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A Thousand Splendid Suns: In-between Realities

Anissa Benmeziane

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Université Européenne de Bretagne

Université Rennes 2

Master Mention Langues, Littératures et Civilisations Etrangères et Régionales :
Parcours Aires Anglophones

A Thousand Splendid Suns : In-between Realities

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2021

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Abstract

A Thousand Splendid Suns reveals many realities about Afghanistan's history, Hosseini's identity and his ideology. Considering the author's complicated background as an Afghan American and a refugee with limited experience in Afghanistan, all of these complex realities in Hosseini's life are laid bare in the novel. Hosseini's stance is categorized as "in-between". However, the question remains how these realities manifest in the novel and to which reality Hosseini leans more. To respond to this query, the study designates two binary realities in the following respects: (Fiction vs History, Afghan Identity vs American, Neo-Orientalism vs Neutrality). The study reveals that historical and fictional realities are strategically overlapped to represent Afghanistan's history and give the text its historic nature. Hosseini's Afghan identity is more dominant in the novel than his American identity. However, the study shows some traces of Neo-Orientalist ideas in his depiction of Afghanistan.

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Introduction

A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) is one of Hossein's bestselling novels. The novel tells the story of Meriam, an illegitimate teenager from Herat, forced by her father to marry a shoemaker (Rasheed) from Kabul, who is twenty years older than her. Leila, the second protagonist, born a generation later, has a privileged life, but a tragedy forces her to become Meriam's co-wife. The two protagonists encounter several challenges in their lives, including their violent husband and the Taliban's cruel rule.

Since the release of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the novel has garnered a positive feedback from the Media and critics. The Daily Mail describes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* "as a gripping tale of physical and psychological violence, of extremes of hope and despair. It is, too, a powerful portrait of female suffering and endurance under the Taliban"¹. Natasha Walter asserts that "Hosseini vividly brings home what life is like for women in a society in which they are valued only for reproduction"². John Freeman assumes that "Khaled Hosseini tells a carefully observed story about his country through the eyes of two such women. They are buffeted by forces of history from 1974 to the present — married off, embraced by their community, as scarred by war as by the horrific abuse at the hands of their husband, a man whom they share"³. Jolie Foster: "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the painful and, at times violent, yet ultimately

¹ "New Fiction." *Daily Mail*, May 2007, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-458511/New-Fiction.html>. Accessed 27 Mar.2021.

² Natasha Walter. "Behind the Veil." *The Guardian*, 19 May 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/19/featuresreviews.guardianreview21>. Accessed 27 Mar.2021

³ Freeman, John. "A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini: Buffeted by Husband, History Khaled Hosseini's Fictional Women Caught in a Grim Fate." *Chron*, 27 May 2007, <https://www.chron.com/entertainment/books/article/A-Thousand-Splendid-Suns-by-Khaled-Hosseini-1611972.php>. Accessed 27 July.2021

hopeful story of two women's inner lives. Hosseini's bewitching narrative captures the intimate details of life in a world where it's a struggle to survive, skillfully inserting this human story into the larger backdrop of recent history"⁴. Michiko Kakutani points out that "in the case of "Splendid Suns," Mr. Hosseini quickly makes it clear that he intends to deal with the plight of women in Afghanistan"⁵. Alan Marshall reviews the novel in the Daily Telegraph as "a historical romance, in which attention remains deliberately focused on the women... Grippingly told"⁶.

Indeed, most of the criticism attributed to *A Thousand Splendid Suns* concentrates on the novel's feminist aspects, as a story about Afghan women's plight over nearly four decades of Afghanistan's history. The following research, on the other hand, sheds light on the novel's binary realities in regards to several topics, such as history, identity and ideology. It mainly focuses on how the author's background as an Afghan American and a refugee influenced the construction of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. As a result, the following questions led to this investigation. How do history and fiction interact in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*? How does Hosseini's in-between identity manifest in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*? Is Hosseini's depiction of Afghanistan neutral or Neo-orientalist?. As noticed in the previous questions, the idea of in-betweenness in present. Indeed, this research aims at analyzing the in between realities found in the novel.

⁴ Julie Foster. "Women's Fates Entwine as Afghanistan Spirals into War." *SFGATE*, 20 May 2007, <https://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Women-s-fates-entwine-as-Afghanistan-spirals-into-2592700.php>. Accessed 28 July.2021.

⁵ Michiko Kakutani,. "A Women's Lot in Kabul Lower than a House Cat." *The New York Times*, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/29/books/29kaku.html>. Accessed 28 July.2021.

⁶ Alan Marshall. "The World through a Mesh." *The Telegraph*, 31 May 2007, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3665498/The-world-through-a-mesh.html>. Accessed 28 July.2021.

Hence, to answer the previous questions, this research is divided into three main parts. The first section, titled "In-between the historical real and the fictional realities," examines Hosseini's strategies as an intermediary that blends fact and fiction to highlight given realities. It also studies the historicity of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*' text and the textuality of Afghanistan's history and culture. The second section examines the author's double identity. It focuses on the way his Afghan and American identities manifest through a textual analysis of the novel. The section studies the notions of displacement and exile as well as space to highlight the author's Afghan roots. Whereas his American identity is examined through the presence of elements in American culture and art. The third section looks into whether Hosseini's novel incorporates any Neo-Orientalist ideas. It contrasts how Afghanistan is depicted in the Western media with how it is portrayed in the novel. The goal of this section is to determine whether Hosseini's representation of Afghanistan is Neo-Orientalist or neutral.

Indeed, this research is structured by postcolonial, new-historicism, and feminist theories. Because of the novel's numerous subjects, including the predicament of Afghan women, the depiction of Afghan history, and the post-colonial era, the research necessitates the use of the three theories. The research also involves textual and discourse analysis based on specific concepts from significant philosophers like David Hume, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Before developing the topic, it is necessary to provide a general overview of the history of Afghanistan, as well as the author's background. This will aid readers to assimilate the following parts of this research.

a. The Socio-historical Background

Afghanistan has been the site of a number of bloody wars and invasions, beginning in the nineteenth century when Britain sought to protect India from Russia by attempting to annex Afghanistan, creating a chain of British-Afghan wars (1838-1921). After Britain was defeated in the Third Afghan War, Afghanistan gained independence and declared itself a monarchy. In

1933, Zahir Shah was crowned king, ushering in forty years of stability and peace before being deposed by his cousin, Daoud Khan, in a military coup.

1. Daoud Khan's Rule (1973-1978)

Daoud Khan settled on new social reforms, like allowing women more public freedom to attend university and enter the workforce, in order to modernize the largely communist state. In 1978, Khan was killed and replaced by Mohammad Taraki, one of the founding members of the Afghan communist party. He became president and took control of the country. He desired an Islamic state free of Soviet influence and based on Afghan nationalism, which led to the formation of the Mujahadeen movement, which launched an armed revolt against the Soviet-backed government.

2. The Soviet Era (1978-1992)

In 1979, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan to shore up the communist regime, which was on the verge of collapse. The Soviet Union intervened to support the Afghan communist government in its conflict with anti-communist Muslim guerrillas known as the Mujahadeen during the Afghan War (1978–92). By early 1980, the Mujahadeen had rebelled against the Soviet invaders, causing approximately 2.8 million Afghans to flee to Pakistan and another 1.5 million to flee to Iran. Thus, the Afghan Mujahadeen gained control of the rural areas, whereas the Soviets controlled the urban areas. In 1989, the USA, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, as well as the Soviet Union, signed a peace treaty in Geneva guaranteeing Afghan independence and the withdrawal of 10,000 Soviet troops.

3. The Mujaheddin Regime(1992-1996)

After the withdrawal of the Soviets, the Mujahadeen continued their resistance against the communist president, Mohammed Najibullah in 1986. By 1992, the Mujahadeen took power and established the Islamic State of Afghanistan with Burhannudin Rabbani as president.

“Rabbani, however, refused to relinquish power to his successor after the expiration of his two-year term in office. Over the next three years, rocket attacks by opposition forces—primarily those of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Islamic Party—caused severe damage to large sections of the capital, and created a civil war among the Mujahedeen factions”⁷. Thus, it led Afghanistan into a social and economic crisis.

4. The Taliban Regime (1996-2001)

Taliban, Pashto *Tālebān* (“Students”), ultraconservative political and religious faction that took its name from its membership, which consisted largely of students trained in madrasahs (Islamic religious schools). It emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the collapse of Afghanistan’s communist regime, and the subsequent breakdown in civil order⁸.

However, “by late 1996, popular support for the Taliban among Afghanistan’s southern Pashtun ethnic group helped the Taliban to gain effective control of the country. Afghanistan became the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. By 2001, the Taliban controlled all but a small section of northern Afghanistan”⁹. Afghans who were exhausted by years of instability welcomed the promises of the Taliban of peace and prosperity. However, at this stage, Afghanistan had witnessed the most difficult period in its history. The Taliban established very restricted laws for women, banished any form of art and prohibited women from schooling or working or walking alone in the street and had to be fully covered with a dark burqa. Taliban Islamic laws

⁷ Weinbaum, G. Marvin. *Burhanuddin Rabbani | President of Afghanistan | Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Burhanuddin-Rabbani>. Accessed 19 Feb. 2021.

⁸ Adam Zeidan. *Taliban | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taliban>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2021.

⁹ Adam Zeidan. *Taliban | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica*.

are manifested through public executions like Najibullah's execution and amputations. The Taliban destroyed Bamiyan in 2001, claiming that it violated Islamic standards.

5. The Afghan-American War (2001-2021)

Bin Laden crashed four planes into the World Trade Center tower in New York in September 2001. Following this, the USA declared war on Afghanistan and started to bomb the Taliban bases in Afghanistan. The Taliban responded that they were prepared for Jihad. After a series of confrontations, the Afghan Islamic press declared that the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan had totally ended. In the coming years, Afghanistan would witness political and military interventions from the USA and NATO. After an American soldier killed 16 Afghan civilians inside their homes, Hamid Karzai was elected president and demanded that American troops leave Afghan villages. NATO officially ended its combat mission in Afghanistan, and the Afghan army took over military operations.

On 29 February 2020, US officials and Taliban representatives signed an agreement in Doha to end the Afghan-American war. The agreement has four points, including a 14-month withdrawal timeline for all US troops from Afghanistan by 2020, a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, and a Taliban guarantee that Afghan soil will not be used as a launchpad that would threaten the security of the US.¹⁰

Joe Biden announced that the American troops will be completely and officially withdraw from Afghanistan by 31 August 2021.

6. The Taliban Taking Back Control (15 Aug 2021-Present)

¹⁰ Qazi, Shereena. *Afghanistan's Taliban, US Sign Agreement Aimed at Ending War*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/29/afghanistans-taliban-us-sign-agreement-aimed-at-ending-war>. Accessed 20 Aug. 2021.

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul and took control of the city, after the Afghan president, Ashref Ghani, had fled the country. “A Taliban spokesperson said on Twitter that they had entered the city to provide security and that foreign nationals would not face any danger. Al Jazeera and Associated Press images showed Taliban members inside the presidential palace”¹¹. According to the Taliban's announcement, they are now attempting to build a government that includes and represents all Afghan tribes.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, doubled down on the Taliban's efforts to convince the world that it has changed from the group that imposed a brutal rule on the country in the 1990s. He promised the Taliban would honor women's rights, but within the norms of Islamic law. He said the group wanted private media to "remain independent," but stressed journalists "should not work against national values." And he promised the insurgents would secure Afghanistan — but seek no revenge against those who worked with the former government or with foreign governments or forces.¹²

The world is now paying great attention to the developments in Afghanistan, and it remains to be seen whether the Taliban will truly reform their policies on human rights, particularly women's rights.

b. Afghan culture

Culturally, Afghanistan is a multi-cultural country. It enjoys a mixture of cultures borrowed from Europe, Eastern and Western Asia.

¹¹ Claudia Koerner. “The Taliban Is Taking Back Control Of Afghanistan.” *BuzzFeed News*, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/claudiakoerner/taliban-afghanistan-biden>. Accessed 20 Aug. 2021.

¹² The Associated Press. “The Taliban Claim They’ll Respect Women’s Rights — With Their Reading Of Islamic Law.” *NPR*, 17 Aug. 2021. *NPR*, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/17/1028391403/afghanistan-women-taliban-government>. Accessed 20 Aug.2021.

1. Afghan Tribe Composition

The Afghan nation is composed of different ethno-linguistic groups. Nonetheless, the research is limited to the three major groups that are present in the novel. The Pashtu, the Tajik and the Hazara. "The largest population in Afghanistan is Pashtuns (about 42%), an Indo-European people. They live in the southeastern and southern parts of the country. The second largest group is the Tajiks (about 22%), the live in the northeast and the west of the country. The Hazaras (about 10%) live mainly in the mountainous regions of the central part of the country"¹³ . The Hazara are seen as political rivals to the Pashtuns for power and Afghan prestige. They belong to the Shia sect of Islam, while the rest of the Afghan people are mostly Sunni Muslims. Consequently, they are often viewed as outsiders and strangers.

2. Marriage in Afghan Culture

The Afghan way of life is guided by traditions and religion. However, it is shaped and practiced differently depending on a variety of factors, including tribes, rural and urban areas, and the government's political policies, which fluctuate from regime to regime. Most Afghans in rural areas adopt a traditional lifestyle and marriage is one of the most significant topics in Afghan culture. It is considered to be a duty. Polygamous marriages are very common in Afghan society because men are allowed to have up to four wives. Women do not choose who they marry; rather, their fathers do, and most of the time, they know little about their future husbands, as in the case of Meriam, who is forced to marry Rasheed, who is 20 years her senior. "Women are respected as the perpetrators of the family and the holders of its honor. Their bodies must

¹³ *Afghanistan Population – Countryaah.Com.* <https://www.countryaah.com/afghanistan-population/>. Accessed 21 Aug. 2021.

be guarded to protect virginity, ensure that their progeny are legitimate and that they are not abducted or in other ways violated as a hostile act against the family unit .”¹⁴Even "divorce is not an alternative. If a woman demands a divorce, she loses virtually all of her rights and privileges. The husband is awarded the children and can even refuse the wife access to them. She is a disgrace to her family, often ostracized, and all property falls to the husband."¹⁵ (Seierstad 26)

c. Khaled Hosseini’s Autobiography

In 1965, Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. His father was a diplomat in the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother taught Farsi and history at a high school in Kabul. In 1976, the Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then, their homeland had witnessed a bloody communist coup and the invasion of the Soviet Army. The Hosseini’s sought and were granted political asylum in the United States, and in September they moved to San Jose, California. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine, where he earned a medical degree in 1993, and after completing his residency; was a practicing internist from 1996 – 2004 In 2001, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, which was published by Riverhead Books in 2003.. Today, Khaled Hosseini is one of the most recognized and bestselling authors in the world. His books, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, have been published in over seventy

¹⁴Tonita Murray. *The Oppressed Women of Afghanistan: Fact, Fiction, or Distortion* | Middle East Institute. 2012, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/oppressed-women-afghanistan-fact-fiction-or-distortion>. Accessed 10 Feb.2021.

¹⁵ Seierstad, Åsne. *The Bookseller of Kabul*. 1st Back Bay pbk. ed, Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, 2004.

countries and sold more than 40 million copies worldwide. In 2006, Khaled was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. Inspired by a trip he made to Afghanistan with the UNHCR, he later established The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a nonprofit, which provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.¹⁶

¹⁶ “About Us | Helping Afghan Women & Children| Khaled Hosseini Foundation.” *Tkhhf*, 2017, <https://www.khaledhosseinifoundation.org/copy-of-about-us>. Accessed 05 Apr. 2021.

I. In-between the Historical Real and the Fictional Realities.

The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a blend of history and fiction. Fiction is comprised of the author's imaginative narratives, whereas history is made up of true and factual narratives. This synthesis reflects certain historical and social realities of Afghanistan. As a result, the goal of this section is to define the relationship between fiction and history in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

▪ Historical fiction

The relationship between history and fiction has been one of the most important questions raised by theorists and critics. Ann Curthoys and Jhon Docker define their relationship as lively and troubled.

Historians insist that what they write is not fiction, as it must retain a fidelity to the available historical sources, those residues from the past we have inherited in the form of documents, images, memories, stories, rituals, material objects, landscapes, and recorded sounds. At the same time, they sometimes envy fiction writers' abilities to imagine and perhaps reconstruct the emotional and intimate aspects of the past that historians find it so hard to recover in the archive¹⁷. (202)

Though history is concerned with factual narratives that claim objectivity and authenticity, and fictional narratives are more concerned with the author's imagination and creativity, they both constitute a powerful partnership when they are combined in a work of literature. This is known as historical fiction, and it is made up of two words:

¹⁷ Ann Curthoys and John Docker. "The Boundaries of History and Fiction - SAGE Research Methods." *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013, <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/sage-handbook-of-historical-theory/i2397.xml>.

1. Definition

History: "The origin of the word History is associated with the Greek word 'Historia', which means 'information' or 'an inquiry designed to elicit truth.'¹⁸ It is a record of continuous events in the past related to a particular country, people, and period. History is recorded in a chronological way in order to understand the sequence of past events and their effect on the present. History is often recorded with written documents, but also includes oral records and objects like paintings, buildings, antiquities and artifacts... etc. Different historians have defined history in various ways:

John Tosh: "History is collective memory, the storehouse of experience through which people develop a sense of their social identity and their future prospects". **Robert V. Daniels:** "History is a source of inspiration as it holds up to us the tradition and glory, the clashing passions, and heroic exploits of past generations. In it, we find the 'drama of real life". **Henry Johnson:** "History, in its broadest sense, is everything that has ever happened." **Smith, V.S:** "The value and interest of history depend largely on the degree to which the present is illuminated by the past." **Rapson:** "History is a connected account of the course of events or the progress of ideas. History is the story of man's struggle through the ages against nature and the elements; against wild beasts and the jungle; and against some of his own kind who have tried to keep him down and to exploit him for their own benefit."¹⁹(Ghosh 713)

¹⁸ Katy Steinmetz , "History Word Origin: What Is History and Where Term Is From | Time." *Time* ,23 June 2017, [History Word Origin: What Is History and Where Term Is From | Time](#). Accessed 02 Feb. 2021.

¹⁹ Ghosh, Sumanta. "An Introduction of History." *IJARIE*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2019, p. 4.

Fiction : The word "fiction" comes from the Latin word "fictus," which means "to form" ²⁰. A work of fiction is a piece of literature that tells a story about an imaginary location, people, or events that are not strictly based on facts or history. To service significant concepts, the author constructs a novel from the ground up, complete with characters, plot, and place. The most famous form of fiction is the novel. "The function of fiction is to entertain, educate, and inspire the readers and the audience. It is capable enough to sweep our emotions and give the audience an experience beyond their daily lives. It provides them with an insight into the lives of the characters, their manners, vicissitudes, and events related to them"²¹. "Fiction, when it is made so truly reflective of reality that it seems like a "piece of life," can communicate complexities of history that can not be corralled within the strictures of rational analysis. The fictional narrative channels to the subconscious a sense of historical cause and effect that is often too subtle for reason to grasp."²²

2. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Historical-fiction Genre

Historical-fiction is a literary genre in which a novel's fictional story takes place in the past. The author imagines a story set in a specific time period and investigates famous historical figures and events, as well as the manners, traditions, and socioeconomic conditions of the time period depicted. Understanding or reading history critically is a difficult task, and a large segment of people may not find it entertaining. Thus, writing history in literary forms like novels or short stories gives history a new meaning, allowing readers to absorb notable

²⁰ Fiction – Examples and Definition of Fiction. <https://literarydevices.net/fiction/>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2021.

²¹ Fiction – Examples and Definition of Fiction.

²² Nikhil Patel. "Fictional Reality A Letter in Response to James Wood's Article (November 26, 2007)." *The New Yorker*, Dec. 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/fictional-reality>. Accessed 03 Apr .2021.

historical figures and events to understand the evolution of the current era. Brannigan points out:

Literature is a vehicle for the representation of history, and it does contain sights into the formation of historical moments. It reveals the processes and tensions by which historical change comes about. But it does not ...reflect history as a mirror. It sees literature as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making, and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions, of history.²³(417)

Brannigan's concept is well-represented in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. From the 1970's to 2003, the tale depicts the shifting historical events in Afghanistan. It also describes how the Mujaheddin and Taliban administrations came to be. The novel emphasizes the disputes between political factions, as well as the contrasts between each regime's periods. The plot's progression is determined by the historical events' sequence and continuity. Without the guidance of history, the story could not stand on its own. The characters' personal lives are inextricably linked to the social and political situations in which they find themselves. The setting's genuineness; the story is set in Afghanistan, which is a genuine country with actual places, including Herat and Kabul. The inclusion of historical figures such as presidents Najibullah, Rabbani, and Hekmatyar, as well as their involvement in molding the story and influencing the lives of the characters. The story also depicts Afghanistan's cultural surroundings. The previous points will be expanded upon with further explanations and illustrations.

- **Fiction and History in *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

The link between history and fiction in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* can be studied by examining how Hosseini arranges historical elements in the text. This allows readers to deduce

²³ Brannigan, John. *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2016.

meaning from the text's strategic placement of historical references. "One of the strengths of the novel is the author's ability to weave historical events into the narrative."²⁴History has an impact on the novel's construction. It serves as a road map for developing the plot in a chronological order. Hosseini's enthralling writing style and language, on the other hand, aid readers in comprehending Afghanistan's complex history and the Afghan women's challenging situation.

1. The Overlapping of History and Fiction

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the blend of history and fiction is harmonious. This is due to Hosseini's narrative strategy, which is based on a strategic emplotment. Emplotment is a concept developed by Ricoeur and means "a process of placing events into a meaningful sequence or configuration, making the succession of events into significant wholes which are the correlate of the act of grouping together"²⁵(Zimmerman 06). Hosseini's emplotment can be examined with "Hume's understanding of the related emplotments of both history and acknowledged fictions"²⁶(Zimmerman 239). According to Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, "there are three principles by which ideas can be associated to each other, resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause and Effect"(18). Hume explains the three categories in his manner: "That these principles serve to connect ideas will not, I believe, be much doubted. A picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original: the mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry or discourse concerning the others: and if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows"(18).

²⁴ Harvey Thompson. "A Thousand Splendid Suns: The Plight of Afghan Women Only Partially Depicted." *World Socialist Web Site*, 8 Aug. 2009, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2009/08/thou-a08.html>. Accessed 12 Jan.2021.

²⁵ Zimmerman, Everett. *The Boundaries of Fiction: History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel*. 1st edition, NCROL, 1996.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Indeed, these categories will be discussed in the context of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In terms of resemblance, the task will uncover any parallels between events in Afghanistan's history and the characters' stories. Contiguity in time or space requires a study of the interaction between Afghanistan's historical time line and space and the protagonists' individual time and space. Cause and effect examines the impact of war and society on the protagonists' lives. The study involves a textual analysis considering the literary devices Hosseini uses to achieve this strategic emplotment, like metaphor, allegory, allusion, and symbolism.

- **Resemblance**

Hyden White, in *The History and Narrative Reader*, believes that "historical narratives are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relationship of similitude between such events and processes and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings" ²⁷ (227). *A Thousand Splendid Suns* contains numerous sequences that depict connections between the protagonists' lives and Afghanistan's history. Afghanistan can be regarded as the novel's hero, along with Meriam and Leila. The country's devastation is worthy of such a conspicuous position in the narrative. As a result, there must be metaphorical similarities between Afghanistan's history and the protagonists' lives.

For instance, at the opening of the novel, Jalil informs Meriam about Daoud Khan's military coup. "His cousin Daoud Khan did it while the king was in Italy getting medical treatment. You remember Daoud Khan, right? I told you about him. He was prime minister in Kabul when you were born. Any way Afghanistan is no more a monarchy Meriam. You see, it's a republic now, and Daoud Khan is the president. There are rumors that the socialists in Kabul

²⁷ Hayden White. *The Historical Text as a Literary Artifact*. Routledge, 2001, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/505356.The_Historical_Text_as_a_Literary_Artifact.

helped him take power” (Hosseini 2). Daoud Khan's betrayal of his cousin, which resulted in the demise of the Afghan monarchy, is analogous to Jalil's betrayal of Meriam when he abandons her and marries her to Rasheed without her consent. Before Daoud's Khan's military coup, Afghanistan used to be a peaceful monarchy. Meriam also, at that time, had a peaceful life. In the same way as socialists helped Daoud Khan get rid of Zahir Khan, Jalil's wives have helped him get rid of Meriam. "They had been disgraced by her birth, and this was their chance to erase, once and for all, the last trace of their husband's scandalous mistake" (Hosseini 52). In her way to Kabul with Rasheed, "Jalil was busy telling her that Kabul was so beautiful, that the Moghul emperor Babur had asked that he be buried there" (Hosseini 58). Jalil's narrative to Meriam about the Moghul emperor is crucial and matches events in her life. Meriam, like the Moghul emperor, will bury her life and dreams after marrying Rasheed. After her execution, she will be buried there as well. Indeed, this historical information leads readers to think about similar events in Meriam's life.

Similarly, Richard Nixon's scandal inclusion parallels events in Meriam's life. "He passed on to her the things he had heard on the streets, like how the American president, Richard Nixon, had resigned over a scandal" (Hosseini 68). Hossein demonstrates how much Afghan society cares about global political events by inserting American politics. In the coming chapters of the story, the United States' policy will be crucial. Nixon's scandal, on the other hand, is parallel to Meriam's betrayal of Rasheed's wishes to keep his bedroom and life private. Nixon's resignation was reportedly prompted by his involvement in an espionage scandal at the Democratic National Committee. Several burglars were caught stealing vital documents from the Democratic National Committee's headquarters. Meriam enters Rasheed's chamber, as we will learn in the days ahead. "She didn't mean to inter into Rasheed's room.... She was in his room for the first time, sitting on his bed, feeling like a trespasser "(Hosseini 86). As evidenced by this sentence, Rasheed is distant from Meriam. Though he treats her well at the start of their

marriage, she overlooks numerous aspects of his background that he attempts to keep hidden. The word "trespasser" reintroduces this idea, but it also links Meriam to the burglars in Nixon's scandal. Meriam violates Rasheed's chamber in the same way as the burglars violated the democratic party's office. As a result, both locations (the Democratic party's office and Rasheed's room) share a sense of privacy and secrecy. Meriam digs through Rasheed's personal and secret stuff. Thus, the act of intrusion is present in both actions. Though Meriam is meant to check Rasheed's room and share everything with him, it is not that simple. "She regretted that she had sneaked around his room" (Hosseini 89). The word "sneaked" implies that Meriam feels like an intruder in Rasheed's personal space. The artifacts Meriam discovers, the gun, the porno magazines, and a picture of him with his first wife and son highlight Rasheed's true personality, which Meriam and the readers will learn about in the next chapters.

The gun, as a symbol, is quite present in the story before the escalating bloodshed between Afghan factions. Khadim, Rasheed, and Tariq are all gun owners. "She saw the gun first. It was black, with a wooden grip and a short muzzle. It was disquieting to her that Rasheed owned something whose sole purpose was to kill another person(Hosseini 86). "I should tell you that while you were dreaming, a boy shot piss out of a water gun on my hair"(Hosseini 128). "I bought a gun," he said one day. They were sitting outside, on the ground beneath the pear tree in Laila's yard. He showed her. He said it was a semi automatic, a Beretta"(Hosseini 180). Guns are owned by the characters, just as they are by the Mujahedin. Surprisingly, Tariq and Rasheed have never utilized their real guns, with the exception of Khadim, who has used a plastic gun to upset Leila. As a result, Hosseini utilizes the gun as a historiographic symbol to anticipate Afghanistan's troubled future and create a parallel between the fictional characters and the Mujaheddin.

Additionally, Leila and Meriam's relationship will be markedly improved, especially after Meriam offers Leila a stack of baby clothes that she has put outside her bedroom as a first step towards a good friendship. Right after this scene, Hosseini inserts a change in Afghan politics.

