

Literature's Contribution to 'Honour'
Killings:
Challenging Cultural Values and Traditions

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Abstract

This thesis will analyse how three different literary texts contribute in the discussion of 'honour' killings, and how they challenge cultural values and traditions in honour and shame based communities. The literary texts are the following: Sarbjit Kaur Athwal's memoir *Shamed: The Honour Killing that Shocked Britain – by the Sister Who Fought for Justice*, Rana Husseini's memoir *Murder in the Name of Honour* and Elif Shafak's novel *Honour*. By exploring the aspect of dehumanization, the power of testimony and witnessing, the notion of life narratives, and discrimination against women, as seen through the different texts, I aim to propose a solution on how to not only challenge, but also change cultural values and traditions. There is a dire need to stop murdering girls and women in the name of honour, and these three authors, through their unique style, language and content, call for not only an ethical response, but for their readers to stand up and take action.

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Introduction

Honour is respect for life. Honour is respect for love. There is no honour in murder.

Jane Fonda, *Murder in the Name of Honour*

Literature has the power of conveying emotions, experiences, and psychological explanations of human behaviours. We learn about each other through literature, in the sense that it gives us an insight into other human minds; into how different individuals perceive things; into different cultures; and into different societies. We may unite or come further apart through literature in the way that it allows us to ask questions about one and another. In other words, literary texts can have tremendous effect on its readers' thoughts, emotions and feelings, even up to the point where the readers stand up to take action. This thesis will look at how three different literary texts contribute in the discussion of 'honour' killings, and how they challenge cultural values and traditions. The literary texts I have chosen for this thesis are *Shamed: The Honour Killing that Shocked Britain – by the Sister Who Fought for Justice* (2013), a memoir written by Sarbjit Kaur Athwal; *Murder in the Name of Honour* (2009) written by Rana Husseini, which will be viewed in this thesis as yet another memoir, but unique in the way it tells the story of the many victims of 'honour' killings; and the third and final text, *Honour* (2012), a novel written by Elif Shafak.

The aim of my thesis is to answer the following question: How do these authors, through their language, style and content, challenge cultural values and traditions in honour-based-violence communities? By exploring the aspect of dehumanization, the power of testimony and witnessing, and the discrimination against women, I hope to take part in the discussion on the issue of 'honour' killings, and propose a solution based on the findings in the literary texts. There is a dire need to stop murdering girls and women in the name of honour and these three authors, through each of their unique ways, call for not only an ethical response, but for their readers to stand up and take action. Can a literary text change centuries-old cultural values and traditions, and if so, how?

The memoirs I have chosen for my thesis can both be viewed as life narratives. These life narratives are connected with violations of human rights, and in their own ways, confront readers with "emotional, often overwhelming, accounts of dehumanization, brutal and violent physical harm, and exploitation" (Smith and Watson 133). By writing their narratives, the authors are telling readers that these stories are too important to remain untold, and while they may never be certain as to how the publication, circulation and reception of their stories

will be received, “their scenes of witness entwine the narrator, the story, and the listener/reader in an ethical call to empathic identification and accountability, recognition, and oftentimes action” (Smith, and Watson 134). There is no escaping the urgent call for attention life narratives make, where they, through their writing, ask their readers to give an ethical response to, more often than not, stories that are vastly different from their own. Schaffer and Smith in *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (2004) explain what happens when people connect through life narratives:

As people meet together and tell stories, or read stories across cultures, they begin to voice, recognize, and bear witness to a diversity of values, experiences, and ways of imagining a just social world of responding to injustice, inequality, and human suffering. (Schaffer, and Smith 1)

Both Kaur Athwal and Hussein invite their readers to take part in this “just social world”, where ‘honour’ killings are a thing of the past.

In addition to life narratives, I have chosen a novel, *Honour*, to expand the literary texts for this thesis. The definition of the novel is known as a heated debate, but there are a few characteristics that are generally agreed upon, and these can be found in Shafak’s novel. I will elaborate on these characteristics in chapter three, but Shafak’s way of captivating her readers is worth mentioning in the introduction. Although the readers know that the novel is a fictional text, the content written by Shafak conveys a realism that is astonishing in the way her characters interact with not only each other, but also their surroundings. Even more so, the thoughts and feelings her characters go through resonates with the readers. It creates a sense of familiarity for the readers who may recognize themselves within the words written on the page. Through the development of the plot and the characters, Shafak writes a story about an ‘honour’ killing that demands attention to the issue, showing the readers that the possibility of an ‘honour’ killing is much closer to home.

Concept of Honour

There is no, and there will never be, honour in killing. In 2000, the UN estimated that each year, five thousand women are killed in the name of honour. For every single day that passes, thirteen women are murdered. This is the number of cases that are reported, and for every case reported, there are ten that will be disguised as suicides, accidents and disappearances. The reasons for these so-called honour killings? If you have sex before marriage, you are

killed. If you commit adultery, you are killed. If you are raped, you are killed. If you become too 'Westernized' in immigrant communities, you are killed. In other words, a woman may lose her life for any number of reasons, but the one that stands out the most is how a life may be lost due to gossip. Hussein writes in *Murder in the Name of Honour* (2009) that "an immoral act does not become dishonourable until it becomes public knowledge (...)" (212), thus making the act of gossip the most damaging reason for 'honour' killings. Worst of all is when the immoral act turns out to be untrue and a life is lost due to gossip and rumours. The 'honour' killing turns into "a brutal attempt to put an end to the unstoppable circulation of words" (Rose), which puts more weight on honour being damaged because of the public's knowledge of someone's action instead of the action itself. All violence inflicted based on honour "becomes at once a perverse tribute to the social power of fantasy" (Rose), with the aim of stopping harmful words from spreading; words which will only stop when blood has been spilled, according to the perpetrator, who becomes blind to the fact that the words will never stop. The question that naturally rises in one's mind is how murdering innocent women can ever be beneficial to a community? How can one value the concept of honour over the life of a person?

In order to even begin to answer the question above, we need to know what an 'honour' killing is. I have decided to use Hussein's definition for my thesis, and it goes following:

A so-called honour killing occurs when a family feels that their female relative has tarnished their reputation by what they loosely term 'immoral behaviour'. The person chosen by the family to carry out the murder (usually male; a brother, father, cousin, paternal uncle or husband) brutally ends their female relative's life to cleanse the family of the 'shame' she brought upon them. (Hussein 14)

'Honour' killings have the goal of cleansing a family, more specifically, the males in the family, of the shame a female relative has bestowed upon them, and the only way they can bring back their honour is to murder her. Once they have killed the female relative and literally washed the shame away with blood, the community can continue to thrive in peace and in honour, seeing as they have restored their honour. This is a community who does not view these girls or women as human beings. The shame or dishonour caused in almost all cases amounts to a woman acting as a human being with personal thoughts, feelings, and needs. In rare cases, the man who was caught in the act with the woman (I am now referring

to cases where women are caught with other men, either as secret lovers, in adultery, or in the act of rape), the man is also punished. However, for honour to be restored, the blood of the woman or girl needs to be shed.

The threat of an ‘honour’ killing lies in every corner for a woman, and it is there to control them in every aspect of their lives. In fact, it is so threatening that it takes away their human rights. Husseinini believes the reason why these killings have received little to no attention lies behind the fact that “they are all too often disguised as a traditional or cultural practice which has to be respected and accepted by everyone” (Husseinini 22), not to mention how many people associate honour killings with religions, such as Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, the first more than the others. This thesis will also aim to prove that statement wrong, and show, that rather than religion, it is the cultural values and traditions a girl is brought up with that threatens her life.

It all starts when a girl is born. From her very first breath and till her last, she will be the carrier of her family’s honour. She may be born ‘pure’, but she will still be judged from her very first breath. She will not see herself as an individual with human rights, but instead as someone’s daughter, sister, wife, granddaughter, niece – as “a member of a family, clan, religious, or tribal collectivity whose welfare she has been born to serve” (Chesler). She is taught before anything else, that her family’s honour lies within her body; within her purity. Despite the closely-knitted involvement the female in the family has with the concept of honour, she can never own honour, because it is the property of the man. This can be seen in the way honour is described and defined in other languages: in Kurdish, *sharaf* refers to the man’s sense of honour and self-worth, while *namus* refers to the purity and propriety of the woman. The word itself and how it translates, defines honour in the woman’s body.

The concept of honour and the role that is passed on to every female in the family is intertwined and have been for hundreds of years, starting from when the early man, who wanted to ensure that his genes were passed on, prohibited ‘his’ woman to have intercourse with other men. Those who managed to do so, were viewed as “strong leaders of high status and therefore were honoured by others in the tribe” (Husseinini 210), which made men’s honour dependent on how the women in their tribe behaved. As time passed, women were started to be seen as a commodity, more importantly, one that could be sold and traded. As a result of women’s lives gaining monetary value, husbands and families started to “regulate and guard their sexual behaviour” (Husseinini 210), which later on developed to a point where their sexual behaviour would correspond to dress codes and the aspects of right and wrong.

This has further developed to women being bound to their husbands and male relatives when religion, cultural and judicial elements of society came into the picture, seeing as they were created and dominated by men. Throughout history then, men have managed to bestow women the role of keeping their family's honour by controlling their fertility and reproductive capacity, and the ways of controlling has evolved throughout time. This idea of women being controlled in all aspects is challenged in the world today, but in many parts, it is still ingrained to the point that anything else would not make sense. This makes the texts written by Kaur Athwal, Husseini and Shafak, and alike, important in continuing to challenge the issue of 'honour' killing, because they all tackle it in different ways.

In order to understand, but not agree, with how such a horrendous act may be accepted by others, we have to unravel the meaning of honour. According to Alina Zvinkliene, in *'Honour Killings' in Modern Societies: A Sociological Perspective* (2010), we can interpret honour academically in two different ways. The first one is connected to virtue, while the other refers to honour as hierarchical power. It may come as no surprise then, that the first is associated with women and the latter with men. What both definitions have in common, is that honour is viewed "as a value system which is gendered" (532). Honour is, in other words, connected to gender identity in the way that a male or female member of a community represent their masculinity or femininity. In addition to being gender-based, honour is also "a concern of the kinship group (nuclear or extended family)" (533), but I would also add that honour concerns itself with a community as a whole as well. This is represented through a person's, a family's, and a community's values and how these values are recognized in public.

In 'honour' killings, it is only males who are allowed to restore the honour that has been lost. The exception arises when there are no male members to fill the position as the head of the family. Even fewer are the times that a female member takes on the role as the head of the family when there are existing male members, and this rarity can be found in *Shamed* (2009), one of the texts I have chosen for my thesis. According to Nootash Keyhani's article, *Honour Crimes as Gender-Based Violence in the UK: A Critical Assessment* (2013), although it is the males of the family that restore the honour, the female relatives "play a significant part" (262), seeing as they are most often, the ones to "instigate the murder or keep it secret" (262). The concept of honour has such a huge impact on their lives, especially mothers, and if someone were to dishonour their family, it could ruin several things, "the family's economic and marital prospects" (263) being two of those. These women are "often, predominantly financially dependent on their husbands and sons", which

give them “a vested, albeit alarming, interest in maintaining the status quo and not tarnishing their husbands’ and sons’ family name” (263). Horrifyingly, this includes “covering up the death of their own daughters” (263).

A research paper written by Aruna Papp under the name of *Culturally Driven Violence Against Women* (2010), shows that immigrant women are often more socially isolated, which amounts to them having limited or inaccurate information about their rights. This problem leads to these women being hesitant in asking for help from others in times of need. The police, which is a source most of us would think would be the most natural place to go to when you fear for your life, has proven to be difficult, seeing as “such an action may result in their deportation or the arrest of their sponsor” (Papp 6). Before all of this however, is the struggle with “intimidating systemic and linguistic barriers” (6) that immigrant women in honour-based-communities have to deal with. As a result, girls and women are denied certain rights because of several barriers, deeming them helpless in situations where they fear for their lives. Therefore, being dependent on their husbands/families and isolated from the rest of the world, makes hundreds, if not thousands, of girls and women afraid to seek help.

Theories

While researching, I found out that in cultures and communities where the concepts of honour and shame play an important role, the value of a girl’s life amounts to nothing where honour is concerned. Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life* (2004) seeks to understand “what counts as a livable life and a grievable death” (xiv-xv), and I believe we can use her theory on how to “best depict a human, human grief and suffering” (xviii) when it comes to unravelling the control the concept of honour has over someone’s life. I am aware Butler initially wrote *Precarious Life* as a response to what happened after 11th of September, 2001, but there are certain aspects that she raises that I believe can be found in any situation where the question of what counts as a human life is raised. Why is it that some lives are grieved, while others are not? Why it is that some victims of murder are presented in the public, for all to see and mourn, while others are erased from public representations altogether? The girl that is born into an honour and shame based family; community; and culture, is not only not recognized as a human being, but also wanted erased from the public the instant she does something her family views as dishonourable. As Butler puts it: “there have been no lives, and no losses; there has been no common bodily condition” (36), and therefore, she is not counted as a human.

Ultimately, this means that girls born in honour and shame based families are deprived of their rights. More specifically, their human rights are violated. Therefore, this thesis will also aim to show how three literary texts, in their own specific and unique ways, speak up on how girls and women are deprived of their human rights because of the concept of honour. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was created with the goal of an:

(...) imagined international community as a whole, to the nation-states within that imagined community and to individuals and communities within those nation-states, a collective moral commitment to just societies in which all people live lives characterized by dignity, equality, bodily inviolability, and freedom. (Schaffer, and Smith 2)

By creating an international community where the purpose is to uphold a just world, the UDHR opens up a space for those whose rights are violated. This results in “legitimizing [a] process of telling and listening that demands accountability on the part of states and international organizations” (Schaffer, and Smith 3). There are many ways to initiate this process, and Kaur Athwal and Husseini demand justice in two different ways, the former focuses on her own experience, while the latter speaks up for hundreds of victims. In order for their stories to become successful, there needs to be “a public, international space that empowers all human beings to speak” (Slaughter 415). In other words, by creating a human rights discourse, where victims can come forward and “testify their experience” (Schaffer & Smith 3), in a space that that will let them *speak*, we will get closer to the ultimate goal, which is to “issue an ethical call to listeners both within and beyond national borders to recognize the disjunction between the values espoused by the community and the actual practices that occur” (3). This thesis will use not only the two memoirs chosen, but also the novel, to try to prove how literature participates in creating a human rights discourse concerning the issue of ‘honour’ killings.

Although Kaur Athwal and Husseini’s texts are viewed as memoirs, classifying them as testimonies is important. These two authors have conveyed their stories “through multiple expressive forms [that] form the historical substance and significance of prior events and experiences” (Simon, and Eppert 179). Kaur Athwal testifies to her experiences concerning the ‘honour’ killing of her sister-in-law, and in an actual courtroom, while Husseini takes on the role of testifying for hundreds of girls and women becoming a victim to the concept of honour. According to Gugelberger and Kearney’s chapter “Voices for the Voiceless” (1991)

in *Latin American Perspectives*, the testimony as a literary genre focuses on the collective self, rather than the individual, which is often found in Central American testimonies. By working for injustice through the collective self, these testimonies tell the story of “the community of the witness” (9). Kaur Athwal’s memoir is based in England, but her community comes from India, and thus, by speaking up against the injustice inflicted upon her sister-in-law, but also herself, she is shedding light on the perpetrators as well, and how certain values and traditions in a culture, have to be challenged. Similarly, Husseini sheds light on how Jordan, but also the rest of the world where ‘honour’ killings occur, need to change the way they handle ‘honour’ killings, both in the media and in the courtroom.

In December 1979, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, making it the “first global and comprehensive legally binding international treaty aimed at the elimination of sex- and gender-based discrimination against women” (Simonovic). The definition of discrimination against women goes along these lines:

(...) any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field (article 1)

While reading about ‘honour’ killings, it was not difficult to come to the conclusion that there is a clear pattern of gender-based violence that is taking place. The families these girls are born into tell them from day one that they do not have the same rights as their male relatives, and that is something they should not question. They do not have the right to marry whomever they want; education is not a priority, but being a good wife and giving birth to sons, certainly are; if they do get a job, it is for the head of the family to distribute as he sees fit. These are examples of gender-based discrimination that girls growing up in an honour-based culture are faced with. It is not only gender-based violence when a life is taken, but also at every other point in these girls’ lives. Keyhani argues that “the definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affect women disproportionately” (264), where violence amounts to more than physical harm. For her, gender-based violence includes “acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and

other deprivations of liberty” (264). Because of the specific ideals of honour, where the aspect essentially “revolve around female sexuality and the regulation of female chastity” (264), a girl growing up in an honour and shame based culture, does not have to be killed in order for there to be gender-based violence. All three literary texts highlight discrimination against women, and examples will be given in each of their respective chapters.

Outline of Chapters

In the first chapter, I will analyse how Kaur Athwal’s memoir *Shamed: The Honour Killing that Shocked Britain – by the Sister Who Fought for Justice* has contributed to the issue of ‘honour’ killings. By stepping forward and testifying against the injustice that took place, Kaur Athwal is demanding the readers to take part in the traumatic, gruesome and unjustifiable death of her-sister-law. Written as a memoir, but also expressed as a testimony, the question of who counts as a human being is raised. Through her own experiences, Kaur Athwal’s story becomes an extremely important example of how a “silent and melancholic” (Butler 36) discourse of dehumanization takes place, where some lives are perceived grievable and represented in the public, while others remain ungrivable, and therefore not even counted as one in the first place (Butler 35). As a result, I argue that Kaur Athwal’s memoir, through its characteristics, challenges the honour and shame based culture, and succeeds in breaking the discourse of dehumanization.

In the second chapter, Rana Husseini’s *Murder in the Name of Honour* will be examined concerning the issue of ‘honour’ killings, through the lens of a human rights activist, who has made it her goal in life to become the voice of the victims of ‘honour’ killings. By reporting and investigating a topic which was, and still is, deemed taboo in many places, Husseini challenges the discourse of dehumanization by representing an image the public has tried to extinguish altogether. Although sharing the same genre, Husseini challenges the issue of ‘honour’ killings from the perspective of a journalist, balancing between a factual and emotional journey, a journey that will be further elaborated in chapter two. By taking on the role she has, Husseini testifies for all the victims she comes across, giving them a face; a name; a life, forcing the reader to acknowledge the fact that a life has been lost.

The third, and final chapter will analyse how Shafak’s novel, *Honour*, impacts the issue of ‘honour’ killings differently from the two other literary texts. Her novel can go under the definition of the modern novel, “a comparatively new literary form [which] has, from its

beginnings, shown itself to be exceptionally well suited to the exploration of social ideas and social protest” (Johnson & Johnson vii). Shafak’s aim is to make her readers aware of ‘honour’ killings. What makes her novel special, is the fact that the readers get to see through the lens of not only the victim, but also those around her, and more importantly, the perpetrator. Shafak portrays to the reader what might possibly be someone’s thoughts and emotions, not only in relation to the victim and the perpetrator, but also the surrounding family during and after an ‘honour’ killing. What triggers a person to murder someone else in the name of honour and how does that person cope with their decision after its done?

