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FRAMING THE FALLEN WOMEN:A STYLISTIC GENDER ROLE ANALYSIS OF OUR LADY OF ALICE BHATTI

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Abstract
The theoretical framework of the paper under question is the Feminist Stylistics as a formulated idea by Sara Mills in her work Feminist Stylistics (1995). In the context of sociopolitical locales of modern Pakistan, the paper explores how the traditional gender rules are created and disrupted based on linguistic features, especially narrative voices, dialogues among characters, and word choices. The main protagonist of this analysis is the figure of Alice Bhatti, a Christian nurse, who has to explore the environment of formally patriarchal, religiously segregated (and religiously stratified), and class-defined Karachi. Finally, the present paper adds input to feminist literary discourse with regards to showing the viability of Feminist Stylistics in the analysis of gender politics in South Asian fiction. It confirms the possibility of the stylistic analysis to reveal veiled but forceful criticisms of patriarchy installed within the fabrics of narration, especially in the postcolonial societies such as Pakistan.

Keywords: Gender Roles, *Feminist Stylistics*, Sara Mills, Muhammad Hanif, Alice Bhatti, Patriarchy, Language and Power, Pakistani Literature

Introduction

Gender roles are norms that are constructed by society and the same, which determine how a person should behave, what to do, and what should be expected of him or her given his or her perceived sex. Such roles are usually strictly rigid and enshrined in culture, religion and institution in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan. Such societal expectations are strengthened or subverted by literature both as a result of society and as a societal response. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Muhammad Hanif is one of the essential works of literature that responds and criticises power structures codified by gender which exist in the present-day Pakistan through the way, in which the female identity is captured in the text itself, being intricate and corrosive.

The story of the novel revolves around Alice Bhatti, who is a Christian nurse serving in a fictional hospital named the Sacred Heart Hospital which is located in Karachi and dedicated to all sorts of ailments. Alice, due to being a woman, a religious minority, and a worker of lower classes, holds many marginalized places of position, and as such, her experiences are representative of the various systems of oppressions, in combination. Her character is a subject of reflection over the perspective of sexually differentiating women, policing, and keeping them in check in the social order that is male-dominated. Institutionalized misogyny in the work place, domestic violence, religious discrimination are only some of the many aspects of the role of gender in society associated with domination, subordination and exclusion in the story of Alice.

This paper applies to the linguistic construction of gender roles in the novel with using the concepts developed by Sara Mills in her *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) as the point of evaluation. Mills points out that there is a great deal to be done in analyzing a text through the word selection, syntactic arrangement, narrative voice, and conversation between characters with a

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view to discover how texts themselves create gendered identities. Through the adoption of this method, this paper explores the way the stylistic choices made by Hanif strengthen or subvert patriarchal ideals. It specifically addresses the case of the fragmentation of female identity, the objectifying and silencing of women, and instances of subversion, when female characters defy the norms of the traditional female identity by means of language, humor and silence.

The study will demonstrate the fact that despite portraying realities of female subjugation, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* represents subtle forms of female agency. The strength of Alice, considering the limitations that she is placed in, turns into a story of refuting the gendered preconceptions. The paper reveals the way Hanif uses language to reflect structure but undermines the actions of the sociocultural forces that are attempting to constrain women by undertaking a feminist stylistic analysis that helps in adding to the general discussion of gender, power, and literary depictions in postcolonial fictions written in the South Asian region

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the linguistic construction of gender roles in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* in terms of narrative voice, dialogue within the characters and stylistic decisions?
2. How does the character of Alice Bhatti as presented by Muhammad Hanif defies or mess with the traditional gender constructs in the patriarchal set up of Pakistani society?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To use the language usage in creating and validating the gender roles in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* according to the Aspects of the Feminist Style of Sara Mills.
2. To explore the extent to which the female character of Alice Bhatti is a symbol of defiance to patriarchal values and subversion of traditional interpretation of femininity in Pakistani fiction.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study holds critical significance in the domains of feminist literary criticism, stylistics, and postcolonial studies. By applying Sara Mills' framework of Feminist Stylistics to *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by Mohammed Hanif, the research underscores how linguistic structures—particularly narrative voice, character dialogue, and lexical choices—can subtly reflect, reinforce, or challenge patriarchal ideologies. It reveals how language becomes a powerful vehicle for articulating resistance in a society marked by gender inequality, religious discrimination, and class-based marginalization, as seen through the lived experiences of a Christian nurse in Karachi. The study also contributes meaningfully to South Asian feminist literary discourse by situating the novel within Pakistan's sociopolitical landscape and demonstrating how feminist stylistics can be adapted to analyze non-Western texts. In doing so, it offers a culturally contextualized critique that expands the theoretical and geographical reach of stylistic analysis. Furthermore, it affirms the potential of linguistic analysis to expose embedded gendered hierarchies in postcolonial literature, encouraging future research to explore similar textual strategies in other regional works.