There is a rumor, Rasheed said over dinner that night, smacking his lips, taking no notice of Aziza or the pajamas Leila had put on her, that Dostum is going to change sides and join Hekmatyar. Massoud will have his hands full then,, fighting those two. And we mustn't forget the Hazars.... Let's hope it's just that, a rumor. Because if that happens, this war, will seem like a Friday picnic at Paghman.(Hosseini 242)

Hosseini draws a parallel between the shifting politics of Afghan leaders and Meriam and Leila's growing friendship. Rumors of a probable political coalition between two rival leaders, Dostum and Hekmatyar, are similar to Meriam and Leila's prospective reunification and their stand against Rasheed's abuse. As a result, Dostum and Hekmatyar correspond to Meriam and Leila, while Massoud corresponds to Rasheed, who will face their union in the coming years. "An unguarded, knowing look. And in this fleeting, wordless exchange with Mariam, Laila knew that they were not enemies any longer"(Hosseini 245). Alongside with the historical union of Dostum and Hekmatyar, Meriam and Leila share their first moment as friends when they "sat on folding chairs outside and ate halwa with their fingers from a common bowl.. As a gunfire cracked in the hill, they watched the clouds slide over the moon and the last of the season fireflies charting blow yellow arcs in the dark" (Hosseini 245).The common bowl is a symbol of their union and cooperation, and "the blowing yellow arcs in the dark" symbolize a new beginning of love and hope in their lives.

On the other hand, Rasheed and Meriam's tumultuous relationship, depict the conflict in Afghanistan between opposing forces. The escalating bloodshed between Afghan factions over control parallels the couple's tense relationship. For instance, Rasheed's rage is set within a historical reference. When Meriam loses her baby, for example: "Are you angry with me"?

Mariam asked. Rasheed said nothing. The song ended and the news came on. A woman's voice reported that President Daoud Khan had sent yet another group of Soviet consultants back to Moscow, to the expected displeasure of the Kremlin"(Hosseini 98). The Kremlin's discontent with Daoud Khan is parallel with Rasheed's dissatisfaction with Meriam's miscarriage. As a result, Hosseini is wary of combining both sides (political and fictional) in order to elicit the same emotion.

After seven miscarriages, Meriam becomes more passive and submissive to Rasheed. "She saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she is afraid" (Hosseini 102). Meriam's domesticity and submissiveness are similar to her country's apathy in the face of various political crises and disturbances. She becomes afraid of Rasheed, of "his shifting moods, his volatile temperaments, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down a confrontational path that, on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks, and sometimes try to make amends for with polluted apologies and sometimes not" (Hosseini 102). Meriam is subjected to Rasheed's violence, which Hosseini links to the horrors Afghanistan will endure in the following chapters. The word "polluted" describes the tainted atmosphere that will exist in Afghanistan as well as in Meriam's life. The adjective "confrontational" also highlights the conflicts Afghanistan witnesses.

Rasheed's conversation with Leila highlights concerns about ethnicity, nepotism, and hypocrisy. Rasheed praises the commander, Massaoud, whom he typically despises and regards as a communist spy simply because he, like Leila, is Tajik.

If you asked me, the Americans armed the wrong man in Hekmatyar. All the guns the CIA handed him in the eighteenth to fight the Soviets. The Soviets are gone, but he still has the guns, and now he is turning them into innocent people like your parents. and he calls this jihad. What a farce! what does Jihad have to do with killing women and children? Better the CIA had armed commander Massoud.(Hosseini 211)

Rasheed's efforts to be close to Leila by using political problems and ethnicity to serve his own benefit, at least by sharing similar political ideas, are similar to the Afghan political milieu, which is rife with hypocrisy and self-interest, and where ethnicity is a crucial subject used to obtain power and wealth.

Finally, the novel concludes with a well-known incident in the history of both Afghanistan and the United States. It was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, when the Taliban demolished the tower in an aircraft crash. As a result, the United States declared war on Afghanistan. Hosseini's speech is particularly poignant at this point in Afghanistan's history. Hosseini's handling of the situation parallels international debates about this matter with Leila and Tariq's dialogue, both have a different point of view.

"It may not be such a bad thing"

"Not so bad? People dying? Women, children, old people? Homes destroyed again? Not so bad?". (Hosseini 376)

This short discussion between Tariq and Leila, which is marked by some tension for the first time between the pair, is essentially a zooming in on the major international discussions that erupted in the aftermath of 9/11. The contrasting perspectives of Leila and Tariq parallel the world's mainstream views on the Afghan-American war, with one of them justifying US military participation to save Afghanistan from the Taliban and the other thinking that conflict is not the best alternative.

- **Contiguity in Time or Place**

Hume's meaning of contiguity in time or space is explained further in the following example. "If you're reminded of something that happened in the 1960s—miniskirts, for example—you may think of the Vietnam War, because they are *temporally contiguous*. Thinking of Sausalito may lead you to think of the Golden Gate Bridge, which may lead you to

think of San Francisco, since they are *spatially contiguous* "²⁸. In the context of historical fiction, contiguity in time or place is determined by how much fictitious space and time lead readers to reflect on real-world time and space, and vice versa.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the characters' individual time and space alludes to Afghanistan. For instance, Hosseini always links the protagonists' age with Afghanistan's historical time period, as perceived in the following examples: "In Nana's account of the day that she gave birth to Mariam, no one came to help. It happened on a damp, overcast day in the spring of 1959, she said, the twenty-sixth year of King Zahir Shah's mostly uneventful forty-year reign" (Hosseini 12). "He was the one who told her in the summer of 1973, when Mariam was fourteen, that king Zahir Shah who, who had ruled from Kabul for forty years had been over-thrown in a bloodless coup"(25). "On April 17,1978, the year Mariam turned nineteen, a man named Mir Akbar Khyber was found murdered Two days later, there was a large demonstration in Kabul" (101). "This was her nickname for Laila, Revolutionary Girl, because she'd been born the night of the April coup of 1978"(116). "In April 1992, the year Laila turned fourteen. Najibullah surrendered at last and was given sanctuary in the UN compound near Darulaman Palace, south of the city" (116). The previous examples are temporally contiguous because when talking about Zahir Shah's reign, readers think of Meriam's birthday, and when citing the April coup of 1978, they think of Leila's birthday. As Meriam and Leila mature, Afghanistan's political and historical climate shifts. Hosseini's selection of Leila's birthday is noteworthy since it emphasizes her feminist strength. Meriam, on the other hand, spent her childhood during Zahir's reign of calm. Her sisters went to schools and universities, and she was free to stroll the streets of Herat and go to the town. These were privileges that Afghan women will lack in the following years. The preceding instances demonstrate how "the fates of

²⁸ Morris, William Edward, and Charlotte R. Brown. "David Hume." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2021, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/hume/>. Accessed 14 Jun.2021

individuals are intermingled with the verisimilitude of history and society. And history, fact and fiction are knitted into the narrative framework." ²⁹(Han and Wang 136)

In chapter 21, Hosseini shifts from Babi and Leila's trip to Bamiyan where they discuss their wish to leave Afghanistan and move to the USA, to the Treaty of Geneva(1988). "Leila thought again about Babi's little dream. Somewhere near the sea... Six months later, in April 1988, Babi came home with big news. They are leaving. Within nine months, there won't be any more Soviets in Afghanistan!" (Hosseini 157-158). This shift from the novel's fictitious story line to a historical event, "The Treaty of Geneva," emphasizes the novel's link between Afghanistan's historical time line and the story time line. Because they are stated in the same perspective (the idea of leaving) and chronological period, the Treaty of Geneva and the characters' journey are temporally contiguous. Leila recalls her memorable journey that occurred the same year as the Treaty of Geneva. As a result, readers will associate Leila and Babi's journey with the Treaty of Geneva.

Likewise, when Leila takes her lessons at home, Hosseini pictures the world outside. "He took over the teaching duties himself. Laila went into his study every day after sundown, and, as Hekmatyar launched his rockets at Massoud from the southern outskirts of the city, Babi and she discussed *the ghazals* of Hafez and the works of the beloved Afghan poet Ustad Khalilullah Khalili "(Hosseini 184). Hosseini opposes the beauty of poetry to the brutality of the rockets in the previous quotation by placing them in the same chronology via the conjunction "as." The fictional world in Leila's home is filled with education, whereas the historical real world outside her home is filled with war and violence. Hence, by making both worlds temporally contiguous, Hosseini highlights the atrocities of war and the beauty of peace.

Similarly, in the following quote, Hosseini sets Leila and Tariq's romance within the historical Afghan wars. "Outside, the far-off boom of artillery, then, more closely, the

²⁹ Han, Jie, and Zhenli Wang. "Postmodern Strategies in Ian McEwan's Major Novels." *Advances in Literary Study*, vol. 02, no. 04, 2014, pp. 134–39. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2014.24020>.

stammering of a long string of gunfire, followed by another. Inside Laila too, a battle was being waged: guilt on one side, partnered with shame, and, on the other, the conviction that what she and Tariq had done was not sinful (190). While Afghanistan is engulfed in war, Leila is grappling with conflicting feelings of remorse and passion as a result of her sexual relationship with Tariq. In this regard, both the external Afghan historical war and Leila's individual internal conflicts are temporally contiguous. Therefore, in the midst of the fight sequences, readers recall Leila and Tariq's beautiful romance. This serves as a respite for readers who might be exhausted by the novel's fight episodes.

In 1998, Afghanistan experienced a severe drought during the Taliban's rule and the Kabul river dried up. One year before the drought and during Leila's delivery, Hosseini describes the room in the hospital. "Leila was given a bed at the far end, beneath a window that someone had painted black. There was a sink nearby, cracked and dry, and a string over the sink from which hung stained surgical gloves "(Hosseini 278). The dark windows and the cracked dry sink echo the coming drought in Kabul. "The Kabul River, without its yearly spring floods, had turned bone-dry" (Hosseini 283). Kabul's dry river and Leila's hospital room are spatially contiguous because both spaces share the idea of drought. They are also very approximate in terms of time. When readers recall Leila's arduous delivery, they immediately think of the upcoming occurrence, which is the historical drought in Kabul. Moreover, Rasheed's love and patience with Zalmai is compared by Hosseini to "a well that ran deep and never dry" (285). In light of Kabul's parched ground and rivers, which force Meriam and Leila to wait hours for their turn to bring water to the deep wells, Hosseini carefully chooses his words, because this simile reminds readers of Kabul's drought and intensifies Rasheed's feelings for Zalmai.

Likewise, the historical pistachio tree and the weeping willow are spatially contiguous. "There is a pistachio tree," Jalil said one day, "and beneath it, Mariam Jo, is buried none other than the great poet Jami." He leaned in and whispered, "Jami lived over five hundred years ago"

(Hosseini 6). The poet Jimi and the pistachio tree are historical symbols of the prosperity, peace, and literature that Afghanistan experienced during that time period. Not far from this chapter, Hosseini's imaginary story features a tree that is both significant and contradictory to the pistachio tree. The weeping willow is the tree where Nana hangs herself. "A gust of wind blew and parted the drooping branches of the weeping willow like a curtain, and Mariam caught a glimpse of what was beneath the tree; the straight-backed chair, overturned. The rope dropping from a high branch. Nana dangling at the end of it" (Hosseini 40). The pistachio tree is a historical symbol of Afghanistan's golden age of peace and wealth. The weeping willow, on the other hand, represents tears and misery in Nana's past life, Meriam's coming days, and Afghanistan's future period. As a result, readers connect the historical pistachio tree and the fictional weeping willow because they inspire images of historical and fictional space that are contrasting.

Similarly, Fariba, too, recovers from her despair following the Mujahedin's victory. She manages to cook and organize her chicken, "She began moving pots and pans around, as though she were laying claim to them anew, retaking her territory, now that she was back" (Hosseini 165). Hosseini uses the chicken to refer to Afghanistan, which is reclaiming its territory and national identity. The kitchen is a symbolic microcosm of Afghanistan. Both spaces share the idea of autonomy and self-determination. Hence, the fictional kitchen and Afghanistan are spatially contiguous.

- **Cause and Effect**

"Of the three associative principles, cause and effect is the strongest. It establishes links between present and past experiences and expectations about the future"³⁰. In *A Thousand*

³⁰ Morris, William Edward, and Charlotte R. Brown. "David Hume." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2021, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/hume/>. Accessed 14 Jun.2021.

Splendid Suns, Hosseini demonstrates the effects of war and society on the protagonists. There are direct and indirect effects. Direct effects include murder, poverty, and displacement; indirect effects cover unstable relationships between the characters and their shifting personalities. For instance, Fariba and Hakim's relationship gets tight. Their quarrel stems from the country's political unrest. "That's your business, isn't it cousin? To make nothing your business. Even your own sons going to war" (Hosseini 114). Fariba holds Hakim responsible for allowing their sons, Noor and Ahmed, to join the Mujahedin in their battle against the Soviet Union, which she despises. Before this war, Fariba used to be a happy woman. "Fariba was smiling, and her palms were pressed against the swell of her pregnant belly" (Hosseini 101). She used to love Babi's intellectual side. "At one time, before Ahmad and Noor had gone to war against the Soviets-before Babi had *let* them go to war-Mammy too had thought Babi's bookishness endearing, that, once upon a time, she too had found his forgetfulness and ineptitude charming" (Hosseini 113). However, Fariba's attitude toward Babi's artistic side changed once their sons joined the Jihad. "How I pleaded with you, but you buried your nose in those cursed books and let our sons go like a pair of haramis" (Hosseini 114). The simile, "like a pair of haramis", highlights the *harami's* disgraced standing in Afghan society. It also emphasizes Fariba's developing animosity toward Babi especially after their sons' death. "Babi too kept walking in and out of the house aimlessly, looking, it seemed, for something to do. "Keep him away from me." That was the only time Mammy said anything all morning (143). After the Mujaheddin triumph. Fariba's passive character changes into a dynamic one. "Mammy rose from bed a new woman. For the first time in the five years since Ahmad and Noor had become shaheed, she didn't wear black" (Hosseini 165). Therefore, Fariba's attitudes are influenced by the political climate in Afghanistan, as evidenced by the previous quote. Her mood, health, and family ties were all affected by the conflict. After the Soviets' defeat, Fariba is regarded as a new woman with a brand-new attitude and outlook on life. She takes off her black clothing,

which symbolize her anguish over the battle. It's also a metaphor for Afghanistan's transformation into a new Afghanistan with new leaders in Fariba's perspective. However, "when the rockets began to rain down on Kabul, people ran for cover. Mammy did too, literally. She changed into black again, went to her room, shut the curtains, and pulled the blanket over her head (Hosseini 179). Fariba's sadness returns as the Afghan civil war breaks out. She wears black and confines herself in a dark room, leaving Leila to handle the housework. As a result, Fariba's persona perfectly exemplifies the concept of cause and effect. The political upheaval in her country has caused these alterations in her personality.

Similarly, Hosseini demonstrates how political strife among Afghan political factions causes a schism among the population. At Fariba's celebration commemorating the Soviets' departure, two of their neighbors spark a brawl. "The fellow at the political table was a Pashtu, had called Ahmed Shah Massoud a traitor for "making deals" with the Soviets in the 1980s. The kebab man, a Tajik, had taken offense and demanded a retraction. The Pashtun had refused. The Tajik had said that if not Massoud, the other man's sister would still be "giving it" to the Soviet soldiers (Hosseini 177). The purported citizen dialogue shows the challenge of political parties forging a unified government. Because of ethnic-based political restrictions, Leila's neighbors have been fighting. This brawl is only one of several that occur on a regular basis among Afghans of various ethnicities. Indeed, as shown by the previous fictitious characters, the conflict has shifted from the government to the public. The Afghan civil war and the prior conflict are, in fact, linked by cause and effect.

The conflict, as well as patriarchy, are directly responsible for Leila and Meriam's misery. Rasheed assaults Meriam and Leila. Leila is beaten by the Taliban for stepping outside her home to visit Aziza in the orphanage. "That time, Laila went home. She lay on her stomach, feeling like a stupid, pitiable animal, and hissed as Mariam arranged damp cloths across her bloodied back and thighs"(Hosseini 311). The simile "like a stupid, pitiable" animal highlights the

physical and psychological effects of the Taliban's torture in Leila's persona. Leila experiences bodily pain, as well as humiliation and injustice. However, she never succumbs to the Taliban's thrashing; she returns to Aziza to show her courage and endurance in carrying out her motherly duties. "Laila never would have believed that a human body could withstand this much beating, this viciously, this regularly, and keep functioning"(Hosseini 314).Leila, who had never known physical violence before her parents' deaths, develops her own strength in the face of the Taliban's torture. Leila is the character who represents the Taliban's physical and mental abuse of women.

Meriam and Leila's bodies have transformed throughout time. The effects of war and Rasheed's maltreatment have damaged their bodies and taken away their beauty. Hosseini describes their changing appearances with great attention. "Mariam was forty now. Her hair, rolled up above her face, had a few stripes of gray in it. Pouches sagged beneath her eyes, brown and crescent-shaped. She'd lost two front teeth. One fell out, the other Rasheed knocked out when she'd accidentally dropped Zalmai. Her skin had coarsened, tanned from all the time they were spending in the yard sitting beneath the brazen sun"(Hosseini 283).The preceding quotations emphasize Meriam's changing appearance as a result of her ordeal. Her visage makes her appear older than she is, despite the fact that she is just forty. Her face bears the scars of her years of suffering with Rasheed. Rasheed's thrashing, for example, has caused her to lose her front teeth. The preceding quote contains an alliteration at the beginning of the words *skin*, *spending*, *sitting* and *sun*. The repetition of the sound "S" evokes the severity and the sternness of Meriam's life.

Similarly, Leila's face reflects her suffering at the hands of Rasheed and the Taliban. Leila's appearance irritates Rasheed. "He found fault with Laila, the way she smelled, the way she dressed, the way she combed her hair, her yellowing teeth. "What's happened to you?" he said. "I married apart, and now I'm saddled with a hag. You're turning into Mariam " (Hosseini 293).

Leila is compared to a hag and Mariam. The metaphor emphasizes how Meriam and Leila's bodies have been impacted by the Taliban and Rasheed's torture. When Leila meets Tariq for the first time after a long absence, she is embarrassed by her appearance. "She was ashamed of her yellowing teeth, the missing incisor-ashamed of her withered looks and swollen lip. She wished she'd had the chance to wash her face, at least comb her hair (Hosseini 32). She is trashed by the Taliban, resulting in a swollen lip. Because of the suffering Leila has undergone, she has lost her attractiveness, and taking care of herself has become the last thing on her mind. The repetition of the phrase *ashamed of* highlights Leila's strong embarrassment at her own appearance. Likewise, Tariq's appearance has been affected by the years of immigration and prison.

Tall, bearded, slimmer than in her dreams of him, but with strong-looking hands, workman's hands, with tortuous, full veins. His face was still lean and handsome but not fair-skinned any longer; his brow had a weathered look to it, sunburned, like his neck, the brow of a traveler at the end of a long and wearying journey. His *pakol* was pushed back on his head, and she could see that he'd started to lose his hair. The hazel of his eyes was duller than she remembered, paler, or perhaps it was merely the light in the room.(Hosseini 322)

The effects of Tariq's displacement on his physique and the pain he has undergone throughout his voyage are mirrored in the expression "on the brow of a traveler at the end of a long and wearying journey". Tariq is only twenty-five years old, yet he is losing his thick hair and his eyes are becoming paler. Tariq, on the other hand, appears to be less impacted by the war than Leila and Meriam in terms of bodily change. Tariq's face is still attractive. His body is still in good shape. This demonstrates that Afghan women are more impacted by wars and society than men. At their wedding, "in silence, Laila looked at their reflection, at faces that had aged beyond their years, at the pouches and lines and sags that now marked their once-scrubbed, youthful

faces (Hosseini 367)." Again, Hosseini uses the characters' bodies and faces to reflect the atrocities of Afghan war history. The pouches, the lines and sags are marks of the suffering they have been through.

2. The Historicity of the Text and the Textuality of History

The idea of the historicity of the text and the textuality of history is rooted in the theory of new historicism, which is a literary theory that aims to understand and interpret a text within its historical, social and cultural circumstances, as well as the author's background. One of the attempts of New Historicism is to discuss literary works using historical references and to understand history using textual analysis. These techniques gave birth to the concept of the historicity of the text and the textuality of history, which is a key idea in discussing *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Louis Montrose, in *Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History*, claims that New Historicism deals with the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. "The historicity of texts" refers to the "cultural specificity and social embedment of all modes of writing" (8). "The rootedness of a text in the social-historical, political and cultural ambiance of its production, "textuality of history" refers to the fictionality and constructedness of history."³¹

Unlike the previous section of this study, which discussed the fusion of historical and fictional narratives, this section examines how Hosseini defines history through the text and how history leads him to write in a certain narrative strategy; indeed, history is shaped and defined through the text, and the text is sculpted by history. Thus, "following the Foucauldian mode of analysis, New-historicists seek to find examples of power and manifestation of discursive practices, how they are dispersed within the text, and how they contribute to

³¹ Nassrullah Mambrol. "The Textuality of History and the Historicity of Texts – Literary Theory and Criticism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 17 Oct. 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/10/17/the-textuality-of-history-and-the-historicity-of-texts/>. Accessed 10 May.2021.

establishing the “greatness” or ‘failure’ of a text at a given point of time”³². Following Michelle Foucault's theories, which have impacted New-Historicism, this section will look at these points independently.

a. **The Historicity of the Text**

The historicity of the text focuses on the fundamental elements that give the text its historic character and nature. It helps distinguish the major features that shaped Afghan history. The study is based on Michelle Foucault's theory about power and control in order to investigate the novel's historicity. “The anti-establishment ethos of New-Historicism was profoundly influenced by Foucault’s theories of Power/Knowledge and Discourse. Foucault observed that the discourse of an era brings into being concepts, oppositions and hierarchies, which are products and propagators of power, and these determine what is “knowledge”, “truth” and “normal” at a given time”³³. Michelle Foucault's philosophy is founded on concepts such as power, hegemony, knowledge, and social class marginalization. “Power structures, according to Foucault, design knowledge in order to dominate certain segments of the population. By developing a specific discourse and systems of thoughts and conceptions, “they allow some things to be said and disallows others.”³⁴

A Thousand Splendid Suns reflects Foucault's theory of power and hegemony to a large extent. In his work, Hosseini discusses the many power systems and regimes that have occupied Afghanistan. Hosseini outlines each regime's ideology (except the United States) and the techniques they use to keep control over the public sphere through reporting history. He also alludes to ethnic and cultural consciousness, which shapes the social structure of Afghan society and has resulted in civil conflicts in order to design the powerful ruler of Afghanistan.

³² Nassrullah Mambrol. “The Textuality of History and the Historicity of Texts”

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

- **The Ethnic Hegemony**

To begin with, ethnicity is not a central theme in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as it is in *The Kite Runner*. Nonetheless, Hosseini mentions the war between the Pashtu and the Hazaras in the text. "In Afghanistan, Pashtuns are considered the royal clan, superior to other ethnic groups like Hazara, Uzbeks, and Kuchis"³⁵ (Adhikary and Pandit 205). Ethnic identity plays a major role in the creation of the hegemonic discourse in Afghan society. According to Foucault, "identity is a form of subjugation and a way of exercising power over people and preventing them from moving outside fixed boundaries"³⁶. This idea is illustrated in Babi's words. "Babi said that there were tensions between their people-the Tajiks, who were a minority, and Tariq's people, the Pashtuns, who were the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Tajiks have always felt slighted, Babi had said. Pashtu kings ruled this country for almost two hundred and fifty years, Laila, and Tajiks for all of nine months, back in 1929"(Hosseini 134). According to Babi's remarks, Pashtuns build a hegemonic discourse in order to gain authority by establishing specific criteria that define the dominating group. First, the group's population density, because the Pashtuns are the largest, they believe they are the most powerful; second, the power period, because the Pashtuns have ruled Afghanistan for a longer period than the Hazaras, the Hazaras have become a minority. As a result of their lower social status, Hosseini refers to the Hazaras as "slighted," while comparing the Pashtuns to "wahshis," or monsters. "It isn't your fault. Do you hear me? Not you. It's those savages, those *wahshis*, who are to blame. They bring shame on me as a Pashtun (Hosseini 308). "Hosseini's evocation of Afghan ethnic society's hierarchy

³⁵ Ramesh Prasad Adhikary and Badri Pandit. "Historicity in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*: Encountering History in Contemporary Afghanistan." *Critical Literary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2020, pp. 197–211. www.academia.edu, <https://doi.org/10.34785/J014.2020.593>

³⁶ Clare O'Farrell. "Key Concepts." *Foucault News*, 19 Mar. 2018, <https://michel-foucault.com/key-concepts/>. Accessed 06 Jul.2021.

argues that power circulates through discourses”³⁷(Adhikary and Pandit 204). Through Babi's study of the subject, Hosseini keeps mentioning the Pashtun group's monopoly on power when he says to Leila: “We 're all Afghans, and that's all that should matter. But when one group rules over the others for so long... There is contempt. Rivalry. There is. There always has been” (Hosseini 135).The Pashtuns' actual class stratification in Afghan society is reflected in Hosseini’s narratives as well.

- **Surveillance**

According to Michel Foucault, surveillance is a strategy that a state adopts to control its citizens “not through threats of physical violence but through surveillance. Punishment has changed from being a violent public spectacle (such as hanging) to being hidden away, behind closed doors. It has also changed from being swift and physical, done on the body, to being more drawn out and psychological – punishment today is typically about changing the mind and the soul.”³⁸

One of the most significant powers imposed on Afghanistan and that applied this technique was the Soviet Union. The story focuses on the Soviet Union's policies and operations in order to maintain control of Afghanistan in the face of US threats. “The Soviets intended to wipe out Islamic fundamentalism prominently the atrocities and oppressive acts on women like veil as a sign of modesty, safeguard, piousness and devotion in Islam”³⁹(Chaudhary 5493).The story shows that the Soviets did not dominate Afghanistan solely by military force. To maintain power, the Soviets focused on propagating their own type of democracy, renaming Afghanistan the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. They Intended to control the mind of Afghans by

³⁷ Ramesh Prasad Adhikary and Badri Pandit. “Historicity in Khaled Hosseini’s The Kite Runner: Encountering History in Contemporary Afghanistan

³⁸ Thompson, Karl. “Foucault – Surveillance and Crime Control.” *Revise Sociology*, 21 Sept. 2016, <https://revisesociology.com/2016/09/21/foucault-surveillance-crime-control/>. Accessed 20 Jul.2021.

³⁹ Chaudhary, Priyanka. “Women Resistance and Power Relation in Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns.” *Journal of Xi’an University of Architecture & Technology*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2020, pp. 5493–502.

supervising Afghan society and establishing new laws to help control their minds and gain their support. To do so, The Soviets have promoted women to attend schools and universities, and have even sacked Babi as a teacher so that women can be hired. In modernized eras like Kabul, women have more freedom in terms of clothing, work, and behavior. The Soviets use institutions such as schools and hospitals to give good health treatment, such as an X-ray to check Fariba's ailment, as well as factories and jobs such as cab driver, barber, and carpenter, to instill knowledge in Afghans that benefits them. Even Babi declares to Leila that being a woman during the Soviet regime is a good thing.

The idea of controlling people's mind through surveillance is vividly illustrated in Khala Rangamaal' point of view. She is certain that "the Soviet Union was the best nation in the world, along with Afghanistan. It was kind to its workers, and its people were all equal. Everyone in the Soviet Union was happy and friendly "(Hosseini 115).Khala Rangamaal admires communist strategic standards and the Soviet interpretation of democracy. Because they have implemented various policies in Afghanistan that benefit women, they have acquired Khala Rangamaal's understanding and support, as shown in the following passage:

That's why our Soviet comrades came here in 1979. To lend their neighbor a hand. To help us defeat these brutes who want our country to be a backward, primitive nation. And you must lend your own hand, children. You must report anyone who might know about these rebels. It's your duty. You must listen, then report. Even if it's your parents, your uncles or aunts. Because none of them loves you as much as your country does. Your country comes first, remember! I will be proud of you, and so will your country.(Hosseini 115)

Khala Rangamaal considers the Soviets to be Afghanistan's allies and ignores their role as colonizers. She also instructs her students to employ the surveillance approach by keeping an eye on everyone in their immediate vicinity and reporting any information about their anti-

Soviet actions to Soviet authorities. She even considers this approach as a patriotic duty to Afghanistan's advantage.

