



From Guilt to Grace: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Trauma Transcendence in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Muneera Hazeem Alsulaiti

*Department of English, College of Arts,
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia*

2230500032@iau.edu.sa

Wafaa A. Mostafa Hussein

*Department of English, College of Arts,
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia*

wamhussein@iau.edu.sa

ABSTRACT:

*This study explores the multifaceted interaction of guilt, trauma, and redemption in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). It investigates how the characters navigate their psychological burdens and seek absolution, illuminating the complexities of human nature and the transformative power of resilience. In exploring the themes of trauma and guilt in Hosseini's literary works, the study utilizes Freud's psychoanalysis theory as a lens to examine complex patterns of human behavior and psychological healing. It juxtaposes characters who successfully transcend trauma and achieve redemption with those who remain trapped by unresolved guilt, thus elucidating the miscellaneous spectrum of human responses to traumatic experiences. Some characters within Hosseini's narratives exhibit remarkable psychological endurance during their journeys of self-redemption by actively addressing their past transgressions; accordingly, they can transcend their traumatic experiences and progress toward self-awareness. Conversely, other characters cannot break free from the shackles of guilt, atone for their perceived sins, or purify their consciences, either due to a lack of awareness of their need for redemption or because death intervenes before they can initiate the process of atonement. The characters' divergent trajectories offer profound insights into the human psyche and the varied, often complex, paths to recovery and self-realization. This research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on trauma studies in literature by exploring how fictional narratives*

can illuminate real-world psychological processes and the human capacity for suffering and redemption.

Key Words:

Afghanistan, Freud, Guilt, Hosseini, Psychoanalysis, Redemption, Resilience, Trauma

I. INTRODUCTION

Khaled Hosseini emerged as a pioneering figure in Afghan-American literature, distinguished as the first author from this diaspora to write in English. His literary oeuvre, which is deeply rooted in Afghanistan's tumultuous history, encompasses the profound political and societal ramifications of the Soviet invasion and the Taliban regime. It includes three inspirational novels: *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *The Mountains Echoed* (2013), complemented by *Sea Prayer* (2018), an illustrated novella addressing the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Hosseini's literary success catalyzed humanitarian engagement through "The Khaled Hosseini Foundation," establishing a bridge between narrative representation and practical assistance for Afghanistan's vulnerable populations.

The psychological dimension of Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reveals the characters' convoluted motivations and emotional complexities as they navigate the societal expectations imposed upon them. These novels illuminate the profound intersection of psychology and literature through innovative narrative techniques, multidimensional character development, and challenging traditional archetypes. The psychoanalytic framework of the current study provides a theoretical foundation for examining the complex interrelation between Id-driven impulses, reality-oriented Ego mechanisms, and morality-bound Superego operations across consciousness strata. This analytical paradigm reveals deeply embedded psychological processes that shape character development and interpersonal dynamics when applied to Hosseini's works. Hence, the psychoanalytic lens plays a crucial role in revealing how trauma disrupts not only immediate psychological functioning but also fundamental structures of self-organization, while guilt operates as both a developmental achievement and a potential source of destructive tendencies. The framework thus illuminates the complex interplay between individual psychological development and intergenerational patterns of trauma transmission, demonstrating how characters navigate the path between psychological entrapment and potential redemption.

In *The Kite Runner*, the first-person narration enables an intimate exploration of Amir's psychological journey from pre-Soviet Afghanistan childhood to adulthood, revealing his struggle

with guilt, shame, and moral responsibility. The protagonist's ethically ambiguous character is a compelling case study for psychoanalytic interpretation, demonstrating how childhood experiences and paternal relationships influence psychological development. The novel's portrayal of familial dynamics illuminates how parental figures exhibit psychological complexity that profoundly impacts their children. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, on the other hand, focuses on feminine psychological experiences through Mariam and Laila's narratives, underscoring the intersection of political violence and gender-based subjugation. The two women's contrasting paternal relationships demonstrate how familial dynamics shape responses to patriarchal oppression, while secondary characters like Jalil and Nana, Mariam's parents, reveal the intergenerational transmission of psychological trauma. *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* demonstrate how environmental and cultural factors fundamentally shape character development, aligning with Freudian concepts of unconscious influences on human behavior. While examining guilt manifestation through internal discourse patterns reveals subliminal forces that determine behavioral outcomes, investigating parental relationships illuminates the crucial role of childhood experiences in adult psychological development.