Ultimately, this research advances an interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistics and gender studies, reinforcing the idea that language is not merely a neutral medium of storytelling, but a site where power relations are constantly negotiated and resisted

1.4 Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the research is narrowed down to offer stylistic analysis of the *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by Muhammad Hanif, where gender roles are presented based only on the manner of representation through the linguistics and narrative options. All the other themes in the novel,

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religion, postcolonial politics, or health care systems are mentioned but not thoroughly handled, unless they have a direct connection to study of gendered social dynamics. This theory is particularly gleaned off Sara Mills (1995) *Feminist Stylistics*. In use of other feminist theories (radical feminism, intersectionality or poststructuralist feminism) are also avoided in order to have a precise methodological and analysis approach

2 Literature Review

The early work of Sara Mills *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) proposed an approach to the study of texts that concentrated on the construction of gendered meaning in language. Mills supports the argument that, in some languages, the way people name people, the usage of pronouns are as well as sentence structure, usually indicate the ideological placing of gender in the text. In her framework, it is stressed that female characters have been often shown under passive constructions and restrictive stereotypes. The present study employs the approach used by Mills to identify how this kind of stylistics is used either to reinforce the patriarchal ideas or to pose the challenge to them through the depiction of Alice as a woman who has to overcome a number of marginalized places.

The South Asian fictional works have featured rather strict gender roles according to the cultural, religious and societal expectations. Such literature is discussed in South Asian literature as scholars such as Firdous Azim (1993) in The Colonial Rise of the Novel in India and Priyamvada Gopal (2009) in Literary Radicalism in India have written about its expression and questioning in their writing. Such studies show that some narratives perpetuate gender roles as they are in the society, but others are subtle or open opposition. As a Pakistani English novel, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* contributes to this tradition bringing a female protagonist who breaks gender rules with strength and humor as well as with silence. This paper contributes to this scholarship as it applies a stylistic reading to the language by which the resistance is demonstrated.

The novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by Muhammad Hanif has been analyzed in terms of addressing the problem of class, religion, gender. Researchers such as Shaista Sirajuddin and Aroosa Kanwal have explored how being a Christian woman of a Muslim majority society is a source of trouble in her work and even at a personal level. These arguments lay stress on the role of marginally triple-marginalizing Alice (due to gender, class, and religion) in terms of compounding her vulnerability as well as bringing out her subversive power. Nevertheless, they are mostly thematic or sociopolitical analysis of them. This study differs in that it provides a linguistic and stylistic study of the construction of the gendered experience of Alice in terms of narrative structure and the use of language.

Scholars have noted the use of humor, irony, as important weapons of subversion in the postcolonial literature. Pakistan writers follow a trend often incorporated in the satiric critiques of power and social standards, according to critics like Ruvani Ranasinha and Claire Chambers. The humour in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is not just comic relief at the end of the patriarchal universe of ideas and actions, it is a literary style which enables Alice to confront such patriarchal designs, to puncture them in their absurdity. This paper contributes to such literature by applying *Feminist Stylistics* to the tone and story irony of the novel, and by claiming that the humor leads to a way of survival, as well as rebellion.

2. Methodology

The current study is a qualitative textual analysis, a study that can be placed in the field of feminist stylistic criticism. The current article sets out to investigate the issues of construction and subversion of gender roles in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Muhammad Hanif via the

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analysis of language, the narrative voice, and stylistic decisions in the novel. Conceptually, the paper is interpretive research and uses Sara Mills *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) to reveal gendered bipolarities of representation in the text. Instead of the empirical or quantitative approach, the study aims at identifying linguistic and discursive features as well as practices that express or oppose the patriarchal ideology within the discourse.