1 Shamed

As she hands the baby over, a woman smiles, 'Congratulations, Amerjit Kaur,' she says, touching the baby's soft cheek. 'But it should have been a boy.'

Kaur Athwal, *Shamed*

In 1998, Sarbjit Kaur Athwal is called by her husband to attend what seems like just another ordinary family meeting. The participants are two brothers, one mother, and one wife. However, the subject to be discussed would turn out to be anything but ordinary. The head of the family, the mother, stares at everyone present in the room. Smiles at her sons, then raises her hand for silence, saying, “It’s decided then (...) We have to get rid of her.” (Kaur Athwal 11). ‘Her’ meaning Surjit Athwal, Sarbjit’s sister-in-law. Within three weeks after the family meeting, Surjit is lured to India, under the pretence of visiting family relatives. Instead, she is drugged, strangled and dumped in the Ravi River, forever to be forgotten. Kaur Athwal refuses to accept this, and fights secretly for justice for nine long years, putting not only her own life at risk, but also her children’s. Justice is served and Kaur Athwal becomes the first person in an ‘honour’ killing case to testify against the perpetrators in an open court, and end in a successful result, without the body ever being found.

In this chapter, I will analyse how Sarbjit Kaur Athwal’s memoir *Shamed: The Honour Killing that Shocked Britain – by the Sister Who Fought for Justice* (2013) has contributed to the issue of ‘honour’ killings. By coming forward and testifying to the rest of the world, of the horrific death of her sister-in-law, Kaur Athwal challenges her culture’s values and traditions, demanding for a change. Through the exploration of the genre’s characteristics, I argue that this story effects the reader’s emotions, thoughts and feelings more effectively than a news article, because it generates “public debate, sympathy, and outrage” (Smith and Watson 5). It is a story that may assist “the advance of human rights” (5), in particular, the advance of women’s rights in honour and shame based cultures.

The chapter will be divided in four different parts. The first part will briefly deal with the background history of the memoir in relation to Kaur Athwal’s text. Critics have defined the genre as either non-fiction, and thus it “must be a form of journalism and therefore devoid of techniques like characterization, story development, and imagination” (Bartkevicius 134) or “a new American form that, having sprung from ‘The Oprah Winfrey Show,’ is characterized by whining and self-indulgence” (134). However, if one examines the

centuries-old genre, one will realize that the memoir, “like its cousin the personal essay” (134), uses aspects such as “story-telling, confession, metaphor, a bit of dialogue, and even moments of imagination” (134), which can all be found in Kaur Athwal’s memoir.

In the second part of this chapter, I will delve into how a discourse of dehumanization develops throughout the memoir, more specifically, the process of how a girl grows up being told that she is worth less than a boy, to being *worthless* if she acts dishonourable, which may entail everything from “chewing gum, (...) laughing at a joke in the street, (...) wearing make-up of a short skirt, (...) choosing her own boyfriend/husband or becoming pregnant” (Husseini 16). These girls and women are not represented to the public, but rather hid behind the excuses of a culture’s values and traditions are important to protect. However, when a story such as Kaur Athwal’s comes out, it presents a voice to the Other; the girl growing up in an honour and shame based culture.

In addition to human rights violations, this memoir brings forth the topic of discrimination against women, which will be the chapter’s third part. Seeing as one cannot read this text, or any other texts about ‘honour’ killings, without noticing the gender-based violence that takes place, I believe it is crucial to read Kaur Athwal’s text through a feministic lens. Consequently, this thesis argues that the author’s aim includes an end to violence against women, cutting through the “north/south, us/them (...) that are so often used to marginalize violence against women in its varied forms” (Husseini, 14).

The fourth and final part is where the power of testifying and witnessing is explored. The text is classified as a memoir, but the argument for it being classified as a testimony is one that cannot be ignored. Simon and Eppert (1997) have defined the testimony as the process of conveying “through multiple expressive forms the historical substance and significance of prior events and experiences” (176), which is one way of looking at Kaur Athwal’s text. Her expressive form, the memoir, conveys the experiences she has gone through, leading up to the horrible event of the death of her sister-in-law. In addition to her testimony shown in her memoir, Kaur Athwal became the first family member in an ‘honour’ killing case, to go into open court as the Prosecution’s key witness, waiving her anonymity, which resulted in the first successful prosecution of an ‘honour’ killing without the body ever being found.

1.1 The memoir: interiority, the inner self

Contrary to what people believe, the memoir is a genre that has been around for centuries. “A Sketch of the Past” (1939), an article written by Virginia Woolf, states that the memoir becomes successful when we know to whom things happen. However, that does not mean writing down a list of facts. Instead, the author needs to give an account of their inner self. Therefore, a memoir should be “neither the totally private and unexamined surface memory of an unreflective person (...) nor the strictly public and analytical world of recordable events” (Bartkevicius 139). This resonates with what critics of the memoir have defined the genre as, stating that it is either non-fiction or self-indulgent, but Bartkevicius claims the criticism as “unexamined [and] unsubstantial assumptions”. One cannot condemn all novels based on one or two bad books, and the same applies for the memoir.

The successful memoir becomes then, a combination, “in which nuances of personal memory lend frisson to particular events” (139). The interiority; the self, must be present when writing a memoir, otherwise it comes just another report. If Kaur Athwal had recounted the events and experiences she has gone through without describing and sharing her inner thoughts and feelings, the words would not have made as huge of an impact on the reader. An example of Kaur Athwal’s inner self goes following:

Sometimes I looked out of my bedroom window and noticed that the people walking past were dressed differently to me. Even the girls. Around the house and outside, I always wore the traditional Punjabi outfit of a *salwar* – loose-fitting trousers – and *kameez* – a kind of shirt. (...) Most important of all, when I stepped through the front door, my head was covered by a kind of shawl called *chunni* or *dapatta*. The girls outside my window didn’t wear these but I never considered myself different. Everyone in my house dressed like me. Everyone I ever spoke to dressed in the same way. *It’s the girls outside my window who are different. Not me.* (Kaur Athwal 16)

Kaur Athwal is not only describing her outfit compared to the people outside her window, but she is also giving the reader her thoughts around it. Because of the exclusion from the Western culture, everyone she would talk to and knew at that point, were all like her, and therefore it is the people outside who are different, not her. This shows the inner self of a young girl who is only allowed to interact with people within her community and how that affects her perception of other people.

The successful memoirist introduces their inner self to the reader by showing “the building of a process of thought” (Judith Kitchen in Steinberg 188). This means that the reader is not only interested in an event, but also how the author is approaching that specific event. When writing a memoir, the most natural part of being a human, which is the part where we always react internally, must come forward. This means that the memoirist’s approach to an event should include aspects such as “retrospection: a looking back, an assessment (...) intrusion: a stepping in, a commentary (...) introspection: a self-examination, honest appraisal and discovery (...) reflection: thinking things out, searching for meaning (...) speculation: playing ‘what if’” (Steinberg 188). Kaur Athwal’s first time going through most of these aspects can be found when, after five years of looking after her siblings and doing every possible chore in the house, her parents decide that it is time for her to go to India in order to become the perfect wife:

‘I’m taking you to India to learn the ways of our country,’ he said emphatically. ‘Your grandmother and your aunts will teach you to be a woman. They will teach you how to look after a family, how to run a house, how to clean and how to cook the Indian way.’ (...) (Kaur Athwal 30)

Looking back at a very important and defining moment in her life, where her parents are sending her to India, a country she has never been before, without her siblings, makes the reader see the first glimpse of a girl questioning her parents. We get to see the first glimpse of Kaur Athwal’s actual thoughts as a young girl, and not as just another family member in a South Asian patriarchal structure, where according to Aruna Papp in her article “Culturally Driven Violence Against Women” (2010), “[e]ach family member is viewed as a contributing part to a collective whole” and “failure to fulfil the expected role creates family instability, and for that reason, personal independence is discouraged” (12). Being a daughter puts Kaur Athwal at the very bottom of that structure, so when the head of the family, her father, tells her she is going to India, she is expected to accept that decision, no questions asked.

However, no matter what angle she looks at the situation she is in, Kaur Athwal cannot be excited about the journey ahead of her: “‘Am I being punished?’ I asked. (...) ‘(...) why are you sending me away?’ (...) What could be more ‘Indian than the way we already lived? Even our area in London was known as ‘Little India’”. Outside of school I never spoke to anyone of a different religion or race.” (Kaur Athwal 30-31). This is an example of as a young girl, Kaur Athwal is reflecting through an experience, searching for a reason why she

is being sent to India, and how up till this very moment, she has never doubted her parents: “I should be honoured to go there. Instead, there I was, challenging him.” (30). The expectations of Kaur Athwal as an obedient daughter overrules her wish, which is to stay home with her family and not be sent to a country she has never been to before.

Growing up in the Sikh community, Kaur Athwal is taught that all men and women are equal, and yet, for every decision that is made *for* Kaur Athwal *by* someone else, makes her think otherwise. Kaur Athwal values her faith and the teachings it has taught her, and notices how Bachan Kaur, the mother-in-law, uses their faith in order to excuse what she has done, which is paid for someone to kill Surjit:

I will never forgive Bachan Kaur Athwal for distorting the teachings of the Ten Gurus. Over the years I questioned many times whether it was my religion’s fault that that Surjit was murdered. But it wasn’t. Bachan Kaur claimed to be acting in the name of the community, in the name of Sikh’s honour everywhere. She wasn’t. She only ever acted in the name of evil, in the name of selfishness. (Kaur Athwal 400)

Bachan Kaur, through her influence and status in the community, manages to hinder Kaur Athwal from entering Southall temple. Even though Bachan Kaur and Sukhdave were the ones to murder Surjit, it is Kaur Athwal who is treated like a villain:

(...) it is rare that I am not accosted by someone who accuses me of bringing shame on my family by having my mother- and brother-in-law arrested. It’s a warped logic that values a murderer’s good name over the life of a young girl whose crime was to be stuck in a loveless marriage” (Kaur Athwal 400)

The last sentence of this example proves the amount of power the concept of honour has over a community, with a message that equals Surjit’s life to nothing compared to the Bachan Kaur’s family name and honour.

1.2 Memoir as verbal art

Elaine Scarry states that although “almost bereft of any sensuous content” with its “monotonous small black marks on a white page” (Avizienis 5), the memoir can be viewed as verbal art. This is done by creating sensory content through mimetic content, in other words “the figural rooms and faces and weather that we mimetically see, touch, and hear, though in

no case do we actually do so” (Avižienis 5). Authors evoke images in their readers’ minds, a process Scarry defines as ‘instructions’. An author may instruct the reader to hear the ‘wind howl’ outside through words written on a page, even though it may actually be completely calm. Kaur Athwal evokes images of an event that took place when she was newly born, and could not have remembered. However, through the act of imagination, which is described by Scarry as “an act of perpetual mimesis, whether undertaken in our own daydreams or under the instruction of great writers” (6), a vivid image is evoked for the reader:

It’s a feast of the senses. The air is filled with incense and the aromas of a busy kitchen. Brightly dressed women jostle for position with men wearing colourful turbans, their long beards trailing down their chests. The sound of their rapid-fire conversation is punctuated by frequent bursts of laughter between mouthfuls of chapatti and sips of chilled lassi. It’s a typical day of celebration for the local Sikh community but despite Punjabi being the only language used, the gathering is a long way from Amritsar or Chandigarh. It’s in Hounslow, west London. (Kaur Athwal 13)

As a reader, one can almost smell the different aromas in the house, hear the beautiful language being spoken back and forth between the people, and nearly taste the food and drink being passed around. Kaur Athwal evokes an image of happiness, an image of a celebration. When the reader imagines the house full of Indian people, celebrating, he or she performs a mimesis of hearing their laughter; of smelling and tasting the delicious food; of seeing the bright colours and long beards. Nevertheless, the bubble of happiness bursts as soon as the last sentence is read on the third paragraph on page 14, “‘Congratulations, Amarjit Kaur,’ she says, touching the baby’s soft cheek. ‘But it should have been a boy.’” (Kaur Athwal). This causes the mood in the story to change, reminding the reader that this is not a happy story. Rather, this is the story of how growing up as a girl in an honour and shame based culture is.

1.3 Human rights violations

Schaffer and Smith (2004) describe stories that deal with human rights framework as “(...) strong, emotive stories often chronicling degradation, brutalization, exploitation, and physical violence” (4). Kaur Athwal is born, like many other girls in honour and shame based cultures, she is viewed as the carrier of her family’s honour. This entails that her purpose in life is to grow up and become the perfect wife to her husband, and the perfect mother to her, preferably, sons. She will be deprived of many rights, such as choosing when and who to

marry, economic freedom, and forced to put the thought of education aside. The threat of physical violence becomes a staple in her life after her community finds out that she wants justice for her sister-in-law, resulting in the head of the family, her mother-in-law, and the eldest son and Surjit's husband, to end up behind bars. Once a story about human rights violations is out, it can "provide necessary evidence and information about violations" (3), which is clearly the case with Kaur Athwal's memoir.

The "degradation, brutalization, exploitation, and physical violence" (4) affects Surjit in a different way, seeing as she fights for her freedom, which ultimately, gets her murdered. When she wants to leave her husband, the measures he goes to in order to 'get her back' is frightening:

At first, Sukhdave kept his cool. I think he assumed his wife would cave in. When she didn't, he didn't just revert to name-calling. He let his fists do the talking, too. Surjit called the police but he left before they arrived. She changed address soon after but Sukhdave tracked her down again. When Surjit refused to open the door, he began shouting through the letterbox. It started with begging, and a declaration of love. When that didn't work the messages turned darker. 'Come back to me, Surjit, or I'll kill you!' (Kaur Athwal 193)

No matter how much the readers had prepared themselves for Surjit being treated horribly and in the end, being murdered, reading the passage above pictures an image of a helpless Surjit, seemingly all alone, which evokes emotions of anger and sorrow, all in sympathy for the victim. It is at this point that the readers realize to what dangerous extent the Athwal family, more specifically Surjit's husband, Sukhdave, and his mother, Bachan Kaur, go to in order to control her life. Being the head of the family, Bachan Kaur does not only control the women's lives, but also the lives of her sons. Whatever their mother-in-law says, gets done. However, as Kaur Athwal puts it: "There are many ways that Sukhdave could have responded" to Surjit's ways of dishonouring their family, "but he chose hitting and abuse" (170).

Although stories differ in their contents, they all "invite an ethical response from listeners and readers" (5), and they "[a]ll have strong affective dimensions for both tellers and the audiences, affects that can be channelled in negative and positive ways" (5). When Kaur Athwal came out with her memoir, she not only put a target on her own back, but the threats against her spread to the rest of her family, more specifically, her children. Therefore, one cannot argue that Kaur Athwal did this for fame or money. These affective dimensions can

“assist, but also impede, the advance of human rights” (5). Although some might claim that Kaur Athwal asserts that all South Asian communities, or even families, value the concepts of honour and shame to the same level as the Athwal family did, this is not true. In fact, although Surjit’s family is an example of how that is not the case: “[h]er Coventry family wasn’t exactly Westernised – far from it – but she had never been shipped to India for intensive training. Nor had her parents restricted her from socialising with Western girl friends at school” (Kaur Athwal 122). Instead, what Kaur Athwal hopes for is to bring awareness to the communities that do value these concepts to the extreme, where the possibility of a life being taken, arises. As such, by stepping forward and telling her story, Kaur Athwal encourages for others to do the same, and “as individual stories accumulate, the collective story gains cultural salience and resonance” (Schaffer & Smith 3), proclaiming to the audience that this issue is not to be ignored.

Gillian Whitlock’s *Soft Weapons* (2007) gives another insight to what may happen when a story is received in a wrong way. At the core of its definition, a memoir can “personalize and humanize categories of people whose experiences are frequently unseen and unheard” (17), which is in several ways, what Kaur Athwal’s story does. On the other hand, it can be looked upon as what Whitlock calls “a ‘soft weapon’ because it is easily co-opted into propaganda”, which in modern democratic societies is “a careful manipulation of opinion and emotion in the public sphere and a management of information in the engineering of consent” (17). Although Kaur Athwal is not saying that all South Asian communities are the same, other people may read her story and come out with the conclusion that all girls and women in South Asian communities are under the threat of an ‘honour’ killing by their family members.

The way this story may be used as a ‘soft weapon’ is when cultures that are already in conflict, for example the Western culture vs. the Eastern culture, may point to this memoir as evidence against harmonizing with South Asian communities, leaving a bigger gap between people than before the story came out. Another example is when Kaur Athwal is forced into an arranged marriage, and advocates and activists reading about it look for an explanation that “preclude any discussion of cultural values and traditions that project a “colonialist” mentality or that may lead to a perceived “racialization” of an entire ethnic community” (Papp 9) instead of confronting the tradition. The ignorance arises from a fear of saying some cultures have less value than others, which further touches upon the issue of how the West may view the East in certain aspects, taking marriage as an example. Papp believes that “to suggest violence against girls and women arises from specific cultural values implies some cultures are better than others where treatment of women is concerned” (Papp 9). This is “an

uncomfortable admission” (9), and it is instead a lot easier to claim that the abuse of girls and women is a “global phenomenon”, or a “settlement issue”, or connected to “discrimination or racism” (9). While each of these claims may rightly be connected to the abuse of girls and women, refusing to challenge traditions and values in communities will allow for the abuse of girls and women to continue.

Kaur Athwal gives more than a handful of examples of why her story needs to be acknowledged when combatting the issue of ‘honour’ killings, and the control the concept of honour has over the Sikh culture. As a young girl, growing up both in England and India, she becomes aware of how differently she is being treated because she is a girl. When faced with situations that she sees as unfair and unjust, instead of explaining why she can’t speak to boys who are not family, or why she can’t invite her English school friends over to her house, or even attend birthday parties, Kaur Athwal is expected to simply accept these restrictions, because *she is a girl* and therefore cannot dishonour her family’s name, which she certainly will do, if she does any of those things. This realization comes to her when she is in India:

And yet as tough and orthodox as my parents were, my Indian family were even more strict, especially where I was concerned. If there were two interpretations of a rule, they took the more punishing one. At first I thought it was just their ‘way’. Then I realised it wasn’t just because it was me. It was because of who I was. Not Dad’s daughter. *A girl*. (Kaur Athwal 51-52)

The realization is not enough for Kaur Athwal to accept her fate, instead it leads to more questions unanswered. Her religion belonged to Sikhism, which “is all about equality, about all castes of men being the same and about the similarities, not the differences, between men and women” (Kaur Athwal 52). It goes as far as her wishing she had been born a boy:

My male cousins were excused everything I had to endure. They went to the local school, shortly after I made them breakfast. They were never asked to lift a finger to help with the chores. And they were allowed to roam the property, the village and beyond. It really was one rule for them and another rule for me. (Kaur Athwal 52)

According to Papp, one can notice the gender roles children are put into as soon as they are born, seeing as “[t]here are great celebrations upon the birth of a son, but solicitous empathy is offered when a daughter is born.” (Papp 13). Compared to the reaction of relatives and the

community to Kaur Athwal being born, and ten years later, when her brother is born, even she as a child, notices the difference: “I don’t know if I imagined the celebrations being more lavish than usual or the congratulations of friends and family seeming more heartfelt.” (Kaur Athwal 31).