II. METHODOLOGY:

This study employs a methodological synthesis that integrates psychoanalytic theory with contemporary literary analysis to examine the psychological manifestations in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The theoretical foundation is rooted in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concept of the tripartite structure of the psyche. It also incorporates modern trauma theory to shed light on the intergenerational transmission of psychological wounds. The analytical framework uses two complementary approaches: psychoanalytic interpretation and narrative analysis. Psychoanalytic interpretation focuses on unconscious processes and emotional undercurrents, explicitly exploring the fears of external authority and the mechanisms of the superego. Narrative analysis investigates the portrayal of trauma and guilt in character development. This methodology examines how psychological wounds disrupt ego functioning, create patterns of unconscious guilt, and affect interpersonal relationships. The analysis reveals how trauma originates from memory and is triggered by events that echo initial experiences. This framework identifies specific psychological indicators within the texts. This methodological synthesis allows for an exploration of psychological content and its literary representation, demonstrating how trauma and guilt serve as fundamental forces in narrative construction.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Sigmund Freud is the progenitor of psychoanalysis whose theoretical perspective illuminates the cognitive dimensions of human experience that are often observable in real life and literature. "Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it helps understand philosophy, culture, religion and first and foremost literature" (Hossain 43). Consequently, this scientific and medical discipline has profoundly influenced contemporary literary scholars, particularly those engaged in critical thinking, literary theory, and criticism. Integrating psychology and literature facilitates analyzing and interpreting ambiguous texts, generating new interpretations and insights. Additionally, straightforward texts can benefit from psychoanalytic interpretation by offering alternative perspectives. Stephen Frosh regards Freud's psychoanalytic theory as a valuable tool for literary interpretation. He underscores the importance of the theory, highlighting its broad applicability across various fields, including academia, art, and public relations. He also addresses Freud's critique regarding the effectiveness of psychoanalysis in interpreting cultural materials, emphasizing the inherent human need to understand the origins of behavior within cultural contexts (4). Literary analysis necessitates comprehensively examining the sociopolitical and cultural milieu that shapes authorial perspective, narrative construction, and character development. Since Khaled Hosseini's novels are fundamentally anchored in the Afghan experience of wartime atrocities, which transcend mere settings to become an integral thematic element that profoundly influences character psychology, they align with Freud's theory.

The application of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to Hosseini's novels illuminates complex patterns of psychological development and intergenerational trauma transmission. Through a detailed examination of character relationships, particularly parent-child dynamics, the current study reveals how early experiences fundamentally shape adult behavior and psychological well-being. The tripartite model of Id, Ego, and Superego serves as an indispensable tool for understanding characters' navigation of moral choices, processing of guilt, pursuit of redemption, and how their psychological trajectories can diverge. This dynamic manifests particularly in parent-child relationships, where early experiences create patterns that influence adult psychological development. The study examines how defensive mechanisms, moral conscience development, and behavioral self-regulation emerge from these formative experiences, shaping characters' capacity for psychological integration or fragmentation.

III.1. Tripartite Dynamics: Ego, Id, and Superego

Freud's conceptualization of human motivation, as outlined in his theory of the unconscious mind, continues to influence modern psychology. He stratifies the unconscious mind into three distinct levels: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. In his seminal work *The Ego and the Id* (1923), his assertion that "the division of what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis" (13) establishes the foundation for his theory of the tripartite psyche. This complicated psychological framework comprises three interconnected components. The Id, the most primitive aspect of personality from birth within the unconscious mind, manifests through instinctual impulses and basic drives. The Ego, an evolutionary extension of the Id, mediates primal urges and social reality, operating across both conscious and preconscious domains. The superego, which develops through parental, educational, and peer influences, embodies internalized moral values and spans all three levels of consciousness. The conscious mind maintains awareness of external and internal environments, corresponding primarily with the operations of the Ego and Superego. The preconscious realm houses readily accessible memories and knowledge, while the unconscious contains socially unacceptable desires and repressed emotions that continuously strive for expression against societal constraints. The superego functions as an internal moral compass, suppressing id-driven impulses and instilling guilt when actions transgress ethical norms.

This dynamic interplay between conscious and unconscious processes forms the essential foundation of psychoanalytic theory, illuminating how this stratified psychic structure, particularly the unconscious mind, fundamentally influences all aspects of human existence. Consciousness is fluid; ideas may emerge briefly before fading yet remain retrievable. Conversely, the unconscious harbors repressed emotions, striving for awareness but constrained by societal norms. Freud's psychoanalytic framework provides a comprehensive understanding of human psychology by examining interactions among Id-driven instincts, Ego-mediated reality checks, and Superego-enforced morality within various consciousness levels. Hence, applying Freud's theory to literary analysis offers insights into the repressed thoughts and emotions of the characters and uncovers the hidden influences shaping characters' behavior. Jackson's *Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the New Sciences of Mind* (2014) conceptualizes literature as a psychotic fantasy, emphasizing that "human beings are innate fantasists" (4). This framework examines how individuals synthesize reality with unconscious elements. This theoretical framework examines the perpetual human engagement with fantastical constructs, whether in states of wakefulness or slumber. Within this realm of fantasy, individuals amalgamate elements of reality with unconscious musings, thereby synthesizing both domains. This notion aligns with Freud's concept of primary process thinking, which posits that

primal cognition occurs through images or dreams rather than verbal discourse. This process suggests that visualizing particular objects is a precursor to their realization, linking it to the id as an essential component of Freud's personality theory. However, a critical limitation of this theory lies in its occasional inability to discern between reality and fantasy. For instance, employing primary process thinking to address the id's impulses may only temporarily distract the id, thus failing as a sustainable solution.