- **The Taliban's Hegemony**

In a different way from the Soviets, the Taliban imposed themselves through controlling knowledge and developing a terrifying and persecuting discourse. "This conception of power, according to Foucault, is essentially juridical, based on the statement of the law and taboo, and is seen as straight forwardly restrictive and repressive. Such conception of power, deriving from the development of monarchic power and the concept of right"⁴⁰. The Taliban's approach is centered on propagating their own religious knowledge, which must be absorbed by the public, and developing laws based on Shariah, which emphasize constraints and taboos over rights. Hosseini characterizes the Taliban's terrifying techniques to dominate and influence Afghans by recounting the Taliban's rhetoric upon proclaiming their reign. The Taliban discourse includes a number of responsibilities and laws that every Afghan man and woman must follow, otherwise risk execution, and here is an excerpt from the Taliban historical proclamation when they took power.

Our watan is now known as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. These are the laws that we will enforce and you will obey.

All citizens must pray five times a day. If it is prayer time and you are caught doing something other, you will be beaten.

All men will grow their beards. The correct length is at least one

Clenched fist beneath the chin. If you do not abide by this, you will be beaten.

All boys will wear turbans. Boys in grade one through six will wear black Turbans, higher grades will wear white. All boys will wear Islamic clothes.

Shirt collars will be buttoned.

Writing books, watching films, and painting pictures are forbidden.

Attention to women

You will stay inside your homes at all times. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home.

You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten

Girls are forbidden from attending school All schools for girls will be closed immediately.

⁴⁰ Nassrullah Mambrol. "The Textuality of History and the Historicity of Texts – Literary Theory and Criticism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 17 Oct. 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/10/17/the-textuality-of-history-and-the-historicity-of-texts/>. Accessed 10 May.2021.

Women are forbidden from working
If you are found guilty of adultery, you will be stoned to death
Listen. Listen well. Obey. Allah-u-akbar. (Hosseini 269-270)

The Taliban speech is written in a vertical format in order to preserve the historical structure of their announcement. Obviously, this discourse encompasses the Taliban's hegemonic authority by publicly and explicitly implementing their regulations, which are based on their own knowledge of the Quran. The fundamentalist discourse entails a number of taboos that exist in Afghan culture, including how people dress, particularly women, their religious practices, their freedom of speech, abilities, and hobbies, as well as the punishment for breaking the rules, which is usually physical torture. "Laila heard of men being dragged from the streets, accused of skipping *namaz*, and shoved into mosques. She learned that Marco Polo Restaurant had been turned into an interrogation center. Sometimes screaming was heard from behind its black-painted windows." (Hosseini 272)

Furthermore, they restrict practically all of a woman's normal activities and privileges, including working, going outside, studying, and even using cosmetics. The text demonstrates how the Taliban exerts mental and physical control over the citizens by forcing males to grow beards, females to wear burqas, and children to wear turbans. They prohibit any other source of knowledge other than the Quran to impose their knowledge as the ultimate truth. The Taliban's misuse of power establishes the laws that Afghan society is obliged to accept and normalize. Consider the following illustration: "One day, during a visit with Aziza, Laila saw a middle-aged woman, her burqa pushed back, visiting with three boys and a girl. Laila remembered this woman once forbidding female students from covering, saying women and men were equal, that there was no reason women should cover if men didn't." (Hosseini 312). Khala Rangamaal is the woman Leila encounters. She earlier refused to wear a burqa but is now forced to by the Taliban. As a result, Khala Rangamaal's altered conduct reflects the Taliban's patriarchal hegemonic system. The Taliban discourse not only stresses the novel's historicity, which is rife

with sexism and hegemony, but it also provides a rich field for investigating the textuality of history.

b. The Textuality of History

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the textuality of history entails the study of discourse, which refers to how the narrative, through its structure, form, and language informs readers about Afghanistan's historical, cultural, and social dimensions. The concept of power-knowledge discourse proposed by Foucault can help textualize Afghan conceptions of power, knowledge, and hegemony. He believes that “dominant power structures maintain their superiority over the margins through the creation of particular discourses. The so-called “objective” disciplines like the sciences relied upon underlying assumptions about the object to be investigated, used particular forms of language and thought to talk about this object, and eventually constructed an institution around the object for its study and control.”⁴¹

• The Taliban’s Discourse

The preceding passage reflects the Taliban's institutional discourse, which plans their use of language, speech, theological knowledge, and power to maintain control over the Afghan people. The Taliban begin their speech by announcing Afghanistan's sovereign name, *The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*. By declaring and establishing Islam as the government's exclusive religion, this statement underlines the state's theocratic nature. As a result, Islamic laws, as understood by men, control Afghanistan, ignoring the existence of other religious minorities, such as Shias, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. The Taliban regime's despotism has been documented throughout history. The relationship between the Taliban as owner "the Lord" and the Afghans as slaves "the devotees" is described in the text using two verbs: *enforce*

⁴¹ Nassrullah Mambrol. “The Textuality of History and the Historicity of Texts – Literary Theory and Criticism.” *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 17 Oct. 2016, <https://literariness.org/2016/10/17/the-textuality-of-history-and-the-historicity-of-texts/>. Accessed 10 May.2021.

and *obey*. The use of the word *forbidden* repeatedly underlines the Taliban's oppressive policies, which are based on so-called assumptions in their interpretation and knowledge of Islam. By addressing women after males in the second portion of the speech, they reinforce men's dominance and women's marginalization in minority groups, mostly because they are under men's authority, as history records. As a result, the text's format and content are shaped by the Taliban's historical reign and philosophy.

Furthermore, the number and types of rules imposed on women highlight the patriarchal Taliban regime's injustices in Afghan society. "If you are found guilty of adultery, you will be stoned to death". The text claims that men are not included in the punishment despite being presumed to be guilty under Shariah. For instance, Nana is chastised and ostracized because she is pregnant outside of marriage, whereas Jalil leads a regular life. Rasheed's behavior confirms that the Taliban's rules are in favor of men. Likewise, "Rasheed wasn't bothered much by the Taliban. All he had to do was grow a beard, which he did, and visit the mosque, which he also did. Rasheed regarded the Taliban with a forgiving, affectionate kind of bemusement, as one might regard an erratic cousin prone to unpredictable acts of hilarity and scandal"(Hosseini272). From Rasheed's point of view, Hosseini describes the Taliban's regime. The crucial keywords *unpredictable*, *forgiving*, *affectionate*, and *bemusement* recall an unexpected point of view in favor of the Taliban. The phrase *an erratic cousin* suggests Rasheed's kinship and closeness with the Taliban ideology. Rasheed is one of many Afghans who backed the Taliban's takeover of power and downplays their brutality, as suggested by the following extract: "Every Wednesday night, Rasheed listened to the Voice of *Shari'a* when the Taliban would announce the names of those scheduled for punishment. Then, on Fridays, he went to Ghazi Stadium, bought a Pepsi, and watched the spectacle. In bed, he made Laila listen as he described with a queer sort of exhilaration the hands he'd seen severed, the lashings, the hangings, the beheading" (Hosseini 273). Through Rasheed's behavior in the previous extract,

Hosseini exemplifies the Afghan Pro-Taliban discourse. Rasheed enjoys witnessing the Taliban's hegemonic use of power. The words *hangings*, *beheadings*, and *lashings* emphasize the Taliban's cruelty. The words *Pepsi*, *spectacle*, and *exhilaration* stress Rasheed's sadism. As a result, Hosseini demonstrates that the Taliban drew support from radical Afghans during their reign. Meanwhile, female characters, such as Leila, who is punished for venturing outside alone to visit Aziza in the orphanage, and Naghma, who is imprisoned while her lover is free, demonstrate how women are the most affected victims of the Taliban dictatorship as well as society.

- **Male vs Female Discourse**

"Discourse is the way in which language is used socially to convey broad historical meanings. It is a language identified by the social conditions of its use, by who is using it and under what conditions. Language can never be 'neutral' because it bridges our personal and social worlds" ⁴²(Henry et al.25). Hosseini distinguishes between male and female languages to emphasize the patriarchy in Afghan society. Male characters like Jalil and Rasheed play oppressors, while Meriam, Nana, and Leila play subordinate women. When speaking to Meriam and Leila, for example, Rasheed uses a strong, macho and dominant language. In this regard, it is necessary to examine the language generated in order to investigate the inherited patriarchal component of Afghan society as portrayed in the text.

1- The Patriarchal Discourse

“The general notion about patriarchy is that it is a belief in the political-social system, wherein males are considered to be dominating one, and to rule over weak, especially females. In a patriarchal society, women are subject to physical and emotional brutality at the hands of

⁴² Henry, Frances, et al. *Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press*. University of Toronto Press, 2002. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442673946>.

their men counterparts”⁴³ (Kumari 241). Patriarchy was not initially caused by conflicts or the Taliban's rule; rather, it is embedded in Afghan society's traditional and religious beliefs that women are dependent on men. "It is a patriarchal traditional society wherein a daughter lives under the control of her father when she is a child. If she is married, she lives her life according to her husband and when she grows into a mother, she has to be dependent on her son"⁴⁴ (Kumari 240). Hence, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*' text reveals the patriarchal discourse that dominates Afghan society through language.

“Language is not only a means of communication”⁴⁵(Goyal 539). The language system gives meaning to what people want to express and how their thoughts are shaped by their cultural environment. Many factors influence how a group of people use the same language, including their intellectual level, personal thoughts, social status, etiquette, confidence, self-esteem, and gender. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the language used by male and female characters differs because it is subject to social codes that give men more freedom of speech than women. As a result, male characters like Rasheed have an easier time expressing themselves than female characters like Meriam and Leila, who are fearful of the consequences. For instance, Nana's statements to Meriam at the opening of the novel show the subjection of women to hegemonic masculinity when she says, “like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam ”(Hosseini 09). In addition to emphasizing the text's literariness, the beauty of this simile highlights Nana's oppression and inequity, prompting her to communicate the injustices against women through a figure of speech rather than a straightforward style. Nana is the first female character to

⁴³ Sweta Kumari. “Interrogating the Patriarchy: A Feminist Reading of Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.” *Indian Journal of English Studies*, vol. 56, 2019, pp. 240–46.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Hitesh Goyal. “Language as a Means of Communication.” *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 8, Aug. 2017, pp. 539–44.

proclaim the inequalities of Afghan society towards women, when she reveals to Meriam the power of Jalil by accusing her of adultery. "You know what he told his wives by ways of defense? That I forced myself on him. That it was my fault. Didi ? You see. ? This is what it means to be a woman in this world" (Hosseini 09). Nana's utterance is full of questions that Meriam does not have to answer. The interrogation in her speech is used to demonstrate the sincerity of her statements and to satisfy her emotional urge to persuade Meriam of her innocence and gain her support. Jalil's choking and harsh behavior toward Nana, as well as a society that solely blames women, are also expressed in the questions.

According to Afghan customs and legislation, a woman who commits adultery is sentenced to death by a man in her family, generally her father or brother. Nana, for the most part, has escaped punishment for her transgression. *The honorable thing* means killing Nana. Nana views this deed to be honorable because it is such in her community. Thus, the masculine social rules impose on Nana's expression and language her choice and usage of the word *honorable*. According to the Afghan code, such an act is noble since it restores a man's honor and removes his shame. After committing the act, the man is seen as a virile person and a brave hero in his community. Therefore, women's language is influenced by the male social code. "As Wood and Kramarea (1999) consider language as man's dominion because men are using it as a tool to maintain their dominance and centrality in the world and push women to the margins"⁴⁶ (khan and Faran 19). For instance, Nana's language and demeanor in the absence of Jalil shift dramatically when he returns. "Despite her rants against him when he wasn't around, Nana was subdued and mannerly when Jalil visited Her hair was always washed. She brushed her teeth, wore her best hijab for him. She sat quietly on a chair across from him, hands folded on her lap. She did not look at him directly and never used coarse language around him" (Hosseini

⁴⁶ Raj Wali khan, and Faisal Faran. *Hegemonic Masculinity, Mutedness and Silence of the Feminine Voice in Khalid Hosseini's Novel "A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Dec. 2016.

23). Nana's manners and language are influenced by the presence of a masculine figure, Jalil. She is courteous when he is around. This highlights the social pressures that women face in terms of their behavior and look to appear ladylike in men's eyes. Because of Jalil's controlling personality and the imposition of male codes on women, Nana is unable to be herself freely. On the other hand, she is afraid to confront Jalil about his tyrannical abuse with her rage and honesty. This is due to his domineering personality and masculine strength, as well as his higher social status. In this respect, Lakoff suggests that "women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it, as demonstrated by their linguistic behavior along with other aspects of their behavior"⁴⁷(45). Meriam's behavior and discourse illustrate Lakoff's idea as well.

Meriam is yet another victim of oppression. Meriam is known for being a quiet, introverted, and self-effacing woman. Because she is afraid to speak her mind and has little control over her fate, Meriam's views and perspectives are frequently expressed through interior monologue. Many variables create Meriam's submissive nature. First and foremost, her status as a *Harami*, her mother's bitterness, and Jalil's betrayal of her to Rasheed, who physically and mentally abuses her. Meriam's subservient nature stems primarily from men's authoritarian and dominating spirit over her, as has been noted. Meriam's earliest shows of obedience emerge with her father, Jalil. Meriam expresses her loyalty when she says to Jalil, "I used to worship you" (Hosseini 59). The word worship emphasizes Jalil's dominance and supremacy while reducing Meriam to a dedicated, loyal, and infatuated servant. The word worship, which refers to the act of paying respect to divine entities, connects Jalil and Meriam to God and the devotees respectively. Consequently, Meriam is demoted, whereas Jalil is raised and exalted. Meriam's servitude is exacerbated when she marries Rasheed, who exemplifies Afghan society's

⁴⁷ Lakoff, Robin. "Language and Woman's Place." *Language in Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1973, pp. 45–80.

hegemonic masculinity. Meriam's language and conduct with Rasheed illustrate the subject of women's submission and men's dominance in Afghan society. As a result, examining some of Meriam and Rasheed's exchanges is crucial in evaluating Hosseini's use of language in his novel. The research examines Meriam's and Rasheed's free direct speech individually.

a- Meriam's Free Direct Speech:

Meriam's speech reveals her inability to communicate with Rasheed. Her speeches are frequently incomplete. Meriam's subordination to Rasheed and her weak character are expressed through the use of short sentences, stative verbs, hyphen, ellipsis and repetitions as seen in the following examples:

"I've been thinking, though...I've been thinking, that maybe we should have a proper burial For the baby, I mean. Just us, a few prayers, nothing more."(Hosseini 99)

"What I meant was, what do they want?"(102)

"I..I..don't want this, I'am too old. Too old for you to do this to me."(213)

"Are you angry with me?.I worry that you are angry with me. I'm sorry. *Bebakhsh*, Rasheed. I'm sorry."(98)

"I ask because-"(102)

"I swear-"(108)

"Stop it, Rasheed, I'm-"(108)

As noticed in the previous examples, Hosseini uses different devices to weaken Meriam's direct speech to serve the theme of Afghan women's servitude. First, Meriam expresses herself in the two first extracts using stative verbs, "think" and "mean." The repetition of the sentence "I've been thinking" emphasizes Meriam's apprehension about sharing her thoughts with Rasheed and her uncertainty about how essential they are to him. The use of repetition in the words "I, too old, angry and sorry" highlights her hesitation, lack of confidence and obedience. The Hyphen in the last three examples expresses her insecurity with oral expression, a non-fluent

aphasia and unfinished powerless speech. Lakoff in her article *Language and Woman's Place* thinks that the usage of such elements in women's discourse weakens their positions.

These sentence-types provide a means whereby a speaker can avoid committing himself, and thereby avoid coming into conflict with the addressee. The problem is that, by so doing, a speaker may also give the impression of not being really sure of himself, of looking to the addressee for confirmation, even of having no views of his own. This last criticism is, of course, one often leveled at women.⁴⁸(55)

Meriam's language and actions are consistent with Lakoff's viewpoint. Rasheed's commands are always followed without question. Rasheed even instructs Meriam not to cry in front of him. "That's one thing I can't stand," he said, scowling, "the sound of a woman crying. I'm sorry. I have no patience for it"(Hosseini 63). Lakoff comments on such behaviors: "The behavior a woman learns as 'correct' prevents her from being taken seriously as an individual, and further, is considered 'correct' and necessary for a woman precisely because society does not consider her seriously as an individual" (51). Meriam learns from Rasheed that a woman must not cry in front of a man. Thus, she always keeps her emotions hidden and under control in front of him. Meriam's character becomes more submissive as a result of this.

b- Rasheed's Free Direct Speech

Rasheed's free direct speech exemplifies the masculine predominance that exists in Afghan society. His powerful position and authority over Meriam and Leila are highlighted by his language. For instance:

"Put these in your mouth. Put. These. In your mouth!"(Hosseini 108)

"Stop pestering me!"(99)

"Put it down and be quiet."(105).

⁴⁸ Lakoff, Robin. "Language and Woman's Place."

"Hand me that ashtray, would you?"(212)

"Sit down,"(212)

"I'm hungry. Get supper ready."(231)

"Take her outside.."Can't you take her outside?"(232)

"CHEW!"(109)

"AND YOU DIDN'T LIE TO ME?"(329). "I'm on to you," "I'm on to you both. I won't be made an ahmaq, a fool, in my own house."(237)

"Ha! All true."(266)

As noticed, Rasheed uses imperative verbs, short complete sentences, repetitions, tag questions, and a high voice tone as depicted through punctuation and capitalized style. These verbal strategies elicit feelings of authority and power. "Put, halt, get, take, and hand" are all imperative verbs that emphasize his status as Meriam's commanding officer. Rasheed perceives his demands as commands rather than requests. He never follows up with polite words like "please"; instead, he utilizes tag questions like "wouldn't you" to reinforce his commands and Meriam's obedient nature. Lakoff believes that "the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of" (45). When speaking of Meriam, Rasheed employs figurative language and pejorative terms to minimize her worth, as evidenced by the following examples: "Chupko. Shut up! " (Hosseini 102). "You know nothing, do you? You're like a child. Your brain is empty. There is no information in it "(102). "I'll say it this way: If she were a car, she would be a Volga (Hosseini 220). "Have you told her, Mariam, have you told her that you are a harami"? (220). Rasheed's violent and sexist personality is reflected in these profanity-laced statements. Meriam is likened to a child through a simile and a Volga through a metaphor. In this manner, Rasheed treats her as a naive woman and an object and doesn't care about hurting her feelings. Moreover, Rasheed often includes swear words when he threatens Meriam and Leila. For instance, "I'm warning you, woman," "I swear to God" (Hosseini 293). "Wallah o billah, I'll go down and teach her a lesson. Who does she think she is, that harami, treating you "(226). "You

try this again and I will find you. I swear on the Prophet's name that I will find you. And, when I do, there isn't a court in this god forsaken country that will hold me accountable for what I will do”(256). These swear phrases empower Rasheed’s speech. They heighten his threats and frighten Leila and Meriam. They express Rasheed’s seriousness about carrying out his threats. It also highlights his use of religion to control them.

Rasheed’s and Meriam’s speeches are easily distinguished. Rasheed’s speech shows Afghan society's masculine supremacy. Meriam’s, on the other hand, emphasizes Afghan women’s servitude and domesticity. Rasheed’s dominance over Meriam has aided in the establishment of the novel's hegemonic discourse. To strengthen his position in his household, Rasheed manipulates his language and behavior. For example, when he intends to marry Leila, he alters his demeanor and words. “Now he ate with a spoon. Used a napkin. Said *lotfan* when asking for water. And talked. Spiritedly and incessantly.” (Hosseini 210). When Leila gives birth to Aziza and begins to rebel against his behavior, he resorts to hegemonic attitudes to reassert his dominance.

Hence, Afghan hegemonic masculinity is produced by religion, culture, class, and ethnicity. Rasheed forces Meriam to wear the Burqa for religious, cultural, regional, and personal reasons. He makes it plain to Meriam that he is not like the modern Kabul men who allow their wives to go outside wearing only a scarf on their heads. “But I'm a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only. I want you to remember that”(Hosseini76). However, Meriam seems to adopt and accept his ideology as Shameem suggests “In the dominant patriarchies, women also seem to be internalizing the essentialist patriarchal customs which traps them further in the web of marginalization”(63). Hosseini also shares the same idea. “Mariam didn't mind. In truth, she was even flattered. Rasheed saw sanctity in what they had together. Her honor, her *namoos*, was something worth guarding to

him. She felt prized by his protectiveness. Treasured and significant”(85). Therefore, under Rasheed’s persuasive discourse, Meriam normalizes his overbearing views, believing that he is protecting her, whereas in reality, he is attempting to dominate her as a property. Hence, Rasheed manipulates his language to persuade Meriam. He also uses religious and cultural allusions to bolster his case. For instance, when talking to Meriam about polygamy he says: "Don't be so dramatic. It's a common thing and you know it. I have friends who have two, three, four wives. Your own father had three. Besides, what I'm doing now most men I know would have done long ago. You know it's true"(Hosseini 214). Rasheed is attempting to normalize polygamy in Meriam’s mind assuming that it is a frequent occurrence in their society. Lakoff notes that such language “submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject-matter; and when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object – sexual or otherwise”(48). Rasheed imposes the Burqa and polygamy discourse on Meriam’s perspective, denying her identity and beliefs on these matters. “Mariam sat watching the girl out of the corner of her eye as Rasheed's demands and judgments rained down on them like the rockets on Kabul”(Hosseini 221). The simile reflects that Rasheed’s onerous demands have weighed heavily on Meriam and Leila, much like the rockets in Kabul. Meriam and Leila's bodies are additionally sexualized by forcing them to wear burqas. Moreover, Rasheed enforces talks in the family about his honor and virility. “No matter. The point is, I am your husband now, and it falls on me to guard not only your honor but ours, yes, our *nang* and *namoos*. That is the husband's burden (Hosseini 221). Rasheed’s honor concerns are meaningless because he owns a porno magazine, as Meriam thinks in her internal monologue, “all his talk of honor and propriety, his disapproval of the female customers...If so, why did Rasheed insist that she cover when he thought nothing of looking at the private areas of other men's wives and sisters?”(Hosseini 87). Rasheed’s use of culture and religion in his discourse is ironic because

it is simply to exert his dominance over Meriam. Consequently, Afghan religious traditions and culture contribute to the patriarchy of Afghan society and the growth of a masculine hegemonic discourse that devalues women's role in society.

- **The use of the Farsi Language**

The study of the textuality of history is not restricted to Afghanistan's grim background. It's also possible to look into the linguistic diversity of Afghan culture. Meriam notices the difference between Herati and Kabuli dialects, “and everywhere Mariam heard the city's peculiar dialect: "Dear" was *jon* instead of *jo*, "sister" became *hamshira* instead of *hamshireh*, and so on” (Hosseini 77). Through Meriam’s remarks, Hosseini highlights the richness of Afghan dialects. Meriam feels it “peculiar”, this captures readers attention to take note to the Farsi terms inserted in the text.

The use of Farsi words has a significant impact on defining Afghan culture, because it encompasses several facets of Afghan life. For instance, religious words like *namaz*, *azan*, *aya*, *surah sujudah*, and *mashallah.allah*. Food like *Kofta*, *Aush*, *daal*, *halwa* *Dishlemeh*, *sabzi* and *Kichiri*. Clothes like *Chapaan*, *Hjib*, *Pakol*, *Poostin*, *Burqa* and *tumban*. Family members like *Akhund*. *Ambagh*, *Aroos Khala Didi*, *Kaka Jan*. The majority of these Farsi terms have a strong connection to the foundations of Afghan society, such as family and Islam . In contrast to the West, which promotes individualism, Afghan society places a high value on the family. Tariq and Leila, for example, have opted to sacrifice their love and union in order to be with their families. Religious phrases are particularly strong because they demonstrate the importance of Islam in Afghan society and how it pervades their daily lives and speech. The names of the clothes also show the differences between Afghan tribes and their levels of religiosity, especially for women's clothing, such as the burqa, which denotes the highest level of devotion, whereas the hijab and scarf are more moderate. Indeed, When dealing with the Farsi language, Hosseini uses different techniques. One is glossing.

a- Glossing:

“It is the explanatory comment attached to a text. It can be a word, a sentence or a clause, qualifying the non-English word. It is one of the most common devices used by authors in cross-cultural texts. The glossed words are the manifestation of cultural distance”⁴⁹ (Awan et al.448). Indeed, the text provides many recurring examples like: *Ahmaq*, a fool, *Chup ko* – Shut up, *Da ze ma ziba watan* – This is our beautiful land. Dehati, – Village girl, *Dil* – Heart; Courage, *Fahmidi* – Understand?, *My flower-* my Gul, *Inqilabi* –Revolution/Revolutionary..etc. Housseini employs glossing to help readers comprehend the meaning of Farsi terms when the context does not assist them in doing so, which is critical in comprehending Afghan customs and speech. He also encourages Western readers to recall certain Farsi vocabulary, as well as make a comparison between the two languages (English and Farsi) when he translates the Farsi words.

b- Untranslated Words

Many Farsi terms are left untranslated, either because there is no English counterpart or because the translation is less forceful than the original words. Often, readers can derive the word's meaning from the context. Muhammad Safeer Awan and others claim that: "This device allows the selection of certain untranslated lexical items to keep their cultural distinctiveness intact. It gets additional importance from the fact that it not only highlights the differences between cultures but also points to the effectiveness of discourse in explaining cultural concepts, actively involving the readers in the contexts to find meanings "⁵⁰(486). For instance, the word *Jinn*. This word appears at the beginning of the novel and, according to the Muslim countries, "in South Asian countries, it is considered to be an invisible power possessing an

⁴⁹ Awan, Muhammad Safeer, et al. “Strategies of Language Appropriation in Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns.” *Strategies of Language Appropriation in Khaled Hosseini’s*, vol. 12, no. 7, 2012, pp. 478–96.

⁵⁰ Awan, Muhammad Safeer, et al. “Strategies of Language Appropriation in Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns.”

individual, thereby making him follow his dictates, as it happens to Mariam's mother, Nana, who commits suicide" ⁵¹(Awan et al.486). Hosseini not only piques readers' attention by keeping this term untranslated. He also discusses Afghan society's beliefs, which are deemed superstitions in Western culture. Because most theological words, such as *tasbeh*, *azan*, *sujdah*, and *Ayat*, are originally Arabic words that designate specific notions in Islam that do not exist in other countries, Hosseini leaves them untranslated.

c- Literal Translation

In some cases, Hosseini makes literal translations of Afghan dialects into English because they convey a powerful meaning and emphasize the cultural aspect of Afghan speech as highlighted in the following examples:

"Anyone tries to harm you, I'll rip out their liver and make them eat it." (207)

"I'll beat you until your mother's milk leaks out of your bones."(286)

"They learned to walk with a milk bottle in one hand and a gun in the other."(183)

"Until her belly begun to swell." (08)

These are frequently used expressions in the characters' native culture. "The author's intent in providing translation equivalents is to demonstrate the untranslatability of certain emotions and related behavior"(Awan et al.492). Hosseini might have used the phrase "until she became pregnant," but Nana's refusal to declare her pregnancy due to her guilt, pushes Hosseini to allude to it rather than outright announce it. As a result, this expression conjures up sexual taboos in Afghan society, which is quite conservative on the matter. Similarly, instead of simply saying "I will beat you hard," the two initial expressions are idioms employed in the local dialect to emphasize fury, power, and threats. Hosseini literally translates the Farsi dialect to illustrate the Taliban and the Pro Taliban's extreme violence. The third expression highlights the same idea.

⁵¹ Awan, Muhammad Safeer, et al. "Strategies of Language Appropriation in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns."