Kaur Athwal’s way of questioning things evolving gender does not last too long, and when the time comes for her arranged marriage, the reader gets a sense of how she forces herself to accept her situation: “[t]his is the tradition, I’m part of the tradition, don’t fight it. Don’t question it. Do your duty – and smile” (Kaur Athwal 95). Kaur Athwal Sarbjit is aware that many readers will not understand why she agreed to the marriage when it was “something that was so much against [her] will.” (Kaur Athwal 116). However, by writing this memoir, she is also showing how it can happen to girls around the world. She is not the first and she will certainly not be the last. Being brought up the way she has, shows us that there was not a lot of room for argument:

The truth is, if you were raised in my family, you would do the same. Yes, perhaps if I had the choice I might have been out enjoying myself like other teenagers. But you have to remember that I had never been out, never socialised, never seen a glimpse of that side of life. I’d never even been on an underground train! You can’t miss something you don’t know exists. (Kaur Athwal 98)

How can someone fight for something they’re not aware exists? Kaur Athwal’s acceptance of where her life had taken her is challenged she gets to know her sister-in-law on a deeper level. In some ways, one might argue that Kaur Athwal is intimidated by Surjit, because years of being told how a girl, a woman should act, but more specifically, how she shouldn’t act, has been ingrained in her brain for as long as she can remember, and then to have someone from the same community go against it, is something Kaur Athwal had never witnessed until she met Surjit.

1.4 Discourse of dehumanization: the derealisation of the ‘Other’

The memoir introduces Surjit as a young and unhappy wife, and it does not take long before Kaur Athwal realizes that the two of them are very different. Whereas Kaur Athwal has come into the family with the intentions of keeping everyone around her happy, even if that means forsaking her own happiness. Surjit, on the other hand, has no problem with showing her disdain at the way she is being treated by the Athwals:

‘All of them are so lazy,’ she fumed. ‘they expect to be waited on hand and foot.’ I didn’t say a word. ‘They never help; they don’t even offer to clean up. Would it kill them to pick up a few plates? Obviously I would never let them, but they should offer, shouldn’t they? I do it in their houses. You would too, wouldn’t you?’ (Kaur Athwal 127)

Bending to Bachan Kaur’s, their mother-in-law, every wish and command is difficult, but the girls find comfort from the head of the family, Gian Singh, who is described as “a generous soul and quick with warm comments” (Kaur Athwal 156). However, this comfort doesn’t last too long, seeing as he passes away six months after the wedding of Kaur Athwal and her husband. The death of Gian Singh leaves a new position open, namely, the head of the family.

Based on the family structure, the next person to take on the role as the head of the family would be Sukhdave, Surjit’s husband, seeing as he is “the eldest male in the family” (Papp 12), and therefore also the one who “has authority to control and dominate all women and younger men” (12). However, Bachan Kaur has something else in mind:

A couple days after Gian Singh’s death, we were all gathered to eat in the dining room. Before we began, my mother-in-law raised a toast to her dear departed husband. She spoke thoughtfully, then concluded with words that I remember to this day: ‘I am the head of the family now.’ (Kaur Athwal 132)

Going against the family structure is not lightly looked upon, but seeing as it is “someone (...) Sukhdave loved most in the world. Someone who was grieving at the loss of her dear husband. And someone who was already more respected in the community than he would ever be. What could he say?” (Kaur Athwal 132-133). According to South Asian cultural codes, Surjit and Sarbjit are the weakest members of the family, and therefore also “constantly at the disposal of [their] mother-in-law, whose aim is to establish her control over the newcomer[s]” (Papp 15). The only way for them to move up the family ladder, is by producing sons. Because they fail to do so, they’re viewed as failures, and therefore, no one bats an eye at the “physical abuse of girls and women, occasionally severe, by older females of status, in particular the mother-in-law” (15). Whereas Kaur Athwal accepts the abuse from her mother-in-law, Surjit cannot deal with it. Kaur Athwal’s reasons, which stems from her upbringing, gives the reader an insight to how someone who has been fed from day one that

they are here for specific reasons, which in her case is to be a good wife and produce sons, thinks:

I was a woman. I was put on this earth to be a daughter, a wife and a mother. That was my lot, that was what I'd been trained for. I didn't question my role in life, I just got on with it. So why didn't she? (Kaur Athwal 148)

When Surjit complains about her the house chores they are forced to do, "(...) the man goes to work, the wife cooks and fetches his slippers when he comes home" (149), it is not Surjit's complaint about her domestic duties that puts up a red flag for the reader, but rather Sarbjit's next words: "I nodded. She spoke sense. The only difference was, I couldn't see the problem. *That's how things are*" (149). This shows how having been told one thing all one's life makes one blind to the fact that it may not be right, because it is all one knows. Surjit, on the other hand, refuses to be controlled at every aspect of her life, and starts to wear short skirts, puts on make-up and goes out drinking with her English friends. The last straw is when she becomes pregnant, and the father is not Sukhdave, but a married man she has fallen in love with. As a result, Surjit's purpose in the Athwal family ceases to exist, seeing as all she had done is dishonour the family name. Therefore, the next obvious step from the mother-in-law's point of view, is to get rid of her, for good.

Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* (2004) approaches the question of a non-violent ethics, "one that is based upon an understanding of how easily human life is annulled" (xvii). By exploring Emmanuel Levinas' conception of ethics, which "begins with the precarious life of the Other" (xviii), Butler believes the conception can be used for "cultural analyses that seek to understand how best to depict a human, human grief and suffering" (xviii), despite it being based on a theological point of view. Through the 'face' – which is neither precisely or exclusively a human face – we can depict "both the precariousness of life and the interdiction violence" (xviii), which further gives us a way of understanding how aggression is present in an ethics of non-violence because it "forms the incessant matter for ethical struggles" (xvii). How can one act right if one does not know what wrong is? Instead, Levinas argues ethics to be a "struggle to keep fear and anxiety from turning into murderous action" (xviii).

According to Butler, the cultural analyses of Levinas' conception of ethics can be found in the media representations of who is looked upon as the 'enemy' of the people; the 'faces' that should not be counted as a human face. This view is exactly what destroys what

Levinas argues is the most human about the 'face'. Therefore, "through a cultural transposition of his philosophy" (xvii), we can challenge these "dominant forms of representation" by refusing to accept them, in order for "the precariousness of life to be apprehended" (xvii). However, this is easier said than done. Seeing as this representation has been going on for centuries, it becomes hard to notice something, or rather someone, who has always been hid, always remained faceless. These "faces must be admitted into public view, must be seen and heard for some keener sense of the value of life, all life to take hold" (xviii). The honour and shame based community Surjit is part of, does not value her as a human being; as a face worth representing. If there indeed is a face, it is one that should be looked upon as the "enemy".

Kaur Athwal describes the decision on Surjit's fate as a normal "Friday afternoon in late November" (Kaur Athwal 186), that suddenly takes a dramatic turn. When asked to join the others, meaning the mother-in-law, Hardave, Kaur Athwal's husband, and Sukhdave, she notices "an odd atmosphere in the room" (187). It becomes clear that something is very wrong as she takes a seat to join them:

As I took a seat at the table, I could sense something was wrong. Was it me? Had I offended someone? Even the way the others were sitting apart from me made me feel nervous. Then I realised both brothers' eyes were on Bachan Kaur. 'I've spoken to a contact in India,' she began. 'It's all going to be taken care of.' Sukhdave nodded. (...) 'It's her own fault. She's out of control,' Bachan Kaur continued. 'She's bringing shame on the family.' She looked sad. 'We're the laughing-stock of the community.' So now I knew who she was talking about – but what did that have to do with India? I didn't get the chance to ask. 'So it's decided then,' Bachan Kaur concluded, without any discussion having taken place. 'We have to get rid of her.' (Kaur Athwal 187)

'Getting rid of her' meant luring Surjit to India, drugging her, strangling her, and then dumping her in the Ravi River. Based on the way Surjit is perceived by the Athwal family, and more importantly, by the Sikh community, getting rid of someone who has brought shame and dishonour on the 'respectable' Athwal family, is understandable. Surjit failed to perform the duties expected of her, and therefore any violence done against her, "from the perspective of violence (...) fails to injure or negate" (Butler 33) her life, because it was already negated to begin with, meaning ultimately that Surjit's murder should have no impact at all, because her life was not viewed as one at all. This is a clear example of

dehumanization, because when Surjit, who is not considered a human being, is killed, the evidence of her life does not change, because there was no evidence in the first place. One may, in fact, say, that once Surjit was branded as a dishonourable woman, her fate was sealed.

Butler asserts the derealisation of the Other to the victims of the war on terror, but I argue that we can extend it to ‘honour’ killing victims as well. The victims of dehumanization cannot be mourned, because “they are always already lost, or rather, never “were”” (Butler 33). What they become instead, is a part of what Butler calls the “spectral” (34), their bodies merely an illusion of a life that is constantly between life and death. The victims that are caught in the spectral, will never be heard about in the public, because they do not exist. Trying to understand this process of dehumanization may be difficult, but there are several ways of looking at it. Butler’s gives us two reasons as to why derealisation of the ‘Other’ takes place, and the following is the one I argue describes victims of ‘honour’ killings most profoundly:

(...) first, on the level of discourse, certain lives are not considered lives at all, they cannot be humanized, that they fit no dominant frame for the human, and that their humanization occurs first, at this level, and that this level then gives rise to a physical violence that in some sense delivers the message of dehumanization that is already at work in the culture. (Butler 34)

In other words, the physical violence against a life deemed ‘unhuman’ is to be expected, because the mental violence already exists in the culture. In the case with ‘honour’ killing victims, the message of dehumanization is conveyed through their human rights violations, where they have no freedom of choice regarding almost everything in their lives, such as what to wear, who to speak to, and who to marry, just to name a few.

However, stating that “violence (...) implements what is already happening in discourse, such that a discourse on humanization produces treatment, including torture and murder” (36) is a statement one should be careful with claiming. According to Butler, discourse of dehumanization is not a discourse that really exists. Rather, “there is no limit to discourse that establishes the limits of human intelligibility” (35), meaning that the aspect of dehumanization exists where it benefits public discourse. No one has the power, and certainly not the right, to dehumanize another human being. Nonetheless, there will always be someone who believes they do, created through public discourse.

In honour and shame based cultures, it is those at the top of the patriarchal family structure who affects public discourse, which is why their words are the girls' and women's commands. If one is to oppose this and say there is in fact a discourse of dehumanization, Butler defines it as "a silent and melancholic one in which there have been no lives, and no losses; there has been no common bodily condition, no vulnerability that serves as the basis for an apprehension of our commonality" (36). When there is no loss, there is no grieving. The public does not grieve, because the life that has been lost, did not belong in 'our commonality', which is the fact that we all have experienced loss; losing someone makes us vulnerable, and it is precisely this vulnerability that unites us as human beings; we can all feel grief and be vulnerable. Which is why, when a life, a body – our commonality – labelled as unhuman is lost, we do not flinch, because "there has been no sundering of that commonality" (36), creating further differences between people.

When a life is not grievable, it becomes "already the unburied, if not the unburi-able" (Butler 34). Surjit's family are denied the possibility of not only getting an obituary, but also of burying their daughter; sister; relative. In fact, the mother-in-law tries to hide Surjit's murder altogether, claiming that she has no idea about her whereabouts:

On 18 December 1998, Surjit's family received a call. Bachan Kaur herself, fresh off the plane from India, called Surjit's mother in Coventry. 'Surjit's not here,' Bachan Kaur told her. 'Have you heard from her?' 'What do you mean she's not there? Isn't she at your house?' responded Surjit's mother. 'No, she decided to come home early. We spoke the other day and she said she missed the kids, so she was jumping on an earlier flight. But I haven't seen her. I thought she must be with you.' (Kaur Athwal 215)

By completely distancing themselves from Surjit, the Athwal family are branding her life as meaningless, where the process of the derealisation of the 'Other', Surjit, goes from deprivation of human rights to the act of murder. In many instances of 'honour' killings, the family does not mourn their lost daughter/wife, because they believe she is not worthy of being mourned. Surjit's body was never found, and therefore denied a proper funeral. This is true of many victims Rana Husseini's memoir, *Murder in the Name of Honour* (2009), tells the story of, sending a message that tells girls and women they are not worth anything. Banaz's family, like Surjit's, is denied mourning when "her body had been stuffed into a suitcase and buried in a garden in Birmingham" (289).

1.5 Gender-based violence

Nootash Keyhani argues in her article “Honour Crimes as Gender-based Violence in the UK: A Critical Assessment” (2015), that honour crimes can be viewed as gender-based violence, because it is defined as “discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis equality with men” (264). This definition correlates to how girls and women are treated in honour and shame based communities, because the “very concepts of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’ revolve around female sexuality and the regulation of chastity” (264). The discrimination against women in these communities includes “acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. The reader gets to partake in a young girl’s revelation on being discriminated for the sole purpose of simply being born a girl. During her time in India, she discovers her body changing, turning into a woman, “unfortunately, [she] wasn’t the only one to notice” (Kaur Athwal 62):

As the bus pulled away, everyone lurched forwards before settling back. (...) I became aware of a hand- a male hand – resting on my waist. Instinctively I twisted my body and tried to shrug it off. The hand pressed tighter, then started moving up my body. I wanted to scream but it was as though all the air had been sucked from the bus. I wanted to kick out but my legs, my whole body, was frozen. I was so shocked I couldn’t even cry. (Kaur Athwal 63-64)

Even though that was the last time Kaur Athwal was physically groped, the incident made her nervous and uptight every time she had to catch the bus again. This image of a helpless young woman being sexually harassed, provokes emotions of anger and sympathy from the reader to the point where the fight for ending discrimination against women gains another participant. Still, where the physical harassment ended, the verbal one began:

(...) several times men whispered things in my ear that made me feel ill. Some of them asked me to do things and then laughed at my terrified silence. Others seemed angry and called me names I had never heard before. Yet again, all I could do was wonder why. Why me? What had I done? Why did these men hate me so? *Why wasn’t I a boy?* (Kaur Athwal 64)

Here is a girl growing into a young woman, learning of the hardships of being a woman. Kaur Athwal’s sense of faith is put to trial after these incidents, seeing as her religion, Sikhism, viewed men and women as equals, values the Sikh communities claimed to uphold, were cast

aside. Instead, Kaur Athwal is made to feel inferior to males, suffering both physical and verbal abuse.

The confusion Kaur Athwal experiences based on her gender, continues when she gets back, when her role inside and outside of the house differ immensely: “While I was expected to be a woman at home, I was still treated very much like a child outside” (Kaur Athwal 74). Whereas her chores at home defined her as a second mother to her siblings and other relatives, constantly being tasked to look after them and the house, Kaur was never allowed to walk to school on her own, instead “one of my aunts or uncles with usually drive me on their way to work” (74). At the end of her school day, her grandfather would wait for her, not accepting any tardiness. Another example of gender role differentiating occurs when Kaur Athwal is ‘caught’ speaking to a boy in her class by her grandfather:

(...) he was pacing agitatedly among the exodus of schoolchildren trying to get home. (...) By the time I reached the pavement he virtually dragged me towards home. ‘Who were you talking to?’ he demanded. The ferocity of his question caught me out. ‘Pardon?’ I said. ‘Who were you talking to?’ he repeated, louder this time. ‘No one, Granddad.’ ‘Yes you were. I say you. A boy.’ (...) ‘Oh, him,’ I remembered. ‘He’s a kid in my class. He was just asking if I’d seen his friend.’ ‘What did you say?’ ‘I said no.’ A frown descended on Granddad’s face. (...) I’d obviously done something wrong but I didn’t have a clue what. (...) ‘Don’t speak to that boy – any boy – again.’

When Kaur asks her grandfather if not answering someone is considered wrong, he gives her a reply that instantly speaks of the way girls are expected to act in an honour and shame based community: “Not as wrong as being seen talking to them” (76). Kaur Athwal, even at the age of a school girl, can dishonour her family by speaking to boys that are not family members. If she is ‘caught’ speaking to a boy outside of her family structure, rumours and gossip can ruin her family’s reputation, and in the worst case, cost her, her life. What is disheartening to realize as a reader, is the way Kaur Athwal accepts her role, because she had to a good daughter and a good Sikh, even though the latter would not discriminate between genders, and refuse girls to talk to boys outside of their family.

Perhaps the most profound example of gender-based violence is Kaur Athwal being forced into an arranged marriage, which she in the end accepts, because refusing would mean to dishonour her family. The following excerpt is from two families celebrating the soon-to-be marriage between a son and a daughter:

While others chatted and ate, my sister and I sat quietly. I'm sure she was concerned for me but also, she knew: in a few years' time, this will be me. I was the example for her, my dad had made that clear. I had the family's honour to think of. How I behaved today could shape many lives for a long time to come. (Kaur Athwal 93)

For most people, a marriage is a bond between *two* people, but in an honour-based community, it is a bond between two families. Kaur Athwal is not only marrying Hardave, but also the rest of the Athwal family. Neither is she marrying him because of love, but rather to honour her family. This control over Kaur Athwal's life speaks to how patriarchy, "in its general sense, represents the institutionalisation of hierarchy" (Zvinkliene 533). Looking at the discrimination taking place through a feministic lens, patriarchy becomes another system of "male authority over women" (533). This system is so deeply ingrained in culture, it "challenges and influences the structures of social institutions responsible for 'processing' a gender identity in a boy/man and a girl/woman" (533). Consequently, it may be difficult to challenge a system so deeply imbedded in honour and shame based cultures, but Kaur Athwal's memoir proves, through her story, that one cannot be afraid to step on anyone's toes when someone's life is in danger. When she decides to go to the police, she challenges the system, knowing that the concept of honour does not guarantee the value of someone's life.

The moment Kaur Athwal manages to divorce her husband, Hardave, "after five long years of fighting" (Kaur Athwal 400), with all of her children under her custody, she vows to give them "not only the childhood Hardave would not allow, but also the one I was denied" (400). Kaur Athwal has taken a step away from her culture's strict rules and codes of letting, her children partake in seemingly normal activities, but nevertheless activities she was denied: "They go swimming, they watch television, they stay over at friends' houses, and have every support in their education that I can provide" (400). Realizing she was denied of things while growing up, solely on the basis of her being a girl, Kaur Athwal wants to make sure that this does not happen to her children. Gone is the girl and woman who accepted every bit of discrimination against her, and in her place, is a woman who knows her rights.

1.6 The power of testimony: bearing witness

The testimony comes in three types, and Kaur Athwal's memoir has aspects from all of them, which is why I argue that her story can be classified as a testimony. The first is called the forensic testimony, and "asks decision-makers to categorize past actions as just or unjust" (Nance 23). The decision-makers reading Kaur Athwal's testimony can be police

officers/investigators and judges, hoping to bring awareness to an issue they can highlight and further implement rules or law concerning ‘honour’ killings. In addition, the decision-maker can also be the head of the patriarchal family structure in an honour-based community, being challenged to take a deeper look into how big of an impact the role of honour has, and more importantly, how violating and dehumanizing it can be for those under its control. Based on the different decision-makers reading her testimony, one can say that she is accusing those who have wronged Surjit and her, asking for a change through defence.