3.1 Data collection tools

As this is a literary and linguistic research, this data collection tool is purely textual and needs analytical tools: Close Reading A textual analysis of major passages in the novel to find terms and other stylistic elements that are gendered. Thematic Coding: There is identification of themes based on gender roles, i.e. submission, resistance, objectification and empowerment. Stylistic Analysis: Discussion of word choice, sentence construction, narrative point-of-view, and dialogue patterns in order to analyze how female characters are as constructed in terms of gender conventions, specifically the character of Alice Bhatti. Sustening Secondary Sources: Scholarly books and journal literature in the area of *Feminist Stylistics*, gender studies, and Pakistani literature are eligible in backgrounding the analysis.

3.2 Sample

The literature to be used in this paper only includes the novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Muhammad Hanif. It is concentrated on the character of Alice Bhatti, although the considerations are given to the relevant interactions with other characters that reveal the means of supporting or undercutting gender roles. The essential moments of the institutional power, family relations, and the working environment are chosen to be discussed in terms of stylistics. Not to blur the sample further, no other texts will be introduced into the analysis to focus and retain the depth of analysis.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The research relies on the *Feminist Stylistics* by Sara Mills (1995) consistent of the feminist theory combined by the features of linguistics and stylistics analysis. Communicating in the language, according to Mills, is not a neutral act but rather ideologically coded one, and literary texts commonly either reflect or undermine the power structure in the society, in particular, its gendered aspects. Using this framework, the paper explores linguistic construction of gender roles by *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, and how stylistic features are some of the locations of oppression and resistance. This theoretical perspective would provide a delicate argument in explaining the character of Alice Bhatti as a subordinate and rebellious character in a patriarchal society.

4. Gender Roles

This text emphasizes the fact that under the impact of patriarchal traditions, in society, men and women are displaced in a given role. The basic functions of life are centered on the men who are meant to be the breadwinners of the family and that of a woman limited to clean up, cook, and childbearing. In the cases where working women are depicted, they are usually seen in narrow, gender-only jobs like secretaries, nurses, or teachers profession since these are jobs that are perceived to be suitable to women. In the meantime, the superior or output jobs are left to their male counterparts. The division is an expression of the gender inequality that exists deep down in the society and plays into the hands of the existing power carried out by the paradigm of patriarchy.

These Muslims will get you to clean up their mess then whine that you smell. (Hanif, 2011, p.01)

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In the above passage of the novel, the female protagonist, Alice Bhatti recalls to a memory of how her father, Joseph Bhatti tells her she will wear the mud of the floor so that the Muslas could come in and clean you off their floor and leave you with the odors. We are all aware of the fact that in any society, there is a marked gender distribution of the function of man and women defined by the patriarchal law and regulations that are made by men. The same happens in the society that Alice Bhatti belongs to. The line mentioned in the foregoing reveals that in our society, the female party is only entitled to being occupied with household chores. It also describes the poor attitude of the male layers towards females which they forced them clean their spit but still complain about the offensive smell that why there is a stink coming out of you. Traditional gender roles are strong in most sectors of Pakistani Society and especially in the rural regions where women are required to play the role of housewives. The main responsibilities of theirs are home tasks of cleaning, cooking and child care. This social concept restricts women in their education and employment as well as personal growth and emphasizes the fact that the main purpose of women is to submit to their families at home. It may be assumed that these traditional roles can be regarded as the element of a wider patriarchal system under which men are in a privileged position or hold power and authority, and the role of women is reduced to the personal domain. This makes a very big gender gap both socially and in resources. This form of conduct falls under the gender roles and emphasizes that the female gender is to be utilized only as the half of the society. The reality of the matter is that the minorities in our society are not treated well at all. Same happens with the treatment of cleaners as they practically do their level best to clean our garbage.

There she had always stood to be given her orders: "; Have you washed the floor, Alice? Why not put the floor clean? And who do you suppose was to clean up the blood on the roof, Alice? Your papa?" (Hanif, 2011, p.01) Alice Bhatti remembers her past where she too used to be here in the same room taking orders by the male police. The females in Pakistan are literally allocated the tasks of cleaning and serving the male stratum of our society. Their female counterparts are expected to clean and wash away the mess made by the male. This role of cleaning is hinted by the patriarchal laws and rules toward the definite female gender.