The extensive presence of Afghan dialects, while Hosseini prefers to write his novels in English, raises questions about Hosseini's double identity as an Afghan American writer. The usage of Farsi terms in Hosseini's story not only makes it unique, but it also reminds readers of his Afghan roots. As a result, examining Hosseini's in-between identity contributes to *A Thousand Splendid Suns'* concept of in-between realities. Hosseini considers himself an Afghan American author, although the two identities are diametrically opposed. So, how does *A Thousand Splendid Suns* shed light on Hosseini's dual identity and how do they manifest in Hosseini's writing?

II. Hosseini's In-between Identity

As an in-between writer who is highly affected by both Afghan and American cultures, Hosseini's novels bear the imprints of both cultures. When asked about his double identity in one of his interviews, "if you have an identity, how would you describe it?" Hosseini responded, "I forged this messy, complicated identity for myself and it's very hard to extricate one from the other. It's all entwined"⁵². Hosseini admits his identity issue. He describes it as messy and complicated, which is really the case when these two identities are philosophically, culturally, and religiously incompatible, but Hosseini is in charge of both of them. Hence, this section looks at how his dual identities influenced the creation of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The section will look at both identities independently before drawing a perspective about Hosseini's identity.

▪ Afghan Identity

The study of diaspora features in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* helps to define the links between Hosseini and his motherland.

1. Diaspora

Diaspora is a Greek word derived from the verb *speiro*-to-sow and the proposition *dia* over. The term was initially used for Greeks who lived outside of Greece for reasons of colonization. In other words, Diaspora is an old phenomenon, signifying dispersed people outside their homeland, who sustain their ties with homeland. It is an ancient social formation, comprising people living out of their ancestral

⁵² Khaled Hosseini. "When Going Home is no Longer an Option." Interview by Melissa Felming. *Awake at Night*, 19 Nov.2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/awakeatnight/chapter-7-khaled-hosseini/>. Accessed 10 May.2021.

homeland, retaining their loyalties towards their co ethnics and their homeland from which they were forced off.⁵³(Ahmed Pir 488)

The continuous chain of foreign invasions and internal clashes between the different camps has led many Afghans to find refuge outside their homeland. As a result, diaspora Afghan communities arose, giving birth to diaspora Afghan thinkers like Hosseini. Studies on the Afghan diaspora show that their works exceed the idea of a physical journey from one place to another. "They also traverse ideological boundaries. Their texts uncover new ideological homelands, or intellectual and moral regions in which they locate evolving political, theological, and often social beliefs"⁵⁴ (Blumenthal 252). As a diaspora writer, Hosseini strives to find his position in his native society. Therefore, he uses his talent to immortalize his country's history and Afghan roots. Hosseini's feelings of belonging, nostalgia, and remorse have prompted him to inquire about the state of his motherland. His trip to Afghanistan inspired him to write about Afghanistan's cultural and sociopolitical climate. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the product of a thorough examination of his homeland. "Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan American writer, has tried to lay a bridge for himself to travel back to "home"⁵⁵. (Godavarthy 26)

According to Elleke Boehmer, "diaspora writing involves two bipolar experiences: home and exile. Diaspora writers work within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and or political connections with a national background "⁵⁶(233).

⁵³ Farhad Ahmad Pir. "Role of Afghan Diaspora." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 9, pp. 448–58.

⁵⁴ Blumenthal, Rachel. "Looking For Home in the Islamic Diaspora of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Azar Nafisi, and Khaled Hosseini". *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4, Pluto Journals, 2012, pp. 250–64.

⁵⁵ Madhavi Godavarthy. "'A Journey Towards Home with Hope in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007)." *ResearchGate*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2013, pp. 25–36.

⁵⁶ Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. OUP Oxford, 2005.

Through their narratives, the authors claim that diaspora is more than just a physical move from one location to another; it is also a significant social, cultural, and psychological shift in their lives, resulting in cultural conflict and identity crises. Themes of nostalgia, home, memories, origins, and cultural heritage abound in diaspora stories. To express themselves, some authors add anecdotes about other immigrants to their books. "The authors map their own experiences, as well as those shared by many others, of dislocation and voice them through their fiction"⁵⁷ (Murshida 01). In some ways, Hosseini's novels reflect his own experience as a refugee, and he wonders what he would have gone through if he hadn't escaped the country with his family. As a result, some of Hosseini's biographical details from his youth in Afghanistan appear in the novel. In a country torn apart by conflict, poverty, and political turmoil, characters such as Tariq and his family forsake their homes and depart Afghanistan, settling in Pakistan and Iran. Through his anecdotes and wonders, Hosseini, in some parts, relates his personal story as a refugee.

2. Biographical Aspects in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

According to Devaki, "diasporic authors reflect their very self and own experience in the novels through their characters. The characters fulfill their desires or wants through this kind of depiction or self-insightful story style. The writers constantly reflect their own special feelings, and experiences, emotions and dissatisfaction "⁵⁸(254). Indeed, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini recounts a portion of his refugee tale as well as his boyhood memories of a peaceful Afghanistan. To convey his sense of belonging and yearning for his homeland, Hosseini weaves personal details from his own life into the experiences of the characters. His writings are deeply founded on his refugee experience. Though his novel centers on the Afghan people who have

⁵⁷ Murshida, Afrida Aainun. *Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner": A Critical Discourse Analysis*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2019.

⁵⁸ Devaki, V. *Lifelines: Diasporic Writing as an Autoethnographic Narrative*. no. 3, p. 6.

been unable to flee the war, his sentiments are deeply buried in his writings. Hosseini said it in one of his videos:

I was fortunate to live the final few years of what is called now a forgotten era in Afghanistan. In those days when I grew up in the 60's and 70's, Afghanistan was a country of unanimity and peace with itself and its neighbors, and my personal recollections of Afghanistan are happy and cheerful. I have told some version of my life story through the lives of the characters in my books⁵⁹.

Hosseini's book *A Thousand Splendid Suns* takes readers back to Afghanistan's forgotten past, before the Soviet invasion. He remembers the era as being quiet and pleasant. Indeed, A portion of Hosseini's novel is based on his own personal experiences, both as a child who grew up in a peaceful Afghanistan and as an adult who returned to his homeland and embraced Afghan stories. The fact that he spent part of his youth in Afghanistan had a significant impact on the development of his personality as a writer. Hence, snippets from Hosseini's biographical elements are presented in this area of the research.

Hosseini lived a serene and tranquil time in Afghanistan. During the pre-Soviet invasion, the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* lived a stable life, much like him. Meriam, for example, is free to go down the street, her siblings attend school, and Jalil's business is thriving. The novel's first half is characterized by a stable political climate in Afghanistan. Hosseini is the son of an Afghan ambassador and a Kabul-based high school teacher. He grew up in Kabul for a period of time.

Hosseini shares parts of his childhood with Leila. Both are from Kabul and come from a middle-class family. Leila's father is a teacher as well. "Before the communists fired him, he

⁵⁹ UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. *Khaled Hosseini Tells His Refugee Story*. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XJj1DSgwBE>. Accessed 10 Jun. 2021.

was a high school teacher. This happened about a year after the coup of 1987, about a year and a half before the Soviets had invaded”(Hosseini103). When Hosseini lived in Kabul, he had a vibrant and varied social life. He said this in one of his interviews:

When I grew up in Kabul, I really didn't see myself as sort of isolated individual. I understood myself as somebody's son, somebody's cousin, nephew and there were always people surrounding me, so the world made sense to me only in the context of all people that were part of my life and I always understood myself as a part of their lives. that sort of really informed my writing because when there is a disruption in that narrative of the unity in the family of the relationship between generations and siblings I find that very compelling and interesting as a source of stories.⁶⁰

Hosseini's perception of social contacts as a youngster in Afghanistan is mirrored in Leila and Meriam's social lives as children. Leila's neighbors, Giti, Hassina, and Tariq, share a strong bond with her. “The truth was, Laila loved eating meals at Tariq's house. *At Tariq's, there was no eating alone; they always ate as a family*”(Hosseini 134). She keeps in touch with Giti and Hassina on a regular basis. They talk about and share their secrets and dreams when they return home from school. When Hassina moves to Germany "they cried then in a three-way embrace. Giti is inconsolable "(Hosseini143). Leila breaks down in tears during the funeral of Giti, killed by a rocket, for her and her dead brothers. “This was the first time that someone whom Leila had known, been close to, loved, had died. Giti, withom Leila had exchanged secret notes in class.. Giti was dead. Dead. Blown to pieces. At last, Laila began to weep for her friend. And all the tears that she hadn't been able to shed at her brothers' funeral came pouring down” (Hosseini 185). Similarly, Prior to Nana's death, Meriam enjoyed an active social life. She was

⁶⁰ Hosseini, Khaled. “Khaled Hosseini : A Story of Family .” Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22 Jul.2013. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g&t=1128s. Accessed 10 Apr.2021.

surrounded by her neighbors, such as Bibi Jo and Mulla Faizullah, who came to teach her Quran and send her gifts on a regular basis. "Mariam loved having visitors at the kolba. The village arbab and his gifts, Bibi jo and her aching hip and endless gossiping, and, of course, Mullah Faizullah."(Hosseini 22)

Additionally, Hosseini's choice of "A Thousand Splendid Suns" as the title of his book comes from his childhood memories. As previously indicated, the title is a passage from the Iranian poet Saib Tabrizi's poem "Kabul," which was written in Persian/Farsi. For Hosseini, this title is "evocative". It refers to Kabul women. Aside from the title's allegorical connotation, Hosseini's inspiration for using it stems from his early interest in and study of Farsi literature. In a documentary about his life he said:

When I was grew up in Afghanistan I was raised in a preliterate household. My mom taught Farsi and both of my parents could recite poetry, so they brought us up around a lot of classic Persian literature, so my early influences were people like Rumi, Hafez, Saadi and Omar Khayaam. I began writing when I was a kid in Kabul probably around eight or nine years old one of the first short stories I wrote made its way into the novel like *The Kite runner*.⁶¹

As a child, Hosseini read a great deal of Persian poetry. As a result, Hosseini's writing reflects his Persian literary heritage. The fourth line of the 17th-century Iranian poet Saib Tabrizi's poem "Kabul," which Hosseini read as a youngster, inspired the title of his work. Hosseini's early literary influence can be seen in this way. He even places two lines of the poem twice in the novel. "One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs and the thousand splendid

⁶¹ BookVideosTV. *Khaled Hosseini on Becoming a Writer*. 2008. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBcyxXU1Dow>. Accessed 15 Apr.2021.

suns that hide behind her walls" (Hosseini 195-383). The first time is when Babi remembers the poem as they prepare to leave Kabul, and the second time is when Leila recalls it when she returns to Kabul. The positioning of these lines is crucial. They serve as markers for Hosseini's journey as an Afghan refugee, his departure from and return to his homeland. The poem also feeds into the story's meaning. The suns hidden behind the walls are Afghan women who hide behind their burqas and the obstacles of war and patriarchy, while the moons are Afghan innocent people and war victims. The lines also allude to Afghanistan's beauty prior to the conflict. Furthermore, Hosseini's favorite singer, whom he listened to when he was a child, is also Tariq's favorite singer. "The Taliban went to the grave of Tariq's favorite singer, Ahmad Zahir, and fired bullets into it." (Hosseini 251)

A Thousand Splendid Suns mentions a detail from Hosseini's refugee story. When discussing the prospect of leaving the country, Babi mentions California as a possible destination. "And then, well, it is a big world. Maybe America. Somewhere near the sea. Like California" (Hosseini 135). Hosseini favors California since it was where he and his family stayed after moving to the United States in 1984.

Moreover, Hosseini resigned from his work as a medical doctor to pursue his writing profession. His medical knowledge, on the other hand, has aided him in the creation of his characters. Hosseini was asked about the impact of his medical experience on the creation of his novels during one of his interviews. Hosseini said:

I find a great deal of medical information in my books in hindsight, which is during the course of writing. I am never quite aware of it, so it does help me write about illness and life, which are kind of one of the recurring themes of these books. Also, as a physician, you have to be an amateur psychologist, especially in primary care, which I practice, because it is largely people's work, so you have to understand people a little bit and try to

know how to speak to them and ask the right questions, which are some of the things that help in creating characters.⁶²

As a result of his everyday contact with patients, Khaled Hosseini has been able to create a closer relationship with people and become a good listener before becoming a good writer. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini exhibits a deep understanding of women's bodies, psyches, and mental health. In chapter 36, Hosseini tackles the subject of Afghan women's health care. When Rasheed and Meriam rush Leila to the hospital as she has gone into labor, they learn that the hospital only treats men, and Leila has to undergo a caesarian without anesthesia, "cut me open and give me my baby" (Hosseini 259). In this sequence, Hosseini not only enhances Leila's strength and Meriam's sense of motherhood, "Mariam positioned herself behind the crown of Leila's head and lowered her face so their cheeks touched" (Hosseini 260), but also the doctor's competence and humanity. For Hosseini, "writers and doctors alike need to understand the motivation behind the things people say and do, and their fears, hopes, and aspirations. In both professions, one needs to appreciate how socio-economic background, family culture, language, religion and other factors shape a person, whether it is a patient *in an* exam room or a character in a story"⁶³. The doctor in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* exhibits Hosseini's observations regarding the similarities between a doctor and a writer. The doctor treats Meriam and Leila with compassion. She takes her time explaining the nuances of Leila's case, mindful of Meriam's lack of education. Despite her reservations about Meriam's interrogation and tone, she is successful in calming Leila. Despite her feelings of suspicion about Meriam's questioning and tone, she is successful in soothing Leila. "Take heart, little

⁶² Hosseini, Khaled. "Khaled Hosseini : A Story of Family ." Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22 Jul.2013. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g&t=1128s. Accessed 10 Apr.2021.

⁶³ Debra L. Beck. "Cover Story: The Physician-Writer: Good Doctors Are Good Storytellers; Some Make It a Second Career." *American College of Cardiology*, <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2016/06/10/11/12/http%3a%2f%2fwww.acc.org%2flatest-in-cardiology%2farticles%2f2016%2f06%2f10%2f11%2f12%2fcover-story>. Accessed 01Jun.2021.

sister"(260), she says after successfully calming Leila and guiding her through the surgery. As a writer and a medical practitioner, Hosseini has identified himself with the character of the doctor in his work, believing that, like a doctor, an author must delve thoroughly into people's backgrounds and demonstrate an awareness of their social and economic conditions.

Despite the fact that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* lacks the biographical details seen in *The Kite Runner*; it provides some insight into Hosseini's background, even with the story's focus on women.

3. Displacement/Exile and Coming Back Home in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

"'Movement' and 'relocation' are not new to human lives. The flux could be attributed to political turmoil or an economic crisis. By chance or by choice, a man moves away from his home and is "displaced"⁶⁴ (Godavarthy 25). Displacement is the act of moving from one place to another. "The term 'displacement' in general means a state of being out of one's own place. It is a situation when someone or something is displaced to new places away from his/her or its original place "⁶⁵(Rai 25). Displacement is a key point in diaspora literature. As an experience, it carries the memories, fears, and hopes that the diaspora writers experienced in their journey of exile. Whether it is an option or a duty, the journey of displacement has a great impact on the author's work. Each diaspora writer has his/her own experience and definition of displacement. Regarding this matter, Hosseini said: "The experience of being displaced and being a refugee is always with me. It's always a part of my identity and it has informed me not only as a person, but it has informed my writing"⁶⁶. Hence, This part of the study attempts to

⁶⁴ Madhavi Godavarthy. "'A Journey Towards Home with Hope in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007)." *ResearchGate*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2013, pp. 25–36.

⁶⁵ Rai, Ram Prasad. "Displacement as a Diasporic Experience in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*." *Crossing the Border: International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 25.

⁶⁶ "CBS This Morning - Author Khaled Hosseini on the Refugee Crisis." *Podknife*, 25 Oct. 2018, <https://podknife.com/episodes/author-khaled-hosseini-on-the-refugee-crisis>. Accessed 15 May.2021.

explore the facets of displacement and exile through the bodily movements of the characters from one space to another and their impact on their identity. This sheds light on Hosseini's own exile. Although Hosseini's escape from Afghanistan to the United States was relatively safe, he recalls hearing about his relatives being executed and punished. The tragic lives of the characters in their search for peace, optimism, and identity reflect these recollections. Hosseini experienced both internal and external exile as a result of his relocation. He stated in an interview:

My relationship with my country, for better or for worse, is one of exile. I've lived in the USA now for 32 years. My relationship with Afghanistan is kind of complicated in the sense that when I go there, I do feel that I have returned home in one sense, because that is where I was born, the city of my childhood but at the same time I do realize that my life is dramatically different from the lives of people that I meet in the streets, so in many ways I have little in common with the people there, even though we share a language, a culture and a religion.⁶⁷

Hosseini does feel a belonging to Afghanistan because it is his birthplace. This highlights the significance of space in defining one's identity, but at the same time, he enjoyed a privileged life in the USA during a time when Afghans were suffering from war. Therefore, this distance has created a sense of "otherness" in his relationship with his nation. Hence, Hosseini's own belonging to Afghanistan and otherness will be explored through the characters' experiences of displacement and exile, as well as their relationship with space to identify their identity.

⁶⁷ Hosseini, Khaled, "Khaled Hosseini : A Story of Family". Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22 Jul. 2013. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g&t=1128s. Accessed 10 Apr. 2021.

a- External displacement/Exile

External displacement is the act of leaving one's country to settle in another one. Sometimes it is a personal choice, but commonly it is due to economic, social, or political issues like poverty and insecurity. External displacement leads to exile, which causes identity crises, a lack of integration, and a sense of loss and dispersion. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* explores the topic of external exile by revealing the protagonists' experiences as they strive to flee Afghanistan in search of peace and safety. Characters like Tariq and his family, Leila's neighbors, and Leila herself, are all forced to leave their homeland because of war. For instance, Tariq's experience:

"Saying that he was leaving. Not the neighborhood. Not Kabul. But Afghanistan altogether.

Leaving.

Laila was struck blind. "Where? Where will you go? "

"Pakistan first. Peshawar. Then I don't know. Maybe Hindustan. Iran. "

"It's my father. His heart can't take it anymore, all this fighting and killing. "(Hosseini 186).

Through this dialogue, Hosseini explains that leaving one's birthplace is a difficult decision to make, but it is no longer a choice when it comes down to life or death. Through the repetition of the word "leaving", and the expression "Leila was struck blind", Hosseini provides readers with a taste of the loss that underpins each refugee's experience. Tariq is forced to flee the country and leave Leila since his parents are unable to cope with the war. With this act, he displays his loyalty to his family. "Tariq is also the representative of the refugees whose family is one of the many displaced subalterns who suffer from poverty, disease, homelessness, and,

most importantly, hopelessness and despair"⁶⁸ (Chaudhary213). Hosseini interrupts their talk and moves into Leila's stream of consciousness to show readers what Afghanistan looks like after its residents have departed.

She should have seen this coming, she thought. Almost everyone she knew had packed their things and left. The neighborhood had been all but drained of familiar faces, and now... Laila hardly recognized anybody on the streets anymore. Hasina's family had fled in May, off to Tehran. Wajma and her clan had gone to Islamabad that same month. Giti's parents and her siblings left in June, shortly after Giti was killed... After people left, their homes sat unoccupied for a few days, then either militia men took them or strangers moved in. Everyone was leaving. And now Tariq too.(Housseini 186)

Hosseini employs visual imagery to depict Leila's area, which was formerly bustling with social contacts, meetings, and parties amongst neighbors and friends, but is now haunted by the Soviets or strangers. Hosseini gives special emphasis to naming everyone Leila knows and has left, including Giti's family, Wajma, and Hassina. By doing so, Hosseini recalls the characters' distinct relocation and Leila's sentiments of loneliness and emptiness. He also awakens the reader's empathy for her and Afghanistan.

Similarly, Hakim, who has gone to great lengths to persuade Fariba to leave Afghanistan, cannot hold back his tears as they prepare to embark on their journey to a safer place.

"Mm." He smiled sadly. "I can't believe I'm leaving Kabul. I went to school here, got my first job here, became a father in this town. It's strange to think that I'll be sleeping beneath another city's skies soon. " All day, this poem about Kabul has been bouncing around in my head. Saib-e-Tabrizi... "One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs, Or

⁶⁸ Chaudhary, Priyanka. "Women Resistance and Power Relation in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns." *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2020, pp. 5493-502.

the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her -walls." Laila looked up ,saw he was weeping. She put an arm around his waist."Oh, Babi. We'll come back. When this war is over, We'll come back to Kabul, inshallah. You'll see. "(Hosseini 195)

By instilling this delicate emotion in Hakim's heart, the character who embodies the dream of migration, Hosseini reaffirms that immigrants around the world, including himself and Afghan refugees, are not refugees by choice. Hakim's words parallel Hosseini's expressions in one of his interviews he said : "When I go to Kabul, whenever the plane enters their airspace in Kabul, and is on its descent I see the city below me, I become quite emotional and I look down and I think, this is where I begun my life, this is where I took my first step, this where I learned to write the first letter, where I made my first friends. It is a sense of home coming to Kabul"⁶⁹. As a result, Hosseini uses Hakim to communicate his own nostalgia. Babi "Hakim" also remembers the two lines of Saib-e Tabrizi's poem when preparing for their outward exile. These are Babi's final words before he is killed in an air attack. Hosseini wants to keep Babi's final recollection of the beautiful, illuminated metropolis of Kabul alive, regardless of the war atrocities and destruction that have racked the country. "In fact, Hosseini's novels unveil what lies behind closed portals, thereby "[throwing] the doors of his country wide open so that the world could see firsthand the real Afghanistan and the great Afghan people who are suffering for being Afghans."⁷⁰(Dar 4)

⁶⁹ Hosseini ,Khaled."When Going Home is no Longer an Option." Interview by Melissa Felming. *UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency*, 19 Nov.2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/awakeatnight/chapter-7-khaled-hosseini/>. Accessed 10 May.2021.

⁷⁰ Dar, Ab Majeed. *A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*. no. 2, 2013, pp. 651–60.

Regarding Afghan refugees' suffering, Hosseini uses Tariq's experience in the Nasir Bagh refugee camp to bring light on the living conditions of Afghan refugees in camps in the following passage:

There was a leafless tree he climbed every day, where he straddled a branch and watched the refugees lying about in the sun, their sores and stumps in plain view. He watched little emaciated boys carrying water in their jerry cans, gathering dog droppings to make fire, carving toy AK-47s out of wood with dull knives, lugging the sacks of wheat flour that no one could make bread from that held together. All around the refugee town, the wind made the tents flap. It hurled stubbles of weed everywhere, lifted kites flown from the roofs of mud hovels. "A lot of kids died. Dysentery, TB, hunger-you name it. Mostly, that damn dysentery. God, Laila. I saw so many kids buried. There's nothing worse a person can see.(Hosseini 326)

Hosseini inserts this passage into Leila and Tariq's dialogue to expose what it's like to live in a refugee camp. Hosseini poses as a journalist, reporting on photographs of Afghan refugee camps. By employing visual imagery, he converts his words into a camera, revealing images of the refugees' wretched lives and survival rituals. The life of the refugees in the camps is symbolized by the leafless tree, which represents despair and sorrow. Hosseini's artwork portrays the Afghan child as a vivid symbol of the misery of war and migration, appealing to readers' empathy for Afghan refugees and refugees in general. He also sheds light on what isn't often reported in the media concerning the refugee camps' conditions. As a result, he allows the reader to glimpse what is going on behind the walls of the refugee camps.

As a result, by discussing external displacement from the perspective of the characters, readers learn that leaving a country is a tough choice, and those who are displaced, such as Tariq in the novel, are forced to face numerous dangers such as hunger, violence, and disease

in order to survive. The external displacement also sheds light on Hosseini's experience and the challenges he has faced in his exile.

b- Internal Displacement/ Exile

Internal displacement is the act of being displaced from one's country without leaving its borders. Internally displaced people are compelled to leave their homes due to a lack of safety, violence, or social and ethnic issues. "One doesn't need to be physically removed from the "homeland" in order to be exiled. Exile can occur in a variety of cultural contexts".⁷¹

Meriam's case is an example of internal displacement. Meriam is forced by Jalil and his wives to leave Herat and move to Kabul with Rasheed, despite her desire to live with Mullah Faizullah. "I'll live with Mullah Faizullah," she said. "He'll take me in. I know he will. ""That's no good," Khadija said. "He's old and so..." She searched for the right word, and Mariam knew then that what she really wanted to say was that he was so close... and this was their chance to erase, once and for all, the last trace of their husband's scandalous mistake. She was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame (Hosseini 52). Meriam's internal displacement is based on her *Harami* social rank, which is in breach of society's social, religious, and cultural standards. As a result, the only way for Jalil and his wives to avoid embarrassment and society's censure is for Meriam to be exiled into another space and social circles where she is unknown. "As Edward Said stresses, exile can be both "actual" and "metaphoric," "voluntary" or "involuntary." This last point is important because it indicates that physical violence is not the only force to cause exile, but subtler forms of compulsion can do the same as well"⁷². Accordingly, Meriam's exile is involuntary and unrelated to physical violence but most importantly it is figurative. Meriam's relocation from

⁷¹ Leong Yew. *Exile*. Mar 2002, <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/exile.html>. Accessed 12 Apr.2021.

⁷² Leong Yew. *Exile*.

Herat to Kabul involves more than just a physical move, It is has also opened her mind to other realities. This move has altered her views on fatherhood and parenting, and starts to reconsider her father's feelings for her. Meriam shifts from a juvenile state of mind to that of a married woman who will shoulder her responsibilities as expressed in the following passage:

Mariam pictured herself in Kabul, a big, strange, crowded city that, Jalil *had once told her*, was some six hundred and fifty kilometers to the east of Herat. She pictured herself living there, in Kabul, at the other end of that unimaginable distance, living in a stranger's house where she would have to concede to his moods and his issued demands. She would have to clean after this man, Rasheed, cook for him, wash his clothes. And there would be other chores as well-Nana had told her what husbands did to their wives. It was the thought of these intimacies in particular, which she imagined as painful acts of perversity, that filled her with dread and made her break out in a sweat.(Hosseini 05)

Meriam's mental transformation is depicted through imagery as advanced by the verb *pictured*. She begins to envision all of the responsibilities she will face once she reaches in Kabul. As a result, Meriam's mindset has grown from being a teenager to being a mature woman. The words *big*, *strange* and *crowded* underscore Meriam's sentiments of exile in Kabul. Despite its location in the country's core, Meriam calls the distance between it and Herat "unimaginable," implying that the gap is not only physical but also psychological. In Meriam's perspective, moving from Kabul to Herat is akin to going from virginity to "immorality" when she thinks of her bedroom duties. "It was the thought of these intimacies in particular, which she imagined as painful acts of perversity, that filled her with dread and made her break out in a sweat"(Hosseini 05). This idea emphasizes the metaphorical significance of Meriam's internal displacement. Her displacement is more than just a physical voyage for her; it is a movement of mind toward isolation, exile, responsibility, and immorality. In this regard, George O'Brien

considers “exile as a movement of the mind, a cultural reaction, a metonym for the restlessness, disaffection and self-respect.”⁷³

Metonymy as explained by Oxford Classical dictionary “denotes a literary trope, that is, a specific form of defamiliarized expression, which indirectly refers to what is at issue. Metonymy achieves this by way of exploiting an already existing association between the term (or terms) used metonymically—the metonym—and the term (or terms) implicitly at issue”⁷⁴. Simply, “it is a word that is substituted for another word or phrase with which it is closely related; it is also the rhetorical tactic of expressing something indirectly by referring to items surrounding it”⁷⁵. The following extract exemplifies O’Brien’s definition: “For most of the days, Meriam stayed in bed, feeling adrift and forlorn....She looked through the ill-fitting drawers, at the mismatched spoons and knives, the colander and chipped, wooden spatulas, these would be instruments of her new daily life, all of it reminding her of the havoc that had struck her life, making her feel uprooted, displaced, like an intruder in someone’s life (Hosseini 66). Hosseini shares Meriam’s mood and thoughts about her new home when she moves in with Rasheed. The words *ill-fitting*, *mismatched*, and *chipped* all conjure up images of being misplaced, inappropriate, and unfit. The description of the objects actually refers to Meriam’s feelings of being a misfit in Rasheed’s home. Hosseini nails the sense of internal exile in this passage by portraying Meriam’s surroundings and generating an aura of being unfit, unsuitable, and inapt in Rasheed’s space. He addresses Meriam’s identity concerns in depth; the adjectives *uprooted*, *displaced*, and *intruder* all confirm Meriam’s inability to fit herself into her new

⁷³ George O’Brien. “The Muse of Exile: Estrangement Renewal in Modern Irish Literature.” *Exile in Literature*, Bucknell University Press, 1988, pp. 82–101.