III.2. Parental Influence on Developmental Trajectories:

Freud's *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1917) represents a systematic exposition of the fundamental principles of his psychoanalytic theory. It underscores the interdisciplinary nature of psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on unconscious desires and early childhood experiences as primary determinants of human behavior. Freud's integrated theoretical models demonstrate the broad applicability of psychoanalysis across disciplines, highlighting its relevance in psychology and literature. Freud's personality theory examines the formative role of childhood memories in behavioral development, through his controversial psychosexual framework. This developmental model proposes distinct phases—"oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital—and their suppressed needs vis-à-vis societal norms" (107), highlighting the significant influence of societal norms on individual behavior. Each stage corresponds to specific erogenous zones that indicate psychological development through conflict resolution. Unsuccessful navigation of these stages manifests in adult behavioral patterns. Moreover, in "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (1910), Freud explores the psychological impact of childhood experiences through the Oedipus complex, suggesting male infants harbor unconscious desires to supplant their fathers and possess their mothers (231). Contemporary critics, notably Irawan et al. (2023), challenge Freud's emphasis on libido as humanity's primary motivational force, asserting that "human agency transcends mere instinctual drives" (198).

Freud's theory illuminates the essential role of conscience in self-regulation. While Freud acknowledged the superego's potential evolution toward increased aggression, his focus remained primarily on its constructive aspects. This theoretical complexity reflects a broader challenge of psychology in examining the intangible dimensions of human consciousness, demonstrating how Freud's foundational ideas continue to generate scholarly discourse and theoretical development.

III.3. Guilt and Trauma in Dynamic Interaction:

Guilt emerges as a fundamental concept in psychoanalytic theory, operating at both individual and collective levels while serving as a crucial mechanism for civilizational development. The intricate correlation between guilt and trauma in psychoanalytic theory reveals complicated psychological mechanisms operating at multiple levels. *The Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* defines guilt as “a sensation of intrapsychic tension, sometimes linked to apprehension of a catastrophic threat to oneself. It may also be manifest as humility, suffering, the need for punishment, remorse, and feelings of inadequacy” (716) through complex interactions between morality, ethics, and the regulatory functions of the superego. Freud’s conceptualization of guilt evolved significantly from its introduction in *The Neuro-Psychosis of Defense* (1894) through subsequent works, including *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). This theoretical development progressed from attributing guilt to phylogenetic memory toward examining the superego’s role, death drive, and masochism. The feeling emerges from “the tension between the demands of the conscience and the actual performances of the ego” (Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 36), operating primarily at an unconscious level. The phenomenon of guilt operates dialectically: while facilitating social cohesion and cultural advancement, it simultaneously functions as a potential source of individual neuroses. In *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense* (1894), Freud establishes guilt as a complex psychological mechanism operating through dual origins: external authority fear and superego fear. As Freud proposed, guilt results from the internalization of societal norms and parental authority, leading to a moral conflict within the individual. The superego, which emerges through parental authority internalization, functions as a moral arbiter that scrutinizes ego conduct while generating an ongoing moral judgment cycle by amplifying initial external aggression. This dynamic manifests through the ego’s submission to superego demands primarily through fear of losing love and protection, transcending mere separation anxiety into diverse forms of psychic distress and self-punishment.

Moreover, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud positions guilt as “the most important problem in the development of civilization” (81), functioning through dual psychological mechanisms: external authority fear and superego fear. The superego, emerging through parental authority internalization, generates an ongoing cycle of moral judgment that transcends mere separation anxiety into diverse manifestations of psychic distress. Contemporary theorists have significantly challenged Freud’s framework. In “The Unconscious Need for Punishment” Donald Carveth argues, “an advance in civilization through a heightening of the capacity to confront and bear guilt leads to a decrease, not an increase, in discontent. Genuine guilt understood as depressive anxiety or concern, represents not the problem of civilization but its solution” (11). In “Self-

Punishment as Guilt Evasion: Theoretical Issues,” Carveth further posits that “the enlarged capacity to experience and bear guilt reflects the healing, not the deepening, of our cultural malaise” (176). Moreover, “Facing and bearing guilt opens the path toward restoration of a sense of inner goodness through reparative processes mediating identification with resurrected, surviving, comforting, forgiving, good internal objects” (195). This contemporary perspective aligns with object relations theory, suggesting that guilt acceptance facilitates psychological wholeness rather than fragmentation and sustains positive internal representations. In object relations theory, ‘good internal objects’ refer to the positive mental representations of others that individuals develop through their relationships, which can serve as sources of comfort and support.