The male officers constantly ask her whether you have straightened the floor or else who will do it and it is your father, which indicates that as a woman you are only allowed to take part in such cleaning chores but not allowed to do work at other areas in the male dominated society. It also shows why the male part is bad to their subordinate people, females.

This type of roles fall under gender roles.

They might have raped their own sister and buried her living, still you are to tell them that it is normal. (Hanif, 2011, p.29) Alice is always the victim of the inhumane activities of the people who tease and abuse her in everyway possible to get a sense of superiority over her, a sense of inferiority over her. She has to listen to the language each day where even her family is mentioned in a negative sense. In the above quoted section of the novel, Alice Bhatti finds memories of how she used to be at the same place here in the same room taken orders by the men officers. In Pakistan, the women are made to perform the duties of cleaning and serving other male rungs of our society. The females are to wash and clean the dirtiness left by the males. This job of cleaning is proposed to the particular female gender by the patriarchal laws and rules. They always ask her whether you have swept and if you have not swept the floor then who will sweep it, and your father and this shows that women can only be involved in the sweeping activity but they cannot work in any area in the male dominated society. It further gives an account of the negative attitude of male part against their inferior beings, females.

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These types of roles fall in the gender roles type. The Pakistani society as it is in the general social context of their own and more so in traditional and conservative society, young girls are bound into stiff roles where they are told to make sure that they are good daughters, good sisters, and good wives.

These roles are identified mostly along the lines of self-sacrifice and obedience expectations where girls are trained to serve the family by performing household duties, preserving their virginity, and retaining a subservient attitude to male members of the family.

It is more of an emphasis on serving and deferring the wishes and desires of the male family members, including fathers, brothers, and subsequently husbands. This expectation impedes their freedom and personal goals, strengthening the idea that a woman is valued mostly depending on how well she performs the mentioned untraditional roles.

This patriarchal system tends to restrict the ability and chances of the girls and women to express themselves beyond these boundaries that affect their mental, emotional, and physical health. The way gender works in this kind of society may also be a circle of dependability/inequality in which the personal rights and wishes of women are subordinated to family and social belief. Most people in our society believe that women must follow the male folk and do whatever they are told to do, they have a right to reason and oppose the rules and regulations stipulated by man. It is granted as a right to man in societies where the man is on top and you can kill your females in the name of honor and pride or you can do whatever you like with the female members of your family and it is permissible to the female members of the family by many religions as well. The mites and end-all necessities of a woman are to feed and give her a shelter in the form of a house, all this is the bare essential right of the woman in the stereotypical Pakistani society.

When Alice began to attend nursing school he frequently said, as he dropped his gloves and took her hands, referring to himself, You know who I am, m. He did save up on Alice she did get a schooling but he never thought that there would come a day where he will be sitting at home and living on her earnings in his old age." (Hanif, 2011, p.48)

In the extract of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2001) challenges of socio-economic life are evident as also are the demands of gendered life in the Pakistani world owing to the familiar signature of the French Colony in which Alice and her family make their sojourn. Since the French Colony is described in relation to poverty and less opportunities, it prepares the groundwork to get an idea of how unacceptable the life of Alice and her family is.

Such strict stereotyping of gender roles not only restrains potential options that can be offered to a woman but also causes inequality that, in its turn, affect a chain of interdependence and, what is more, gender-based humiliation. The autobiographical story of Alice Bhatti can give us a keen point of view upon the harmful impacts that such norms have on the FR lives of people. And certainly he never imagined that he would find himself in a court being involved in the case of his daughter accused of attempted murder. He has played the absentee father role mostly and he almost feels ashamed to come home to a daughter who acts like a son and like all sons, fails to measure up in her performance." (Hanif, 2011, p.48)

We understand that there are some gender roles that male and female undertake in patriarchal societies all over the world. The Pakistani society is male dominated so the women cannot perform male roles and they cannot be the sons of the family and are not permitted to be the sustenance of their family. The women are expected to meet all the needs of the male members of their families even in sacrificing what they want. In the foregoing quotation of the novel, Joseph Bhatti tells a very sad tale of his attending the courts when his daughter is accused of a

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case of attempted murder. Joseph Bhatti is ashamed of his daughter who everywhere attempts to act in the way that can be typical of a son because in our culture we are not supposed to believe that a girl can relate to or engage in something that is masculine. This denotes that the woman is supposed to be obedient to whatever the males in society do to her; she is never allowed to take up the task to defend or protect herself and give herself to the wicked inclinations of the man.