⁷⁴ Matzner, Sebastian. “Metonymy.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics*, 25 Jan. 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.8229>. Accessed 21 May.2021.

⁷⁵ Richard Nordquist. “What Is Metonymy.” *ThoughtCo*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/metonymy-figures-of-speech-1691388>. Accessed 21 Mar.2021.

location and her difficulty adjusting to it. In this context, Petruta Spanu says in her article *Exile et littérature*: " The exile itself, the exile lived, is multiple and ambiguous like all the experiences on which the work of fiction feeds. One may feel exiled because one lives in a foreign social environment, because one no longer has friends or a language of communication."⁷⁶(165). Exile, according to Spanu, isn't just about exterior displacement; it's also a psychological state of not fitting into a specific space or community. As a result, there is a separation between body and soul; people are physically present, but their minds, souls, and feelings return to their homes. Meriam's body is in Rasheed's house, but her thoughts and soul go back to the kolba. Hence, when evoking Meriam's issue of integrity in her new location, Hosseini brings up his own issue of integrity when he first arrived in the United States.

Fitting in the US when we first moved here was quite a difficulty, because I moved to the States when I was fifteen, and fifteen is a strange enough age. If you are in your environment growing up and you still feel alienated and isolated, you start searching for who you are, and you go through this period of metamorphosis both physically, emotionally and mentally. But it's much more tricky when you are fifteen and you have to come to an environment where you don't speak the language, you don't understand the ambient culture and you feel completely at a loss. In 1982, I was in school in a regular English language class. I was sitting in this class, but in terms of fitting in, I felt like a complete outsider.⁷⁷

In his essay, *Exile, Self and Society*, Roberts Edwards provides three modes of the metaphorical and the poetic function of exile. The first, deals with the function of memory which has the power to transform the original experience by viewing it from a different

⁷⁶ Spânu, A. "Exile et Litterature." *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis*, vol. 3, 2005, pp. 164–71.

⁷⁷ "Khaled Hosseini, M.D." *Academy of Achievement*, <https://achievement.org/achiever/khaled-hosseini/>. Accessed 13 Aug. 2021.

perspective. The second refers to the creation of an alternate society, and the third concerns the imaginary projection towards the future”.⁷⁸

Meriam’s prison is a metaphor of internal exile. The fact that Meriam is isolated and unable to see her most cherished people, Leila and her children Aziza and Zalmai. This is what links Meriam’s prison to exile. Furthermore, the prison adequately illustrates Edwards’ three metaphorical functions of exile. Hence, It’s critical to investigate these three functions through an analysis of the text.

The first function has to do with gaining a new perspective on memories. Meriam has an interesting viewpoint on the prison when she first sees it. “Back in a kolba, it seemed, after all these years”(Hosseini 354).The kolba is a part of Meriam’s life story and recollections. Meriam’s perspective on jail differs from that of the other women inmates since she has had a distinctive experience. Her Kolba experience has shaped her perception of the prison. She perceives it in the same light as the Kolba .The living circumstances in both spaces are the same. Meriam’s prison, like the kolba, is cramped. They both inspire poverty and isolation.

They were unfurnished rooms, with dirty, peeling walls, and small windows that looked into the courtyard. The windows were barred, even though the doors to the cells were unlocked... The windows had no glass. ..There were no curtains either, which meant the Talib guards who roamed the courtyard had an eyeful of the interior of the cells. Because of this, most of the women wore burqas all day and lifted them only after sundown. (Hosseini 355)

Meriam enjoys wonderful moments in the kolba as a child, but it also feels like a prison to her. She is always curious about the world outside Kolba and Herat, and she aspires to see cities and

⁷⁸ Robert Edwards. “Exile, Self and Society.” *Exile in Literature*, Bucknell University Press, 1988, pp. 15–31.

her father's cinema. "He was Mariam's link, her proof that there existed a world at large, beyond the kolba..... a world of presidents with unpronounceable names, and trains and museums and soccer, and, every Thursday, Jalil brought a piece of that world with him to the kolba" (Hosseini 24). The children born inside the prison are also exiled from the rest of the world. Only in prison do they form memories of their upbringing that will have a lasting impact on their personalities. "The courtyard was also the children's playground-Mariam had learned that many of the children had been born in Walayat, had never seen the world outside these walls" (Hosseini 355). As a result, the prison is seen as a form of exile in addition to a site of detention and punishment. In this respect, Patruta Spanu says: " Faced with this multifaceted aspect of exile, one is tempted to look for what it is not. Its two implicit limits are prison and escape. Prison can appear as a radical form of inner and outer exile" (164). There, Meriam meets Naghma, a young girl who has been condemned to five years for fleeing with her lover, the son of a local mullah, who has been released following their capture. When listening to Naghma's narrative, Meriam recalls the "dim glimmer of frigid stars and the stringy pink clouds streaking over the Safid-koh mountains that long-ago morning when Nana had murmured to her, "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam" (Hosseini 357). The alliteration in the first sentence with the sound "S" in the words *star*, *stringy*, *streaking*, and *safid* highlights the strength of Mariam's recalling of this memory, because now, when she hears the story of Naghma, she perceives Nana's words differently than she did years ago.

The prison reveals more of Meriam's character. Meriam spends her time meditating on her life experiences. Hosseini reveals all of Meriam's life's climaxes. She has dream sequences of her life in the Kolba, her hidden pebble game, Mullah Faizullah's Quran classes, and Jalil's singing. Meriam spends her final days in prison in complete silence. In her final moments, Hosseini uses her stillness to explore her inner thoughts. From her perspective, he describes life

in the Walayat prison. "She watched the winds stir mutiny in the dust, whipping it into violent spirals that ripped through the courtyard" (Hosseini 361). The expression evokes rough sounds that match Meriam's hard life. The ferocious wind and dust symbolize the turmoil and violence she has experienced throughout her life. Meriam's perception of herself as a person has also changed. Meriam has spent most of her life as a weak and obedient daughter and wife, but she now holds a high regard for herself since she sacrifices her life for the ones she cares about the most.

But when she was made to descend from the truck, Mariam's legs did not buckle. Her arms did not flail. She did not have to be dragged...it was not regret any longer but a sensation of abundant peace that washed over her. She thought of her entry into this world, the harami child of a lowly villager, an unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed. And yet she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last. No. It was not so bad, Mariam thought, that she should die this way. (Hosseini 365)

Hosseini depicts Meriam's changing vision of herself through a stream of consciousness. Meriam has always felt sorrow for being born a Harami since she was a child, as expressed through the short phrases, "an unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed ", but she now feels serenity and pride because she is leaving this world as a good mother and friend to Leila and her children. Hosseini portrays the two contradicting forms of Meriam's character, the harami girl, and the mother, through these insights into her psychology. Hence, the prison fulfills its function as a place of exile, allowing Meriam to remember her old life in the Kolba and her joyful memories with Leila from a different viewpoint. Despite being a harami, she now considers herself to be a fortunate person as a result of her recollections. Indeed, Meriam's prison helps her gain insight into her memories and life experience.

As previously stated, the second metaphorical function of exile is the establishment of an alternate society. This concept is also mirrored in the prison's characters. The women in Meriam's jail, the judge, and the young Talib who attends Meriam on her way to death, all demonstrate a society that cherishes humanist values and treats Meriam ethically. For instance, Mariam's cellmates treat her like a celebrity despite her crime. "None of the women in Mariam's cell were serving time for violent crime-they were all there for the common offense of "running away from home." As a result, Mariam gained some notoriety among them, became a kind of celebrity. The women eyed her with a reverent, almost awestruck, expression. They offered her their blankets. They competed to share their food with her" (Hosseini 356). Meriam is perceived as a hero in the prison, as she really should have been outside. Meriam's cellmates like and respect her; they perceive her as a courageous woman whose crime is justified by righteous fury and a sense of justice to save another woman's life. Meriam has ended injustice, violence, and her husband's abuse. "It occurred to her that this was the first time that she was deciding the course of her own life "(Hosseini 342). Meriam has spent her entire life trying to be a good daughter to Jalil and a good wife to Rasheed, following his orders and putting up with his abuse "his scorn, his ridicule, his insults, his walking past her like she was nothing but a house cat. Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid.....She lived in fear of his.. volatile temperament, his punches, slaps, [and] kicks"(Hosseini 89).However, by murdering Rasheed she proves her ability of revenge and self-defense as well as her feminist spirit. Shabanirad and Seifi argue that "Mariam's decision to murder Rasheed in order to preserve Laila's life is a standout scene that reveals Mariam's dissatisfaction with what has been absorbed in her, what Nana taught her to accept without question. But she is no longer a helpless victim of Rasheed's domestic brutality; she has gained authority."79 (251)

⁷⁹ Shabanirad, Ensieh, and Elham Seifi. "Postcolonial Feminist Reading of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*." *International Journal of Women's Research*, vol. 3, no. 2, Center for Women's Studies and Research, University of Tehran, Oct. 2014, pp. 241-54

Mariam swung... She imagined that something had passed between them, that maybe she had quite literally knocked some understanding into his head. Maybe he saw something in her face too. Maybe he saw some trace of all the self-denial, all the sacrifice.. live with his continual condescension, his faultfinding and meanness. Was that respect she saw in his eyes? Regret?. And so Mariam raised the shovel high.. and, as she did, it occurred to her that this was the first time that she was deciding the course of her own life. And, with that, Mariam brought down the shovel This time, she gave it everything she had.(Hosseini341-342)

In this climatic confrontation, Meriam vents all of her wrath that she has been holding in her heart since her marriage to Rasheed. Rasheed and Meriam exchange glances, as described by Hosseini. Meriam brings up all of her pain with Rasheed at this point, and it gives her the strength to kill him. The repetition of the word “maybe” is noteworthy, it highlights Meriam’s inquiries and doubts about Rasheed’s regret. In this way, Meriam controls her fate for the first time in her life, and proves her heroic spirit. Hence, by killing Rasheed, Meriam kills the living embodiment of patriarchy and puts an end to violence in her life and Leila’s.

The other character who represents the alternate society is the middle judge. "Mariam found a disarming quality about him. When he spoke, it was with a tinge of guile and tenderness. His smile was patient. He did not look at Mariam despisingly. He did not address her with spite or accusation, but with a soft tone of apology "(Hosseini 358). Though the judge sentences Meriam to death, he speaks to her with compassion and kindness, presuming that he has no power to interfere with the Taliban's view of Sharia law. Despite the injustice of the verdict, he does not attack Meriam as a person or label her a criminal; rather, he characterizes her as a decent woman and only judges her action. "Something tells me you are not a wicked woman, hamshira But you have done a wicked thing "(Hosseini 360).

The Talib, who attends Meriam on her route to death, is the third character that represents the alternate society. Meriam describes him as an "appealing young man" (Hosseini 362). He offers Meriam a biscuit and attempts to assuage her anxieties. Hosseini supports the existence of humanistic feelings and people in an unjust world by presenting these examples. Hence, the prison depicts the concept of an alternate society by introducing characters who demonstrate humanistic tendencies and treat Meriam humanely.

The third function of exile is the imaginary projection towards the future. Meriam wishes for a longer life to spend with Aziza and her children as she nears death.

But as she walked the final twenty paces, she could not help but wish for more of it. She wished she could see Laila again, wished to hear the clangor of her laugh, to sit with her once more for a pot of chai and leftover halwa under a starlit sky. She mourned that she would never see Aziza grow up, would not see the beautiful young woman that she would one day become, would not get to paint her hands with henna and toss noqul candy at her wedding. She would never play with Aziza's children. She would have liked that very much, to be old and play with Aziza's children. (Hosseini 364)

This passage shows Meriam's dreams and aspirations for the future. Using imagery, Hosseini depicts the future that Meriam has always dreamed of and longed for. The things that she will never see or feel, like attending Aziza's wedding. The repetition of the phrases, *she wished*, and *would not* emphasize her regret of being unable to accomplish her dreams, as well as readers' empathy for Meriam's demise, not only as a character but also as a representative of Afghan women. Despite her grief, Meriam seeks solace in her spirituality and faith. She feels that because God is aware of her motivation, he will forgive her wrongdoing. "Mariam's final thoughts were a few words from the Koran, which she muttered under her breath"(Hosseini 365). Meriam finally finds peace in her internal exile, thanks to her love for Leila and her faith in God, in this respect Petruta Spanu says: "Exile turns to oneself and sometimes leads to God.

Lived, dominated, justified under other horizons, it can change the being. Inner and imaginary exile, as a distancing and affirmation of a singularity, is victory over exile ” (170). Meriam’s internal exile, whether physical or emotional brings her to God. In Nana's death, her miscarriages, and her own death, her faith helps her somewhat to liberate herself from her burdens and hardships.

Hence, By studying the aspects of both internal and external exile, readers can grasp their impact on the displaced people in the world, including Khaled Hosseini who admits his own exile experience when he says :

It takes a lot of work to establish new identities, to adapt to new circumstances. My father was a lawyer and my mother was a teacher of Farsi literature, but in the US, when we came here as refugees, they had to redefine who they were. To be uploaded and to have to start a new life, learn a new culture, a new language. That’s a tectonic shift in your life, so the idea of displacement is very present in my books.⁸⁰

Indeed for Hosseini, “exile is an especially traumatic experience, not just because of the physical displacement from the native land but because his professional tools are inextricably related to the cultural and linguistic realities of his country of origin.” (Lagos-Pope 08)

4. Defining Home and Self Through Space

The setting (time and space) in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is crucial for several reasons. First, it covers major historical periods in Afghanistan's history and includes many significant locations such as Afghanistan, Herat, Kabul, and Pakistan, as well as domestic areas such as the Kolba, Bamiyan, Jalil's castle, and Rasheed, Tariq, Leila's homes. Second, depending on

⁸⁰ Housseini, Khaled, “Khaled Housseini : A Story of Family”. Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22Jul.2013. Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g . Accessed 10 Apr.2021.

the historical period, it allows readers to learn about the lifestyle, economic, and social context of each region. Finally, it aids understanding of the characters' perspectives and relationships with the environment and time period in which they live. Regarding this, Myria Georgiou argues that “space is not singular; it brings together into meaningful relations and formations places and practices. Space also carries social meanings – and these are always plural. The meanings of space are shaped in contexts of continuities, links and conflicts”⁸¹(22). In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini manipulates time and space configuration by allowing readers to travel around the novel and experience numerous realms in Afghanistan. In terms of time, the novel spans nearly forty years in Afghanistan's history, under four successive regimes, and Hosseini occasionally transports readers back to centuries ago boasting his country's historical and cultural legacy. In terms of space, the novel spans both rural and urban settings, allowing readers to appreciate the social, economic, and cultural disparities between the two worlds. But most importantly, It reveals the character’s inner conflicts regarding their identity and belonging. This conflict is prevalent throughout the narrative. Because of their love for their nation, characters like Leila, Fariba, Tariq, and Hakim have all fought to accommodate themselves into a particular environment. Fariba, for example, does not want to leave Afghanistan, though her sons have died. Leila and Tariq return to Kabul to help with the city's rebuilding. Babi displays his love for his homeland by telling poetry about it, despite his desire to leave. Hence, Hosseini portrays his own conflicting feelings about his nation through the relation between the characters and space, feelings like belonging, patriotism, guilt, exile, and otherness. Godavarthy suggests that “most of the diasporic writers have shown their protagonists’ struggle and tenacity to fit themselves in the new- setting. They have accepted the challenges of cultural displacement in their own ways and they stand sometimes as victims and

⁸¹ Georgiou, Myria. “Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora.” *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1, Université de Poitiers, Feb. 2010, pp. 17–35. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028](https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028).

sometimes as heroes in the process of defining or redefining their existence”⁸² (26). Therefore, By assimilating Hosseini’s treatment of space in relation to the characters in his novel, a clue to his double identity issue and his ratio with his country and nation can be identified.

a- Meriam and Space

The first space that is introduced to the readers is the "kolba", a small little hut where Meriam grows up until Nana’s death. The "kolba," a little hut where Meriam grows up until Nana's death, is the first space introduced to the readers. To keep Nana and Meriam hidden from society, the kolba is set off from the rest of the hamlet. "It was raised with sun dried bricks and plastered it with mud and handfuls of straw. It had two sleeping cots, a wooden table, two straight backed chairs, a window and shelves nailed to the walls where Nana placed clay pots and her beloved Chinese tea set" (Hosseini 10).The Kolba is a fictional place created and structured by Hosseini to fit and provide insight into Meriam and Nana's lives; as described in the novel, it is a symbol of their poverty and low social position in the society. The kolba, on the other hand, has a literary value that provides insight on Meriam’s identity.

Meriam and the kolba have a strong and emotionally charged relationship. Through the text, Hosseini demonstrates that the kolba is more than just a place where Meriam has lived; it is a pool of fond and painful memories, a place where Meriam has spent her happiest moments with her friends, such as Mullah Faizullah and Bibi Jo, as well as when her father, Jalil, paid her a visit. "For an hour or two every Thursday, when Jalil came to see her, all smiles and gifts and endearments, Mariam felt deserving of all the beauty and bounty that life had to give"(Hosseini 7). The kolba is also the place of her most painful moment that changes her life upside down, when Nana takes her own life. Meriam learns from her life experiences that the

⁸² Madhavi Godavarthy. ““A Journey Towards Home with Hope in Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007).” *ResearchGate*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2013, pp. 25–36.

kolba is the only place she feels truly belongs to, the only place she considers to be her home. Before her death, Nana, her mother, had validated this theory. "Then you make her see that she belongs here at home with her mother. There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache. I know Akhund Sahib. I know "(Hosseini 2). Meriam's journey from Kolba to Jalil's villa and finally to Rasheed's house reveals so much about her character, particularly her feelings of "internal exile". Meriam feels herself as "the other" in Kabul, Jalil and Rasheed's spheres. She begins to doubt her roots and identity when she moves to Jalil's villa. She notices the disparity between her modest kolba and Jalil's opulent mansion in terms of comfort, family, and treatment. "As she saw him cross his palms on his chest and nod to their wives, she knew that Nana had spoken the truth, she did not belong here, but where do I belong? what I'm going to do now?... Like the wind through the willow around the Kolba, gusts of an inexpressible blackness kept passing Mariam (Hosseini 38). Meriam feels like a foreigner in Jalil's enormous house, not just because his residence is unknown to her, but also because her feeling of family and union has been tainted by Jalil's wives' harsh treatment. "Like a wind through the willow around the kolba, gusts of an inexpressible blackness kept passing Meriam" (38). This simile is notable since it links Meriam's perspective to the kolba. It also highlights her disordered state of mind and scattered questions in her search for her own identity within space. Using natural elements as a point of reference, such as the wind and the willow around the Kolba, shows that Hosseini is inspired by the space Meriam considers home, to highlight her identity issue.

Meriam's spirit is haunted by thoughts of loneliness and parasitism, which Hosseini expresses through space. For instance, in Meriam's round table discussion with Jalil and his wives on her proposal to marry Rasheed, and when the three wives and Jalil express their approval, ignoring Mariam's protests, Hosseini uses imagery and space to describe Meriam's disappointment. "As Jalil's wives began a new-and more sprightly-round of reassuring, Mariam looked down at the table. Her eyes traced the sleek shape of the table's legs, the sinuous curves

of its corners, the gleam of its reflective, dark brown surface. She noticed that every time she breathed out, the surface fogged, and she disappeared from her father's table” (Hosseini 46). This passage expresses Meriam’s stunned state when she realizes she is nothing more than a burden. The table is a significant element in the space that surrounds Meriam. She loses focus and weaves her consciousness by tracing the frame while contemplating her new life. As Meriam traces the frame of the table, she is also tracing her new life in her mind. The table is the physical symbol of Meriam’s confrontation with society and the polluted meeting where she has no words or control over her own fate. As she breathes, Meriam feels as though she is fading from her father's table and space, and this symbolizes the end of her story with Jalil and the beginning of a new existence that Hosseini develops to fit the space she is in. The idea of Jalil vanishing from Meriam’s life is mirrored in the same way, with him fading from Meriam’s sight and space. “And when the bus pulled away, she did not turn back to see him disappear in the cloud of exhaust and dust” (Hosseini 51). The cloud and the dust symbolize Jalil’s exhausting feelings of guilt.

Meriam’s memories and homesickness enhance the connection between her and space. “Home is the symbolic and real place that becomes a synonym to familiarity, intimacy, security and identity against the unknown, the distant and the large”⁸³ (Georgiou 23). Meriam has only found these qualities in the kolba. She considers the Kolba to be her only home and a source of belonging . For instance, In Rasheed’s House, Meriam pines for the life she had in the Kolba.

At the kolba, she could touch the ceiling with her fingertips. She could lie in her cot and tell the time on day by the angle of sunlight pouring through the window. She knew how far her door would open before its hinges creaked. She knew every splinter and crack in

⁸³ Georgiou, Myria. “Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora.” *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1, Université de Poitiers, Feb. 2010, pp. 17–35. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028](https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028).

each of the thirty wooden floorboards. Now all those familiar things were gone. Nana was dead, and she was here, in a strange city, separated from the life she'd known by valleys and chains of snow-capped mountains and entire deserts. She was in a stranger's house, with all its different rooms and its smell of cigarette smoke, with its unfamiliar cupboards full of unfamiliar utensils, its heavy, dark green curtains, and a ceiling she knew she could not reach. The space of it suffocated Mariam. (Hosseini 53)

This passage expresses a strong sense of longing for home. "Hosseini has tried to lay a bridge for himself to travel back 'home'. There seems to be a change in his perspective in which his protagonists are rooted in their home "(Godavarthy 26). Through Meriam's longing for the kolba, "Pangs of longing bore into her, for Nana, for Mullah Faizullah, for her old life", Hosseini unleashes his own yearning to come back to his motherland. By comparing Rasheed's house to the Kolba, Meriam recognizes how much happiness she used to find in the kolba . Hosseini expresses his passion for the Afghan landscape by depicting valleys and snow-capped mountain chains. He wants to highlight the beauty of the Afghan countryside, which both Meriam and Hosseini are longing to return to. The repeated words in this text are, *she could, she knew*, which have to do with ability and knowledge, two privileges that Meriam lacks at Rasheed's House, where she is treated as a slave and an ignorant. By paying attention to what Meriam loses in Rasheed's space, as she encounters new things in Rasheed's home and in Kabul, readers can understand the difficulties that Hosseini faced when he was forced to match with unfamiliar language and culture when he was in the United States for the first time.

Moreover, Hosseini goes back to the Kolba at every stage of Meriam's life, including when she moves to Racheed's house, during Leila's delivery, in the prison, and after her death. This stresses the idea of Meriam's belonging to the kolba. When taking Leila to deliver her baby, the hospital is very crowded with women. "My daughter's water broke and the baby won't come," Mariam called. "I'm talking to her!" the bloodied young woman cried "Wait your turn!"

The whole mass of them swayed side to side, like the tall grass around the kolba when the breeze swept across the clearing”(Hosseini 277). The use of simile to equate the group of women to the grass surrounding the Kolba is noteworthy. It shows how ingrained the Kolba and its nuances remain in Meriam’s mind after all these years, and how she returns to it from time to time, especially during tough occasions like Leila's delivery.

Leila decides to visit the kolba for the first time after Meriam’s death to say her goodbyes. “In Pakistan, it was difficult sometimes to remember the details of Mariam's face. There were times when, like a word on the tip of her tongue, Mariam's face eluded her. But now, here in this place, it's easy to summon Mariam behind the lids of her eyes: the soft radiance of her gaze, the long chin, the coarsened skin of her neck, the tight-lipped smile (Hosseini 392-393). This quote implies that Meriam’s memory in Leila's mind is spatially dependent. Despite spending so many years together, Leila barely remembers Meriam’s face in Pakistan, her exile. Hosseini uses the simile "Mariam's face eluded her like a word on the tip of her tongue" to describe how Leila begins to forget Meriam’s picture in her mind when she moves to Pakistan. Meriam’s memory and Leila's devotion for her are linked to the Kolba, which is Meriam’s true home. Leila regains Meriam’s picture by visiting the Kolba, and imagines her childhood as a vivacious, joyous girl in the Kolba. "A young Mariam is sitting at the table making a doll by the glow of an oil lamp. She's humming something. Her face is smooth and youthful, her hair washed and combed back. She has all her teeth. Leila watches Mariam glue strands of yam onto her doll's head" (Hosseini 393). The Kolba scenario employs the technique of imagery to bring Meriam back to life in Leila's imagination. The doll represents Meriam’s innocence as a child, as well as her manipulation by her parents and Rasheed. Hosseini’s use of visual imagery demonstrates how much easier Leila can see, feel, and imagine Meriam in the Kolba than in any other space. Meriam is still present in Leila's heart, as evidenced by the use of the present

simple tense. Housseini pays homage to Meriam's memory and identity by revisiting the Kolba. The Kolba is proof of Meriam's existence and roots.

b- Leila and Space

In regards to Leila and space, when Leila goes to Pakistan and lives in Murree with Tariq and her children, her ratio with her homeland is established. Leila has a nice life with her family there. This does not, however, shelter her from the sensation of being an outsider and exiled. Many of the novel's passages deal with Leila's challenges as an immigrant. Through Leila's character, Hosseini explores the psychological trauma that an immigrant endures as a result of deportation. In this respect, Rachel Blumenthal says:” For Hosseini's characters, a complete turn to either space, whether geographical, ideological, or textual, amounts to a renunciation of personal history and identity”⁸⁴ (263). In her exile “Muree”, Leila finds tranquility, that she lacked in Kabul. However, she begins to struggle with her identity and sense of self, and views her life in Pakistan as insignificant. It all starts with memory, when Leila revisits her childhood experiences in Kabul for the first time. “A year ago, she would have gladly given an arm to get out of Kabul. But in the last few months, she has found herself missing the city of her childhood. She misses the bustle of Shor Bazaar, the Gardens of Babur, the call of the water carriers lugging their goatskin bags. She misses the garment hagglers at Chicken Street and the melon hawkers in Karteh-Parwan”(Hosseini 379). The process of returning home begins with nostalgia and remembrance. Leila's decision to return home stems from the trauma of a lost homeland. Leila had never dreamed she would miss Kabul when she moved to Pakistan. Ironically, her longing for it, on the other hand, has organically manifested in her memories. Myria Georgiou argues in this regard, “the home, the public, the city, and the national, in its interconnections with the transnational space form layers of the spheres of belonging; they together form the puzzle of

⁸⁴ Blumenthal, Rachel. “Looking for Home in the Islamic Diaspora of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Azar Nafisi, and Khaled Hosseini”. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4, Pluto Journals, 2012, pp. 250–64.

the context where social relations, communication and action take place and shape the meanings of identity and community”⁸⁵(22). Leila's nostalgia gives way to emotions of regret and unease about being so far away from her nation, which is beginning to heal from the war's ravages.