The second type, called the epideictic testimony asks their spectators “to categorize present actions as noble or shameful” (23) with an outcome of either praise or blame. Although Kaur Athwal never actually addresses her readers in order to get an answer on whether what is happening is “noble or shameful”, I argue that it is asked indirectly through the way the readers themselves make up their mind on who it to blame for these ‘shameful’ and horrific actions. Kaur Athwal puts trust in her readers to acknowledge what happened to Surjit, become aware of how an ‘honour’ killing can occur, as in what signs to look for and hopefully, how to stop it. The third type of testimony is what one may call a further step ahead from the first type, namely, the deliberative one. Here, the author asks readers “to determine whether or not to undertake a future action” (23). Kaur Athwal, through her story, hopes for people to realize that if she could stand up against the injustice, as someone deep imbedded in the honour and shame based community, so can others.

Kaur Athwal testifies to Surjit’s death, which is, up until the point she calls the police, “an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence” (Felman & Laub 57). It would be one thing to read about Surjit’s death in a news article, but “the trauma – as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock – has not been truly witnessed yet” (57). In order for the trauma to unravel as a known event, there needs to be a narrative which is being listened to. Only when the listener, which in Kaur Athwal’s case is the reader, acknowledges the trauma, does it become real; “the event is given birth to” (57). Thus, when “reading the narrative of extreme human pain, of massive physic trauma” (57), the reader takes on an important role, a crucial one in fact. Stepping away from “the presence of ample documents, of searing artifacts and of fragmentary memoirs of anguish” (57), and instead search for something that properly acknowledges the trauma; the presence of the event that has taken place. Felman and Laub describe the hearer as “the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (57). However, how can Kaur Athwal testify to an event where she was not present?

Although Kaur Athwal was not present when Surjit lost her life, she was the only one who knew what had happened to her who felt a moral obligation to tell the truth. The rest of the Athwal family would never come forward and admit to what they had done, especially the mother-in-law. As far as she knew, she had done them all a favour and gotten rid of a dishonourable person who could no longer tarnish their family name. Despite the fear of something similar happening to her, Kaur Athwal's thoughts keep going back to "Bachan Kaur's description of Surjit's last moments" (Kaur Athwal 282):

'So, Surjit was taken out in a jeep as arranged. But they didn't reach the shops. She was given some water to drink and as soon as she'd swallowed, Surjit knew she had been drugged.' As she relayed the details, Bachan Kaur's confidence returned. The more she spoke, the more normal she sounded. From seeming so distraught a few minutes before to now sounding holier-than-thou – as she did when making small talk outside the temple (...) 'When she was unconscious, the two men who had driven her there strangled her, removed her jewellery and threw her body in the Ravi River.' (Kaur Athwal 266)

Surjit's death becomes a real trauma when the mother-in-law testifies to Kaur Athwal about how it happened. At first, what stops Kaur Athwal from going to the police is the thought of what happened to Surjit, happening to her. This is something she is told more than once: "If you say anything, you will regret it,' he snarled. 'Remember who you're dealing with.'" (Kaur Athwal 309). If the Athwal family managed to arrange for Surjit to be murdered, who was to say they wouldn't do the same to Kaur Athwal?

Even with the constant fear that she might be the next victim, Kaur Athwal's thoughts go out to Surjit: "I couldn't stop myself from picturing what she must have gone through: alone, frightened, fighting for her life. I knew too, that I should *do* something" (Kaur Athwal 282-283). These two women have endured the same discrimination against them, the second they stepped became a part of the Athwal family, and therefore Kaur Athwal becomes the best person to testify Surjit's pain; her trauma. The difference between them was that while Kaur Athwal accepted her fate, Surjit fought for her freedom. In that sense, one may say, based on Felman and Laub's theory on testimony, that when Kaur Athwal testifies for Surjit through her memoir, writing about what happened, Surjit's trauma impacts the reader. Just like Kaur Athwal imagines Surjit's fear in her last moments, so does the reader. In other words, the reader goes through "the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts"

(Felman, and Laub 57) inflicted upon the victim. Therefore, Surjit's trauma impacts Kaur Athwal to then impact the reader.

Another way Kaur Athwal testifies for Surjit is in the courtroom, and thereby becoming the first family member to do so. Going against her community, and at some point, her family's wishes, Kaur Athwal waives her anonymity, knowing it is the right thing to do in order to bring justice to Surjit's murder. However, her resolve gets close to breaking when she sees the way her husband, Hardave, starts to spread lies about her, telling their children that their mother was a liar, and should ring the police and get their 'Mum' and 'Uncle' out of prison:

It was the hardest line to walk. Trying to tell your child that you're not a liar without saying their father is. One look at Balveen's face, crushed with disappointment, told me that whatever I said, I was to blame for everything that was world in her world. And, for a moment, I felt I was, too. 'Can you do this?' Clive's words echoed in my brain. Yes I can. Whatever the cost, I will get through this. (Kaur Athwal 374)

As if the abuse from her Sikh community is not enough, Kaur Athwal was doubted everywhere she went. Desperate times calls for desperate measures, causing Kaur Athwal to ring an old family friend of the Athwals, hoping to get some advice about her husband's behaviour from "an incredibly religious, virtuous man and someone Hardave respected" (Kaur Athwal 376). Instead, what she gets is comments such as, "Sarbjit, you must stop this campaign against your family", "You are bringing shame on everyone", "How dare you go to the police" (376), to which Kaur Athwal answers that Surjit was murdered and people need to know the truth. His answer shocks her, "'You have to honour your family. That is all. What have you got out of this? You've put your mother-in-law in prison and for what?'" (378). It is not easy to persist with resistance on all sides, but Kaur Athwal braces all of it, until the trial date of April 2007 comes and it is time to testify.

After two years of prepping for her trial and withstanding abuse when people in her community found out she was testifying, the day had come for Kaur Athwal to bring justice to Surjit's death:

When the court official opened the door and I stepped through, I got the shock of my life. Sitting directly opposite the door and staring right at me were Sukhdave and Bachan Kaur Athwal. I hadn't seen them for nearly two years but my heart jumped like it was yesterday.

(...) All I could think about were the four unforgiving eyes glaring over my shoulders. I felt like a new kid at school. (...) Everywhere I looked there were expressionless faces judging me before I'd even uttered a word. (...) Mr Worsley did his utmost to put me at ease (...) Nothing worked, though. The first few answers I gave were monosyllabic. The ones after that weren't much better. (Kaur Athwal 392)

Even though Kaur Athwal wants to do her utmost best for Surjit, having never spoken in public, in English before, makes it very challenging. Having Sukhdave and Bachan Kaur stare holes into her head while testifying, is what scared her the most, seeing as she suddenly starts to doubt herself, and go back to thinking about herself like she used to: "I was absolutely terrified of them and had lived in fear of them my entire marriage. How on earth did anyone expect me to suddenly shake off a lifetime's training to obey my elders and speak now?" (Kaur Athwal 392). Years and years of having certain thoughts and customs imbedded in her mind, Kaur Athwal does not know how to go against her mother- and brother-in-law. Kaur Athwal goes home that day feeling defeated.

The next day, on the other hand, Kaur Athwal wakes up with a new determination and talks confidently in court about what Sukhdave and Bachan Kaur had done to Surjit, and "the intimidation they'd used to cover up – and that emotion was just crying to be heard" (Kaur Athwal 394). Whereas the next part, the defence asking her questions, would prove much harder, Kaur Athwal stands her ground and gets through her last day of testifying. Several days later, Clive, the police detective rings her, "My fingers were shaking too much to answer first time. (...) I was so tense I didn't think actually take in the first things Clive said. But I made out one word. 'Guilty'" (Kaur Athwal 397). After nine long years, Kaur Athwal has, with help from DPI Clive, managed to bring justice to Surjit's death, sentencing Bachan Kaur to a minimum of twenty years and Sukhdave a minimum of twenty-seven.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say that Kaur Athwal's memoir has indeed contributed to the issue of 'honour' killings. Despite knowing the risk she would be putting herself into by coming forward and testifying against the unjustifiable death of her sister-in-law, Kaur Athwal hopes to bring awareness to how communities where the aspects of honour and shame rule, can destroy people's lives. The memoir gives the readers a sense of Kaur Athwal's inner self by

showing her building of a process of thought, sharing her thoughts and emotions on the events that take place, all leading up to the ‘honour’ killing of Surjit.

In order for her readers to understand how such a thing may happen, Kaur Athwal starts at the very beginning, proving that there exists a gender-based violence against women in an honour and shame based community. Being born as a girl and then being told constantly that you have no say whatsoever on how you live your life, can damage the way a person views themselves. Kaur Athwal gives an insight into what happens to a girl’s mind if she is told she is worthless enough times, where instead of fighting for your own rights, you grow up thinking you don’t have any to begin with.

In addition, Kaur Athwal’s story can be viewed as one that portrays the dehumanizing process that takes place in discourse, where girls such as Surjit is labelled as unhuman. Once a person’s life is annulled, any violence implemented goes unnoticed, because that life did not exist in the first place, meaning it leaves no mark when gone. When Surjit’s life is taken, her perpetrators try to annul her life, taking the possibility of mourning away from her family. Not accepting this to be Surjit’s fate, Kaur Athwal writes her story and demands every reader to acknowledge Surjit’s life and mourn her. Kaur Athwal gives a voice to the ‘Other’ and puts a face on what the public has thus far viewed as unmarked through discourse. If the reader chooses to read Kaur Athwal’s story as a testimony, they choose to become a witness to Surjit’s trauma, told through Kaur Athwal’s strong and clear voice. It is only when the reader takes on their role as a participant that Surjit’s trauma becomes real.

As a conclusion, one can state that Kaur Athwal’s memoir, through the exploration of the terms of dehumanization, gender-based violence, and testimony, gives a voice to the ‘Other’ and refuses to accept the message of how “certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is derealized and diffused” (Butler 38) on these lives. Kaur Athwal has written this memoir not from the perspective of the individual ‘I’, but rather from the perspective of the collective self, resulting in a movement towards ending ‘honour’ killings.

2 Murder in the Name of Honour

If enough people read this book, maybe the next time a young woman is being stoned to death for having fallen in love, someone will intervene to save her life.

Jane Fonda, *Murder in the Name of Honour*

Rana Husseini depicts a powerful image in the first chapter in *Murder in the Name of Honour* (2009), when she asks her readers to imagine their sister or daughter “being killed for chewing gum, for laughing at a joke in the street, for wearing make-up or a short skirt, for choosing her own boyfriend/husband or becoming pregnant” (16). By directly addressing her readers in the very first sentence, Husseini manages to capture their attention instantly, asking them to try to relate to the victim of an ‘honour’ killing. This method of writing feels more conversational, suggesting that Husseini wants her audience to interact with her text, and create a conversation about the issue of ‘honour’ killings.

This chapter will explore Rana Husseini’s *Murder in the Name of Honour* (2009) contribution to the issue of ‘honour’ killings, through the perspective of a journalist, feminist and human rights defender. I have chosen to view this text as a memoir, based on the fact that Husseini gives a collection of memories about moments and events that has taken place in her life while investigating and reporting the topic of ‘honour’ killings. Similar to Kaur Athwal, Husseini writes her story for even those who have no background information on ‘honour’ killings, shedding light on the unknown sides that are often hidden from the public. Although both Husseini and Kaur Athwal demand for a change, Husseini gives specific examples of changes in laws, where the outcome would be reforms on existing national and international laws, but also mentality, where people start questioning the control the concept of honour’ has over communities.

Husseini has made it her goal in life to become the voice of the victims of ‘honour’ killings, and this is implemented through exploring many of the terms found in chapter one. By reporting a topic which is still looked upon as taboo in many places, Husseini challenges the aspect of dehumanization by representing an image the discourse of ‘honour’ killing communities have tried to suppress from the public. Husseini’s perspective differs from Kaur Athwal, because as a journalist, she manages to balance a factual and emotional journey that takes place between the pages. Furthermore, whereas Kaur Athwal testified for one victim, Husseini takes on the role of testifying for all of the victims of ‘honour’ killings she comes

across, precisely through her reporting. Despite what many think when hearing the words ‘journalist’ and ‘reporting’, Husseinini manages to give the victims an identity through their names and who they were before they became a victim, a crucial achievement in order for the readers to identify and sympathize with the victims. I argue that Husseinini’s memoir is a perfect example of how a literary text can not only challenge, but also change cultural values and traditions.

2.1 The memoir: a teaching moment

It is said that the memoir can provide a teaching moment through focusing on an event or series of events that has taken place in the author’s life. The teaching moment can evoke changes in not only the author, but also change the reader’s perception of something, based on the way they relate to the topic. What started as an “eye-opening encounter with one (...) murder that changed” Husseinini’s life, turned into “a quest that has since become all-consuming” (Husseinini 17). Rana Husseinini would become the journalist to report every single case of an ‘honour’ killing that she came across in *The Jordan Times*. During her time of investigating and reporting, Husseinini comes to the realization that “while reporting these crimes was a step in the right direction” (18), something else had to be done in order to “end these senseless murders” (18). Thus, the journey of a “naïve but enthusiastic and stubborn journalist” shifts, with a new goal: “a sensational campaign to change the law and attitudes in Jordan” (18). It is a journey Husseinini finds herself fighting alongside many others, all over the world.

Despite what many people think, an ‘honour’ killing is not a religious act. When asked about the issue, many refer the reason behind it to come from Islam and Islamic communities, when in fact, one cannot find any justification for it in the Quran. However, the laws of Muslim countries treating honour killings lightly, is an actual issue:

In Egyptian law, a man who kills his wife and/or her lover after catching them ‘in the act’ (in flagrante delicto) is only punished with prison opposed to the death penalty. Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Oman, UAE, and Jordan’s laws extend drastically reduced penalties for the murder of any female relative (and their lover) that a man finds in such a situation. (Brown 74)

This does not mean that any of these laws have “any basis in the Shariah or Islamic teachings” (Brown 74), but rather influenced by the West, more specifically by the French

Criminal Code of 1832, “copying word for word its lax punishment for honor crimes” (74), thus creating the Ottoman Code of 1858. Today in the Middle East, these laws are still used in court, like the country Jordan, which is the basis for Husseini’s memoir. The Shariah law, on the other hand, has its “rulings made by the Prophet Muhammad: a husband who kills his wife and/or her lover has committed homicide like any other case, even if the husband caught the two in the act” (75). Perpetrators who kill in the name of honour today, do not do so according to teachings of Islam, because if they did, there would be no murder in the first place. The Prophet claimed that if punishment were to take place, the whole of four witnesses had to have seen the act.

Thus, the real issue here is acknowledging that fact that “violence against women is mankind’s problem, and it’s as much a part of the past and present of the West as anywhere else” (Brown 76). The life of a person, no matter the gender, is sacred. A Muslim killing someone in the name of honour and justifying it through the teachings of Islam, is first and foremost, a human being trying to take a life. The same applies for other religions, and Kaur Athwal’s memoir testifies for this claim; all men and women are equal in Sikhism, but the way the cultural values and traditions, mixed together with the religion, tries to assert that it is based in religion, is wrong. This is not to say that all religions view the man and the woman as equal, but the right to take a life, unless it is through self-defence, is not allowed. Both Husseini and Kaur Athwal, by writing their memoirs, address the way Islam (Husseini) and Sikhism (Kaur Athwal), do not in fact, justify ‘honour’ killings. The person who starts reading Husseini’s memoir, with the assumption of religious justification, goes through a teaching moment, when she shuts the idea down, and instead tells the reader to look at the laws of a country.

2.2 The balance between the inner self and reporting

What makes the memoir so interesting is the way it has historically situated the author “in a social environment, as either observer or participant” (Smith and Watson 274), with the focus “more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator” (274). Reading Husseini’s text, it is clear to say that the attention is directed towards the victims of ‘honour’ killings, their perpetrators, people’s attitudes regarding the issue, and the campaign to change the Jordanian law. Even so, the notion of the inner self is still present in the memoir, throughout the events that occur. The following excerpts from the memoir shows, firstly, Husseini

narrating a scene in which, if she had been there, she would be an observer, directing the attention towards the victim's, or more specifically, Kifaya's life:

It was 31 May 1994, the day that Kifaya's mother, uncles and brothers had decided she would die. In the built-up part of the conservative old city, Kifaya sat, tied to a chair in the kitchen of her family home. The sweets that her older brother, Khalid, had brought earlier to persuade her that everything was alright lay untouched on the counter. Kifaya's crime was to have allowed herself to be raped by her other brother, Mohammad. She has hen been forced by her family secretly to abort his child and had then been made to marry a man thirty-four years her senior, whom she had divorced after six miserable months. She had shamed her family. There was only one solution. (Husseini 24-25)

Husseini's way of writing Kifaya's last moments portrays vivid images in the reader's mind, causing, despite the simple and straightforward sentences, the reader to empathize with Kifaya, and her unfair sealed fate. This excerpt exclaims everything that is wrong with honour and shame based communities: a young girl is raped by her brother, forced to abort the child, marry someone thirty-four years her senior, but when she leaves him, it is Kifaya who is in the wrong; it is Kifaya who has dishonoured their family, not the brother who sexually assaulted his sister.

The second excerpt shows, like mentioned, Husseini's inner self; her thoughts and emotions when dealing with an event, which in this case is the realisation that she needs to investigate these so-called four-line stories on 'honour' killings:

'You're a professional,' I muttered to myself. 'Don't worry, you'll know what to say when you get there. Just stay focused, stay focused.' (...) I recited the words I'd read in the paper for the umpteenth time that morning. 'Thirty-two-year-old man kills sixteen-year-old sister in Hashemi Shamali. Surrenders to police. Investigations underway.' I don't know how many times I saw similar four-line stories spread all over the Arabic press. Something told me that I needed to investigate these stories. As a twenty-six-year-old journalist, I was still somewhat uncertain of myself. (Husseini 26-27)

Husseini connects with the reader in the way she shares her worries as a journalist, giving the audience the chance to know the author on a more personal level; like everyone else, we doubt ourselves sometimes. The excerpts given shifts between Husseini using 3rd person's point of view, which is understandable, seeing as she was not present when Kifaya was

killed, to 1st person's point of view, where it becomes easier for her to share her thoughts and feelings with the reader regarding an event or experience.

2.3 Dehumanization: invisibility and lack of power

Memoirs proving how the aspect of dehumanization affects certain people, who in Hussein's example are girls and women being denied their rights to freedom concerning all stages of their lives, raises "complex questions about the invisibility and lack of power of those who suffer" (Smith, and Watson 136). On the one hand, a person may read Hussein's narrative and acknowledge the fact that not only are girls and women being discriminated against, but it is so bad, they are defined as less than human, never mind less than the opposite gender. On the other hand, another person reading the narrative may only come out with the notion of compassion fatigue, implying that these girls and women are only a small part of many other groups who suffer from human rights violations. What this tells us, is that "audience reaction to stories of profound suffering and harm cannot be predicted" (137). The possibility of some readers finishing the memoir and giving an ethical response is high, but one cannot forget that there will always be responses that will "seek to discredit the narrative told, as well as the witness" (137).