In a plastic shopping bag it was pure, just this big." He opens his hand and waves his hand and his forearm in an attempt to have the size of the baby in the plastic shopping bag correct. Not awfully large, poor thing."Boy or girl?'Girl. I believe it is a sign. (Hanif, 2011, p.50)

Every day, the girl babies are being dumped into drains and killed in some of the Pakistani male dominant society. The life of a woman is highly cheap and does not count in our society. Lifestyle of a female can be conveniently flushed down the toilet and no one cares about their rights. A women life is not worth anything and they can be mutilated at any time. A child has no right to live in case she is a girl

In this respect, the experiences of Alice and the way the father of the baby girl can be presented to us by the description of his reaction on the discovery of the baby girl tells us about the emotional and cultural aftermaths of this patriarchy of the enrooted state. It is a heart-rending observation of the devaluation of female life as well as how penetrating sexism is in the normal life in such settings.

Alice moves her plate, away. She feels that she is still in the Borstal taking the shit when she has to but knowing when to quit. What is this sign of? I feel it is an indicator that there is no where a woman can go and give birth that there is no where she can go even when her water was breaking. They indicate that human life can be pushed down the toilet. (Hanif, 2011, p.50)

The Pakistani male dominant society is symbolized as a prison in which women can live. Women have no rights in a male oriented society and the woman is treated as a child making machine. Our society has been shown by the female protagonist because there is no place towards which women can go and give birth to a child because once the child born is female it will have to be murdered as there exists a mode of thinking that it is the male child that will carry the family and the girl child will become the object of disgrace of her parents and kind of a load that a father will carry throughout his life. Both the genders in this male centric society have the gender roles imprinted in their minds ever since they are born. The boys and girls are guided to perform the sex-related activities where the boys at their young age are guided to perform masculine related activities and the girls are guided by the elders of their families to perform the feminine activities and none of them to undertake the prohibited activities. According to Alice there is no significance of woman life and it does not make any difference whether she passes or stays. They brought me dinner on their Choohra dishes and then began saying that they had to wash their hands because I was carrying leprosy. The people avoided me, and would have had me stand off, almost as though I might have brought defilement where ever I went.

I would prefer to clean up sewers. They are mine when I am walking on the streets. Have you observed that when I pass with my bamboo people cross not to walk in my shadow? They had done this during the time of language (Hanif, 2011, p.51)

The author has shown us gender roles that have been laid down by our male centric society. Women have no value in our society and same goes with other minorities particularly with Choohras. They are not even viewed as human beings. The story is told by Joseph Bhatti, a father of the main heroine, in the development of events that took place before Alice found

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herself in jail. He says that I was fed in the Choorahs dishes and having touched those dishes they wash their hands as though I was infected with leprosy. The phrase Choohra points at the hypocrisy of our gender oriented society. The life of Choohra is not significant in our society. The Choohras would be spotted as something that cannot be touched and should somebody do it, he or she will become contaminated. The society assigns all these gender roles to us.

Alice Bhatti begins picking plates and talks without even looking up (Hanif, 2011, p.51).

In the above line, the female lead character, Alice begins to gather plates because that is the job of a woman in cases of anything feminine, then it is the responsibility of women to carry that out. The male centric society determines these masculine and feminine jobs and allocates them to the genders. The culture has equipped women with the responsibility of washing and cleaning the dishes and crockery. In case by chance a male happen to do this duty then they abuse him and make a mockery of the character because this is not a masculinity thing. Collecting plates is a name that brings out gender issues in our society. They might have termed her as sister of the nation. Since at that time people could have thought that she was a nurse, one of us (Hanif, 2011, p.55)

The above text can be interpreted as, and when Sister Hina Alvi talks of Fatima Jinnah, it shows the entrenched gender role and stereotyping that are instilled in the society, especially when it comes to the role played by women or the appreciation towards them. Fatima Jinnah, one of the most respected persons in the history of Pakistan, was actually a dentist and the only thing left of her legacy is the title of Mother of the Nation which is more of the traditional role of the woman who stays at home and is self-sacrificial and motherly.