But it isn't mere homesickness or nostalgia that has Laila thinking of Kabul so much these days. She has become plagued by restlessness. She hears of schools built in Kabul, roads repaved, women returning to work, and her life here, pleasant as it is, grateful as she is for it, seems insufficient to her. Inconsequential Worse yet, wasteful. Of late, she has started hearing Babi's voice in her head. You can be anything you want, Laila, he says. I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you.(Hosseini 379)

Leila recalls Babi's comments, "Afghanistan will need you. “She also recalls her mother's wish for a peaceful Afghanistan as a tribute to Ahmed and Nour. As a result, Leila's sentiments of yearning and remorse for not helping to reclaim her country drive her to ask Tariq to return home to redeem herself. “This isn't home. Kabul is, and back there so much is happening, a lot of it good. I want to be a part of it all. I want to do something. I want to contribute. Do you understand?” (Hosseini 381). Through her dialogue with Tariq, Leila is able to articulate and conjure her inner distress in her external exile. Leila eventually discovers what she's been looking for to justify her existence, identity as an Afghan woman, and duty as an Afghan citizen: being a part of the country's rehabilitation. Babi has been teaching Leila since she was a youngster that Afghanistan will need her as much as its men, if not more. Now Leila has the chance to back up his statements and elevate women's status in Afghan society. Returning home is more of a necessity than a choice for Leila. "I want it, yes, I'm sure. But it's more than that. I

⁸⁵ Georgiou, Myria. “Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora.” *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1, Université de Poitiers, Feb. 2010, pp. 17–35. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028](https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028).

feel like I have to go back. Staying here, it doesn't feel right anymore”(Hosseini 381). Laila settles back in her seat, blinking the wetness from her eyes. Kabul is waiting. Needing. This journey home is the right thing to do "(Hosseini 383). By imbuing Kabul with human characteristics, such as "Kabul is waiting, needing," Hosseini strengthens the bond between Leila and Kabul. Leila's trip back to her homeland is reminiscent of Hosseini's own process of redemption through a return to his homeland. Hosseini portrays what he has been through in his exile through the figure of Leila. Despite leading a great life in the United States, he has always felt compelled to return to his homeland and assist it through his association. “ Hosseini walks towards his literary calling which he terms as ‘a voice in the head’ and he had ‘surrendered to that compulsion’ (in an interview with Firoozeh Dumas; an Iranian American writer) he said : It’s a journey from the conflicting ‘where do I belong’ to ‘I belong to...’ and here lies the essence of his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* which is his quest for belonging in terms of meaning and relevance” (Godavarthy 27). Despite having only been in Afghanistan for a short time, Hosseini has always conveyed his sense of belonging to the country and its people. In an interview he said:

I think, at the end of the day, I will always feel like an Afghan. Although I also feel like an American, but I have a very different reaction when the plane is about to land in San Jose than I do when I go to Kabul. It is a sense of home coming to Kabul. Even though I realize that this is a dramatically transformed place, nevertheless, it is a very strong emotional sort of visceral bond that you feel. I don't think my kids will ever have this connection with my land because this (US) is their birthplace.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Housseini, Khaled, “Khaled Housseini : A Story of Family”. Interview by Steve Paikin. The Agenda with Steve Paikin, 22 Jul. 2013. *Youtube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g. Accessed 10 April. 2021.

Hosseini's Afghan identity and cultural ties do not, however, preclude him from feeling American. His moral character and education in American institutions have aided in the development of his identity as a person, as well as a writer and thinker. Hosseini prefers to write his novels in English rather than his native tongue, despite the fact that he deals with Afghani issues.

- **American Identity**

The use of American literature and art reflects Hosseini's affinity for the United States. This demonstrates how much American culture has influenced him. As a result, Hosseini incorporates some of its elements into his work to manifest his American identity and serve the themes of the novel. For instance:

- 1. The American Dream**

To begin with, the incarnation of the American dream is the first evidence of Hosseini's American philosophy. "The American dream is the concept that everyone, regardless of where they were born or what social class they came from, may achieve their own version of success in a society where everyone has the opportunity to advance. The American dream is seen to be realized via sacrifice, risk-taking and hard work rather than by chance."⁸⁷ In American culture, everyone, regardless of gender, race, religion, or ethnicity, has equal access to opportunities. "Hosseini also described himself as a living example of the American dream. He claims he came to America almost without money, with a suitcase of clothes and family."⁸⁸ In his novel,

⁸⁷ Barone, Adam. "What Is the American Dream?" *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp>. Accessed 6 Aug. 2021.

⁸⁸ Humaira. "Khaled Hosseini: The American Dream — Home." *Afghan Culture Unveiled*, 13 June 2013, <https://www.afghancultureunveiled.com/humaira-ghilzai/afghancooking/2013/06/khaled-hosseini-american-dream.html>. Accessed 14 Feb.2021.

Babi is the embodiment of the American dream. Babi aspires to live a happy and prosperous life in America with his family. He hopes to give Leila an excellent education and to manage a modest business for a living. He informs Leila about his goal of creating an Afghan restaurant in America.

I would find work, and, in a few years, when we had enough saved up, we'd open a little Afghan restaurant-Nothing fancy, mind you, just a modest little place, a few tables, some rugs. Maybe hang some pictures of Kabul. We'd give the Americans a taste of Afghan food. And with your mother's cooking, they'd line up and down the street. And you, you would continue going to school, of course. You know how I feel about that. That would be our absolute top priority, to get you a good education, high school then college.(Hosseini 155)

Babi's aspirations for the future embodied the American dream. He chooses America as their target place because he believes that there, he will have so many opportunities besides, Babi believes that the American people are helpful and welcoming. Babi's definition of success and happiness includes privileges that he and Leila have been denied as a result of Afghan political philosophy, such as peace, stability, a right to education and schooling, freedom, and free trade; all of these hopes encapsulate the American dream completely. Babi's association with the American ideal is also well-balanced because he depicts an Afghan man with western ideas and ideology.

2. Highlighting the American Values of Equality, Freedom and Power

In his story, Hosseini emphasizes the American values and lifestyle, which include human rights of equality, freedom, and power that have been upheld since the declaration of independence. Hosseini promotes American values which are forbidden and rejected by the Afghan traditional communities via the plot and characters like Rasheed and the Taliban. The

story's context demonstrates how much the female characters lack freedom of expression, mobility, and choice in many aspects of their lives, whether due to political regimes such as the Taliban or pro-patriarchal attitudes such as Rasheed's.

Babi and Leila's teacher, Khala Rangmaal, are two characters who preach American ideas of freedom, equality, and power. Both of them are intelligent and well-educated. Babi is the figure who, defends the independence of women. As a result, other characters, particularly Rasheed, insult and harass him since he holds different opinions and lives a different lifestyle than the rest of his community. "They're here too, Mariam, in this very neighborhood, these soft men. There's a teacher living down the street, Hakim is his name, and I see his wife Fariba all the time walking the streets alone with nothing on her head but a scarf. It embarrasses me, frankly, to see a man who's lost control of his wife" (Hosseini75). Babi does not force Fariba, his wife, to wear a burqa, like Rasheed does with Meriam, nor does he treat her in a harsh and misogynistic manner; rather, he respects her choices and bears her bad temper and sadness. Babi believes that men and women should be treated equally. He advises Leila to complete her study and obtain a degree before marrying. "Marriage can wait, education cannot" (Hosseini 118). He even pays for her education by taking her to see the Buddha's gigantic stone monuments in Bamiyan Valley. Babi believes that education is the only way for Afghan women to gain power. "You're a very, very bright girl. Truly, you are. You can be anything you want, Laila I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila No chance"(Hosseini 118). Babi's statements to Leila highlight the three values: power (when he tells her she's a bright girl), independence (when he tells her she can do whatever she wants), and equality (when he asserts that Afghanistan's men are just as important as its women).

Hosseini believes in rebuilding Afghanistan and envisions a brighter future for Afghan women with the western model of human rights: “girls are going back to school and learning again. Women are returning to the workplace. They wear the Burqa if they want to but they don’t have to. Once again they can move about without the presence of a male adult companion, wear makeup, listen to music and so on”⁸⁹. "Supporters of modernity like Khala Rangamaal also try to adopt modern culture because it allows them to lead a life of equality"⁹⁰ (Yeasmin 384). Khala Rangamaal is a feminist icon who fights for women's educational, equality, and rights. “She did not cover and forbade the female students from doing it. She said women and men were equal in every way and there was no reason women should cover if men didn't” (Hosseini 115). Through Meriam’s perspective, Hosseini also provides insight into modern Afghan women in Kabul under the Soviet occupation. Meriam recognizes women who are different from her as she journeys with Rasheed to Kabul.

These women were-what was the word Rasheed had used?-"modern." Yes, modern Afghan women married to modern Afghan men who did not mind that their wives walked among strangers with makeup on their faces and nothing on their heads. Their nails were long, polished pink or orange, their lips red as tulips. They walked in high heels, and quickly, as if on perpetually urgent business. They wore dark sunglasses, and, when they breezed by, Mariam caught a whiff of their perfume. She imagined that they all had university degrees, that they worked in office buildings, behind desks of their own, where they typed and smoked and made important telephone calls to important people. (Housseini79)

⁸⁹BookBrowse.“Khaled Hosseini Author Interview.” *BookBrowse.Com*, https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/900/khaled-hosseini. Accessed 3 May.2021

⁹⁰ Farhana Yeasmin. “Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Saga of Afghanistan.” *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2020, pp. 381–90.

In this passage, Hosseini describes modern Afghan women through Meriam's point of view behind her burqa, emphasizing their physical appearance, attitudes, and manners. Meriam builds a perspective on these ladies, picturing them as having advanced degrees and important positions. With their make-up, cigarettes, and demeanor, they're ready to take on the world. These women are typical western women who have nothing to do with Afghan women. When comparing these women to herself, she is "aware of her own lowliness, her plain looks, her lack of aspirations, her ignorance of so many things" (Hosseini 80). By including this sequence in the novel, Hosseini gives readers an overview of 1970s Afghan society, where tradition and a progressive sense of modernity coexist. He also emphasizes Meriam's anguish and ignorance of these women's modern lifestyles. In terms of women's rights, Hosseini accentuates the advantages of modernity in Western values. While highlighting Meriam's otherness, In this respect, Leong Yew says: "It is possible for exile to occur particularly when one realizes that a traditional way of life, religion, tribal practices can no longer be articulated or experienced without the mediation of modernity. This causes a sense of loss and displacement from a traditional homeland"⁹¹. Hence, by inserting characters like Babi and Khala Rangamaal who have a Western-style education, and stand to defend women's rights to education, freedom, and choice, Hosseini wants to promote Western values and women's rights in Afghan society.

3. Leila's Feminist Spirit

As shown in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Afghan society is a male-dominated culture in which religion and tradition play a role in all aspects of life. Religious fundamentalism's first victims are women. Hosseini illustrates the existence of women in a society where their worth is heavily based on their ability to reproduce. Rasheed's hostility toward Meriam is a good

⁹¹ Leong Yew. *Exile*. Mar 2002, <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/exile.html>. Accessed 12 Apr.2021.

example of this. “There was always something, some minor thing that would infuriate him, because no matter what she did to please him, no matter how thoroughly she submitted to his wants and demands, it wasn't enough. She could not give him his son back” (Hosseini 103). Most of the female characters in the novel, like Meriam, are stereotypically submissive Afghan women. They've all been victims of marital violence and mistreatment, which has been exacerbated by the Taliban dictatorship. “Women are depicted as objects to be bought and consumed rather than beings with dreams and the right to live their dreams. They cook and clean and manage children while husband goes out for work. They are denied opportunities to learn and write and to know the world”(Aswathy 806). However, from a feminist standpoint, Leila looks to be the most powerful female character. Leila's aspirations and intentions for the future differ from those of her friends Giti and Hassina, who are both preparing for arranged and traditional marriages, whereas Leila wishes to pursue education and fall in love with her suitor before marrying. “Laila, the protagonist, is capable of changing her fate because she has been familiarized with the Western definition of progress”(Siahmansouri and Hoorvash 100). Leila's nick name is *Inqelaby Girl*. "The revolutionary girl", is not only inspired by the historical circumstances of her birth, it is also a metaphor of her feminist spirit and revolution against the injustices of her husband. By creating a feminist spirit in her character, “Hosseini's character becomes a modern archetype because she influences modern day behaviors and attitudes” (Andrews 09). When Leila marries Rasheed, she is dissatisfied with the way he treats her and frequently has arguments with him when he compels her to have sex with him. “Usually, the bickering ran its course after a few minutes, but half an hour passed and not only was it still going on, it was escalating. Mariam could hear Rasheed shouting now. The girl's voice, underneath his, was tentative and shrill. Soon the baby was wailing”(Hosseini 235). Unlike Meriam, who prefers to remain silent in order to avoid Rasheed's wrath, Leila is a feminist modern figure who stands up to Rasheed's abuse and brutality. When Rasheed is sacked from

his work, for example, Leila does not hesitate to criticize him, despite Meriam's request to not irritate him.

"You were probably out back napping," said Laila.

"Don't provoke him, Laila jo," Mariam said.

"I'm warning you, woman," he said.

"Either that or smoking."

"I swear to God."

"You can't help being what you are." (Hosseini 293)

Leila even dares to punch Rasheed when he slaps her because she refuses that he turns Aziza into a street beggar. Hosseini describes Leila's act as a heroic act of self-defend against violence and abuse. "Then Laila punched him... It seemed worthwhile, if absurdly so, to have endured all they'd endured for this one crowning moment, for this act of defiance that would end the suffering of all indignities(Hosseini 289). Hosseini describes Leila's action as an act of defiance. This is a crowning moment for Leila; her punch to Rasheed gives her the feeling that she has triumphed over his unfairness. Leila has also no qualms about expressing her views on political issues and engaging in arguments with Rasheed. When the Taliban announces the new Sharia laws, Leila argues with Rasheed. "They can't make half the population stay home and do nothing."(Hosseini 270)

In terms of romance, Leila and Tariq's story is typical of Western love romances. Hosseini breaks the taboo around male and female relationships and sexuality via their love story. Early on, Leila and Tariq fall in love and have intercourse, which is considered a sin. "The disbelief at their own boldness, their courage" (Hosseini 164). Hosseini describes their intercourse as an act of courage. Through their Western-style romance, he fights against Afghan arranged

marriages. Hosseini also strives to infuse new Western forms of feminism into Afghanistan's tradition to liberate Afghan women's bodies and sexuality.

4. Promoting the American Culture, Myth and Art

Hosseini pushes forth Afghan traditional culture in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by exposing readers to Afghan culture. However, as an American author, he has a strong respect for American culture, art, and literature. Many allusions to American culture and literature may be found throughout *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which assist to bring depth to the story.

a- Pinocchio

Meriam has always wanted to see Pinocchio in her father's cinema since her childhood. The iconic 1940's American film Pinocchio tells the story of a wooden puppet constructed by an old and lonely woodworker and turns into a real boy by magical fairy. However, if he wants to be a real human boy, he has to act decently. Unfortunately, he always fails because of his lying habits. As a result of this, his nose keeps growing. The story of Pinocchio ends by happily finding his father and turning into a real human boy. Pinocchio is an important symbol in the story. The adventure of Pinocchio is similar to Meriam's life. Like Pinocchio, Meriam is born a harami and treated like a puppet by Rasheed, who controls and abuses her. In his adventure, Pinocchio seeks to be a real human boy, while Meriam seeks to find her identity and human value, among other things. In the end, Pinocchio succeeds in becoming a real human boy, while Meriam transforms into a woman full of love and compassion.

b- *The Old Man and the Sea*

The second element of American literature is the short novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, written by the American author Ernest Hemingway, which Babi reads. "Babi sat at the foot of a thick-trunked acacia tree reading a paperback. Laila knew the book; he'd read it to her once. It told the story of an old fisherman named Santiago who catches an enormous fish. But by the

time he sails his boat to safety, there is nothing left of his prize fish; the sharks have torn it to pieces "(Hosseini 157). Hosseini does not mention the title of the book, instead he summarizes the story from the point of view of Leila, making readers guess the novel. However, what is important is that the story itself is an allusion to the plot of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The story of Santiago is about resistance and fighting against defeat; he faces death and danger and battles with the Marlin and sharks in order to prove himself and survive. On the other hand, the story of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is about survival, resistance, and fighting; the characters struggle to survive the war through hope and courage, demonstrating the astonishing capacities of the human body and mind. However, the passage and the details that Leila remembers of the story, those of Santiago's lack of chance to bring the Marlin, symbolize the state of weakness and vulnerability of the Afghans to doing something regarding the wars that ravage their country.

c- The Titanic Movie

The Titanic movie also refers to American culture, which Hosseini utilizes to bolster the story's meaning. "That summer, Titanic fever gripped Kabul. People smuggled pirated copies of the film from Pakistan- sometimes in their underwear"(Hosseini 291). Despite the Taliban's policies making it unlawful to view movies, Afghans risk their lives to do so. This demonstrates how receptive Afghans are to new cultures but the Taliban does not allow it. "It was possible to buy Titanic carpets, and Titanic cloth, from bolts arranged in wheelbarrows. There was Titanic deodorant, Titanic toothpaste, Titanic perfume, Titanic pakora, even Titanic burqas. A particularly persistent beggar began calling himself "Titanic Beggar." "Titanic City" was born" (Housseini 292). The people of Kabul tolerate the Titanic film, despite the fact that it contradicts their morals and traditions in so many ways. Hosseini proves that genuine Afghanistan is open to all cultures, just as it was when Leila and Tariq went to the cinema to see a Russian film. "This American love story not only allows Laila's children to experience fun and take their

minds of the scary things outside and the hunger inside, but also it becomes a symbol of Kabul's people resistance against the Taliban. This movie is watched by Aziza with the two people she treasures the most: her mother and Mariam”⁹²(Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva 06). The film is a metaphor to Kabul; the Titanic boat represents Kabul, and the passengers represent Afghans; and, like the Titanic, Kabul is drowning in warfare, and its people are starving and suffering as a result of the system and the drought . Meriam, Leila and Aziza are also obsessed with Titanic, Aziza and Meriam play the movie, and Leila comments: “That's what it is. Everybody wants Jack to rescue them from disaster. But there is no Jack. Jack is not coming back. Jack is dead.” (Hosseini 292). Leila seems hopeless like other Afghans who wait someone to save them. However, Leila will find her” Jack”, Meriam who will sacrifice her life to save her from Rasheed. Tariq might also be termed her Jack because he returns and marries her.

Hence, Hosseini’s hybridity enhances the in-between identity realities. His depiction of Afghan traditions such as Ramadhan, marriages, and funerals, as well as his usage of Farsi language and Afghan symbols, demonstrate his great commitment to the Afghan nation. Hosseini’s American identity is also present in his novel. His ideology is highly influenced by the American values of freedom, power, and equality that Afghanistan ignores. He also inserts elements from American literature and culture to develop the story and express his “Americanness”. Hosseini does not deny either identities. However, the collected data show that Hosseini’s Afghan identity seems to occupy more space in his novel. Nonetheless , after the 9/11 event, and for the first time, Hosseini felt a split in his identity because the subject involves both Afghanistan and the United States, and Hosseini, as an Afghan American, is

⁹² Al-Dagamseh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. “Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative.” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 2017. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3057>.

concerned with both nations. In an interview, Hosseini expressed his feelings about the attack and said:

The sort of split in my identity that really came into view was September 11th, which I experienced as into very different ways. First, as an American, I experienced this with shock, horror and terrible sadness. At the time, I experienced this as an Afghan when the news leaked out soon that it was in Afghanistan that these plots had been made. Therefore, I began thinking about what the consequences are for the people in Afghanistan, what does this mean for the future of the country, what is the impact of this on me not just as an American but also as an Afghan and that's sort of when I felt that split in my identity.⁹³

In the novel, Hosseini expresses his opinion about that matter through Leila and Tariq's dialogue. The mixed feelings of fear about war and the hope for the Taliban's collapse by the American army are expressed by Tariq and Leila's contradictory views. "It may not be such a bad thing... 's going on back home," Tariq argues. It may not be so bad in the end"(Hosseini 378). Tariq's arguments rely on his hope that the American army will put an end to the Taliban regime "that maybe there will be hope at the other end of this war, that maybe for the first time in a long time" (Hosseini378). On the other hand, Leila's impression of America declaring war is fear because of what she has experienced with the death of her parents. "You left when the Mujahideen began fighting, remember? I'm the one who stayed behind. Me. I know war. I lost my parents to war. My parents, Tariq. And now to hear you say that war is not so bad? " (Hosseini 377). Hosseini expressed the same feelings:

For me, as an Afghan, it was more complicated because I not only experienced what happened as a citizen of that country but also as an Afghan. When the stories began to

⁹³Housseini, Khaled, "Khaled Housseini : A Story of Family". Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22Jul.2013. Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g. Accessed 10Apr.2021.

come out that this attack was initiated in Afghanistan and then when President Bush announced that the USA was going into Afghanistan, it was a very challenging time for us. It was a mixture of dread and hope. Dread that there was going to be more fighting, but at the same time, there was hope that things might finally turn in a better direction.⁹⁴

Tariq and Leila's viewpoints reveal two dominating conceptions of the Afghan-American battle. One vision supports an invasion by the United States to eradicate the Taliban, while the other believes that war is a risky approach that will inflict more damage and death. However, Hosseini's objectivity appears to be compromised by Leila's internal monologue. "She knows that he is probably right. She knows how his comment was intended. Maybe this *is* necessary. Maybe there will be hope when Bush's bombs stop falling. But she cannot bring herself to say if. It's hard to rejoice. It seems hypocritical, perverse"(378). Privately, Leila appears to agree with Tariq's viewpoint, but her trauma prevents her from admitting it. Leila's point of view is emotionally driven, whereas Tariq's is more critical and objective. This undermines Leila's case while strengthening Tariq's. In this way, Hosseini seems to support the US war in Afghanistan. Thus, Hosseini's handling of the 9/11 event raises a plethora of questions about the novel's Neo-orientalist leanings. The question is whether Hosseini's characterization of Afghanistan obscures America's hegemonic position in the country. The following chapter will go over this subject.

⁹⁴ Housseini, Khaled, "Khaled Housseini : A Story of Family". Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22 Jul. 2013. Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN_6g. Accessed 10 Apr. 2021.

III. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* : In-between Neo-Orientalism and Neutrality

This chapter examines Hosseini's portrayal of Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which falls in-between Neo-Orientalist and neutral ideas. Many critics assume that Hosseini's novels nourish the stereotypical image that the West adopts from the East. Hence, contributing to the spread of a false image of the Orient among Western readers. Others regard the novel as an authentic and neutral depiction of Afghanistan. To discuss this matter, it is important to understand the notions of Orientalism and Neo Orientalism. "For an Afghan American writer like Hosseini forced to grapple with complex identities by virtue of his emigration from Afghanistan to the United States, questions of centrality and peripherality are inevitable: how does such an author fit into 'national' literary traditions"?⁹⁵ (O'Brien 02)

▪ **Orientalism/Neo Orientalism: Definition**

1. Orientalism

Said's groundbreaking critical work *Orientalism* (1978) is widely acknowledged as the cornerstone of what has evolved into a multifaceted and diverse conceptual framework known as 'postcolonial theory'. *Orientalism* questions the very foundations of Western representation and the social construction of the 'Orient' as the ultimate Other in history, literature, art, music, and popular culture. ⁹⁶(Burney 23)

⁹⁵ George O'Brien. "The Muse of Exile: Estrangement Renewal in Modern Irish Literature." *Exile in Literature*, Bucknell University Press, 1988, pp. 82–101.

⁹⁶ Burney, Shehla. "Chapter One : Orientalism: The Making of the Other." *Counterpoints*, vol. 417, Peter Lang AG, 2012, pp. 23–39.

Orientalism is an academic discipline that studies the Orient from the point of view of the West. It involves a chain of representations that western writers, travelers, anthropologists, painters, missionaries and traders report about the Orient and that often categorize the East as the other, uncivilized exotic world. In his book *Orientalism* (1978). Edward Said denotes three meanings of the word Orientalism.

First, Orientalism as a traditional academic field: Said assumes that "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient-and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism"⁹⁷(10). Said adds that "most scholars do not support this definition first because it is too general and indistinct and because it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism."⁹⁸(10)

The second meaning assumes that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between" the Orient "and (most of the time)" the Occident"⁹⁹(Said 11). Hence, for Said, the establishing of a comparative study between the East and the West is the starting point for elaborate theories, political accounts, novels and epics to settle a distinction between the West and the East. This distinction draws the East as everything the West is not considering their customs, beliefs, lifestyle and so on.

Said proposes a third definition of Orientalism that is more applicable in the historical context: "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"¹⁰⁰(11). In this respect, Said

⁹⁷ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014.

⁹⁸ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*.

⁹⁹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*.

¹⁰⁰ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*.

supports this definition with Foucault's idea of discourse and knowledge concerning the use of institutions to produce knowledge. Foucault's ideas are already detailed in the previous parts of this research.

I have found it useful here to employ Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (Said 11)

When describing the relationship between the Orient and the East, Said designates "an intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture" (27). In *Orientalist Structure and Restructures*, Said explains the changing perception of the East in the Orientalists' works. Before the eighteenth century, the main concern of orientalists was religion. However, the expansion beyond "the Islamic lands" led to a better understanding of the rest of the world. Orientalists distinguished the physical, religious, and cultural differences between the East and the rest of the world, including the Orient. Increased research and comparative studies between the West and the East resulted in the formation of new perspectives regarding the superiority of white men over the rest and the romanticization of the Orient. Eastern expansions, studies, and research into the Orient increased the Orient's passivity while putting the East in a dynamic mood in the oriental spheres. Hence, such intellectual activities nourished the imperialist and colonist projects of the East over the Orient under the pretext of white men's burden.

To study the Orientalist discourse, Said proposes a concept that he calls "strategic location". "By strategic location, I mean a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about" (Said 28). This strategy aims to identify the

author's relationship with the Orient. Anyone who writes about the Orient leaves traces that identify which pole he or she stands for, whether the Orient or the West. "This location includes the kind of narrative voice the author adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf."(Said 28)

2. Neo-Orientalism

The nineteenth century witnessed great reformations in which Islam participated as an important leader and factor in the dramatic changing politics of the Middle East, like The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, The Arabic-Israelian fight over Palestine, and The Mujahidin revolution against the Soviets. However, the 9/11 terrorist attack has "put both the West and Islam in quite new positions" ¹⁰¹(Samiei 1184). These rising incidents formed a set of questions about Orientalism as a range of thoughts that need to be evaluated and refined. This led to the appearance of a new paradigm which is called Neo-Orientalism. The term Neo Orientalism suggests a distinctive change from the classical Orientalism that Bahdada and Williams identify:

First, whereas classical Orientalists were commonly male European savants, philologists, established writers and artists, Neo-Orientalists tend to be ordinary Middle Eastern subjects whose self-proclaimed authenticity sanctions and authorizes their discourses. Contemporary Neo-Orientalists are not, however, merely 'native informants' or 'comprador intellectuals'.. but rather Middle Eastern women and men who use their native subjectivity and new-found agency in the West to render otherwise biased accounts of the region seemly more authoritative and objective. Second, in

¹⁰¹ Samiei, Mohammed. "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 7, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2010, pp. 1145–60.

contrast to classical Orientalism's apparent privileging of philological, cultural, and formalistic concerns over ideological ones, neo-Orientalism is marked by an unapologetic investment in and engagement with the politics of the Middle East¹⁰².(284)

Neo Orientalist writings, like those of Orientalists, exaggerate the stereotypical image of the Orient as the savage, violent, and uncivilized other. The increasing clash between the USA and Muslim countries like Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, especially post 9/11, encouraged academic research and publications about the Muslim world. Hence, while "classical Orientalism represents and focuses on different issues of different ethnic groups of the Middle East, Neo-Orientalism is distinguished by the geography it covers, which Said defines as" Islamic East vs the West. "¹⁰³(Altwaiji 317)

Neo Orientalism raises questions about the monopoly of Islam in Middle Eastern politics and social life, considering it as a threat to the world. In this respect, Salim Kerboua suggests: "A peculiar aspect of this Neo-Orientalism manifests itself in different forms within the Western social world and with regard to how some right-wing circles view countries and peoples of the Arab-Muslim world or Muslim people within Western societies. The most hostile manifestation of Neo-Orientalism is a social phenomenon called Islamophobia "¹⁰⁴(8). Like antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia, the word Islamophobia emerged to designate hate and the rejection of the "other" because of his or her Muslim identity. Since the 9/11 attacks, the discourse that has

¹⁰² Ali Behdad, and Juliet Williams. "Neo-Orientalism." *Globalizing American Studies*, University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 283–99.