When Hussein wants to investigate the 'honour' killing of Kifaya, she stumbles upon her uncles, and their reaction to the murder is what fuels Hussein to report 'honour' killings in order to make them become a national issue, instead of keep being defined as "just another crime story" (Hussein 35):

'Kifaya was not a good girl,' one of them said, as if killing a 'bad girl' was acceptable. (...) Every now and again I asked why Kifaya had been killed, until one of the uncles said, 'She was raped by Mohammad, her brother. That's why she was killed.' (...) Eventually I said, 'Why was she punished and not her brother? Why didn't Kifaya's family discipline him instead?' One of the uncles looked worried. 'Do you think we killed the wrong person?' Her other uncle answered quickly, 'Relax. We did the right thing.' I struggled to contain my fury. It was as if they were speaking about a sheep. (...) Her body not yet cold, yet here they were – on a sofa in a barbershop chatting with the owner and smoking cigarettes. 'She seduced her brother. She tarnished the family's honour and deserved to die' (...) (Hussein 32)

Hussein decides to report the story the following day, with a headline Jordanians had not seen before: "'Victim of incestuous rape killed by second brother'" (Hussein 35), giving a

human face to the suffering and trauma Kifaya went through. If not for Hussein's story, Kifaya would have remained a faceless, dehumanized victim of yet another 'honour' killing. The first response they receive further proves that what Hussein is doing, is right: "You should stop Rana Hussein from reporting these crimes because they do not exist in Jordan! This does not happen in our society!" (36). Thus, Hussein decides to "become the voice of these women whose lives have been wiped out and every record of their existence destroyed by their family" (35-36). Despite the complaints and threats she receives, "If you don't stop reporting these murders, I will send someone to visit you at your home or workplace" (39), Hussein has already found her "life's mission" (39). Luckily, among threats and complaints, were also "letters of support from readers, expressing their anger and outrage about the killing of innocent women and the leniency shown to killers for murder in the first degree" (39), and it is this awareness Hussein had set out to achieve. These girls and women had lost their lives "in the cruellest manner possible", and the public "needed to know who had murdered them and why their killers had gone unpunished" (40).

Hussein's work proves its importance and influence when she gets the opportunity to interview perpetrators, and despite wanting to remain professional when meeting them, it becomes easier said than done when faced with Sarhan, who had shot his sister, Yasmin, four times with an unlicensed gun. Her crime? Being raped by her brother-in-law. By giving Yasmin a name, once again, Hussein has given the public a face; an identity, demanding people to acknowledge her death. One of the important aspects of Hussein's memoir is getting to look inside the thoughts of the perpetrator. When asked about why he had committed murder, Sarhan answers:

'I killed her because she was no longer a virgin,' (...) 'She made a mistake, willingly or not. It is better that one person dies than the whole family of shame and disgrace. It is like a box of apples. If you have one rotten apple would you keep it or get rid of it? I just got rid of it.' (...) He added: 'People refused to talk with us. They told us to go cleanse our honour; then we were allowed to talk with them. Death is the only solution to end disgrace. (...) They only stopped talking when she is dead.' (Hussein 43)

This is a perfect example of how damaging the acts of gossip and rumour can be in an honour and shame based community. Sarhan has essentially been coerced into killing his sister, because the people in his community have told him that the only way for him to cleanse his family's honour is through the act of spilling blood. Sarhan becomes a pawn in a much larger

system, and this can be further explained, when a few weeks after the interview, Hussein sees Sarhan in court again, as a free man:

The investigator (...) advised him to change his story to say he was taken by surprise by his sister's rape and the loss of her virginity, in order to get the lightest sentence possible. (...) 'I took the stand and told the judges that I had to kill my sister, because if I did not kill her, it would have been like killing more than a thousand men from my tribe.' (Hussein 45)

Centuries of maintaining the patriarchal family structure has ingrained beliefs and traditions to the point of no return. Killing Yasmin meant saving the family's honour, which refers to the honour of the male members in the family. Therefore, taking the life of one woman does not affect the community in the slightest when compared to dishonouring every single male in a family. This stems from the fact that the girl in an honour based family structure, is not an individual with rights, but rather as a member of a family, "whose welfare she has been born to serve" (Chesler). Furthermore, her position in the patriarchal structure is at the very bottom, which means she has the least to say, but nevertheless, she carries the family's honour within her body and maintaining it pure. Therefore, when Yasmin is raped, she loses the one thing that gives her value: her virginity. Never mind the fact that rape is defined as sexual assault, an act done without her consent, which means that she did not lose anything, but rather stolen from her only 'value' in life. Despite the family's honour being carried by the girl, she herself can never own honour, because it is the property of the man. Inevitably, Yasmin would lose her life because it is only the man who can restore the honour.

Another example that proves how little say a woman has in the patriarchal family structure is when Sarhan relays how not only him, but every other male member of his tribe and his mother, decided on Yasmin's fate:

He said that he sat with his father, mother, his uncles and around eight hundred men of his tribe and they had reached this consensus together. 'If I hadn't killed her, people would look down on me. Once she was raped, she was no longer a girl. My only alternative was to kill her. Death is the only way to erase shame.' (Hussein 48)

This passage tells of not only the lack of power the victim of an 'honour' killing has, but also of the one chosen to execute the victim. Sarhan was pressured from all sides; his family, his tribe, his community, to kill his sister in the name of honour. After the killing, "his family

and relatives visited him in prison to congratulate him on the act” (Husseini 46), but is it what is shared next that truly speaks about his feelings, as Yasmin’s brother, indicating that “he was not entirely comfortable with what he’d done and told me he’d been ‘forced’ to kiss his sister, whom he grew up with and loved deeply” (46). The concept of a brother killing his sister “because she had lost her virginity” (46) is unbelievable and unjust in every single way, so when his family and friends visit him in prison, I argue that it is not only to congratulate him, but to further brainwash him their harmful beliefs regarding honour and shame, by telling him that the only way out of the situation regarding his sister, was through her bloodshed. Husseini interviews Sarhan on several occasions, and from the first interview till the last, the reader gets to partake in how Sarhan went from proudly stating that he had killed his sister, to saying he wished he hadn’t been forced to kill her, to then going back and saying he would have done it again if given the chance to go back. Although Sarhan was treated like a hero in prison, the aftermath of the death of his sister, has ruined his life outside of prison:

He had tried to seek the hand of eleven women in marriage, but they all refused, including a cousin whose father had encouraged him to kill his sister. ‘They all refused for fear that I might kill them or my daughters one day. But if I were put in the same situation again I would kill my sister and any other sister who goes through the same thing. This is our society, this is how we are brought up and it will never change.’ (Husseini 51)

Again, another example of how a society that values the concept of honour, can control someone’s judgments. It is ironic how Sarhan can say if given the chance to go back to the same situation, he would kill his sister again, but then complain about how no women wants to marry him. Sarhan blames their society for killing his sister, stating that if it “would not have shunned us after her rape, we would not have killed her and instead locked her inside the house until she died or someone married her.” (52). Being aware of how society controls girls and women, causes Sarhan to not want “female children because society is harsh, and I have a feeling that I might want to bury my female daughter because that is what I would feel is right” (52).

Husseini’s story about Sarhan highlights the desperate need for a change in the values and traditions that exists in honour and shame based communities, seeing as Sarhan did not want to kill his sister, but based on what his society thought of her after she was raped, knew he had no choice but to go ahead and end her life, because “it is better to sacrifice one soul than to sacrifice my whole family” (52). Husseini’s answer to this view gives Yasmin’s life a

worth, asking the back: “But what about Yasmin? Who should then defend her? She was also a victim. Was her life worth nothing?” (49). Hussein issues a call to those reading her memoir “to respond to the story; to recognize the humanity of the teller and the justice of the claim; to take responsibility for that recognition; and to find means of redress” (Schaffer and Smith 3). People within honour and shame based societies need to acknowledge Kifaya, Yasmin, Surjit, and every other girl killed in the name of honour, as someone who was worth more than they were told; as someone who deserved better, and because of that, change the control the concept of honour has in their society. This, however, proves to be more difficult than one thinks, especially when the perpetrators are given lenient punishments.

Those who commit ‘honour’ killings are protected by Jordanian laws, more specifically, through:

Article 340 of the Penal Code, the target of Hussein’s campaign, [which] allows for exemption or reduction of penalty for any man killing, wounding or injuring any female relative he discovers in a situation of adultery. Article 98 allows for such a reduction if he commits any such crime in a ‘fit of fury.’” (Rose)

Sarhan, who killed his sister because she was raped, served one month for possession of an unregistered firearm and six months for misdemeanour. A person’s life was wrongfully taken and their perpetrator gets seven months in total, calling his crime ‘misdemeanour’, and not murder. Even though Sarhan had pleaded guilty to manslaughter, the court “decided that he did in fact ‘benefit from a reduction in penalty because he committed his crime in a fit of fury’” (47). It is one thing to break the silence on ‘honour’ killings through investigating and reporting, demanding readers to acknowledge that the issue is a problem that needs to be solved. It is another thing to try to change laws that encourage men to murder in the name of honour, because of their lenient punishment. Even Sarhan, who has killed in the name of honour, acknowledges this statement:

‘If the state amends the law to execute men who kill their female relatives or lock us behind bars for good, I do not think that any family would venture and push her male relative to kill. No family wants to see its male relative executed or locked up for good.’ (Hussein 43)

Thus, one may say that changing people’s perception of ‘honour’ killings and changing the law, giving stricter punishments for those who commit murder in the name of honour, is a

way of preventing ‘honour’ killings from taking place, or at the very least, make someone intervene and try to save the girl’s life.

2.4 From the standpoint of a feminist

‘Honour’ killings will be accepted as long as there exists “beliefs relating to women as the bearers of family honour” (Husseini 382). Husseini argues that these beliefs come from a place of wanting to control women, and not honour:

Women are places in fear, knowing that one false move or one malicious piece of gossip could end their lives in a moment. A killing made in the name of honour is a murder, plain and simple, and must be punished as such. (Husseini 382-383)

Husseini’s memoir, like Kaur Athwal, shows readers how ‘honour’ killings are cases of discrimination against women. Whereas Kaur Athwal presents examples of how she, from the moment she was born, was treated differently than her male relatives simply because she was a girl, Husseini gives examples of how girls and women have lost their lives due to their male relatives’ perceptions of them, because of their gender. An example of this is the story of Nadia and Kifaya, two young women who had good reputations in their neighbourhood, who got killed because their brother, who had a criminal record, had a problem with the sisters’ share of their inheritance, wanting them to give their share up to him. Instead, Mohammad, their brother, claims he killed his sisters because he found a strange man in the house. When Husseini shares the information she has found out about the inheritance with the chief prosecutor, he dismisses her words, and instead asks: “‘Why do you care for such small and minor cases? Forget about this story. It is not important; you’re wasting your time.’” (Husseini 54). The end result of Nadia and Kifaya’s case turns in the favour of their brother, who, like many others, benefits from a reduction in penalty, due to the Article 98 of the Penal Code, stating he “‘committed his crime in a fit of fury to cleanse his family’s honour’.” (55), and is sentenced to one year in prison. The readers, though, know that Nadia and Kifaya were not killed because of honour, but because they were two girls who had inherited too much for according to their brother, who saw himself as the right owner of their inheritance.

Rania, the twenty-three-year-old who ran away from home because she refused to marry her cousin, is another example of how women are discriminated based on their gender. After a few months on the run, Rania is missing her family dearly and says that she will come back, if they promise not to force her to marry her cousin. Rania’s family reassures her they

miss her too, and tells her to come home. Lured two weeks later by her aunts to a secret meeting with a boy she had fallen in love with, Rania instead is faced with her younger brother, sixteen-year-old Rami, who shoots her four times, before firing a fifth and last bullet “point-blank through her forehead”. The family’s reason for killing her? She had lost her most valuable aspect, her virginity, to Khalid, when she had run away. However, “medical examinations indicated that Rania was still a virgin” (61), resulting in the devastating fact that she “had been betrayed by the closest members of her family” (61). This example shows how society’s concept of Rania as a girl, is used to discriminate her.

The ‘honour’ killing of Amneh, a twenty-one-year-old young woman who was shot and killed by her eldest brother, Mohammad, is an example of gender-based violence. Amneh’s mother finds out her daughter is pregnant and tells the news to Mohammad, who loses his mind, demanding to know the full story. When Amneh tries to explain that it was against her will; that she’s been raped by their neighbour, it falls on deaf ears. What Amneh sadly doesn’t know, is that being raped is not going to away the fact that she has become pregnant before marriage, thus committed adultery and shamed her family’s honour. In his rage, Mohammad receives his gun and in front of their mother and sixteen-year-old younger sister, shoots Amneh, who spends her last minutes on this earth in her younger sister’s arms. Once again, another girl is failed by the cultural system of honour, where instead of punishing the person who sexually assaulted Amneh, she loses her life for the reasons of having lost her virginity and become impregnated before marriage. Yet another example; another victim the reader mourns, an act that is considered forbidden, but that is made possible through Husseini’s memoir, giving life to a once annulled life.

Jacqueline Rose’s article ‘A Piece of White Silk’ (2009) defines crimes of honour through the violations of:

the right to life, liberty, bodily integrity, the prohibition against torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment, the prohibition on slavery, the right to freedom from gender-based discrimination and sexual abuse or exploitation, the right to privacy, the duty to modify discriminatory practices against women. (Rose)

Within that definition lies the support for stating that ‘honour’ killings discriminate against girls and women, all hid behind cultural values and traditions. It speaks to how all these girls and women were taken their right to life by the male members of their families, based on the

fact that they were a girl/a woman, at the very bottom of the patriarchal family structure, which essentially meant no control or power over their own lives.

A step further into the discussion would be to ask the following question: How, through the lens of a feminist, can one challenge crimes and killings hiding behind a culture's deeply imbedded beliefs and behaviours? Again, like in Kaur Athwal's memoir, splitting open a culture into its male and female components, and exposing the violence and discrimination against girls and women, can give rise to prejudice against immigrant cultures, by pointing out that X culture bad, and therefore, everyone identifying with X culture, is also bad. This harms especially those who fight against discrimination against girls and women (Rose).

Nevertheless, the need to challenge and change cultural values, beliefs and traditions are crucial. While being aware of not offending a culture by saying those belonging to the culture X are all the same, is important, targeting the groups of people who actually do harm is more important, and the solution. An example is when Hussein describes how conservatives in Jordan have taken advantage of terms such as "western-influence and interference" (80) to explain how the west has meddled "in the internal affairs of Arab countries to destroy the structure of its society" (80). What this accomplishes is people getting uncertain about "the motives and intentions of campaigners like those in our group" (80), and therefore distancing themselves. Another example of how certain people can damage a cause, is Norma Khouri's *Forbidden Love*, which is not to be found in the book store shelves any more. Khouri's co-called memoir tells the story of:

Khouri and her childhood Muslim friend named Dalia. Khour, who describes herself as belonging to a strict Christian family in Jordan claims she ran a unisex hairdresser's shop with Dalia. According to Khouri, Dalia was killed by her father after he discovered she was in love with a Christian (one of her male customers). Khouri also writes that she had to flee Jordan in 1996 to escape death after speaking out against the murder. (Hussein 168)

When Hussein investigates starts to investigate Khouri's claims, the findings shock her: there are so many false accusations about not only Muslim women in Jordan and their horrific lives, but also "gross historic, geographic and demographic errors" (Hussein 168) that makes the reader firstly angry at Khouri, but also embarrassed on her behalf. What bothers Hussein the most about Khouri's text is the way she describes the lives of Muslim women in Jordan:

(...) a 'stifling prison tense with the risk of death at the hands of loved ones and [they] had no right to argue with men in their families'. (...) 'Life in Dalia's home was basically like life in all Muslim homes in Amman, regardless of class, money, or neighbourhood.' (...) Khouri claimed that Dalia was not permitted to eat at the same table with, or at the same time as, the men in her household. Dalia was to cook the meal and quietly serve it to them. Only when they had finished and left the room were she and her mother allowed to eat the leftover. (Husseini 169)

To generalize the lives of all Muslim women the way Khouri does, is truly damaging. Her book became a bestseller under the title of a memoir; an autobiography, and thus becomes a perfect example of the type of text Whitlock (2007) describes as a 'soft weapon'. This type of memoir can be "easily co-opted into propaganda", in which the word propaganda is defined as "a careful manipulation of opinion and emotion in the public sphere and a management of information in the engineering of consent" (17). Khouri's audience, not knowing the fact that her text is a hoax, views it as a life narrative that tells about the "struggle for recognition among individuals and groups" (37). The individual is Dalia, Khouri's supposed friend, and the group refers to all Muslim women living in Jordan. Seeing as the life narrative gives a voice to the 'Other', when used incorrectly, represents a picture of the 'Other' that is dishonest and therefore not reliable.

The life narrative plays a role in how we create "imaginary boundaries between ourselves and others" (Whitlock 37), both in the sense that it may reaffirm or destroy those boundaries. A reader who may have certain assumptions about how badly Muslim women are treated in the Middle East, can point to Khouri's text as evidence of their assumptions. For Husseini, it is "vital [her readers] to understand the incredible amount of damage Khouri has done by writing this book" (Husseini 173). In fact, Husseini goes as far as to say the Khouri's words has ruined their cause, seeing as "[t]hose who opposed change, who suspected that a western agenda lies behind our activism, were suddenly presented with 'evidence' that crimes of honour were a fiction and exaggeration and sought to link our campaign to Khouri's book" (173). Once the truth came out about the whole story being a hoax, international writers and columnists argued that,

the Australian government had used it as a means to convince people that there were strong moral reasons (namely, the supposed severely abusive treatment of all Muslim women in the Middle East) for Australia to take part in the war in Iraq. (Husseini 180)

It seemed as though every party revolving Khouri's book, except Arab Muslim women living in Jordan, benefitted somehow of her accusations, and while she herself claimed to want justice done for her friend, Dalia, Nada Jarrar's article in the *Guardian* (2004) argues for another reason: "greed and hunger for power – in so far as writers can be powerful – seem to have been her chief motivations" (Jarrar). Because of Khouri's book, and the flux of similar ones that came to the market after publishers realized the massive interest by people, Husseini believes that "publishers (and authors) owe the world a duty of care to check non-fiction stories before they are published" (Husseini 183). Look at the damage one single book made.

2.5 Testimony: becoming the voice of hundreds of victims

The moment Husseini decided to become the voice of victims of 'honour' killings, she started testifying on behalf of these girls and women's injustice and suffering. Taking on that role meant being criticized at every step; every victory; every loss. According to Butler, "to charge those who voice critical views with treason (...) is to seek to destroy the credibility not of the views that are held, but of the person who hold them" (xix). Husseini, being human with feelings, felt "frustrated at the amount of criticism [she] received for reporting these stories that would have previously gone unnoticed" (Husseini 68). Instead of being disheartened, Husseini strengthens her resolve and initial goal: to change article 340 and 98 of the Penal Code. By continuing to voice her views, which Butler describes as "braze stigma that seizes from the public domain" (xix), Husseini proves to the readers that when met with difficulties, one should not quit, especially when it concerns such an important issue. At the time, Husseini was the only one to properly report these crimes, and thus a voice too important to be lost due to criticism.