However, as Ury demonstrates, a fundamental tension persists between viewing guilt as a developmental achievement indicating psychological maturity and recognizing its potential as a destructive force linked to the superego's punitive tendencies:

There is a tendency in psychoanalytic literature to view the nature of guilt in two contradictory ways. The first is often found in the theoretically derived developmental premise of the tripartite structural model of intrapsychic differentiation, which states that unconscious guilt emerges from an internalized superego, which presupposes a structured and mature ego. An assumption follows that the “capacity for guilt” is a higher and more adaptive form of mental functioning: healthy, civilized, mature, and equated with notions of repair and concern. It is also often interchanged with the concept of conscience. The second view of guilt is to be found in clinical formulations of pathology where the destructiveness of guilt in psychic functioning is highlighted, especially in relation to the sadism of the superego. Despite the observation that guilt is associated with destructive pathology, the developmental framework that positions guilt as a mature effect is left intact. This contradiction begins with Freud, who suggested that guilt is not only the height of civilization but also a deep-seated, intractable form of aggression. (51)

Freud’s theory simultaneously presents guilt as the peak of civilized development and a form of deep-seated aggression turned inward. This theoretical tension reflects the complex nature of guilt in human psychology—it can serve both adaptive and maladaptive functions, a sign of psychological maturity and a source of psychological disturbance. Ury ultimately highlights how psychoanalytic theory struggles to reconcile these opposing views of guilt, maintaining the developmental framework while acknowledging guilt’s destructive potential in clinical practice. This theoretical evolution demonstrates how guilt functions concurrently as a civilizational necessity and a complex psychological mechanism requiring integration rather than eradication for individual and collective psychological health. The study of guilt, thus, necessitates a multifaceted analytical approach that considers its manifestations across various domains - from individual psychopathology to broader

cultural and civilizational processes - while acknowledging its fundamental role in psychological development and social organization.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory posits a complicated correlation between guilt and trauma within the human psyche. The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (2015) defines trauma as:

Any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning. Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior (e.g., rape, war, industrial accidents) as well as by nature (e.g., earthquakes) and often challenge an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place.

Freud's perception of trauma transcends physical injury, positioning it primarily as a psychological wound within the psychoanalytic framework. In "The Etiology of Hysteria", Freud defines trauma as "any excitations from the outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield there is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus which have broken in and binding of them" (p. 7). This conceptualization underscores the ego's confrontation with overwhelming forces that exceed its integrative capacity, leading to a profound state of psychological helplessness. When defensive mechanisms prove insufficient against the intensity of traumatic stimuli, the ego becomes vulnerable to psychological fragmentation, resulting in a fundamental disruption of regulatory functions and compromising its mediating role between internal psychological demands and external reality.

The break in the psychic mechanism, created by the overwhelming protective barriers, engenders enduring alterations in psychological functioning and defensive organization. This traumatic situation represents a critical failure of the ego's capacity to maintain psychic equilibrium and manifests as a profound powerlessness that fundamentally challenges individual agency and control while simultaneously threatening the foundational structures of self-organization and defensive capacity. Shinebourne's investigation of Freudian trauma theory reveals its origins in memory, activated by contemporary events that mirror initial traumatic experiences (p. 335). While Freud acknowledges the non-universality of this principle, recognizing the malleability of memories and their subjective interpretation, he identifies two primary trauma indicators: the sense of fright and physical injury. The state of fright, distinct from fear or anxiety, represents unpreparedness for imminent danger, while physical injury serves as a tangible reminder of a traumatic experience. This theoretical framework proves particularly valuable in literary interpretation and historical analysis, facilitating multiple interpretations based on individual perspectives. It enables readers to

distinguish between textual objective truths and subjective interpretations shaped by personal backgrounds and biases. The process of trauma involves reconstructing past events to achieve comprehensibility, acknowledging that such reconstructions may remain imperfect or unsatisfactory to the individual.

The connection between trauma and guilt manifests in several ways, such as the repetition of traumatic memories that resist forgetting. Trauma can generate unconscious guilt, which manifests through Self-punishing behaviors, self-sabotage patterns, and various forms of psychological masochism. Accordingly, the psyche may develop various defensive strategies against feelings of unbearable guilt, including self-punishment as a substitute for genuine guilt, unconscious patterns of self-torment, and avoidance of conscious guilt through various forms of self-sabotage. Freud suggests that addressing trauma requires working through both the traumatic experience and its associated guilt components.

IV. ANALYSIS:

A Critical Investigation of Guilt and Trauma in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*:

Applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory to the textual analysis of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* operates through interpretive mechanisms that illuminate both individual psychological development and intergenerational trauma transmission. The analysis reveals how characters navigate psychological mechanisms of guilt and trauma through self-punishing behaviors, patterns of self-sabotage, and psychological masochism. The study illuminates how early experiences shape adult behavior and psychological well-being through exploring parent-child dynamics and character relationships. The tripartite model of Id, Ego, and Superego plays a crucial role, providing essential analytical tools for understanding characters' moral choices, guilt processing, and pursuit of redemption. This comprehensive approach illuminates the intricate relationship between childhood experiences, parental influence, and adult psychological development. It reveals complex patterns of psychological development and trauma transmission across generations. In Hosseini's novels, the characters either remain trapped within their psychological wounds or achieve transcendence through active engagement with past traumas. While acknowledging the imprecise nature of reconstructing past events, the interpretive process reveals deeper psychological truths within the text.