When affirming that Fatima Jinnah gave up her own interests and commitments to her professional life in the interest of the country, Sister Hina Alvi throws some insight on how the role of women is usually determined by their relation to the men or the country in most cases, but not as individuals. This is how the boundaries placed on the identities of women are restrained as being locked into the expectations of being and performing the role of mother and selfless people not following their careers and ambitions. The hint that all one has to do is call her the Sister of the Nation, and people will think that she is a nurse, simply points out the extent to which this connection between the female gender and the term caregiver is rooted.

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But she settles down to all the roles that are envisaged by the male dominated society and owns her destiny. Gender roles in our male dominant society are brought about in the humiliations performed by men.

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As Teddy explains it, women are never focused, trying to deal with a number of tasks simultaneously, and quickly derailing. That is why they are good nurses, good politicians but not good leaders or truck drivers. In our society there is a structure of how the women are much talkative and are distracted all the time so the reason is that they never stick on one thing but they talk about many things simultaneously. The society has designated certain duties to men and woman such as truck driving that is only a concern of man. This male dominant society does not have space of a woman being a truck driver. Women are given the mission of housewife and a nurse by the society. Teddy believes that due to the absence of focus and concentration women can make a good nurse or politician but none a good chief or a truck driver. All these are the gender oriented roles defined by the male to the female in a patriarchal society.

Working in Accidents and Emergencies as a house job meant that she worked there six months and there was not a single day, not a single day, when she did not see a sister shot or hacked, strangled or suffocated, poisoned or burned, hanged or buried alive, the husband and brother taking care of their honors, the father taking care of his honor. (Hanif, 2011, p.96)

The male in the patriarchal society always attempts to bring honor to themselves by murdering the innocent girls in the name of religion and in the name of their family honor. House job is a career that is topical to the woman. This house job is a gendered occupation given to woman by the society. Alice tells us about the events that they are not any particular day by which there is no woman who is not abused, burnt or even buried alive just because there is none who values the life of a woman in the male dominated Pakistani society.

The manner in which Alice hugs him is just as the men are supposed to hug one another open-chested with arms around each other and their bodies against that body. (*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, p.105) In a male dominated world there are gender roles assigned to men only and women cannot even think of performing the roles otherwise or do something similar to that and the society treats it as something that is forbidden and punishable. Suppose such woman is to embrace other women there ought to be feminine to them in this greeting otherwise there would be something that would indicate some bad intentions.

The women are expected to hug other women in feminine mannerisms such as close-chested manner and open arm and shake hand to receive another female human. Our male dominated society exists with lots of restrictions on women in the form of gender roles even at the time she dies, she is to be well enveloped in the abaya.

Joseph Bhatti cannot recollect the way he used to address his wife prior to the birth of Alice. He did not call anything; he said oye, or listen, or what is dinner? Or hadst thou concealed my bottle? It is a general perception of a male centric society that a husband/male can call his wife anything he so desires and this is a job of a man. But yet it is for a woman or a wife a prohibited and punishable situation to call the right name of her husband even. Similar to the case in the aforementioned paragraph Joseph Bhatti addresses his wife simply as oye, or

The examples of the roles assigned to women by the patriarchal society of Pakistan are either nothing or listen.

The mother of Alice Bhatti was killed in the workplace. In the house of one of the people where she lived and had a full-time job. She has already given up her three part time cleaning jobs at three houses to secure this one since they required a full time worker. The house was so spacious such that it would accommodate all the three houses where she had ever worked. Actually, this entire Bhatti family could have concealed themselves beneath the front steps

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made of travertine marble that had to be hosed and polished on daily basis. She slipped on this staircase and died. (Hanif, 2011, p.119)

There are some roles in our society which are only supposed to be laid down by the female strata of the society especially the cleaning job at the houses of the so called civilized and rich families of our society. Alice Bhatti's mother was a house cleaner and throughout her life she works in order to run her house along with her husband. Working at the houses of people is the only job assigned to woman by the male strata of our society. These gender roles play a vital role in the death of Alice's mother as she was doing the full day job at somebody's house and died anonymously on her job. The society has assigned all those roles to women who are considered as the roles of shame and hatred.

"Hunger I understand, because you know a man has to work hard every night, sometimes he has to work hard more than once at night, but why do women get sad after getting married? I mean, shouldn't they be happy? They have found their mate, the father of their future children, the man they will force to work so hard that after his demise they'll become much sought-after widows" (Hanif, 2011, p.125).