Husseini's bravery leads her to meet people who wanted to fight for the same things; "raise local awareness about these brutal murders but [also] to fight to change Jordanian law, and to demand tougher punishments for the perpetrators of these crimes" (Husseini 70), which results in a grass-roots movement called the 'Jordanian National Committee to Eliminate So-Called Honour Crimes', where acts such as organizing a nation-wide campaign

to collect people's signatures who agreed on the issue of honour crimes, and present to Parliament were set to motion. Stepping outside and interacting with the people of Jordan in the hopes of creating "a new movement that would bring the government more under the control of the people" (Husseini 72), Husseini and her colleagues would show that not only was it possible for the voices of the people to be heard, but through the people's voice, the voice of the victims of 'honour' killings would also be heard. In a sense, one may argue that the signatures collected by Husseini, testified to the suffering and trauma experienced by the victims, which is precisely how a testimony takes place: by participants on both side; the teller and the listener. Husseini was the teller, while the people of Jordan who gave their signature, became the listeners, making the victims' traumas and suffering, real.

Every case of honour crimes Husseini investigates and reports, can be looked at as examples of her testifying for the victims. A special example is Inas, who elopes with her lover, and thereby going against her strictly conservative family's wishes: for her to marry her cousin. On their way to escape, they meet Inas' uncle, who fires "a total of twenty-two rounds before border guards overpowered him" (Husseini 62). By some miracle, despite being hit "in her shoulders, arms, legs and chest" she survives. The special, and perhaps, unbelievable, aspect of Inas' story is where she is located after her recovery, namely a prison called 'Jweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre for Women':

Located about thirty kilometres south-east of Amman, the white, box-like, fortress houses up to eight hundred female inmates. (...) around twenty to twenty-five women were detained, many for indefinite periods and with no official charges, under what the government calls 'protective custody' or 'administrative detention'. These women are kept in prison out of fear their families might kill them for violating their families' honour. (Husseini 63)

The women in this prison testify their traumas to Husseini, who fulfils her role as the hearer, partaking in "the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts" (Felman and Laub 57) imposed on them.

Like Kaur Athwal, Husseini's testimony can relate to Nance's three types; the forensic, where she asks decision-makers, who in her case are lawmakers, to classify 'honour' killings as unjust; the epideictic is where Husseini invites all readers, lawmakers and the rest of us, to categorize what has happened to victims of 'honour' killings as shameful, where the outcome is to put blame on not only centuries-old values and traditions, but also the courtroom for creating laws that allow for loopholes to be found in relation to the

punishing of the perpetrators; and the deliberative, where Hussein demands for change to take place, seeing as we are far from solving the issue of 'honour' killings. In other words, she is asking for future action to take place.

2.6 Being part of the change

Hussein, along with her colleagues try, and fail, to change Article 340 of the Penal Code, which brings with it the failure to change Article 98 of the Penal Code as well. Right after this failure, comes the news of yet another case of an 'honour' killings, one that shocks Hussein, for more reasons than one. The case concerned two sisters, aged twenty and twenty-seven, who had decided to leave their family three years ago. On a seemingly normal day, someone who knows the sisters spots them shopping, and informs their brothers straight away. The next time one of the sister's open their door, it will be the last one. Carrying axes, the girls are brutally murdered. Hussein's thoughts and emotions comes across the pages clearly, evoking the same emotions for the reader:

I was unable to sleep that night. I was so enraged. Imaginary scenes from the murder replayed in my head every time I tried to close my eyes. (...) To be killed by their own axe-wielding brothers ... it nearly broke me; it was just such a waste of life. I felt tired, lifeless; I couldn't go on. (Hussein 153)

The reader sees an image of a broken Hussein, who has hit a wall. However, right before she wants to give up, a silver lining comes through, in the form of the judge who ruled the case concerning the brothers who killed their sisters, are refused a more lenient punishment, and instead sentenced to death. Even with their parents dropping the charges against their sons, lowering their sentences to ten years each, will this case remain the first one that challenged the control the concept of honour had over the society: "This, for me, was a landmark case. It was the first sign that the Criminal Court was beginning to change their attitude to these crimes" (Hussein 153). The Family Protection Project, a UK-funded scheme implemented in Jordan, that aimed at "training judges, criminal prosecutors, police officers, physicians, social workers and religious scholars to be more aware of and sensitive to domestic violence" (153) played a crucial part in making sure that perpetrators would not go unpunished.

Once this trial goes differently than all the others, it opens the door for change in other areas. The National Institute for Forensic Medicine becomes another establishment that wanted to break "the social and official silence over these brutal murders" (Hussein 154).

One of the doctors working for the establishment, Dr Hadidi, had himself seen the horrors of ‘honour’ killings, in the sense that they would end up on his autopsy table. As the examples of ‘honour’ killings throughout this shows, a major factor that causes the act of murder is the girls and women’s proof of virginity; the hymen being unbroken until the wedding night. The reason for this, as mentioned before, is because a woman’s virginity represents her honour, or more importantly, her family’s honour.

Going back thousands of years, “women across the world from Europe to the Middle East have been expected to be virgins on their wedding night” (156), which gives the first night together between a husband and wife monumental value. Her proof of virginity is her blood on the bedsheets, and if she fails to produce this, which ultimately claims her as not a virgin, “the bride is then taken back to her family, who might kill her for having shamed them” (157). According to psychiatrist Dr Mohammad Habashneh, being a virgin is something that haunts girls “from the time they become aware of this issue until their wedding night” which essentially send out a message to girls of being “guilty of not being virgins until proven otherwise” (158). The tests performed on girls and women is rarely consented for by them, but rather forced upon by family members, who’s honour is dependent of the girl or woman being a virgin.

Aside from the family needing the girl to be a virgin, the man who is about to become a husband is also dependent of his soon-to-be wife’s virginity, because it is “evidence of exclusive possession, proof that the ‘merchandise’ is brand new and that his wife will not be able to compare his performance unfavourable to that of another man” (Accad 2). Noticing the tremendous value, a girl’s virginity has to families and soon-to-be-husbands, gives Dr Hadidi and doctors like him, the tools to “provide evidence that helps solve social ills” (Husseini 159).

Therefore, even though Husseini’s campaign “failed in convincing Parliament to vote for the bill to Amend Article 340” (Husseini 163), the time spent on making people aware of ‘honour’ killings and actually come together to debate the issue, can be seen as a “precedent for the younger generation to learn from our experiences” (163). Furthermore, Husseini’s work proves to the public that if one truly invests in a topic, they can organize “successful marches and petitions”, by being “agents for change” (163). Still, this does not mean that one can relax now, because Article 340 still exists; violence against girls and women are still taking place, every single day, all over the world. What it does mean, is that by coming together and demanding change through different methods, be in marching in the streets, or

writing a memoir on an issue, can in fact, issue changes. It may not be exactly what one had set out for at the beginning, but small steps of change are better than none.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to explore how Rana Husseini's memoir, *Murder in the Name of Honour*, has contributed to the issue of 'honour' killings, through the perspective of a journalist, feminist and human rights defender. Through these perspectives, Husseini has taught everyone reading this book, but even herself while writing, the importance of challenging and more importantly, changing the control the concepts of honour and shame has in Jordan, but also the rest of the world.

By giving herself the task of investigating and reporting every single 'honour' killing she comes across, Husseini makes it her goal in life to become the voice of these victims, for two reasons: the first one stems from the very obvious reason of these victims not being among us anymore, which makes Husseini their last and only hope. The second draws on how even when alive, girls growing up in the patriarchal family structure don't have a voice, because they're situated at the very bottom, where their sole purpose is to serve the family structure as best as possible, never once having the opportunity to stop and think about what she, as human being, have the rights to. Before they are human individuals, they are someone's daughter, sister, niece, and finally, someone's wife. Thus, the examples shown in this chapter, confirm the statement of the aspect of dehumanization taking place in honour and shame based communities.

Husseini's examples of how girls and women have lost their lives due to their male relatives' perceptions of them, supports the claim that 'honour' killings are gender-based violence. In almost every single case of an 'honour' killing represented to the reader, what has defined the woman's value, which has been keeping her virginity intact until marriage, has played a huge role in why she has been killed. However, Husseini has also given us examples of women being killed because they had "stolen" a right from the male member of the family, such as the case concerning two sisters being given, on equal level with their brother, a share of their inheritance.

Through her memoir, Husseini has managed to become the voice of the 'Other', where the 'Other' represents the victims of 'honour' killings. By breaking the silence on the issue through reporting and investigating every case, that, if not for her, would have stayed hidden from the public, Husseini gives each and every victim mentioned, as well as the

‘lucky’ ones who had survived an ‘honour’ crime, an identity; a name to be recognized with, forever in time.

With the threat of so-called non-fictional stories about ‘honour’ killings being published as real representations of the victims; the perpetrators and the circumstances around them, Husseini warns her readers to read with caution, because one single book can harm years of hard work. Whereas the reader has to be careful with believing what is being said about certain groups of people, in this case, girls and women growing up in honour and shame based communities, the publishers and authors of those books have a moral obligation to check non-fiction stories at least twice before publishing.

In conclusion, Husseini’s memoir manages to not only bring awareness and challenge the issue of ‘honour’ killings, through her investigating and reporting skills, she shows the readers how even if the change one set out for doesn’t happen, one person’s work of activism may be the push another person; group; institution, are awaiting, in order to make their change.

3 Honour

I'll leave him there. In a room in my house. Neither far away nor too close. I'll keep him confined within those four walls, between the hate and the love, none of which I can help but feel, for ever trapped in a box in my heart. He is my brother. He, a murderer.

Elif Shafak, *Honour*

In this chapter, I will analyse how Elif Shafak's novel *Honour* (2012), impacts the issue of 'honour' killings. Different than the two previous literary texts in genre, this chapter will examine the ways the novel, compared to the memoir, can bring awareness and challenge cultural values and traditions in honour and shame based communities. Although classified as a fictional text, Shafak's story, which will be defined as a modern novel, introduces the readers to a family whose members they can relate to and identify themselves with. This can be explained from the way the modern novel is viewed as "well suited to the exploration of social ideas and social protest" (Johnson, and Johnson vii), which in this case is how the codes of honour can control a family through generations and spaces, affecting their choices at every step in life. Shafak's protest rings loud and clear on how damaging the concept of honour is, by giving the public an idea on how an 'honour' killing can occur, and the repercussions that follow.

The first part of this chapter will briefly explore the novel in relation to Shafak's text, and try to explain how stories, such as *Honour*, speak to the realistic aspect of the modern novel, where the author manages to create a credible picture of reality to the audience. The second part will deal with how the characters in the novel, through their complex and unique relationships with the concept of honour, interact with cultural values and traditions, especially when one of the main characters, Pembe, moves to England, London, with her family. The challenges one is faced with as an immigrant in a country where everything you've been taught, in the sense of the family structure, and the rights women have, is different, will be also be explored. How does one, as a wife – but first and foremost – as a woman, accept love from someone outside of her marriage; her culture, after her husband abandons her? What are the repercussions of going against the codes of honour in a family structure that was full of cracks to begin with? Similar to Kaur Athwal and Hussein's memoirs, the concepts of dehumanization and gender-based violence can also be found in Shafak's novel, concepts which will be further explored in the last and fourth part of the

chapter. I argue that despite being fictional, Shafak's novel represents a realism that the readers can resonate with. This is evident through the recognition of the characters' thoughts, emotions and feelings when faced with different events and experiences.

3.1 The novel: authorial intentions

According to Belfiore and Bennett, in their article "Researching the Social Impact of the Arts: Literature, Fiction and the Novel" (2009), separating literature from other types of discourse is a difficult task, seeing as "there are clearly no identifiable sets of rules" (24)). However, if one is to try to "develop a solid methodology for the evaluation of the impact of novel reading" (25), looking back in time, the novel wanted to distance itself from already "well established forms of writing", such as "romance, epic, satire and history" (25). When comparing the romance and the novel, it is stated that while the romance "is a heroic fable, which treats fabulous persons and things", the novel focused on showing its readers "a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written" (25). Shafak writes her novel in accordance to this definition. Her story depicts the journey of three generations of a culturally divided Turkish-Kurdish family, starting from working-class Istanbul in 1954, to a remote Kurdish village by the Euphrates in 1964, and then finally, to London in 1977 and on.

Shafak manages to "provide a realistic, and therefore credible, picture of reality" (25), through her descriptions of these different places. An example of this is the way she describes the Kurdish village:

It was a rugged, remote Kurdish village with no roads, no electricity, no doctor, no school. Barely any news from the outside world permeated its sheath of seclusion. The aftermath of the Second World War, the atomic bomb... The villagers hadn't heard of any of this. (...) Whatever took place in one corner was heard, at once, by everyone else. Secrets were a luxury only the rich could afford, and in this village, named Mala Çar Bayan, 'House of Four Winds', no one was rich. (Shafak 16-17)

The reader's mind is evoked with images of this small village, from the way everyone knows everyone's business, but still not preoccupied with the rest of the world and its issues. Even the way Shafak portrays the village elders, who were "small-statured, forlorn-looking men who spent most of their time in the sole tea house contemplating the mysteries of Divine Wisdom and the stupidities of politicians while they sipped tea out of glasses as thin as

eggshells, as fragile as life” (Shafak 17) gives a clear picture of the ‘reality’ she wants to relate to the readers. Thus, through the emphasis on the credibility of representation as seen and created by the writer, one could state that the “imaginative nature of the plot and the writing (...) is central to a definition of the novel” (Belfiore and Bennett 25). However, as research has shown, the novel’s relationship with the term fiction, is a lot more complex, and requires a closer look.

Although features such as plot, style, and narrative forms are looked upon as central in defining fictional texts, it “would be pointless to search for any *intrinsic* qualities of a text that can function as an indication of its fictional nature” (Belfiore and Bennet 25). An example that explains this well, is the following:

A diarist and a novelist might produce two identical texts, corresponding to one another in every detail, including punctuation or spelling; nevertheless, one will be a diary (thus, non-fiction), while the other will remain a work of fiction (a novel in the form of a diary.) (Belfiore and Bennett 26)

To resolve this confusion, Currie (1990) proposes the solution to come in the form of “authorial intentions” (22) when concerned with “the act of fiction-making” (22). Instead of looking at the plot, style or content of a text, one should focus on the writer’s intentions, seeing as “the idea of an author intending that the audience make believe his story is central to the explanation of what fiction is” (22). Kaur Athwal’s memoir and Shafak’s novel could have been written in the exact same way, with elements such as plot, dialogue, setting, even characterization, all identical. However, what makes Shafak’s story fictional, are her intentions, and the way she writes about ‘a world’, opposed to Kaur Athwal’s memoir, that represents ‘the world’ (Smith and Watson). Shafak’s representation of ‘a world’ in her novel can be seen in the way she intends for her readers to become aware of how, there exists a reality outside of her novel, where people deal with the same issues that Shafak’s characters do. An example is how Iskender, Pembe’s son, feels regarding his family living in London:

We didn’t live in this flat, only sojourned. Home to us was no different than a one-star hotel where Mum washed the bed sheets instead of maids and where every morning the breakfast would be the same: white cheese, black olives, tea in small glasses – never with milk. (...) We Topraks were only passers-by in this city – a half-Turkish, half-Kurdish family in the wrong end of London. (Shafak 87)

A reader who reads this passage may resonate with Iskender, because he or she is experiencing something similar. Another reader may instead sympathize with Iskender, because they know of someone who feels the way he does, like they don't belong. Kaur Athwal, and even Husseini, represent 'the world' of actual victims and suffering. Their audience may resonate and sympathize with the stories about the victims of 'honour' killings, but knowing that the events described have actually taken place, affects the readers in a different way, in the sense that the ethical response turns into activism: people wanting to take action. This might stem from the fact that at the end of the day, Iskender remains a fictional character, while Surjit, Kifaya, Amneh and Nadia, amongst many others, were actual human beings who lost their lives due to the concept of honour.

3.2 The modern novel's impact on society

The modern novel, which is viewed as a "comparatively new literary form" (Johnson, and Johnson vii), is defined, more than any other literary genre, as the genre to change not only people's minds, but society as well. An example is John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), that tells the story of a family during the Great Depression. Seeing as the novel spoke to the hardships "felt by the hundreds of thousands of dispossessed families from the Midwest who had been lured to the California agricultural fields with the promise of work" (vii). Steinbeck's novel, when dropped, described the "human experience of migrant farmworkers" (Schleeter) in ways that resonated with people all over the country in relation causing it to become a bestseller straight after it came out, and ending up staying on the list for a year:

(...) newspapers large and small publicized the situation described in the novel; national magazines like *Fortune*, *Collier's* and *Life* ran articles on the situation; and one of the most highly acclaimed motion pictures of all time was promptly made from the novel. (Johnson, and Johnson vii)

For the American people, Steinbeck's novel became a hope for those who had suffered at the hands of the government, and in addition to bringing awareness of the issue and taking a spot on the bestseller's list for a whole year, the novel brought "immediate action" (vii). One of these acts were initiated by then First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who "upon reading the book, called for congressional hearings that resulted in reform to labor laws governing migrant

camps” (Schleeter). Steinbeck’s novel, although classified as a fictional text, is evidence of how great of an impact it can have on society and its people.

While Shafak’s novel may not have reached out to people in the same way Steinbeck’s novel did, one has to consider the time and place the novel was published. Today, the amount of novels that deal with ‘honour’ killings have reached a high number, and thus, it may be difficult for people to choose the ‘right’ one, that does not come across as a ‘soft weapon’. Steinbeck’s novel will always be remembered for its success, because it was what the people who suffered at the time, needed. There was a necessity among those affected by the Great Depression for someone to stand up and demand change. If one is to compare Shafak’s novel, the time it is published is a challenging one. The reason for this is because the public has access to life narratives, such as the ones by Hussein and Kaur Athwal. The threat of compassion fatigue hangs over the texts written of ‘honour’ killings, and if people want to know about the issue, for most of them, novels such as *Honour* will not be their first choice, but I argue that they should not be forgotten. If not first choice, then maybe second.

If the modern novel is to become “more than the transitory plaything of an hour” (Lewisohn 459), it must gain access to “a boundless freedom in the application to the stuff of human life” (459). Shafak’s novel, through her interpretative power, becomes a form of art, based on the techniques used, resulting in a novel that emits strength, richness and variety. With this ‘freedom’ granted, the author, Shafak, may “imitate life faithfully”, sharing her experiences closely at many levels, but still “without discriminating or choice its accurate picture or its sensation” (Brunetière, quoted in Lewisohn 460). Through Shafak’s freedom of interpretative power, such as shifting between the characters in order to create complex personalities with multiple layers, she creates the opportunity for her readers to understand the characters on a deeper level. This is performed through the partaking in their inner thoughts and emotions, when reacting to different situations. An example of this is Iskender’s reaction to receiving the news article that reports him killing his mother in the name of honour:

My hands shake so hard the newspaper clipping flaps as though in a mighty wind. I’m dying for a cigarette. Or a drink. Something strong and simple. My father never knew this, but me and the boys used to have a cider or beer every now and then. Never whisky, though. That was another league. I had my first taste of it under this roof. You can find anything in gaol, if you know your way around. I fold the paper in half, creasing the corners down into the

middle. A square, two triangles, a rectangle... I make the corners meet, pull the triangles apart and there it is: a paper boat. I put it on the floor. There is no water to make it float. No gust to push the sails. You would think it was made of cement. It doesn't go anywhere. The like pain in my chest. (Shafak 146-147)

This excerpt comes towards the end of one of Yunus' chapters, shifting from 3rd person's point of view (Yunus) to 1st person's point of view (Iskender), a feature that one might think would seem confusing, but which instead makes sense. Even though Iskender's part is written in 1st person's point of view, the 'you' he addresses, is not Yunus, but rather the reader. The effect is a more focused reader, who 'listens' more attentively to what Iskender has to say, in the quest of understanding why and how an 'honour' killing occurred.