¹⁰³ Mubarak Altwaiji. "Neo-Orientalism and the Neo-Imperialism Thesis: Post-9/11 US and Arab World Relationship." *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2014, pp. 313–23.

¹⁰⁴ Salim Kerboua. "From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism: Early and Contemporary Constructions of Islam and the Muslim World." *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2016, pp. 7–34.

been adopted in depicting and publishing information about the Middle East and Islam in the Western media has contributed to the disseminating of Islamophobia among western readers.

In literature, many novelists, especially Middle Eastern ones, are accused of adopting a Neo-Orientalist discourse in their depiction of their own countries and culture. Their novels are judged for participating in the spread of Islamophobia and the stigmatization of Muslims. "Far from giving an accurate representation of Islam and Muslims, they emphasize exclusively what are considered negative dimensions and components of the Islamic faith and culture or the alleged behavior of Muslims."¹⁰⁵(Kerboua 24)

After exposing the key ideas of both Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism, here comes the main focus of this chapter, which is analyzing Hosseini's representation of his land and people to the Western reader. Does it hold any orientalist ideas or is it simply an authentic and neutral report about his land and nation?

- **Afghanistan in the Western Media vs Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

This section compares how Afghanistan is portrayed in the Western media, particularly in the American media, as well as in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, in relation to Neo Orientalist ideas. This helps to establish Hosseini's "strategic location". It also enables readers to figure out whether Hosseini supports Western propaganda about Afghanistan and the Muslim world or rejects it. That is, the representation of Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is contingent on the various interpretations offered by the text. Here is how Afghanistan is depicted in the Western media and in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

¹⁰⁵ Salim Kerboua. "From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism: Early and Contemporary Constructions of Islam and the Muslim World." *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2016, pp. 7–34.

1. In the Western Media

Many thinkers regard the media as not only a vivid source of information, but also as a vivid influence in shaping opinions, images, perceptions, and attitudes toward a given subject. In this regard, "Shoemaker and Reese (1991) assert that media content is both a manifestation and a source of culture. That is, media content takes elements of culture, magnifies them, frames them, and feeds them back to readers, thus imposing their logic on creating a symbolic environment"¹⁰⁶(qtd.in Kazemiyan 32). Shoemaker and Reese highlight the power of the media in constructing a truth that is not necessarily reality through discourse. Such discourse creates meanings and images that manipulate and influence our views and feelings about the subject being exposed or discussed. Before presenting this subject to the public, "as Hall (1997) argues, it implies the active work of selecting and presenting and of structuring and shaping. It is not merely the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labor of "making things mean"¹⁰⁷(qtd.in Kazemiyan 32). In terms of media coverage, Afghanistan has occupied a prominent position in the international press and media following the 9/11 attacks and continues to do so today. These attacks heightened strategic interest in Afghanistan as the epicenter of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, which pose a threat to the entire world. Therefore, public opinion about Afghanistan is primarily formed and developed through the post-9/11 discourse, which is more focused on Afghanistan's radical side rather than its humanistic side. Terrorism, Afghanistan, and Islam were the major themes in the Western media, as demonstrated in the following extracts: *The Guardian* (2005): "J.W Bush claimed that the American war on terrorism was a "crusade" when he said: I am driven with a mission from God'. God would tell me, 'George go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan'. And I did.

¹⁰⁶ Kazemiyan, Azam. *A Thousand Splendid Suns: Rhetorical Vision of Afghan Women*. Department of Communication, University of Ottawa, 2012, p. 120.

¹⁰⁷ Kazemiyan, Azam. *A Thousand Splendid Suns: Rhetorical Vision of Afghan Women*

And then God would tell me 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq'. And I did." ¹⁰⁸. *Los Angeles Times*(2001) reports Laura Bush' speech:

The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control. Brutal oppression of women was one of the terrorists' central goals. 70% of Afghan people are malnourished and one in four children, lacking health care, won't live past age five. Women are denied access to doctors and have not been allowed to work outside their homes or leave their homes unescorted.¹⁰⁹

Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (2001): "Syndicated columnist Ann Coulter says: "This is no time to be precious about locating the exact individuals directly involved in this particular terrorist attack. We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity"¹¹⁰. "Bill O'Reilly said in 13/9/2001: "It doesn't make any difference who you kill in the process of retaliation against the attacks."¹¹¹ (Matusitz190). "The former U.S secretary of state Laurance Eagleburger said to CNN in September 2001: " There is only one way to begin to deal with people like this, and that is you have to kill some of them even if they are not immediately directly involved in that thing."¹¹² (Matusitz190). "*New York Post* about Steve Dunleavy's comment on September, 13, 2001: The response to this unimaginable 21st century Pearl Harbor should be simple as it is swift-Kill the bastards. A gunshot between the eyes, blow

¹⁰⁸ Ewen MacAskill. "George Bush: 'God Told Me to End the Tyranny in Iraq.'" *The Guardian*, Oct. 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa>. Accessed Jun.2021.

¹⁰⁹ James Gerstenzang and Lisa Getter. Laura Bush Addresses State of Afghan Women." *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 2001, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-nov-18-mn-5602-story.html>. Accessed 20 May.2021.

¹¹⁰ "Media March to War." *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, 17 Sept. 2001, <https://fair.org/press-release/media-march-to-war/>. Accessed 15 Jun.2021.

¹¹¹ Matusitz, Jonathan. *Terrorism and Communication*. SAGE, 2013.SAGE, 2013.

¹¹² Matusitz, Jonathan. *Terrorism and Communication*.

them to smithereens, poison them if you have to. As for cities and countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts.”¹¹³(Matusitz190). “*CBC News* reports that the Canadian Prime Minister said on September 6, 2011: "Islamic terrorism is the greatest threat to Canada's security. When people think of Islamic terrorism, they think of Afghanistan, or maybe they think of some place in the Middle East, but the truth is that threat exists all over the world, "he said, citing domestic terrorism in Nigeria. "¹¹⁴

The Canadian prime minister highlights an important point about the media portraying Afghanistan as the epicenter of terrorism, despite the fact that terrorism exists in other parts of the world, such as Nigeria with Boko Haram. In this regard, Jonathan Matusitz observes that “media pundits use loaded language that is highly emotive and designed to evoke a specific image of enemies such as Afghanistan and Iraq for propaganda purposes”¹¹⁵(190). For example, Bush's claim that the war in Afghanistan was a religious duty evokes the concept of white men's burden. The use of such language is intended to persuade the western public of the purity of their intentions in their war against Afghanistan, which excludes any other economic, political, or strategic goals. His wife's speech focuses primarily on the portrayal of Afghan women. as passive and oppressed, claiming that it is America's responsibility to save them. “The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.”¹¹⁶As noticed, world leaders, including those from the UK and USA, regularly cited the need to improve Afghan women's rights to justify their military interventions. UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said:

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ “Harper Says ‘Islamicism’ Biggest Threat to Canada | *CBC News*.” *CBC News*, Sept. 2011, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/harper-says-islamicism-biggest-threat-to-canada-1.1048280>. Accessed 21 Jun.2021.

¹¹⁵ Matusitz, Jonathan. *Terrorism and Communication*. SAGE, 2013.

¹¹⁶James Gerstenzang and Lisa Getter. “Laura Bush Addresses State of Afghan Women.” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 2001, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-nov-18-mn-5602-story.html>. Accessed 20 May.2021.

"There cannot be true peace and recovery in Afghanistan without a restoration of the rights of women". UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "The recovery of Afghanistan must entail a restoration of the rights of Afghan women. Indeed, it will not be possible without them". US Secretary of State Colin Powell: "The conflict will not be the end. We will not walk away, as the outside world has done so many times before"¹¹⁷. And after the invasion of Afghanistan, *Time Magazine* reports:

In the streets of Kabul, you can see something these days that has not been glimpsed there for almost five years – women's faces. Now that the Taliban has fled the city, a few brave women have shed the burka – the head-to-toe garment, to Western eyes, a kind of body bag for the living, made mandatory by the defeated religious leadership. Men sometimes look in astonishment at these faces, as if they were comets or solar eclipses. So do other women. From the moment in 1996 that the Taliban took power, it sought to make women not just obedient but nonexistent. Not just submissive but invisible. For five years, it almost succeeded.¹¹⁸(Lacayo 2001)

Newsweek also reports the improving conditions of women after the US invasion:

Last week, at least four women got jobs at Radio Afghanistan, and others continued to stop by the radio station to apply. "When I heard the Taliban was finished, I rejoiced beyond measure," said Rida Azimi, 25, one of the first women to read the news on Radio Afghanistan after the Taliban fled. At 10 a.m. on Tuesday, as soon as she heard about the

¹¹⁷ "Women in Afghanistan: The Back Story." *Amnesty International UK*, 25 Nov. 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/womens-rights-afghanistan-history>. Accessed 12 Jun.2021.

¹¹⁸ Richard Lacayo. "About Face for Afghan Women." *Time*, Nov. 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,185651,00.html>. Accessed 30 .Jul.2021.

Taliban's defeat, Azimi joyously burned her burqa at home. "I felt so depressed wearing the veil," she said. "Now I see the sunlight and it's so beautiful."¹¹⁹

As previously noted, the representation of Afghan women in the Western media is based on two time periods: Before and after the US military intervention. Before the intervention, Afghan women were represented as Burqa-wearing, helpless, and docile women, but after the operation, women were described as liberated, more powerful, and hopeful for the future. In the United States, the burqa has received a lot of attention. According to the American media, it was viewed as a symbol of the Taliban's oppressive policies against women. As a result, filming ladies removing their burqa not only legitimizes their cause, but also emphasizes their triumph. However, "the powerful side of Afghan women is missing from most of the Western media representations but these representations also surprisingly miss the US involvement in the deteriorating situation of Afghanistan and put all the blame for the women's worse condition on the Taliban"¹²⁰ (Khan and Qasim¹²⁹). Indeed, the necessity to compare Western media reports on Afghanistan with those made by Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* arises. This comparison aims to examine if he agrees with the media portrayal or has his own take on it.

2. Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a vivid source of knowledge about Afghanistan, particularly for those who have no prior experience with the country. Critics have deemed the historical

¹¹⁹ Liu Milinda. "Now I See The Sunlight." *News Week*, Nov. 2001, <https://www.newsweek.com/now-i-see-sunlight-149777>. Accessed 11 Jun.2021.

¹²⁰ Khan, Muhammad Uzair, and Muhammad Qasim. "Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*." *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 9, 2017, pp. 127–36.

evidence in the work to be true and authentic. In terms of historical narratives, the data's authenticity lends the novel a sense of neutrality.

a- Authenticity of the Historical Data

Novelists, like Hosseini, who write about history, aim to convince readers about the authenticity of their works. To convince his readers, Hosseini claims that his objective is to present an authentic work to readers. "My duty as a novelist is to represent my homeland authentically as displaying the things I love about my country but also the things I find problematic"¹²¹. The idea of writing *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is inspired by a visit to Afghanistan in an interview he said:

In the spring of 2003, I went to Kabul, and I recall seeing these burqa-clad women sitting at street corners, with four, five, six children, begging for change. I remember watching them walking in pairs up the street, trailed by their children in ragged clothes, and wondering how life had brought them to that point...I spoke to many of those women in Kabul. Their life stories were truly heartbreaking...When I began writing *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, I found myself thinking about those resilient women over and over. Though no one woman that I met in Kabul inspired either Laila or Mariam, their voices, faces, and their incredible stories of survival were always with me, and a good part of my inspiration for this novel came from their collective spirit. ¹²²

¹²¹ Hosseini, Khaled, "Khaled Hosseini : A Story of Family". Interview by Steve Paikin. *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 22 Jul. 2013, *Youtube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVuwzCgN6g>. Accessed 10 Apr. 2021.

¹²² BookBrowse. "Khaled Hosseini Author Interview." *BookBrowse.Com*, https://www.bookbrowse.com/author-interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/900/khaled-hosseini. Accessed 3 May 2021

Hosseini acknowledges in this interview that his novel is the result of some research into Afghan society, particularly Afghan women. Being present in the field of labor among the Afghan people, observing and conversing with them, collecting information about their lives, and then presenting it in his novel. All these activities are primarily practiced in the field of sociology, which aims to understand social relationships and institutions. As a result of this social and scholarly touch in the construction of his novel, Hosseini's portrayal of Afghanistan obtains authenticity among *A Thousand Splendid Suns* readers. Moreover, his identity as an Afghan native contributes to the credibility of his novel. Allison argues that New Orientalism is based on the authority that readers perceive the authors to have, which Gayatri Spivak refers to as the "native informant" viewpoint. That is, the author's background—many authors, like Hosseini, are diasporic members of the communities they write about—is perceived by Western audiences as providing an insider's perspective, and thus more credibility”¹²³ (75). Moreover, "the afterword, acknowledgments, dedication, and even the placement of the author photo and biographical note—at the beginning of the text rather than the end—work to establish the veracity and authenticity of the narrative contained between them”¹²⁴(Mader 76). Furthermore, while presenting historical information, Hosseini makes sure to direct readers to a specific source, such as local newspapers, radio, or television networks. "After the music faded, a man's voice came on the radio," the radio announces. He reported that Daoud's loyalist forces were all but defeated... " (Hosseini 91). "Anis, one of Kabul's newspapers, had run a story the month before on the renovation of the orphanage" (Hosseini 399). " The TV is tuned to BBC. On the screen, a tower, black smoke billowing from its top floors" (Hosseini 372). The fact that actual media sources are used as historical references leads the reader to trust the information

¹²³ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the subaltern speak?: Postkolonialität und subalterne Artikulation*. Turia + Kant, 2008.

¹²⁴ Mader, Allison. *The Importance of Reading Said: Orientalism, Women, and Postcolonial Literature After 9/11*. Graduate Studies, 2017, p. 164. DOI.org (Datacite), <https://doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/28202>.

supplied. Hosseini's report's reliability is bolstered by his thorough coverage of the wars' specifics. The credibility of Hosseini's report is strengthened by his accurate coverage of the details of the wars. "Jonathan Yardley (2007) in *Washington Post Review* asserts that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is powerfully moving. He adds, like a historian or journalist, Khalid Hosseini carefully provides dates for all of the historical events, which seems a bit out of place in a work of fiction"¹²⁵(qtd.in Kazemiyani 54). In her essay *A Good Authentic Read: Exoticism in the Postcolonial Novels of the Richard and Judy Book Club*, Helen Cousins assumes that "readers reviews on Richard and Judy Book Club Website suggested that many of these readers understood Hosseini's book as an authentic representation of Afghanistan from the 1960 to the present despite his absence from the country for 36 years"(139). As a result, by claiming the authenticity of reporting Afghanistan's history, Hosseini is equally accountable for the picture of Afghanistan that he is propagating among Western readers. In this respect, Abdullah M. Al-Dagamseh says: "here and there, Hosseini mentions dates, names of prominent figures, and titles of parties. But this is even more dangerous than outright silencing of historical facts, because it gives the narrative a sense of trustworthiness"¹²⁶(7). Hence, to study the existence of any eventual Neo- Orientalist attentions, it is important to confront *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with some critics that assume their presence and those who defend the novel.

b- Muslim Men and Women Portrayal

1. The Stereotypes.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, characterization is crucial. The characters' roles in the narrative aid readers in forming their own image of the Afghan people. Hosseini's character

¹²⁵ Kazemiyani, Azam. *A Thousand Splendid Suns: Rhetorical Vision of Afghan Women*. Department of Communication, University of Ottawa, 2012, p. 120.

¹²⁶ Al-Dagamseh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 2017. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3057>.

design has a significant impact on the reader's perceptions of Afghanistan. Therefore, the characters are viewed as representatives of Afghan society. In *New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir*, Fitzpatrick addresses Hosseini's portrayal of the characters. She bases her study on the character of Rasheed. She considers him as the representative of "almost every common stereotype of the Muslim man: infinitely sexual, irrational, and cruel" ¹²⁷(249). Hence, a study of Rasheed's character is necessary to support or undermine this thesis. Rasheed's physical description creates a shady idea about his personality.

In the mirror, Mariam had her first glimpse of Rasheed: the big, square, ruddy face; the hooked nose; the flushed cheeks that gave the impression of sly cheerfulness; the watery, bloodshot eyes; the crowded teeth, the front two pushed together like a gabled roof; the impossibly low hairline, barely two finger widths above the bushy eyebrows; the wall of thick, coarse, salt-and-pepper hair.(Hosseini 58)

The description of Rasheed through a mirror is metaphorical, because his physical appearance mirrors his personality. It is a reflection of his internal self and individuality. For instance, the depiction of his cheeks highlights his inner slyness. The bloodshot eyes reflect the vibe of a criminal (when he eventually tries to kill Leila) and the simile "the crowded teeth... like a gabled roof", emphasizes his hard demeanor. The use of the word *impossibly* stimulates the imagination of his face and adds mystery to his persona. Furthermore, terms like "large, square, reddish, hooked, crowded, bushy, and thick" create rough sounds that convey severity and harshness.

Concerning his personality, Rasheed is the antagonist of the novel. He is described as the story's ruthless villain. Rasheed's personality is unstable. "Initially, Rasheed has the potential

¹²⁷ Fitzpatrick, Coeli. "New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir: An Illustration of Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Nov. 2009, pp. 243–56. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140902972305>.

to gain the reader's sympathies. He can be pitied as a widower who simply wants companionship in life, and he seems to treat Mariam with care and affection "¹²⁸(Fitzpatrick 248). At the beginning of their marriage, Rasheed shows Meriam sympathy and love. He takes her to the city, buys her ice cream, and informs her about the city, its architecture, and its automobiles. He takes his time before asking her to help with her household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, as well as her wifely responsibilities in the bedroom. Rasheed's joy is greatly exhibited when Meriam becomes pregnant. He builds a crib for the child and insists that it is going to be a boy. "What if it's a girl?" Mariam said. "I think it's a boy. Yes. A boy "(Hosseini 90). Rasheed's desire for a son highlights the concept of gender roles in Muslim societies, where male heirs are sought and cherished more than female heirs. "This oriental stereotype tradition is widely associated with ancient Arab pre-Islamic tribes"¹²⁹ (Louai 02). This idea is also internalized by the female characters, like Fariba, who is more concerned with her sons and ignores Leila. Meriam's neighbors too when they tell her : "Boy is better, Mariam jan, they carry the family name" (Hosseini 72). After Meriam's miscarriages, Rasheed's misogynist character is manifested. "He blames Meriam for failing to give him a male heir. Within such oriental categorizations, Rasheed is presented as a superior irrational male who can not accept any possible scientific explanation for these miscarriages "¹³⁰(Louai 02). He even refuses to attend the funeral that Meriam plans in honor of their child's memory. Rasheed begins to dislike Meriam and treats her horribly at this point. Hosseini depicts the previous idea in this passage:

¹²⁸ Fitzpatrick, Coeli. "New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir: An Illustration of Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Nov. 2009, pp. 243–56. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140902972305>.

¹²⁹ El Habib Louai. Reading Lolita in Tehran and A Thousand Splendid Suns: Unveiling a New-Orientalist Discourse | Comparative Literature. <https://www.cmlt.uga.edu/news/stories/2013/reading-lolita-teheran-and-thousand-splendid-suns-unveiling-new-orientalist>. Accessed 15 June.2021.

¹³⁰ El Habib Louai. Reading Lolita in Tehran and A Thousand Splendid Suns: Unveiling a New-Orientalist Discourse

And as her heart pounded, her mind wondered what excuse he would use that night to pounce on her. There was always something, some minor thing that would infuriate him, because no matter what she did to please him, no matter how thoroughly she submitted to his wants and demands, it wasn't enough. She could not give him his son back. With each disappointment, Rasheed had grown more remote and resentful. Now nothing she did pleased him."(103)

Rasheed begins to physically assault Meriam and beats her. The words *heart* and *mind* highlight both Meriam's emotional and psychological trauma. The repetition of the expression *no matter* emphasizes Rasheed's implacability. One of the most painful instances of his cruelty is when he forces Meriam to chew pebbles because his rice isn't boiled enough, one of the most painful instances of his cruelty.

His powerful hands clasped her jaw. He shoved two fingers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold, hard pebbles into it.. Mariam struggled against him, mumbling, but he kept pushing the pebbles in his upper lip curled in a sneer. "Now chew," he said... Mariam chewed. Something in the back of her mouth cracked. "Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you've given me in this marriage. Bad food, and nothing else. (Hosseini 109)

This scene is cruel enough to influence the reader's perception of the oriental man and husband. Hosseini's imagination of Rasheed's torture calls for solidarity for Afghan women. It does, however, reinforce the orientalist stereotype of the violent Muslim husband. "Rasheed is represented as an Oriental man not governed by sublime feelings of love and affection, but rather by egoistic sentiments of personal immobilization of his ancestral line"¹³¹. His obsession

¹³¹ El Habib Louai. *Reading Lolita In Tehran and A Thousand Splendid Suns: Unveiling a New-Orientalist Discourse | Comparative Literature*. <https://www.cmlt.uga.edu/news/stories/2013/reading-lolita-teheran-and-thousand-splendid-suns-unveiling-new-orientalist>. Accessed 15 Jun.2021

is highlighted when Leila is pregnant. "It was this story that was circling in Laila's head after she gave Rasheed the news about the baby. He had immediately hopped on his bicycle, ridden to a mosque, and prayed for a boy "(Hosseini 225). When Leila gives birth to Aziza, Rasheed treats Leila roughly. He shows no love for Aziza. "Sometimes, I swear, sometimes I want to put that thing in a box and let her float down the Kabul River. Like baby Moses"(Hosseini 232). Rasheed's sincere love is revealed only when Leila gives birth to Zalmai, his male heir. Rasheed's fury has calm down. "When Zalmai was born, Rasheed had moved him into the bed he shared with Laila... He'd paid for new clothes, new rattles, new bottles, new diapers, even though they could not afford them and Aziza's old ones were still serviceable" (Hosseini 285). Rasheed's life is being renewed by the use of the word *new*, as he becomes a parent (of a son) for the second time. Hence, Rasheed's obsession with having a male successor, as well as his mistreatment of Aziza and his wives, reinforce the stereotype that only males are valued in Muslim society. Zalmai, although being a youngster, is given a neo-Orientalist personality. When he's with Rasheed, for example, he acts differently.

But Zalmai worshipped his father, and, because he did, he was transformed when his father was around to dote on him. Zalmai was quick then with a defiant cackle or an impudent grin. In his father's presence, he was easily offended. He held grudges. He persisted in mischief in spite of Laila's scolding, which he never did when Rasheed was away. Rasheed approved of all of it. "A sign of intelligence," he said. He said the same of Zalmai's recklessness-when he swallowed, then pooped, marbles; when he lit matches; when he chewed on Rasheed's cigarettes(Hosseini 284).

Despite the fact that Zalmai is just two years old, Hosseini blames wicked behavior to him. The adjectives used to describe his actions have a strong connotation of harshness that is out of proportion to his age. Hosseini murders his innocence as a child and imagines him as the future Rasheed. Indeed, he supports the notion that misogynistic, anti-woman sentiments are inherited

in orientalist men. "Zalmai will always possess this streak of devilish behavior, which aligns him with the novel's long list of male characters who are cruel to women seemingly for pleasure or purely out of callousness."¹³²(Mader 87)

Furthermore, sexuality is a major theme in orientalist publications on the Orient. In the 18th and 19th century European painters sexualized oriental women in their paintings by depicting them nude. Images like these helped to sell the concept of the Middle East as an exotic land of sexual hallucination. As a result, women are reduced to sexual objects, while males are reduced to sexual machines. Rasheed's sexuality is also revealed. He is portrayed as extremely sexual, and regards his wives as sexual properties. He only cares about satisfying his own desires without the consent of his wives. "A few moments later, he pushed back the blanket and left the room, leaving her with the impression of his head on her pillow, leaving her to wait out the pain down below, to look at the frozen stars in the sky and a cloud that draped the face of the moon like a wedding veil" (Hosseini 82). This portrayal reinforces the stereotype of the oriental male as a sexually driven individual. The repeating of the phrase *leaving her* emphasizes Rasheed's lack of emotional support for Meriam. In this section, Rasheed's sexuality is also discussed: "His appetite, on the other hand, was ferocious, sometimes bordering on the violent. "The way he pinned her down, his hard squeezes at her breasts, how furiously his hips worked. He was a man. All those years without a woman "(Hosseini 88). Rasheed's sexual abuse of his wives is clearly depicted by the words *ferocious*, *hard*, *furiously* and *violent*. He does the same with Leila when he forces her to have sex before her recovery. Jalil also is another character that promotes the same idea. Jalil is depicted as a womanizer. He has three wives, and ten children. After impregnating Nana, he leaves her in a small kolba. Furthermore, Hosseini depicts Rasheed's personality as a result of social beliefs and religion. Rasheed always uses

¹³² Mader, Allison. *The Importance of Reading Said: Orientalism, Women, and Postcolonial Literature After 9/11*. Graduate Studies, 2017, p. 164. DOI.org (Datacite), <https://doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/28202>.

religion or customs to back up his claims. For instance, he justifies his sexual abuse of Meriam by saying that the prophet did the same with his wives. To protect his honor, he forces her to wear a Burqa. When it comes to Ramadhan, Hosseini depicts it through Rasheed's behavior:

Except for a handful of days, Rasheed didn't observe the fast. The few times he did, he came home in a sour mood. Hunger made him curt, irritable, impatient. One night, Mariam was a few minutes late for dinner, and he started eating bread with radishes. Even after Mariam put the rice and the lamb and okra *qurma* in front of him, he wouldn't touch it. He said nothing, and went on chewing the bread, his temples working, the vein on his forehead, full and angry. (Hosseini 83)

Hosseini chooses Rasheed, an abominable character, to picture this holy month in Islam. Therefore, he provides readers with a superficial image of Ramadhan. He even reduces it into a month of angst and impatience instead of charity and patience.

On the other hand, some critics, like Melissa Lam in her article *The Politics of Fiction: a Response to New Orientalism in Type*, defend the novel from having any Neo-Orientalist approach. Lam relies on the analysis of characters, like Babi, Mullah Faizullah, Zaman and Tariq. She suggests that "reading further into the text, one can ascertain that there are many others, in fact a majority of central male characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that are not brutal or given misogynistic tendencies in the text" ¹³³(258). These characters represent the wise, good Afghan man. For instance, Mullah Faizullah represents moderate Muslims. He is a Quran tutor in the village. He visits Meriam's kolba once a week to teach her how to write and read the Quran. He even asks Nana to let Meriam to go to school. Mullah Faizullah is the only good man Meriam has ever known. her religious spirituality and faith are constructed through

¹³³ Lam, Melissa. "The Politics of Fiction: A Response to New Orientalism in Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Routledge, Nov. 2009, pp. 257–62. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140903198496>.

his lessons of prayer and Quran. Babi is a wonderful father who is concerned about the education and well-being of his daughters. He also puts up with Fariba's rage. Tariq represents the adoring and devoted husband. Regardless of his problems, he returns to Leila and marries her. He also supports her decision to return to Kabul, and he adores Zalmai just as much as he adores Aziza. Zaman, the orphanage's director, is portrayed as a kind soul who genuinely cares about all of the orphans. He even puts his life on the line to teach the orphans. As a result, the presence of such positive characters "resists Muslim stereotypes by not being overtly masculine and physical and is progressive in thought"¹³⁴ (Lam 258). Nonetheless, Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva view that "the existence of" likable "characters does not impede the spread of this ideology; on the contrary, it fuels the rescue discourse used by those who have power in their hands to invade other countries"¹³⁵ (10). By ideology, they mean Neo-Orientalism, which justifies the need for foreign intervention to rescue people like Leila, Meriem, Tariq, and Babi from the Taliban. Fitzpatrick also comments on this, saying: "At the end of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, we feel lucky if we can count on one hand the people in Afghanistan who have any real humanity. The reader could be forgiven for thinking that Mariam, Laila, Tariq, Babi, and Mullah Faizullah (three other characters) are anomalies of kindness in a cruel and violent country" (250). Her theory argues that the novel's prior characters aren't given much screen time. After a brief appearance, the characters are either murdered or estranged. Mullah Faizullah is removed from the story shortly after Meriam marries Rasheed, Babi is slain, and Tariq is exiled from the story following his separation with Leila. Furthermore, as Allison Mader points out, "each of these characters falls into stereotypes and cliches that have been well-documented by

¹³⁴ Lam, Melissa. "The Politics of Fiction: A Response to New Orientalism in Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Routledge, Nov. 2009, pp. 257–62. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140903198496>.