IV.1. Hegemonic Structures and Psychological Subjugation: Ethnic and Gender Dynamics:

Sejuti and Md's "A Study of the Parallel Vision of War in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*" (2022) presents a chronological examination of Afghanistan's political evolution: from pre-Soviet conditions through the Soviet-Afghan conflict to the Taliban regime (p. 56). Set against the backdrop of the 1970s Soviet invasion, *The Kite Runner* aligns external political turbulence with internal character development, creating a parallel between societal and psychological transformation. While *The Kite Runner* offers limited female representation, notably through the death of Amir's mother during childbirth, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* emerges as Hosseini's deliberate attempt to provide agency to female narratives. The narrative perspective in Hosseini's works serves as a strategic device for portraying Afghan society and its complexities. From a historical perspective, Hosseini's novels represent family dynamics, childhood experiences, and feminine identity. The narrative technique is characterized by its adherence to historical authenticity as Hosseini masterfully captures Afghanistan's historical reality through Rahim Khan's visceral description: "Our ears became accustomed to the whistle of falling shells, to the rumble of gunfire, our eyes familiar to the sight of men digging bodies out of piles of rubble. Kabul... was as close as you could get to that proverbial hell on earth" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, p. 196). This sensory-rich narrative technique not only conveys the normalization of violence but also creates an immersive experience that facilitates reader empathy and understanding of the characters' psychological states. The novels examine how social stratification impacts mental health and community dynamics. Kabeer's analysis of "Afghan Minorities and Ethnic Tension in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2020) reveals the double marginalization of minorities (3), exemplified by Hassan's assault by Assef: "Afghanistan is the land of the Pashtuns... We are the true Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood." (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, p. 38). The author's strategic employment of sensory detail transforms abstract war concepts into tangible human experiences, making the historical context both accessible and emotionally resonant while maintaining its accuracy. Hosseini creates a profound connection between the reader and the characters' experiences of war and trauma through this technique. Saraswat argues: "the novel revolves around the central axiom of personal selves permeated by political prejudices and permutations" (166).

In *The Kite Runner*, the ethnic dynamics between Amir, a Sunni Pashtun representing the dominant ethnicity, and Hassan, a Shi'a Hazara from a minority group, establishes the sociocultural framework of their relationship. The power dynamics between Amir and Hassan culminate in the pivotal false accusation of theft, where Amir exploits his social privilege to orchestrate Hassan's departure. Hassan's acceptance of false guilt represents his final sacrifice, prompting a profound self-recognition in Amir: "I wanted to tell them all that I was the snake in the grass, the monster in the

lake... I was a liar, a cheat, and a thief" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, p. 98). Baba's unexpected forgiveness of Hassan's theft reveals the complex layers of his guilt regarding his illegitimate son.

The trauma experienced by both Amir in *The Kite Runner* and Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* cannot be separated from Afghanistan's rigid social hierarchy. It is an illustration of class structure and vulnerability; Hassan's rape occurs not just as an individual act of violence but as a manifestation of the systemic oppression of Hazaras by Pashtuns. The social power dynamics create conditions where Assef feels entitled to commit violence while Hassan is rendered particularly vulnerable. Religious and educational institutions play a crucial role in either enabling or preventing trauma. The contrast between Mullah Fatiullah Khan's extremist teachings and Baba's liberal worldview demonstrates how institutional forces shape individual behavior and psychological development. These competing ideologies directly impact how characters process and respond to trauma. The transmission of trauma occurs through family structures that mirror broader societal hierarchies; Baba's guilt over his illegitimate son, Hassan, reflects the social impossibility of acknowledging a Hazara heir, whereas Amir's psychological struggles stem not just from personal cowardice but from inherited social privileges and prejudices:

I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me... That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe... The real reason I was running was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he? (77)

In "The Issue of Cultural Identity in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*" (2008), Farlina argues that the novel significantly contributes to our understanding of how shared historical experiences shape cultural identity (p. 43). Additionally, Khan et al., elaborate that *The Kite Runner* "recounts devastation and violence in the socio-historical context of Afghanistan and its impact upon the psychological lives and identity of the characters in the story" (65). Individual trauma becomes embedded in collective experience through shared cultural narratives about ethnic identity, communal experiences of political upheaval, and generational patterns of violence and discrimination. The path to healing requires addressing both personal guilt and social injustice. Amir's redemption comes not just through individual action but through challenging the very social structures that enabled the original trauma. His rescue of Sohrab represents both personal atonement and resistance against systemic oppression, showing how individual psychological experiences are inseparable from their broader sociocultural context, creating a more nuanced understanding of trauma's multilayered nature.