Even though Iskender may not be addressing Yunus, his excerpt, which always comes from Shrewsbury Prison, reminisces about him, "(...) Trippy's eyes remind me of Yunus's. He's the one I miss most. I've never been a true brother to him. I wasn't there when he needed me, too busy fighting the wrong battles" (Shafak 139). Iskender, who was abandoned by his father, feels like he has abandoned his own brother, and now Yunus has become just a person he remembers based on old memories:

Yunus is a big man now. A talented musician. So they say. He has been to see me only twice in twelve years. (...) He has cut and run, like he always did. Even Esma's sharpest words don't hurt as much as my little's brother's absence. I would like him to forgive me. If he could find it in his heart, that is. Not because I expect him to love me. That's a pipe dream. I want him to forgive me for his own good. Anger is toxic – gives you cancer. People like me are used to it, but Yunus deserves better. (Shafak 139-140)

Shafak depicts an image of young man full of regret and sorrow; a young man who wishes better for his little brother, and who has given up hope regarding himself. Although fictional, Shafak's novel goes one step further than Hussein's memoir in the way it tells the reader about the perpetrator: Sarhan is seen through the lens of Hussein, and gives his answers through her words written on the page. The reader does not know Sarhan's deepest thoughts. Shafak's novel, on the other hand, allows the reader to dive into Iskender's inner thoughts and feelings concerning his actions. Both cases were pressured by their surroundings: Sarhan by his tribe, and Iskender by his uncle:

I rang Uncle Tariq. I told him what I had done. There was an awkward silence. I thought he hadn't heard me. So I repeated myself. I told him I had punished Mum for her illicit affair. From now on she'd never do such a thing again. I said her wound wasn't too bad but it would take some time to heal. That would show her how grave her sin was (...) Our family's honour was cleansed. (Shafak 484)

Awaiting his uncle to agree with him based on what Iskender has done, he is instead surprised to hear his uncle act surprised, "What have you done son?" His voice sounded strangled. 'This is terrible.' (484). When Iskender answers that he did what they had talked about, his uncle denies it all, "Surely we did not," my uncle said. The man who had told me everything and then impressed upon me, over and over again, that I had to do something and do it soon, had vanished into thin air" (484-485).

Iskender, after hearing his uncle to tell him to turn himself in to the police, puts the puzzle pieces together, and comes to the realization that "Uncle Tariq had rehearsed this moment. Had he been waiting for this? Preparing his speeches. What he told me on the phone (...) what he would declare in court... He was prepared for it all" (485). Similarly, Sarhan is shunned and ignored by not only his community, but also his family: the same people who told him he would be doing the right thing. This excerpt makes the reader realize how there might exist more cases where the head of the family; the patriarchal family structure, uses other male members as their pawns, pressuring them to perform an act *they* view as dishonourable.

Shafak's writing style can be defined as richly detailed, a feature that depicts clear and realistic images for her readers:

Once in a while my mind ran back to the basement in that old house: the furniture upholstered in azure; the round, white, crocheted lace doilies on the coffee tables and kitchen shelves; the colony of mould on the walls; the high windows that opened on to the street... The flat etched in my memory was a dimly lit place where a crackly radio was on all day long and a faint odour of decay lingered in the air. It was always dusk in there, morning or afternoon made little difference. (Shafak 149-150)

Esmâ recollects the basement flat in Istanbul her family lived in during the early years of both her and her older brother's, Iskender, early years of childhood. Shafak's details in describing the flat in Istanbul invites the reader to take a step inside, and together with Esmâ, Iskender and Pembe, watch "the feet of the passers-by and [try] to guess what their lives were

like” (150). Another example is Esmā’s comparison of London and Istanbul, but not in the way one would necessarily think: “If London were a confection, it would be a butterscotch toffee – rich, intense and traditional. Istanbul, however, would be a chewy black-cherry liquorice – a mixture of conflicting tastes, capable of turning the sour into sweet and the sweet into sour” (152).

The novel is written in a nonlinear narrative, where each chapter unravels bit by bit, the act of ‘honour’ killing that occurs. Throughout the novel, readers may try to make their own assumptions, filling in the gaps missing, but nothing will prepare them for the twist Shafak adds right towards the end:

A second later she saw her twin enter Lavender Grove, carrying a number of bags. ‘Jamila... Look up! Here!’ Jamila lifted her gaze towards the balcony (...) ‘I’m making a dessert for you!’ ‘What?’ Jamila asked, distracted by a passing car. ‘I am –’ Pembe stopped, having just noticed Iskender walking up the road. For a second or two Pembe watched her elder son trail behind her sister. Iskender’s eyes had narrowed into slits; his jaw was tight, his lips moving incessantly, as if quarrelling with himself. She couldn’t figure out what was going on. Even when she noticed the knife in his hand, even when he blocked her sister’s way and uttered words that could only have amounted to steeling himself against any doubts (...) (Shafak 505-506)

After Pembe had sent her sister a letter concerning her feelings for Jamila, her twin had travelled to London, in order to talk sense to her sister and get her back on track, having felt an ominous feeling ever since the letter had arrived. Instead, Iskender, who believes Jamila to his mother, stabs her in the chest. Iskender’s reaction can be viewed as Shafak’s way of portraying the reaction of someone who has been pressured to kill someone in the name of honour:

Iskender took a step back, paused for an instant, frowning at the knife in his hand. For a moment he seemed confused, as though he didn’t know what he had done, as if he had been a puppet dancing to the pull of strings and was only now waking up. (Shafak 507)

Iskender, the moment he has been tasked with cleansing his family’s honour, gets into a certain mind-set that pushes his emotions and feelings for his mother aside, and it is only when he has done the deed that he ‘wakes up’, realizing what he has done. Iskender knows what he had done is wrong, this can be interpreted by his next actions, “with a jolt he threw

the knife aside and sprinted in the opposite direction” (Shafak 507). This differs from the mind-set of those Husseini interviewed, who despite knowing what they had done, viewed it as the right thing to do, thus turning themselves in willingly. One may argue that a factor that plays into this, is the leniency the perpetrators receive in the courtroom, whereas Iskender has to serve fourteen years.

3.3 Codes of honour: a dehumanizing and gender-based process

Following the story of three generations of the Turkish-Kurdish Toprak family, Elif Shafak interlaces time and place, taking the reader to working-class Istanbul in 1954, then a small Kurdish village by the Euphrates in 1962, further on to Hackney in 1977, as well as Abu Dhabi and Shrewsbury prison in the 1990’s. Within Shafak’s pages are examples of how an ‘honour’ killing can happen in honour and shame based communities, whether it is in Istanbul or England. While unravelling these examples, Shafak’s novel has, like Kaur Athwal and Husseini’s memoirs, confirmed that aspects such as gender-based violence and dehumanization are present in these communities.

First generation Toprak introduces the reader to pregnant Naze, already mother of six girls, a number that turns into eight:

She gave a wisp of a sigh, buried her head in a pillow and turned towards the window, as if straining to hear fate’s whisper in the wind, as mild as milk. If she listened attentively, she thought, she might hear an answer from the skies. After all, there must be a reason, a justification unbeknownst to her but surely obvious to Allah, as to why He had given them two more daughters when they already had six, and still not a single son. (Shafak 17)

Growing up in a remote Kurdish village, Naze has been following honour codes since the day she was born, and when she is unable to give birth to a son, one of the things expected of her as a mother, she has shamed her family. However, being a woman of faith, Naze copes with the birth of two more daughters, twins nonetheless, by naming them Bext and Bese; Kader and Yeter; Destiny and Enough, and thus

declaring to Allah that even though, like a good Muslim, she was resigned to her fate, she had had her fill of daughters and next time she was pregnant, which she knew would be the last time because she was forty-one years old and past her prime now, He had to give her a son and nothing but a son. (Shafak 21)

Their father, Berzo, is not happy with their names, and gives the twins the names of Pembe and Jamila.

Naze's wish for a boy resonates with her view on the concept of honour, where her duties as a mother and wife is not completed until a son is born. This view ends up costing Naze her life when she becomes pregnant one more time after the twins. Convinced that it is a boy this time, because "He was in her debt (...) even though she knew she was speaking utter blasphemy" (40), Naze spends "months knitting little blankets, socks and vests in a blue deeper than stormy nights, all of them designed for her perfect little boy" (40). The notion of worry arrives when, despite the midwife informing her that the baby's body is not positioned right and that they should go to the city's hospital, Naze refuses to do so, seeing as this is her last chance to give birth to a boy. However, complications arise and the risk of death for both mother and child forces the midwife to make a choice on who she wants to save:

All at once, she made up her mind. She would pick the woman. At that moment Naze, lying there with her eyes clamped shut, dancing with death, bleeding umbrage, lifted her head and yelled: 'No, you whore!' It was a cry so shrill and forceful, it didn't sound as if it had come out of a human being (...) 'Cut me, you bitch! Take him out,' Naze ordered and then laughed, as if she had already crossed a threshold beyond which everything was a joke. 'It's a boy, don't you see? My son is coming! You spiteful, jealous whore. (...) Cut my belly open and take my son out!' (Shafak 43)

The complications turn out to be too much, and Naze dies, taking her baby with her shortly after. A baby "whose gender she had been wrong about the whole time" (43). Years later, at the age of seventeen, Pembe becomes a mother for the first time, giving birth to a son, "the son her mother had craved, and prayed to have throughout her entire life" (40). Influenced by her culture's honour codes that value the life of a boy more than a girl, Pembe views her son and firstborn as a boy who can do no wrong. An example of this is when a distressed mother of a boy Iskender and his gang have beaten up and almost caused his death by drowning, comes knocking on their door, and Pembe reacts in a way that surprises Iskender:

'Yesterday was my washing day,' Mum said. 'Iskender helped me take down the curtains and put them back afterwards. So you see, he was with me all day long. In case you were wondering, my son had nothing to do with this.' (...) After the woman left (...) I expected her to tell me a thing or two. A slap on the wrist. A pinch on my ear, at least. But she only looked

at me long and hard, and I think I say a trace of pride in her eyes. Then she said, ‘What would you like to eat for dinner, my sultan? Shall I make you lentil soup, the way you like it?’ We didn’t talk about the boy I had assaulted. Neither then nor later. (Shafak 268)

The reader is not given the chance of seeing this specific scene outplayed from the perspective of Pembe, but one can imply, based on the gender-roles children are born into, the reaction would not have been the same if Esma, her daughter, had been caught a fraction of what Iskender had done, nevertheless assault someone else.

Esma’s relationship with her mother proves that Pembe views her daughter’s worth through her virginity, and what Esma should and shouldn’t do:

We had been very close, me and my mother, but all that changed the moment my breasts started to bud and I had my first period. (...) Not once had she told me about what was possible and permissible; her powers of communication were reserved solely for rules and prohibitions. My mother warned me about boys, saying they were after one thing and one thing only. (...) Yet she didn’t impose the same rules on my brothers. (Shafak 300)

The way Pembe communicated with her daughter is the same way Pembe’s mother, Naze, would communicate with Jamila and her. Therefore, unlike Esma, Iskender “didn’t need to be careful. He could just be himself. No hold barred” (300)

When Naze catches the twins dancing one evening, the mother’s view on women and the importance of modesty comes forward, because it “is a woman’s only shield” and “if you lose that, you will be worth no more than a chipped kurus” (Shafak 36). She goes further on to explain the difference between men and women, claiming women to be made of the lightest cambric, “whereas men were cut of thick, dark fabric” (36), which amounts to the man being superior to the woman. The reason why, is not something Naze is concerned with, and neither should anyone else, seeing as “that is how God had tailored the two” (36). Evolving the statement on women’s modesty, Naze explains to her young daughters that once they’re ‘stained’, there is no going back:

What mattered was that the colour black didn’t show stains, unlike the colour white, which revealed even the tiniest speck of dirt. By the same token, women who were sullied would be instantly would be instantly noticed and separated from the rest, like husks removed from grains. (Shafak 37)

Husseini's memoir revealed how a girl's virginity was the only power she had over her body, and, if taken before marriage, would not only deem her powerless, but also worthless. Shafak's novel highlights this issue as well, especially, when Jamila is rejected as Adem's soon-to-be-wife, because of a kidnapping event that had taken place a year prior to Jamila and Adem meeting:

'Did they... touch her...?' 'Hmm, nobody knows for sure. They say they didn't lay a hand on her, but they're shifty and the girl never explained. Her father beat her several times but still not a word. A midwife examined her. She says Jamila has no hymen but some girls are born like this.' (Shafak 196)

The thought of Jamila no longer being a virgin anymore is more than enough for Adem to view her differently, and when he meets her the next time, he is demanding to know what happened when she was kidnapped. However, the connotations of what it entails if Jamila is no longer a virgin makes him burst out, "Your father says you may not be a virgin." (198), a statement that makes Jamila avoid his eyes, instead of reacting hysterically, Adem's initial thought of reacting from her. Instead, he receives a calm and collected Jamila, who asks him for his thought, and ultimately, his love: "The truth is what you make of it.' (...) 'Will you love me the way I am?'" (198). If Jamila and Adem had not both been raised in a culture that puts honour above everything else, even love, this conversation would not take place. However, this is not the case, and Shafak gives us a look inside Adem's thoughts and feelings, as he ponders what to do next:

That day in the Kurdish village Adem spent the rest of the afternoon on the move, quarrelling with himself (...) He could see the garden where he had first run into her. (...) One part of him wanted, in fact was desperate, to go to Jamila's father and tell him that he didn't care. He loved her (...) she loved him. That was all that mattered. (Shafak 199)

Adem's turmoil concerning Jamila's chastity shows the reader that, despite loving and caring for one and another, the iron-grip the concepts of honour and shame have over its people, puts a stop to everything else:

Jamila had not defended herself or sworn her chastity, and her silence was so unsettling. What if she was not a virgin? How could he live with this doubt for the rest of his life? What would

his brother Tariq say when he learned that he had found himself a tainted wife (...)? (Shafak 199-200)

What Adem does next, is a decision that can be defined as a by-product of the honour codes, where “(...) women who were sullied would be instantly noticed and separated from the rest” (37), thus making the village they lived in, view Jamila as a girl who had been shamed, and therefore, if Adem had decided to marry her, he would be guaranteed dishonour brought upon his family name. The fact that Jamila is viewed as tainted, affects her family as well, seeing as “the notion that women are the vessels of a family’s honor (...) [is] closely tied to values placed on marriage with virgin brides” (Recknagel 67). Thus, when Jamila’s family is unable to guarantee her virginity before she gets married, she becomes a lost cause who only causes shame. As a result, Adem turns around and marries Pembe, Jamila’s untainted twin. Once again, like with so many other girls and women in honour and shame based communities, Shafak, like Kaur Athwal and Hussein, tells of the dehumanization process that takes place, rendering someone like Jamila as worthless; a life “that is neither alive nor dead, but interminably, spectral” (Butler 34). And thus, Jamila, having lost the possibility of the life expected of her, becomes a midwife, ironically called “Kiz Ebe – the Virgin Midwife” (Shafak 71).

The fear of being seen as a dishonourable man exceeds the value of a woman’s life. Tariq, like many other men in honour based communities, viewed a man robbed of his honour as a “dead man” (Shafak 251), where if dishonoured:

You could not walk on the street anymore, unless you got used to staring at the pavement. You could not go to a tea house and play a round of backgammon or watch a football match in the beer house. (...) No one would pay heed to you when you spoke; your word would be no more valuable than dried dung. The cigarette you offered would be left unsmoked, the coffee you drank bitter to the end. You would not be invited to weddings, circumcisions or engagements, lest you bring your ill luck with you. (Shafak 251-252)

The thought of a woman being mercilessly killed because a man would not be invited to a wedding, denied the activities in a tea house, or gossiped about, is for those outside of honour and shame based communities unbelievable, but actually seen as proper threats for men who do belong in those communities. This equals the life of a woman to a mere activity, essentially telling her that she is not a human being; not a life that is “characterized by

dignity, equality, bodily inviolability, and freedom” (Schaffer, and Smith 2). Tariq, Adem’s older brother, believes Pembe has brought shame upon their family name, and therefore rendered her as a commodity with no more value, so why shouldn’t Iskender get rid of her and cleanse their family’s honour?

3.4 Expectations of honour in another country

Pembe and Adem, together with their two children, Iskender and Esma, move to London in the 1970s, bringing with them values, beliefs and traditions that are distinctively different from the values, beliefs and traditions in London. Iskender and Esma, unlike their parents, adapt a lot quicker to a new life in London; from the language to the customs:

We learned the language fast, unlike our parents, particularly Mum. (...) At home, with us children, my mother spoke a Turkish that was peppered with Kurdish words. We answered her in English and spoke only English amongst ourselves. (...) Perhaps all immigrants shrink from a new language to some extent. Take the brick-thick Oxford English Dictionary and show a new arrival a couple of pages, ask about a few pages, (...) entries. Especially idioms and metaphors – they’re the worst. (Shafak 220)

Whereas language can be looked upon as a small aspect amongst the large ones, values and tradition, Shafak’s novel portrays more from the first than latter. Esma is different than the others girls and women we meet in the novel. Her focus is on books, not boys: “What mum didn’t understand was that I was not the least bit interested in boys. I found them boring, shallow, hormonal” (Shafak 300). Esma and her mother’s relationship shows how two different people, growing up in different cultures, where different things are expected of them, can drift apart and create distance. Esma believes she can be a writer, “but not a female one. I had even decided on my pen-name. John Blake Uno – an amalgam of my three favourite personalities, a poet, a writer and a performance artist” (298), while Pembe has been told that all she had to do, was to get married and give birth to sons.