¹³⁵ Al-Dagamseh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 2017. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3057>.

Said and critics such as Jack Shaheen: Jalil is lustful and weak; Mullah Faizullah is weak and dependent on the Koran, which does not aid Mariam in the end; and Tariq is a man who is physically less of a man. Hakim is also described as timid, cowardly, and ineffective”¹³⁶ (88). “Although depicted in favorable light, he does not strike the reader as a representative of the Afghan men, either. The narrative singles him out as different from the norms of his community.”¹³⁷(Mansouri and Hoorvash 100)

Moreover, Hosseini chooses Rasheed as the spokesman of sensitive topics, like the Burqa, sexuality and the Taliban. He has greater room to voice his misogynist and extreme beliefs and when he asserts his understanding of Afghanistan, he enhances Rasheed’s discourse:

You think this is some new, radical idea the Taliban are bringing? Have you ever lived outside of your precious little shell in Kabul, my *gull* Ever cared to visit the real Afghanistan, the south, the east, along the tribal border with Pakistan? No? I have. And I can tell you that there are many places in this country that have always lived this way, or close enough anyhow. Not that you would know.(Hosseini 270)

By inserting this passage, Hosseini gives more authenticity to Rasheed’s discourse. Readers believe Rasheed’s presentation of "the real Afghanistan" as radical by nature even before the coming of the Taliban. Therefore, readers' understanding of Afghanistan comes initially from Rasheed’s ideology and attitudes. As a result, Hosseini diminishes the image of Muslims by limiting the roles of these characters. Rasheed, a sexist harsh character who supports the Taliban, on the other hand, is given more space and freedom to express his bigoted notions.

¹³⁶ Mader, Allison. *The Importance of Reading Said: Orientalism, Women, and Postcolonial Literature After 9/11*. Graduate Studies, 2017, p. 164. DOI.org (Datacite), <https://doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/28202>.

¹³⁷ Siahmansouri, Maryam, and Mona Hoorvash. “Heroic West, Villainous East: A Postcolonial Interpretation of Narrative Structure in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.” *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, vol. 11, no. 2, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Sept. 2020, pp. 95–106. [rals.scu.ac.ir, https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2020.15949](https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2020.15949).

This advantage develops his character by allowing him to have a greater impact on readers than the other characters. Indeed, Hosseini's uneven approach to these people is more akin to a Neo-Orientalist portrayal than a neutral incarnation of Afghan men.

2. The Need for the West and the Missing Side

According to Fitzpatrick, "there are few things Hosseini portrays more positively in Afghanistan than foreign occupations, which for all their 'errors' are never as bad as indigenous rule"¹³⁸ (249). To begin with the chain of colonial forces that occupied Afghanistan before the Soviets, Hosseini, surprisingly mentions only non-Western forces. "And that, my young friends, is the story of our country, one invader after another," the driver said, flicking cigarette ash out the window. "Macedonians. Sassanians. Arabs. Mongols. Now the Soviets. But we're like those walls up there. Battered, and nothing pretty to look at, but still standing. Isn't that the truth, *badar?*" "Indeed it is," said Babi" (Hosseini 150). "The British invaded Afghanistan twice from India with the intent of installing a puppet government. The first invasion (1838) was defeated by a popular uprising. In the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878). The British took control and installed a puppet ruler"¹³⁹. However, Hosseini prefers to exclude Britain from the list. This highlights Hosseini's manipulation in his use of history when he prefers to not mention some significant data. Moreover, the simile "we're like those walls up there. Battered, and nothing pretty to look at, but still standing", downplays Afghans' resistance to occupiers

¹³⁸ Fitzpatrick, Coeli. "New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir: An Illustration of Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Routledge, Nov. 2009, pp. 243–56. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140902972305>.

¹³⁹ BookBrowse. "A Short History of Afghanistan: Background Information When Reading A Thousand Splendid Suns." *BookBrowse.Com*, https://www.bookbrowse.com/mag/btb/index.cfm/book_number/1991/a-thousand-splendid-suns#btb. Accessed 8 July 2021.

throughout history. It depicts them in a passive mode, especially that these remarks come from an Afghan himself, which is noteworthy. This supports the assumption that Afghans lack self-confidence and consider themselves easy targets for invaders. As Said argues, "the West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor."¹⁴⁰ (109)

Hosseini's depiction of the Soviet occupation shows a positive impact on the lives of the characters. Readers discover that the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in order to liberate women and improve their education. Babi praises the soviets when he says: "and you can take advantage of that, Laila Of course, women's freedom- here, he shook his head ruefully-is also one of the reasons people out there took up arms in the first place "(Hosseini 141). By *out there*, Babi means the rural areas that are traditional and patriarchal. "While some atrocities of the Soviet occupation are mentioned, by and large the book presents the Soviet occupation as an ineffective attempt to bring Afghanistan into modernity by 'liberating women, abolishing forced marriage, raising minimum marriage age, etc'"¹⁴¹ (Fitzpatrick 249). What Fitzpatrick means is that Hosseini does not see the Soviet occupation through a colonial lens. The absence of the cold war in the tale hides the real motives of the soviets behind their invasion. It also serves to divert the reader's attention away from the United States' role in implementing the Jihad movement. On the other hand, Hosseini designates Arabs as the builders of the Taliban; "Meet our real masters," Rasheed said in a low-pitched voice. "Pakistani and Arab Islamists. The Taliban are puppets. These are the big players and Afghanistan is their playground." Rasheed said he'd heard rumors that the Taliban were allowing these people to set up secret camps all over the country, where young men were being trained to become suicide bombers and jihadi fighters'"(Hosseini 296). Hosseini portrays Arabs as the Taliban's masters and the

¹⁴⁰ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014.

¹⁴¹ Fitzpatrick, Coeli. "New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir: An Illustration of Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Routledge, Nov. 2009, pp. 243–56. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140902972305>.

world's most dangerous terrorists, and by reducing the Taliban to puppets, he convinces readers that Arabs are even worse than the Taliban. As a result, he perpetuates the stereotype that Arabs and Muslims are synonymous with terrorism. Hosseini only cites Arabs and Pakistanis, despite the fact that the United States played a significant role in arming and training the Mujahedeen to fight against the Soviets.

When it comes to the Taliban, though, Hosseini gives extensive documentation. He describes them as decent Muslims through Rasheed's discourse. "At least the Taliban are pure and incorruptible. At least they're decent Muslim boys. *Wallah*, when they come, they will clean up this place. They'll bring peace and order. People won't get shot anymore going out for milk. No more rockets! Think of it"(Hosseini 266). Despite the fact that Rasheed, the antagonist, holds this viewpoint, the phrase "decent Muslims" has the ability to impact Western readers' impressions of Islam. Hosseini does not associate this expression with characters like Mullah Faizullah or Babi. As a result, it may be deduced from the reader's perspective that "decent Muslims" are the ones who apply the Taliban's Shariha. In the following passage, Hosseini discusses the Taliban's origins, institutions and politics. Rasheed is the character who is dedicated to bringing these details to light.

They were a guerrilla force, he said, made up of young Pashtun men whose families had fled to Pakistan during the war against the Soviets. Most of them had been raised-some even born-in refugee camps along the Pakistani border, and in Pakistani madrasas, where they were schooled in *Shari'a* by mullahs. Their leader was a mysterious, illiterate, one-eyed recluse named Mullah Omar, who, Rasheed said with some amusement, called himself *Ameer-ul Mumineeny* Leader of the Faithful. (Housseini 265)

The words like *madrasas*, *Shariha*, *Mumineen* are attributed to a pejorative connotation because Housseini associates them with the Taliban. Shariah is an Arabic word derived from the verb *shara'a* which means to legislate. Shariah, as defined by scholars, is a set of rules and

laws that are extracted from the Quran and the prophetic teachings of the prophet Muhammed. The religious law of Islam is seen as the expression of God's command for Muslims and, in application, constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon all Muslims by virtue of their religious belief. Known as the Shari'ah " (literally, "the path leading to the watering place"), the law represents a divinely ordained path of conduct that guides Muslims toward a practical expression of religious conviction in this world and the goal of divine favor in the world to come".¹⁴²

Following the September 11th attacks, the term Shari'a became divisive. It is frequently linked to acts of torture, such as whipping women and forcing them to wear burqas, decapitation, and so on. "While attacking Shari'a, many in the West have sought to assert the superiority of their own civilization"¹⁴³. Indeed, Shariah in a Western context emphasizes the fundamental distinction between the West and the Orient. The secular West, which distinguishes between church and state, and the Orient, which governs in a primitive Islamic manner.

Shortly after 9/11, "the Italian PM Berlusconi said, We must be aware of the superiority of our civilization, a system that has guaranteed – in contrast with Islamic countries – respect for religious and political rights". At the same time, a writer in the International Herald Tribune wrote that, "Islamic society, the West's equal at the time of the European Renaissance, failed to make the transition to a modern society... Islam since 1914 has

¹⁴² Noel James Coulson. "Shariah | Definition, History, & Examples | Britannica." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 Jan. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shariah>. Accessed 8 Jul.2021.

¹⁴³ "Shariah: The Glass House Attack." *Hizbu-Ut-Tahrir Britain*, 28 May 2009, <https://www.hizb.org.uk/islamic-culture/shariah-the-glass-house-attack/>. Accessed 08 Jul.2021.

failed to make a serious intellectual response to the modern West. Culture and intelligence, not power, decide the quality of societies.¹⁴⁴

The usage of the word Shariah by Hosseini emphasizes the Western connotation of the word. He immediately associates the word with the Taliban, as though the Shariah is exclusively used by the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban model shapes readers' perceptions of Shariah.

Madrasa is an Arabic word and means school. It is derived from the verb *darasa*, which means study. Instead of translating the word into English, Hosseini keeps it in Arabic. By doing so, Hosseini's aim is to avoid blurring the universal meaning of school as a place of education and ethics. Instead, he uses the word Madrasa to designate a model of an orientalist school completely different from Western schools. In his book *Terrorism and communication*, Matusitz assumes "that after 9/11 the word madrasa was loaded with negative association by Americans and people in the west who did not know Arabic and failed to distinguish between radical Islamic schools and schools that offer primary education courses"¹⁴⁵ (190). "When articles mentioned Madrasa, readers were led to infer that all schools so named are anti American, anti-Western, pro terrorist centers having less to do with teaching basic literacy and more to do with political indoctrination"¹⁴⁶ (Matusitz 190). Indeed, unlike the words *Ameer-ul-Mumineen* and *Shari'a*, there is no italicization on the term madrasa. This is due to the extensive propaganda it has generated after 9/11. Thus, "madrasa" becomes a familiar term in the American news and among American readers, who regard it as a key factor in the formation of future terrorists.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Matusitz, Jonathan. *Terrorism and Communication*. SAGE, 2013.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, when it comes to the USA, Hosseini shows great gratitude and compliments and uses praising words. "Babi said that the Americans were generous people. They would help them with money and food for a while, until they could get on their feet"(Hosseini 155). The fact that Hosseini praises the Americans while degrading Afghans to savages raises issues about his neutrality in dealing with the American occupation. "In Europe, Massoud had warned the West about terrorist camps in Afghanistan, and pleaded with the U.S. to help him fight the Taliban. "If President Bush doesn't help us," he had said, "these terrorists will damage the U.S. and Europe very soon"(Hosseini 302). By inserting this historical discourse, Hosseini portrays the US as the savior of Afghanistan and the world. Readers are convinced that the war in Afghanistan was a good decision. Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva argue "that this example exemplifies a pattern of juxtapositions found in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that contributes to Neo-Orientalist ideology by portraying Afghanistan as a failed state that can only function under foreign supervision on the one hand, and the United States as a symbol of progress and prosperity on the other"¹⁴⁷(09).

In addition to this, Hosseini does not provide any details about this invasion. He decides to bring the story to a joyful conclusion in the year 2003. The Taliban have been driven out of Kabul, and life has returned to normal. "Laila has to explain to Aziza that when they return to Kabul the Taliban won't be there, that there will not be any fighting, and that she will not be sent back to the orphanage" (Hosseini 382). Hosseini opens the year of 2003 with a significant description of the Kabul landscape, "April 2003, the drought has ended. It snowed at last this past winter, knee deep, and now it has been raining for days. The Kabul River is flowing once again. Its spring floods have washed away Titanic City" (Hosseini 400). The end of the drought,

¹⁴⁷ Al-Dagamseh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 2017. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3057>.

the running river and spring symbolize the end of distress in Kabul and hope for prosperity. The Titanic city that is flourishing is a symbol of the United States' presence in Afghanistan, which has aided in the development of the country. Indeed, Hosseini makes no mention of the American bombs falling in Afghanistan; instead, his assessment of Kabul is overwhelmingly positive. The following passage highlights more the previous idea.

Laila finds it strange to be back in Kabul The city has changed. Every day now she sees people planting saplings, painting old houses, carrying bricks for new ones. They dig gutters and wells. On window sills, Laila spots flowers potted in the empty shells of old Mujahideen rockets-rocket flowers, as Kabulis call them. Recently, Tariq took Laila and the children to the Gardens of Babur, which are being renovated. For the first time in years, Laila hears music on Kabul's street corners, *rubab* and tabla, *dooiar*, harmonium and tamboura, old Ahmad Zahir songs. (Hosseini 402)

As a result, readers are persuaded that, unlike the Soviets, who failed to bring peace to Afghanistan, the United States has paved the way for her to return to a peaceful Kabul. The preceding quote elicits feelings of optimism and progress. By using rockets (a symbol of war) as a source of flowers, the rockets-rocket flowers become a symbol of hope. The renovated homes and gardens indicate that Kabul has improved since the United States intervened. Hence, for the first time, readers are released from the scenes of the Soviet bombs and the Taliban barbarism, and this only after the USA invaded Afghanistan. The present simple tense transports the reader from the hideous period of the Taliban to Leila's current happy life. As a result, it appears that Leila's life will continue to improve under American protection. In this respect, Abdullah M. Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva comment : "When taken by themselves, all of the historical facts used by Hosseini to create a background in his novel are legitimate and cannot be argued against. However, when some bits of reality are skillfully pitted against one another and others are silenced, the whole picture becomes skewed to fit a presenter's

agenda"¹⁴⁸(09). What they mean is that Hosseini's historical information are authentic and true. However, his manipulation of this data adds to his ideology's Neo-Orientalist flavor. What matters the most is not what Hosseini says but what he does not say. It is clearly perceived that When it comes to discussing the disaster caused by the American war in Kabul, it is clear that Hosseini remains silent. Fitzpatrick also discusses this point in her article:

By ending in 2003, Hosseini can avoid mentioning the resurgence of the Taliban outside of the cities, the soaring opium exports, and the continuing struggle for control of the country by the Americans and their allies. He can also avoid mention of the more violent aspects of foreign occupation, such as the unscrupulous activities of American mercenaries looking for Osama bin Laden and the 'collateral damage' to wedding parties and other gatherings of Afghan civilians by the American military forces¹⁴⁹. (250)

Ending the story in the year of 2003 is one of the strategies that Hosseini uses to avoid criticizing his host country and probably gain their attention and satisfaction. In 2008, Laura Bush wrote in *Time Magazine* a review of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: "His 2003 novel, *The Kite Runner*, introduced readers around the world to the people of Afghanistan. Four years later, he published *A Thousand Splendid Suns*—and helped his audience see the faces of the women under the burqas. Hosseini's stories are set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's tumultuous history."¹⁵⁰ Laura Bush's compliment of the novel demonstrates that Hosseini's ideology goes in favor with

¹⁴⁸ Al-Dagameh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative.

¹⁴⁹ Fitzpatrick, Coeli. "New Orientalism in Popular Fiction and Memoir: An Illustration of Type." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol. 4, no. 3, Routledge, Nov. 2009, pp. 243–56. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140902972305>.

¹⁵⁰ Laura Bush. "Khaled Hosseini - The 2008 TIME 100 - TIME." *Time Magazine*, May 2008, http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1733748_1733752_1735971,00.html. Accessed 15.Jul.2021

the American one regarding its policy in Afghanistan. Despite the fact that the Afghan-American conflict was still going on when the book was published in 2007, Hosseini chooses a close happy ending for his tale. By concentrating on Leila's accomplishments, her decision to give up the burqa, her teaching profession, and her part in the revolution of the orphanage, Hosseini simply makes an end to the suffering of Afghan women that is unfortunately still present today. He also minimizes the psychological effect of the ongoing Afghan war in the long term. Readers learn that Tariq's opinion that the US war isn't all that bad finally persuades Leila. Leila resolves to return to Kabul under the presence of American forces, despite having fantasized about escaping under the Soviet occupation years before. This shift in behavior suggests that Leila has more faith in Americans than she does in the Soviets. Indeed, Hosseini "draws a sharp distinction between the unwanted Soviet presence and the welcomed American one"¹⁵¹ (Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva 05). As a result, the idea of a war to liberate Afghan women is straightened, and Americans are portrayed as the world's saviors, which is not the case. Hosseini does not mention that in "the rescue operations the US Army, in just one month dropped more than half a million tons of bombs which is approximately 20 kg per Afghan citizen including women and children"¹⁵²(Khan and Qasim 130). Mariam Rawi, a member of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), gave a speech in 2006 in which she exposed the reality of post-9/11 Afghanistan.

You might expect me to talk about Afghanistan as a free, peaceful and liberated country but painfully and unfortunately the reality is not what you might be aware of through media. After the September 11, and the subsequent US military intervention in

¹⁵¹ Al-Dagamseh, Abdullah M., and Olga Golubeva. "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative.

¹⁵² Khan, Muhammad Uzair, and Muhammad Qasim. "Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*." *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 9, 2017, pp. 127–36.

Afghanistan in the name of "war on terror" and "liberating Afghan women", despite tall claims of USA and its allies, Afghanistan is still burning in two-fold fire. On one hand, there are the brutal and horrific Jahadi fundamentalists of the "Northern Alliance" who are supported by the USA and on the other hand, there are the Taliban and Al-Qaida terrorists who have the support of all the fundamentalist and terrorist regimes, parties and organizations in different parts of world.¹⁵³

Mariam's testimony brings forth a debate about Hosseini's objectivity in reshaping the post 9/11 era. Rawi says overtly what Hosseini tries to hide in his novel. The novel briefly mentions the United States' support for the Mujaheddin since the cold war, and the Taliban's renewed movement is also absent. Indeed, it is true that some achievements are realized at the stage of education, women's freedom and healthcare, but the Utopian ending of the story is far from the real post 9/11 Afghanistan.

Moreover, The novel is infiltrated by the image of burqa-clad ladies. When Rasheed forces both Leila and Meriam to wear the burqa, it is portrayed as a sign of women's servitude. It has also been designated as the official clothing for women by the Taliban. However, Hosseini gives the Burqa a new meaning as a protective garment. When Meriam, an illegitimate girl, wears a burqa, she feels safe. "And the burqa, she learned to her surprise, was also comforting. It was like a one-way window. Inside it, she was an observer, buffered from the scrutinizing eyes of strangers. She no longer worried that people knew, with a single glance, all the shameful secrets of her past."(Hosseini 77)

¹⁵³ RAWA.ORG: *Women in Afghanistan Today: Hopes, Achievements and Challenges*. 27 Apr. 2006, <http://www.rawa.org/rawi-speech.htm>. 17 Jun.2021.

For Laila, being out in the streets had become an exercise in avoiding injury... She walked in perpetual fear of tripping and falling, of breaking an ankle stepping into a pothole. Still, she found some comfort in the anonymity that the burqa provided. She wouldn't be recognized this way if she ran into an old acquaintance of hers. She wouldn't have to watch the surprise in their eyes, or the pity or the glee, at how far she had fallen, at how her lofty aspirations had been dashed. (Hosseini 228)

Beyond the stereotypical picture of the Burqa, Hosseini reveals to readers that, though the Burqa keeps women invisible in society, it also protects them in specific situations. It serves as a shield between women and the rest society. Behind the Burqa, no one identifies Meriam as a *harami* or having pity for Leila. This approach, however, is insufficient to modify the western perception of the Burqa. It may even be exacerbated to some level by the fact that women must cover themselves in order to feel safe.

Hosseini also misses to represent the Burqa as a symbol of fight. “They often used their burqas to hide the weapons This was the story of the cities and in the rural areas, women prepared meals for the *Mujahidin* and delivered goods to them in the hills. In return, women paid a substantial price for such activities. Many of them were arrested, tortured and executed”¹⁵⁴(Khan and Qasim 132). Women's resistance to the Taliban has been overlooked by Hosseini. In his story, all of the female characters wear burqa and show no resistance to the Taliban. Despite the fact that history demonstrates women's emancipation even under Taliban control. Khan and Qasim explain this point in their article *Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns*:

¹⁵⁴ Khan, Muhammad Uzair, and Muhammad Qasim. “Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns.” *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 9, 2017, pp. 127–36.

Women continued participation in politics actively during the rule of Taliban as well. In 1996, poor beggar women protested to persuade the governor making it compulsory on the shopkeepers to accept small currency notes. Alongside protests and rallies, they organized to run underground schools to fulfill their practical needs of education and handicraft training . They continued their struggle despite strict check and persecution from Taliban. The Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA) is one such example which advocated women participation in the political arena, demanding the right to education, training, and employment. During all this while they remained within the Islamic fold [. These are very strong examples of political activism and these are true standpoints but Hosseini has intentionally missed this side. ¹⁵⁵(132)

Indeed, Hosseini's succeeds in arousing readers' empathy for Afghan women. However, this has prompted him to focus on portraying an extremely misogynistic image of the Afghan Muslim man. "As an Afghan, I would like readers to walk away with a sense of empathy for Afghans, and more specifically for Afghan women, on whom the effects of war and extremism have been devastating. I hope this novel brings depth, nuance, and emotional subtext to the familiar image of the burqa-clad woman walking down a dusty street"¹⁵⁶. As a result, the emphasis on misogynist characters such as Rasheed, "whose behavior is regarded by the narrative as an enactment of the traditional patriarchal norms of the Afghan society, the reader will not have much difficulty in generalizing these traits to the image of the Afghan man, in general"¹⁵⁷(Shiamansouri and Hoorvash 101). The limiting role of decent characters such as

¹⁵⁵ Khan, Muhammad Uzair, and Muhammad Qasim. "Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns."

¹⁵⁶ BookBrowse. "Khaled Hosseini Author Interview." *BookBrowse.Com*, https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/900/khaled-hosseini. Accessed 3 May 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Siahmansouri, Maryam, and Mona Hoorvash. "Heroic West, Villainous East: A Postcolonial Interpretation of Narrative Structure in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns." *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, vol. 11, no. 2, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Sept. 2020, pp. 95–106. *rals.scu.ac.ir*, <https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2020.15949>.

Babi, the lack of information concerning US military operations and the missing role of Afghan women in the wars, all contribute to the propagation of a Neo-Orientalist approach in Hosseini's ideology. Hosseini's novel is authentic in terms of the material supplied, but his withholding of some material has an impact on the reader's perception of Afghanistan and strengthens the stereotypical image of it. This is not to say that Hosseini's goal is to distort Afghanistan's image, but his reservations about the US military presence in Afghanistan gives a Neo-Orientalist touch to his novel.

Conclusion

The research shows that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a novel in which binary realities interact. Beyond the feminist spirit of the novel, the research demonstrates couples of binary realities in which Hosseini is set in-between. The research is guided by New-historicism, feminist and postcolonial theories.

The first section deals with historical and fictional realities. History and fiction, two fields that are very different, but when combined together form a marvelous genre called historical fiction. History is a collection of facts concerning events that occurred in the past. Fiction, on the other hand, is imaginative and artistic, yet it evokes real-life situations. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, these realities are strategically overlapped. The study of the novel's emplotment under David Hume's theory demonstrates the overlapping of these realities through resemblance, contiguity in time or space and cause and effect. This overlapping highlights the historicity of Hosseini's text that draws on Afghanistan's history of hegemonic rhetoric and patriarchy. They (hegemony and patriarchy) shape the textuality of Afghanistan's history as perceived in the comparison between Meriam and Rasheed's discourses, and the use of the Farsi language with different linguistic strategies including, glossing, untranslated terms and translations of Farsi dialects.

Hosseini's command and use of the Farsi language reminds readers of his own Afghan heritage. Indeed, the author's in-between identity (Afghan American) is also discussed. The author has always claimed that his double identity is entwined. However, this research split them into two separate parts to distinguish the influence of each. Concerning his Afghan identity, The findings show that Hosseini communicates his own Afghan identity through the characters' experiences. The research focuses on the study of diaspora, which involves the analysis of the characters' displacement and exile, as well as their ratio with space. The

characters' displacement/exile, whether internal or external, represents more than a physical transfer from one location to another; it also indicates a psychological and emotional shift in their spirits. Their identity is shaped by the space they consider home. Through the character's stream of consciousness, Hosseini releases his complex feelings of nostalgia, belonging and otherness. On the other hand, his American identity is expressed through his borrowing of elements from American art, culture, and literature such as *Titanic*, *Pinocchio* and *The Old Man and The Sea*. The American dream and values are also discussed in order to emphasize Afghan women's desire for independence, equality, and power. The research concludes that Hosseini's Afghan identity is more dominant in the novel.

Indeed, the study was directed by an inquiry into any subjective traces in favor of Afghanistan, or at the very least neutrality. As a result, the study looks into the author's portrayal of Afghanistan. Due to the authenticity of historical data, the mention of historical dates and figures, and legitimate media sources, readers deduce that the novel is authentic and conforms to the media coverage of Afghanistan. Surprisingly, his novel adopts a Neo-Orientalist discourse as indicated by the study of characterization (Rasheed) and the paucity of information about USA policies in Afghanistan and the idealization of Afghanistan after the US incursion.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher concluded that Hosseini has failed to challenge the stereotyped image of Afghanistan. However, as compared to the facts demonstrating Afghanistan's hegemony and patriarchy, the examples provided in the third chapter are scarce. Indeed, the researcher might not convince readers of the Neo-Orientalist perspective of Khaled Hosseini. Moreover, considering the researcher's cultural background, it has prevented her from studying the author's presentation of Islam to Western readers, which could have served the last chapter. On the other hand, it may cause readers to question the researchers' objectivity.

Implications for Future Research

There are many aspects that can be studied in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in the concept of in-betweenness. The writer suggests a study of the characters facing two conflicting worlds, the one they build in their inner side and the world they face outside. The study can involve the analysis of dream sequences and interior monologues related with the world outside. The writer suggests an analysis of Meriam and Leila's building up their own perception of realities according to the historical and cultural atmosphere of Afghanistan.

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Resumé

A Thousand Splendid Suns révèle de nombreuses réalités sur l'histoire de l'Afghanistan, l'identité de Hosseini et son idéologie. Compte tenu des antécédents complexes de l'auteur en tant qu'Afghan-Américain et réfugié avec une expérience limitée en Afghanistan, toutes ces réalités complexes de la vie de Khaled Hosseini sont présentes dans le roman. La position de l'auteur est catégorisée comme "entre-deux". Cependant, la question demeure de savoir comment ces réalités se manifestent dans le roman et à quelle réalité Hosseini se penche le plus. Pour répondre à cette interrogation, l'étude désigne deux réalités binaires sous les aspects suivants : (Fiction vs Histoire, L'identité Afghane vs L'identité Américaine, Néo-Orientalisme vs Neutralité). L'étude révèle que les réalités historiques et fictives se chevauchent stratégiquement pour représenter l'histoire de l'Afghanistan et donner au texte son caractère historique. L'identité Afghane de Hosseini est plus dominante dans le roman que son identité Américaine. Cependant, l'étude montre quelques traces d'idées Néo-Orientalistes dans sa représentation de l'Afghanistan.