A Thousand Splendid Suns explores womanhood through the intricate relationships between Mariam, Laila, and their mothers. The author's perspective on education, marriage, and domestic violence emphasizes the significance of authorial worldview and social context as vital as traditional literary elements in textual analysis. Despite similar backgrounds, these characters exhibit divergent responses to their circumstances. Mariam's relationship with Nana, her mother, instills a deep-seated sense of unworthiness due to her illegitimate status, while Laila's resilience stems from her father's support despite her mother's emotional deficiency. The novel's treatment of educational paradigms and gender reveals stark gender-based disparities shaped by political upheaval. During both Soviet occupation and Taliban rule, women's educational opportunities were severely circumscribed. This institutional restriction was reinforced by deeply embedded cultural attitudes, exemplified by Nana's dismissive stance toward female education: "Learn? Learn what, Mullah sahib?" "What is there to learn?... What's the sense of schooling a girl like you? It's like shining a spittoon. And you'll learn nothing of value in those schools. There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life... And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure" (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* 18). This intergenerational transmission of educational disenfranchisement contrasts sharply with Laila's experience, whose intellectual development benefits from her father's progressive worldview.

The novel depicts marriage dynamics and power relations and investigates how the institution of marriage in Taliban-era Afghanistan exemplifies profound power asymmetries. Mariam's arranged marriage to Rasheed, who is thirty years her senior, illustrates the normalization of age-disparate unions and their inherent power imbalances. Jalil's later remorse regarding this arrangement reveals its function as a mechanism for displacing paternal guilt. Hosseini's portrayal of domestic violence demonstrates its multifaceted manifestations—verbal, physical, and psychological. Rasheed's abuse following Mariam's miscarriage reveals how reproductive failure becomes a pretext for spousal violence. The contrast between Mariam's initial acquiescence and Laila's resistance illustrates varying responses to patriarchal oppression. These women's resilience in maintaining dignity and pursuing rights within a hostile social framework demonstrates remarkable psychological fortitude. Their capacity to nurture hope and mutual support while navigating systemic oppression represents a powerful testament to female solidarity and resistance. The narrative demonstrates how early marriages are institutionalized within Afghan society. Both Mariam and Laila's marriages to Rasheed exemplify the manipulation and desperation that characterize female experiences. Their eventual deaths at the hands of the Taliban underscore the intersection of ethnic, political, and gender-based oppression. Hosseini illuminates how societal perceptions fundamentally shape individual identity and interpersonal relationships within Afghan society through these multilayered perspectives.

A Thousand Splendid Suns vividly portrays how societal constraints shape women's aspirations and self-perception through maternal relationships that either reinforce or challenge patriarchal limitations. Laila's experience of loss and guilt manifests differently from her mother's grief over her brothers' deaths in war. Her emotional distance from these losses, contrasted with her mother's devastating response, creates a complex psychological turmoil where guilt intertwines with survival instincts. These survival instincts, born out of the need for security and stability in a war-torn society, lead to her marriage to Rasheed. This narrative illustrates how trauma and guilt operate across generations, shape decisions and relationships within the constraints of Afghan society, and demonstrate both vulnerability and resilience within oppressive societal structures.

Hosseini's deliberate employment of third-person narration in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* marks a significant departure from *The Kite Runner*'s male narrative voice, enabling female characters to articulate their experiences directly. This narrative choice amplifies previously silenced voices, revealing the profound psychological complexity of Afghan women's resistance against societal constraints. The psychological development of the female characters emerges through their distinct childhood experiences. Mariam's early isolation, stemming from her status as "harami," profoundly shapes her adult interpersonal dynamics. Her initial inability to form meaningful connections, followed by her eventual bond with Laila under Rasheed's patriarchal authority, demonstrates how early trauma influences relational patterns. Her guarded nature and reluctance to express opinions reflect the profound psychological impact of sustained criticism from maternal and marital relationships. Through this distinctive portrayal, Hosseini illuminates how childhood experiences and parental relationships fundamentally shape women's psychological development within Afghanistan's patriarchal society. However, he also demonstrates their remarkable capacity for resilience and transformation.

IV.2. The Dialectics of Guilt: Between Development and Destruction

The psychological complexity inherent in literary works provides essential insights into character motivation and emotional depth. *The Kite Runner* presents an intricate narrative of Amir, a pre-Soviet era Afghan youth whose story unfolds through first-person narration, revealing the complexities of class-bound friendship and paternal interactions. In "Sacrificing and Saving the Lamb: Betrayal, Guilt, and Redemption in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini", Khan et al. argue: "Against this starkly traumatic background, Amir's narrative account is a coping strategy through which he attempts to alleviate his traumatized mind and come to terms with the consequences of his past transgressions against his close friend Hassan" (66). The narrative explores the doomed relationship