In the patriarchal society of Pakistan, there is a common belief that a man is responsible to run his family and is made accountable to feed himself as well as his wife. The people in our surroundings believe that the women should be happy after getting married to a man who earn and feed his family because there is no need for women to work and financially support her family. The man who allows her women to work outside her home is not considered even a man but there is a specified word for that type of men which is 'run mureed' that means a slave to his wife. The society is of the view that the women should be happy once she got married because now, she has a man who she can force to work all the day and night.

"She drags out a dustbin from under the table, bends down and spits her leftover paan into it" (Hanif, 2011, p.132).

In the line above, Sister Hina Alvi pulls a dustbin and spat the remaining paan into it which probably is not suitable since paan refers to the male members of the society. In our society no woman may be treated as a good one who has this habit of paan chewing as this is something related to the male members of the society and is a thing of defame to women that they should carry such a habit of chewing paan.

Alice Bhatti awaits the coming home of Teddy till 2 a. m. when she turns in calmly into the kitchen, takes out the plate of food upon which she had cooked and wrapped in a white paper napkin and throws it in the garbage bin (Hanif, 2011, p.213)

The roles that the male dominant society assign to women are illustrated in the above mentioned paragraph. Probably the women are instructed on how to cook food to the family and how to take care of the husbands. Since it has distinctly been stated in the paragraph that Alice takes the plate of food she had made, symbolizes the nature of thinking characteristic of our society that a wife has to make food for his husband and he or she has to wait until the husband comes back.

In the patriarchal Pakistani society, women are cast as the people in charge of taking care of house maintenance and assume the responsibility of undertaking the decisions made by their husband. They are advised to remain home and attend to their house and cannot take responsibility of her family in economic issues.

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5. Findings and Conclusion

Stylistic reading of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* shows that certain important trends can be outlined in the portrayal of gender relations. To begin with, the Voice of narration often uses irony, understatement and satirical mode of speech to ensure that it brings out this absurdity of the values of patriarchy and related social expectations made of or on women. Alice Bhatti character has been built in a very vulnerable yet strong body, where her silence, resistance, and refusal to fit, appear with the help of a selected pattern of language, which includes indirect speech, ironical speech, and gendered labeling.

Second, the lexical options and dialogs among characters reveal the subordination of the male and the female characters. Male characters are also tending to dominate with sheer and authoritative language whereas the answers of Alice are cunning yet moderate to reflect deliberate undermining of the anticipated gender conduct. The novel does not represent passivity in women as a virtue, but rather offers the theme of resistance in day to day activities, use of language patterns, and symbolism in language usages.

Then thirdly, the analysis revealed that the fragmentation of narration and a humorous undertone are feminist discourses that disrupt the power of a male-centered discourse. In light of the above framework, using the analysis of Sara Mills this paper presents how the language plays an important role not just in the representation but also destabilizing and challenging gender oppression. Alice turns out to be an object of a complex female character that breaks down the gender binary traditions and can be viewed as an agent of change, strong, and a critic of patriarchal authority.

Conclusion

In this paper, it is concluded that *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* adopts the employment of language as a potent locus of ideological conflict, wherein female roles are both created and disputed. With the help of *Feminist Stylistics* created by Sara Mills, it is possible to claim that stylistic moves, including character speech, choice of words, and even plot order, are of critical importance in creating a certain vision of gender within the text. Alice Bhatti, in this depiction, highlights a micro-critique of the social, political and other cultural structures that control the lives of women in Pakistan.

The deeply rooted gender roles exploit language and power at the expense of the women, as is revealed in the novel, but at the same time, it presents a style of resistance by the application of distancing, irony, humor, and subversive narrative styles. In her character Alice, the author provokes the reader to re-visit the similarity in the traditional stereotypes of what a woman should be, her role and her power to act in life. So, the novel makes a meaningful intervention into feminist literary criticism and points to the significance of stylistic interpretation in exposing the gendered processes of subordination and opposition in the Pakistani fiction today. By locating and participating in the present research, this study confirms the applicability of such an analytical framework as *Feminist Stylistics* in postcolonial textual studies and suggests future researchers to continue researching the intersections of these factors language, gender, and power in South Asian literature.

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