basis of socially defined criteria.

The woman too is an actor whose goal is to find acceptance and expressions. She might have been dismissed by society. Broken bangles and textual references may also refer to loss of a male relative, especially her husband. Her possessive attributes, such as no head covering, bare feet, stooped head, brown dress, and placement against a slightly broken door and the circle of floral patterns, signify a better past or happiness now lost or taken away from her. The painting thus depicts her as a carrier suffering from loneliness, exclusion, identity crisis, helplessness, lack of protection and support, stigma, dejection, surrender, and loss of her lover or spouse. Doğan aptly defines such a state as “social death” caused by loss of social identity, personal value, or involuntary withdrawal from the community. He further explains that such a state “results from alienation, social exclusion, and disapproval that the person in question or any person does not want to experience at all. Such ostracism or exclusion makes the person consider him/herself as dead and think that when I die, no one will cry” (Doğan 2018, 15).

The vectors being formed by the bangles, as well as by the world by fading into the outer space of the door may also signify patriarchal norms that exclude women if they do something that society or family deems inappropriate. In this context, one is reminded of Gharaibeh’s (2016) comment, though made with reference to another culture, that “A defining feature of ‘honour’ killings is that they tend to be sanctioned by the community in which they occur”(p. 124). The curved shapes of numerous bangles connote the adamant attitude of the society towards the acceptance of norms as if they were naturally established rules.
Interpersonal metatfunction

The indicative mood of the painting exhibits an offer image, evincing feelings of loss and helplessness while urging the interactive participants to take action, clear the obstructions and identify with the victimhood of the actor. The frame figures the woman in a close medium shot and at far personal distance. Thus, the interactive participants can feel what she is feeling on an impersonal and objective level but they can surely identify her as a victim. The painting is perspectival and the angle is horizontal frontal but high, thus relating the painting to real life and giving power to the viewers over the woman being marginalized. The high angle depicts the deprivation, insignificance, marginalization and despondency of the woman. Modality caused by sound colour contrast, modulation, depth, differentiation and saturation is high.

Textual metatfunction

The large-sized door, placed above the female figure is the most salient feature. Although the woman, being the only human being in the frame is also salient, her posture and avoidance of eye contact detach her from the viewers. The overlapping of bangles makes them salient as well. Shades of brown colours are used as a rhythmic device to connect various elements in the painting. The layout is horizontal; therefore the circle signifying the past is the Given; while the woman is New due to drawing attention to her adversity as the main issue to be addressed. In relation to the door, the woman is Given and the patriarchal values, the impediments, and the loss of love and life, signified through the door, newspaper scraps and the broken bangles, become New, thus spotlighting the man-made rules and tormenting behaviours that cause the woman a nerve-breaking ordeal, a matter of concern which needs solution. The door placed on the top is the Ideal because it idealises the much-cherished patriarchal norms in honour-based cultures; while the woman placed at the bottom is the Real as she represents the entire female community suffering for similar reasons.

Overall, these paintings manifest “a universally oppressed, homogeneous and static representation of women” (Macdonald 2016, 1) because women have been portrayed as passive, helpless, oppressed traumatized and marginalized others, fundamentally bearing the burden of patriarchal norms of honour and pangs of male aggression and control. This representation is similar to patriarchal portrayals of gender, which focus on the suffering and victimhood of women with predominance of male primary characters (Matthes, et al, 2016, 315). Such portrayals also reinforce power differentials (Hyman, 2016, 4). Studies by Akram, (2017); Hadi, (2017); Murshid and Critelli, (2017); Gryzyb, (2017) or Pahor, (2016), to name a few, have drawn similar conclusions. Although most studies show a “higher prevalence of partner homicide victimization among women than men” (Sabri
Raza and Liaqat comment that “in some cases both men and women are subject to honor killings, but mostly media …present the women as the victim” (2016, 1-2) also deserves consideration. In the five paintings under analysis, the representation of possibilities that women may kill male partners after years of suffering physical violence (Dogan 2018, 1), or fear of exclusion, aggression, threat, and sexual abuse in the forms of rape or harassment by the male victim are utterly missing. Except partially in one painting, there is no clue of male victims or female perpetrators of honour violence in Pakistan. Men are also killed due to honour norms in Pakistan, but this aspect has not been represented in the paintings.

Conclusion

An analysis of the visual grammar of honour killing in Pakistani paintings reveals that the paintings, as perspectival offer images, condemn honour killing, draw attention of the viewers to the plight of Pakistani women and inspire them to take steps to emancipate them. Women, as only human figures placed at the centre of the paintings due to “the ideology which associates family honour to female virtue” (Hadi 2017, 297), have been depicted as the main victims fore grounded against whirlwinds, black colour, broken bangles, floral patterns and hard brushstrokes etc. They have been depicted as victims of honour killing, gender inequality and patriarchal control. Helplessness, passivity, suppression, gloom, insignificance and isolation are their defining traits. Contrarily, men have been represented as hyper masculine oppressors and tormentors through signs such as guns, moustaches, turbans, axes or black colour. Portraits of men have not been painted; instead, their characters have been revealed indirectly through signs and symbols. Society and its patriarchal norms and traditional ideologies have been represented as judgmental, enervating, determining and restricting forces through signs such as wrapped tape, textual references, broken doors, black backgrounds, iron bars, veils or threatening dogs.

The representation is authentic because women are actually suffering from honour killing and honour norms limit their freedom. Men are also killed in the name of honour and this aspect remains missing. Painters, like all of us, have their limitations. Art forms, including the art of painting, could be used as a change-making medium by depicting women’s education as an impetus for changing patriarchal norms (Khurshied & Saba 2017, 11). Perhaps women’s property ownership and family rights could also be used by painters as “the sphere where many of these transnational, hybrid, and often marginalized, identities may be negotiated” (Pellicer-Ortin 2017, p. 53). Finally, and most importantly, appropriate representation of male victims could help resolve the issue.
Appendix 1
List of Figures

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Figure #2: Ms. Farah Mehmood, Islamabad, Honour killing-Wajood-e-Zan, 2014, “In the Name of Honour Killing”, Islamabad.

Figure #3: Mr. Khuda Bux Abro, Karachi, Honour, December 8, 2010, “No Honour in Killing: Making Visible Buried Truth”, VM Art Gallery, Karachi.

Figure #4: Ms. Umna Nabi, Faisalabad, Restrictions, 14 July 2011, ‘In the Name of Honour’, Rastay in collaboration with Jharoka Art Gallery, Islamabad.

Figure #5: Ms. Saba Saleem, Lahore, Broken, 14 July 2011, ‘In the Name of Honour’, Jharoka Art Gallery, Islamabad.

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Mehvish Riaz is an Assistant Professor at the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore and a Fulbright Alumna of New York University, New York. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, gender studies, semiotics and stylistics.

Dr. Muhammad Shaban Rafi, an alumnus of Cardiff University, UK, is Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of English Language and Literature at University of Management and Technology, Lahore. He is Chief Editor of the Linguistic and Literature Review (LLR). Email: shaban@umt.edu.pk