between Amir and Hassan, his servant companion and illegitimate brother, while simultaneously examining the profound influence of Amir's troubled paternal bond on his psychological development. Fathi et al. (2020) reveal how Amir's unconscious yearning for paternal affection manifests through the interplay of psychological forces (p. 4). Amir's compromised superego is evidenced by his moral transgression in falsely accusing Hassan of theft. At the same time, his ego eventually emerges as the dominant psychological force, mediating between primal desires and moral constraints. The narrative opens with a temporal acknowledgment of the persistence of guilt: "That was a long time ago... but it's wrong what they say about the past... it claws its way out" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 1). This reference to Hassan's assault, which Amir witnessed at age twelve, establishes guilt as the narrative's central psychological motif. The psychological reverberations of the incident persist twenty-six years later, demonstrating the temporal transcendence of guilt. Through Amir's limited perspective, Hosseini masterfully portrays how guilt intertwines with moral consciousness and societal values. His perception of paternal rejection fundamentally shapes Amir's psychological development, crystallized in his belief that his birth caused his mother's death: "I always felt like Baba hated me a little... after all I had killed his beloved wife... hadn't I?" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 18). This early trauma manifests in Amir's persistent quest for paternal validation, symbolically represented by his first word being "Baba," while Hassan's first utterance of "Amir" foreshadows their tragic relationship path. The narrative thus presents a complex psychological tapestry where guilt, paternal relationships, and moral choices intersect to shape character development, all within the context of societal values that dictate their actions. The limited perspective through which Amir views his father's emotions creates a narrative filtered through childhood trauma and misunderstanding. His fixation on winning the kite tournament represents his desperate attempt at paternal approval and his willingness to sacrifice moral principles for personal gain, demonstrating the profound psychological impact of parental relationships.

The narrative reveals how destructive obsession perpetuates throughout the story, manifesting as Amir's desperate attempt to overcome his perceived worthlessness in his father's estimation. Hosseini masterfully burdens his characters with profound emotional responsibilities, compelling them through profound journeys of self-discovery, guilt management, and ultimate redemption. Amir exists in a perpetual state of psychological tension, simultaneously yearning for paternal validation while grappling with guilt over his treatment of Hassan. His father, Baba, portrayed as imposing and formidable, maintains emotional distance from Amir. The narrative later reveals that this distance stems not from his wife's death during childbirth, as Amir believed, but from Baba's guilt over a post-marital affair. While Amir's guilt dominates the narrative through a first-person perspective, making

him an easy target for reader contempt, Baba's guilt operates more subtly. Only after Baba's death does Rahim Khan reveal the truth: Hassan was Baba's illegitimate son. Baba attempts to assuage his guilt by incorporating Hassan into his household as a servant, allowing him to provide care while maintaining societal appearances. This arrangement inadvertently intensifies Amir's psychological turmoil, as he perceives the preferential treatment of Hassan without understanding the underlying familial connection. The resulting jealousy catalyzes Amir's betrayal of Hassan, creating a complex web of guilt, betrayal, and unspoken truths that shape the narrative's psychological turmoil.

On the other hand, A Thousand Splendid Suns chronicles the intertwined narratives of Mariam and Laila across three decades of Afghan history, from the 1970s through the early 2000s. The novel illuminates the complex psychological turmoil of women's experiences in Afghanistan through third-person narration divided into four parts. The narrative opens with fifteen-year-old Mariam, who lives with her mother, Nana, in a modest dwelling outside Herat and receives weekly visits from her father, Jalil. Nana's antipathy toward Jalil stems from their past: As his former servant, she bore his illegitimate child only to be cast aside. While Mariam initially dismisses her mother's bitterness as hyperbole, the narrative reveals Jalil's shame-driven attempts at absolution through material gifts rather than genuine paternal engagement.

The parallel narrative introduces nine-year-old Laila, whose life is shaped by maternal absence as her mother, Fariba, descends into depression following her sons' deaths in war. Laila's route intersects with Mariam's following a rocket attack that claims her parents' lives. Their initial antagonism, sparked by Rasheed's marriage to Laila, evolves into profound solidarity against patriarchal oppression, highlighting the weight of Rasheed's influence on the two female characters' lives. The psychological complexity deepens through Mariam's internalization of the term "harami." This designation of illegitimacy becomes a defining force in her psychological development, shaping her self-worth and later acceptance of marital abuse. The misplaced guilt, transferred from Nana and Jalil's transgressions onto their innocent offspring, exemplifies the novel's exploration of inherited trauma, highlighting the depth of the characters' struggles. The novel thus presents an examination of how male authority shapes women's psychological development and life.

IV.3. Intergenerational Dynamics: The Psychological Legacy of Parental Authority

Psychoanalytic theory's emphasis on childhood experiences as determinants of adult behavior provides a crucial theoretical framework for examining character development in Hosseini's novels. The father-son relationship between Baba and Amir in *The Kite Runner* exemplifies how unresolved psychological conflicts emerge through intergenerational dynamics. Their

ideological tensions reflect deeper unconscious processes, heavily influenced by cultural and environmental factors, demonstrating how these external influences become internalized determinants of behavior. Baba's intricate relationship with guilt is not a simple matter of remorse but a complex interplay of emotions and actions. His compensatory behaviors, such as constructing an orphanage, ensuring Hassan receives birthday gifts, and arranging his harelip surgery, are not just acts of atonement but manifestations of profound psychological complexity:

Now, no matter what the mullah teaches, there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft... When you kill a man, you steal a life, you still his wife's right to a husband, rob his children of a father. When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth... There is no act more wretched than stealing, Amir, a man who takes what's not his to take, be it a life or a loaf of naan... I spit on such a man" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 17).