The differences between Istanbul and London baffles Adem, where even the small act of women smoking out on the streets was a peculiar thing:

Adem dredged up a time when he – as a young man in Istanbul – would gather cigarette butts from the streets to eke out one final drag. Once he had found half a cigarette with a lipstick mark on the pavement. He was doubly mystified by the discovery: amazed that someone

would dispose of a fag that was only partly finished, and amazed that a woman could smoke on the street. (Shafak 583)

Coming to London, however, Adem would see women smoking in the streets everywhere, and views the act of sharing one with Roxana as an exhilarating and intimate moment. For Pembe, moving to England brought along many different experiences and feelings, from:

The first time she took a big red bus, the children still little by her side and Yunus still to be born. She would never forget the excitement of seeing the Queen's soldiers, sober and serious on high horses. A sense of loneliness had washed over her upon arriving in Hackney, with its rain-soaked streets, adjoining brick houses and thimble-sized gardens. The house her husband had found was shabby and in need of a paint, but she didn't mind, being used to making a home in small spaces. What she couldn't adjust to, however, was the weather. The gloom. The clouds always a tint of some obscure colour. (Shafak 545)

Pembe's experiences and thoughts regarding moving to England remind the reader that first and foremost, before any notion of honour or shame, she is an individual with similar thoughts and experiences to anyone else moving to England. She notices the same things; the red bus, the Queen's soldiers and the weather. This invites the reader to see another side of Pembe who, despite being born in a small Kurdish village by the Euphrates, does not like the cloudy weather in England. It gives her an identity, where finding out her likes and dislikes makes her more human, more relatable.

Right from the very beginning, Adem and Pembe knew they were not right for each other. Adem chose Pembe because she was 'untainted', whereas Pembe went along with him, not that she, as a girl had much to say about it, to get out of their small village. When Adem starts to see another woman, Pembe writes a letter to her twin, wishing for a different time:

Adem is no husband to me. He doesn't come home anymore. He has found himself another woman. The children don't know it. I keep everything inside. Always. My heart is full of words unsaid, tears unshed. I don't blame him. I blame myself. It was the biggest mistake of our lives that I was his bride, instead of you. It's true, he never loved me the way he loved you. He is a man who has many regrets and no courage. I feel sorry for him. (Shafak 149)

Even Iskender, their son, notices that there is no love between his parents, when he asks his mother why she decided to marry Adem, and her answers goes, "It was a different world

back then,' (...) 'Nothing similar to your life here in London. You young people are so lucky.'" (168). Esma, on the other hand, "was aware the three of us were here only because of duty, surrender and indifference, not because of love" (168).

Both Adem and Pembe start to stray away from the family life; the family structure. It starts with Adem, who spends his nights gambling, and this is also where he meets his soon-to-be lover, Roxana:

That night he stopped as if there were such a handle attached to his back and someone had tugged and tugged it. A young woman had entered the room, like an apparition from the shadows. In the faint lamplight her sandy hair had an uncanny glow, curling below her ears, small and delicate. Leather miniskirt, white silk halter top, stiletto daggers on her feet. (Shafak 78)

Up until this point, Adem had been on a winning streak that night, and although everyone had advised him to stop playing, feeling Roxana staring at him across the room, is enough for Adem to continue gambling, feeling a different kind of energy overtaking him, "he felt the possibility, a chance in a thousand but a chance nevertheless, of winning her heart if he kept on winning at roulette" (Shafak 80). As long as she is watching him, Adem keeps on winning. However, when one of the owners asks him about his family, "'Don't you have a family waitin' my friend? They must be worried for you. It's getting late'" (Shafak 80), Adem stops, and as he does, he feels how his family draws "a thick curtain between him and the roulette, him and the room, him and her" (80). Still, Adem goes back to the gambling room, goes back to Roxana, thus leaving his family behind.

Adem's failure at being a father for his children is a by-product of his father's own disability at being a good father for him and his brothers. Having spent his entire childhood between what he would call his 'sober baba' and his 'drunken baba', and never knowing which one would be present when he woke up. Whereas sober baba liked to spend time with his sons, and "sometimes Adem would escort Baba to the local tea house, where they would while away the day sipping *sahlep*, linden or tea, and watching men of all ages play backgammon and draughts" (Shafak 91). Drunken baba, once he started, shifted into a whole different person:

He would scowl more often, cursing himself, and every few minutes he would scold the boys over something so trivial nobody could remember what it was afterwards. Anything might

annoy him: the food was too salty, the bread stale, the ice not cold enough. In order to soothe his nerves, he would open up a second bottle. (Shafak 94)

This instability in Adem's life regarding his father, follows him into his own role as the father of his children. As a young boy, Adem would try to tell himself that,

It was his other baba who fumed and raged, just as it was his other father who punched the steering wheel/the walls/the tables/the doors/the china cupboard, and, when that didn't help, beat them with his belt, and once kicked his wife in the groin, sending her flying down the stairs. It helped to remember that it wasn't the same man. Not that this lessened the pain or the fear, but it made it easier the next morning to go back to loving Baba (the Sober One). (Shafak 98)

Whereas his dad decided to stay, Adem leaves his family, forcing Iskender to become head of the family. This causes a change in Iskender, one that Esma describes as him being "full of himself, crabby, peevish, always hanging with his mates and that needy girlfriend of his. Hitting the punch bag day and night, as if the world was teeming with his invisible enemies" (Shafak 299-300). Iskender takes his role as the head of the family seriously, and tells his mother to stop working, "She cried a lot but didn't resist. She knew I had my reasons. People were gossiping. (...) So I told her to stay home. I had to put out the flames" (87). Iskender had to hide his mother from the public, from the rumours, and his way of doing this, was to make her stay at home. Being head of the family, Iskender does not realize till later, when asked about why he seems so mature, that he has had to grow up faster than his other friends: "My father isn't around," Iskender heard himself saying. 'I had to grow up at top-speed, if you know what I mean.'" (363). This gives him "a warm sense of worth, almost liquid, a new thrill in his veins" (363). Having to take care of his family puts even more pressure on Iskender, the kind of pressure that a boy his age should not have to face.

When Pembe meets Elias, she violates every honour code that has been drilled into her head from day one. Infidelity is one of the most common reasons why women are killed in the name of honour. Shafak's novel, thus, becomes an important story of how honour and shame based communities ignores a man's extramarital affairs and betrayals, but does not accept a woman to be with someone after he has abandoned her. Here is someone who is changing the way she views everything, but the fear of being seen by someone who knows her, makes Pembe tread lightly, knowing the repercussions of her actions would only lead to

bad things happening. After their first cinema date, which becomes their way of meeting up, Pembe agrees to meet him for a second date; a second film, before turning around and running away, “from him and everything that had taken place between them, or would have taken place, had they been different people” (236-237). The second date turns into many more dates, until the faithful day Tariq spots them:

Behind the couple Tariq caught sight of a woman. She was wending her way towards the exit, her eyes glued to the ground. Inadvertently, Tariq stepped forward as if to apprehend his sister-in-law. He was about to call her name, ask what she was doing here on her own and offer to go back with her, when he noticed a middle-aged man approaching Pembe. He grabbed her elbow, murmured something inaudible and gave her a piece of paper, which she accepted with a smile and swiftly put in her pocket.

Upon seeing this, there is no doubt in the reader’s mind what happens next. Pembe, once viewed as a wife with three children, becomes a person with no worth, now that she has committed adultery. It does not matter that Tariq had not seen them intimately, just the sight of her with someone else is enough for Tariq’s mind to come to the following conclusion: Pembe has shamed their family’s honour, and therefore she needs to vanish.

Adem moves to Abu Dhabi, and starts working at a construction site. It is at one of his shifts after the incident, that he come to the realization that he is remorseful for the things he did not do, rather than what he has done, concerning not only his children, but also his life in general. A flock of birds flying over his head reminds of Esmā, Yunus, and Iskender, and what they would be doing now, through the eyes of the birds:

Esmā leaving a bookshop with newly bought books, or Yunus writing graffiti on the walls with those punk friends of his, or Iskender, in prison, looking out of a prison window; watching the drizzle hit the courtyard – but no, he still found it painful to think about his eldest son and the terrible place he had ended up. Adem blamed himself. (...) he had always played truant in life, always been absent, always fearful of being swallowed by the earth. (Shafak 482)

Adem comes across as a man who, caught up in the expectations of honour codes, never lived his life for himself, rendering him to end up with a woman he did not love, children he could not take care of, and a lover who would end up leaving him. Losing Roxana leaves Adem pondering about his life and his identity: “His life had been a maze of mirrors, in each mirror

he had seen a different reflection of himself, but which one of them was the real Adem, he couldn't tell" (Shafak 437).

3.5 Conclusion

In the last chapter, I wanted to analyse how Shafak's novel, *Honour*, had impacted the issue of 'honour' killings differently than Kaur Athwal and Hussein's memoirs. Although literature has been difficult to separate from other types of discourse, through history, the novel has taken the standpoint of showing reading a realistic picture of life, through their lens. In order to not confuse this definition with non-fictional texts, such as the diary, the reader can look to the author's intentions with the text, where an author such as Shafak tells of 'a world' and Kaur Athwal and Hussein represents 'the world'. Even though Shafak's story is fictional, by defining the text as a modern novel, one can still argue that she has written a story that sets out to change not only people's minds, but society as well concerning the issue of 'honour' killings, through the freedom of her distinctive narrative.

Shafak's story manages to convey how honour codes can follow a family, up to the point of three generations, no matter where you live, be it in a remote Kurdish village by the Euphrates, the city of Istanbul, or London. Similar to Kaur Athwal and Hussein, aspects such as dehumanization and gender-based violence can be found in the story. Shafak's ability to shift between the characters invites the readers to partake in their inner thoughts and emotions, so that the readers may understand how concepts such as honour and shame, controls different members of the patriarchal family structure.

Iskender's point of view is one the public never hears from, but just like Sarhan, who showed remorse for his actions, so does Iskender, in the letters from Shrewsbury prison. This ability is not possible in Kaur Athwal's memoir, seeing as she can only relay her inner thoughts and feelings. However, what Shafak lacks, which are actual victims' suffering and traumas, she takes back by confirming the conclusions the other two authors come to in their memoirs: the act of an 'honour' killing is far too widespread and long-lived to have its origins from any one religion or even one culture, and the need to challenge these cultures and the laws that give perpetrators a more lenient punishment, is crucial, because it is only when people speak up that other people change; that society changes.

Conclusion

All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.

Rivkin, and Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthropology*

The aim of this thesis was to answer the following question: How do Kaur Athwal, Husseini, and Shafak, through their language, style and content, challenge cultural values and traditions in honour and shame based communities? Through the exploration of aspects such as dehumanization and the act of mourning; the power of testimony and witnessing; and discrimination against women, I wanted to take part in the discussion on the issue of ‘honour’ killings, through a literary lens. Based on my findings, I believe all three authors, in varying degrees, have managed to not only bring awareness and challenge the issue, but also change people’s perception of, and laws, concerning ‘honour’ killings.

Based on the capacity of this thesis, I chose to mainly focus on the memoir, but I also wanted to add a genre, the novel, that represented a fictional world; fictional characters, plot and content, and compare how opposed to the memoir, it differed. For future research, I propose to include additional genres, and explore the literature aspect even further concerning the way it impacts readers.

Through my research, I came to the conclusion that life narratives, like no other narratives, impact the world in unique ways. It gives an account of lived experiences; of subjective truths through the voice of the ‘Other’; and most importantly, demands an ethical response by engaging the readers in a powerful, imaginative and intimate way. Memoirs such as Kaur Athwal and Husseini’s put a human face to suffering, using their platform to rectify for those whose rights have been denied, such as the many victims found in their texts. As well as giving a voice to the ‘Other’, life narratives can be used as a form of recognition among both individuals and groups, evolving the meaning of what constitutes a human being with rights to dignity, equality, bodily inviolability and freedom. Thus, with that established, Kaur Athwal and Husseini give their readers the possibility of identifying themselves in relation to the victims mentioned in their memoirs.

An important discovery came forward when I analysed the memoirs of Kaur Athwal and Husseini as testimonies. By acknowledging the absence of an event that has yet to happen, despite the horrific and traumatic reality of its occurrence. The victims of ‘honour’ killings are in principle, robbed of the possibility to testify to the trauma and suffering that took place, before they lost their lives. Kaur Athwal and Husseini, through depicting the victims’ last moments, testify on behalf of them. As a result, the victim’s narrative is passed on to Kaur Athwal and Husseini. For a testimony to take place, there needs to be a listener, or in these memoirs’ case: a reader, so that the trauma and suffering that took place, is passed on from the victim to the listener/reader. Surjit’s trauma was testified through Kaur Athwal, which is again, testified by the reader.

Butler’s theory on what constitutes a human being can be implemented to the victims of ‘honour’ killings. The media’s failure to represent certain faces because they are deemed unworthy is challenged in these memoirs. What can be added, is how the faces of the victims are hidden not only from the media, but also their own communities; cultures; even their own families. This stems from the way girls are defined in the patriarchal family structure, where every member has its own role. Being born a girl puts you at the very bottom of this structure, rendering your worth close to zero. Because of this system, the violence that these girls and women suffer through, only a type of violence that is already taking place in discourse. Therefore, one cannot state that there exists a discourse of dehumanization, but rather that dehumanization is already taking place in discourse. Within that discourse, human beings distance themselves from each other, thus, distancing themselves to the vulnerability that unites us.

Kaur Athwal speaks up against the unjustifiable death of her sister-in-law, putting herself and her family at risk. Knowing that the voice of Surjit, the voice of the ‘Other’, is important, she relays how aspects such honour and shame need to be challenged, in order for ‘honour’ killings to stop happening. By giving the readers a sense of her inner self, Kaur Athwal’s memoir becomes one of a kind, through the process of sharing her thoughts and emotions on the experiences that take place, all leading to the ‘honour’ killing of Surjit. It is not only Surjit’s experiences around the concepts of honour and shame that the readers get to know, but also Kaur Athwal’s; a girl who, from the day of her birth, has been discriminated against for the sole reason of being a girl. In addition, one can find the process of dehumanization in the memoir, where girls such as Kaur Athwal and Surjit are labelled as unhuman, and therefore, any violence inflicted upon them leaves no mark, because how can one hurt something that doesn’t exist?

Husseini's text, although sharing the same genre, impacts the readers in a different way. Being a journalist, feminist and human rights defender, Husseini set out on a journey of investigating and reporting where every single case of 'honour' killings, at first in Jordan, but then all over the world. Through her research, which initially began with the story of a girl, Kifaya, being murdered by her brother because she had been raped by another brother, Husseini becomes a lot more invested and makes it her goal in life to become the voice of these victims; victims who didn't have a voice to begin with while alive, and certainly not after their murders.

Instead of accepting the way the public, the media and even the courtroom not only ignores, but tries to hide these crimes, Husseini fights back by giving each and every one of the victims a name; an identity, forcing them to acknowledge the unjustifiable deaths that have taken place. Through her investigation, she finds that 'honour' killings occur most often because what has been the woman's greatest value, her virginity, has been taken, therefore leaving a stain the family cannot get rid of. It is a stain that will only be washed away with blood.

Among the life narratives that speak the truth, there exists those who publish their fictional stories as non-fiction. This presents an image of the victims of 'honour' killings that is incorrect, and can only do damage to those who have fought against injustice for years. In addition to damaging the victims' image, it also may portray a country or a culture as something it is not, further creating distance between people and borders. Husseini advises readers and publishers to tread carefully, and as for the publishers, to make sure that the stories being published are fact-checked.

Despite being challenged at every corner, Husseini ends her memoir on the note that one should not give up, because one person's work of activism may be the push further needed by other people; groups; and institutions.

Shafak's novel, although different by genre from the other two literary texts, still manages to bring awareness to the issue of 'honour' killings. By using the novel's freedom of distinctive narrative, and making her authorial intentions clear to her readers, Shafak manages to portray that could have taken place in the real world, where the thoughts and emotions of everyone involved, are explored. This gives the readers an opportunity to understand how such a horrendous act may take place. The novel reveals the pressure all members of a patriarchal family structure are under concerning the family's honour. The same way the readers could recognize themselves in the memoirs, so can they in Shafak's novel. When we read a narrative, we can encounter ourselves and each other. A reader may

recognize themselves in the hardships the Toprak family goes through when they move to London: the difficulty of learning a new language; Esma going against cultural norms, wanting to become more than a mother; Adem's lost sense of life, pushing his family further away from himself; Iskender feeling the pressure to care for his family with his father gone; and Pembe's thoughts concerning moving to London. By writing about the characters as individuals, all with hopes, dreams and expectations of their own, Shafak gives them the value of a human life, making readers aware of how members of honour and shame based families, are people they can recognize themselves with, and therefore the need for action to take place in ending this tradition of killing girls and women, is crucial.

These three literary texts have attested that narratives telling the story of victims, victims who are not able to defend themselves, can be used in order to challenge and bring about change to the issue of 'honour' killings. By bringing to light the issues within honour and shame based communities, such as the derealisation of the 'Other', discrimination against women, the power of testimony and witnessing, they call for an ethical response by affecting the readers' thoughts, emotions and perceptions. Furthermore, assumptions about 'honour' killings being based on one religion or one culture are also proven to be wrong, and instead, evidence is given on how it is found everywhere in the world. It may differ in definitions here and there, and excused based on different cultural values and customs, but violence against women; discrimination against women; 'honour' killings, will remain a world phenomenon. Until it is addressed as a world-wide problem, the public will continue to point their fingers at specific cultures and religions, while honour and shame based communities will continue to hide their victims, dehumanizing girls and women like they have done for centuries. The result will be people and groups further distancing themselves from each, which leads to the loss of vulnerability that binds us together; makes us humans.

Although it may seem impossible to tackle the issue of 'honour' killings, all three authors, but especially Hussein, proves that every bit helps. Every person who does something, be it sign petitions and demanding the government to listen; join an organization against discrimination against women; fund places/institutions that protect girls and women who have survived an attempt at 'honour' killing; even just by being aware of the issue and spreading the word, all these acts will eventually equal a tremendous affect. These literary texts, in varying levels, have managed to tick off things from the list above, and encourage their readers to do the same. Hussein's work of activism involved investigating and reporting every case of 'honour' killings she came across, which further led her to join an organization that worked to defend women's rights, especially where the issue of 'honour' killings were

concerned. Because of her determination to help these girls, who the rest of the world had seemingly forgotten about, Hussein's group gets thousands of signatures on the issue, bringing awareness to their society, marches the streets demanding the government to listen to its people, and write two amendments in order to change specific laws that give those who commit honour crimes a more lenient punishment. As for Hussein herself,

Since I have become known for my work, many schools and universities have invited me to speak about my experiences. In one school, I watched in amazement as children performed a play about so-called honour crimes at the end of the school year. They told me they wanted to be part of the change that was taking place in our society. (Hussein 161)

Here is the evidence that shows how one incredible person's hard work, has spread across Jordan, something that "would have been unheard of just a couple of years earlier" (161). In addition to school plays, theatres have joined in on the change, and "staged plays about so-called honour crimes and violence against women, with many of the voices opposing these crimes coming directly from male actors and performers" (161).

Kaur Athwal's memoir, although not creating as big of a change like Hussein's, is a special one, because she testified in court against her family; her mother- and brother-in-law, in open court as the Prosecution's key witness, something that had never been done before. Furthermore, she waived her anonymity, and the result was tremendous: Kaur Athwal's testimony became the first one to successfully prosecute an 'honour' killing without a body; Surjit's body. Justice is served, however, when Bachan Kaur has to serve twenty years in prison, and Sukhdave twenty-seven. Today, Kaur Athwal is a police community support officer, helping others who are in similar situations.

In conclusion, I hope this thesis has proved that, through literary texts such as *Shamed, Honour and Murder in the Name of Honour*, one can challenge and change cultural values and traditions in honour and shame based communities.

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