This quotation reveals Baba's psychological mechanisms for managing guilt, which are not as straightforward as they may seem. His selective moral reasoning, which simultaneously condemns and absolves, is a source of irony. His consumption of alcohol despite Islamic prohibition, while maintaining theft as the singular sin, demonstrates a complex psychological compartmentalization. The irony emerges in his acts of theft: stealing Amir's knowledge of his brother, Hassan's identity, and Ali's honor through adultery. Baba's attempt at redemption through Hassan's servitude exemplifies how guilt shapes behavioral patterns across generations, creating complex familial dynamics. These dynamics are shaped by guilt, societal expectations, and personal shame, adding layers of complexity to the characters' relationships and actions. The narrative is a rich exploration of how guilt operates across generations. It delves into the various psychological defense mechanisms and behavioral patterns that guilt can manifest, simultaneously revealing and concealing deeper truths. This exploration elucidates the complex nature of guilt and its profound impact on individuals and families.

The complex familial dynamics in Hosseini's narratives reveal how parental guilt shapes intergenerational trauma. Amir's unrecognized fraternal relationship with Hassan creates a psychological crucible of jealousy and betrayal, fueled by Baba's preferential treatment of his illegitimate son. Baba's attempts to atonement manifest through actions toward Hassan while maintaining emotional distance from Amir. His statement to Rahim Khan that "a boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up for anything" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 221) serves as both prophetic commentary on Amir's future betrayal and unconscious self-indictment of his moral failure. The psychological reverberations of guilt extend into Amir's adult life, manifesting in his infertility struggles with Soraya. His interpretation of this biological challenge reveals deep-

seated psychological trauma: "Perhaps something, someone, somewhere, had decided to deny me fatherhood for the things I had done" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, p. 204).

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the psychological turmoil shifts to explore feminine guilt through Laila's struggle with gender-based inadequacy. Her mother's emotional absence prompts profound existential questioning. This theme runs through the narrative and underscores the characters' internal struggles: 'Why Mammy had even bothered having her... she believed that people shouldn't have children if they'd already given away all their love to their old ones' (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 121).

Mariam's psychological development is deeply scarred by the label "harami" and her mother's relentless manipulation of guilt. Nana's reference to Jalil's visits as "His idea of penance" (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 13) reveals how parental guilt transforms into psychological weapons wielded against children. Nana's emotional manipulation reaches its apex in her final plea: "I'll die if you go. The jin will come, and I'll have one of my fits... Don't leave me, Mariam Jo. Please stay. I'll die if you go" (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 27). Through third-person narration, Hosseini illuminates how parental guilt

creates complex psychological patterns that shape children's self-worth and future relationships. The narrative vividly demonstrates how guilt operates as a transgenerational force, perpetuating cycles of emotional trauma and psychological damage.

Laila's psychological agony is shaped by multiple intersecting guilts: her gender identity, the shadow of her brother's legacy, and her parents' loss. When she was nine, Laila was a beacon of youthful aspirations, fostered by her relationship with Tariq and significantly influenced by her father's support of her educational ambitions - a stark contrast to Mariam's maternal prohibition from schooling. The familial dynamics reveal complex responses to guilt and trauma. A pivotal confrontation illuminates this when Laila's mother accuses her father: "That's your business... to make nothing your business. Even your own sons are going to war. How I pleaded with you. But you buried your nose in those cursed books and let our sons go like they were a pair of haramis" (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 110). This exchange reveals how differently her parents process their guilt over their sons' military service - Fariba through confrontational blame and Babi through literary escapism.

Laila is a navigator in a world of ideological contradictions, epitomized by her teacher, Khala Rangmaal, who champions gender equality and Soviet sympathies while maintaining intricate relationships with Afghan identity. Her title as 'Inqilabi Girl' or 'Revolutionary Girl' (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 112), marking her birth during the 1978 April coup, symbolizes the

transformative and perilous period in Afghan history. This label gains a poignant edge when Rangmaal later succumbs to Taliban mandates requiring the burqa, underscoring the profound shifts in Afghan society and women's autonomy. Hosseini illuminates how personal and political traumas intersect through these layered narratives, woven together to create a rich and complex tapestry of Afghan life. These narratives, each with its unique perspective and voice, shape individual identity within the broader context of societal transformation, providing a profound understanding of the psychological and societal themes in Khaled Hosseini's work where "females share experiences by their oppressions, jeopardizes, endurances, silences, and beaten down dreams and ambitions. Hosseini examines and probes into the encounter with strength, perfection, and concreteness" (Gordan and Almutairi 2450).

IV. 4. The Dialectics of Recovery: Trauma Resolution and Redemptive Processes:

IV. 4.1. Amir's Path to Redemption Versus Baba's Unresolved Trauma:

In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini crafts a complex psychological exploration of guilt through the parallel narratives of Amir and Baba, who employ markedly different strategies in confronting their moral transgressions. Baba's perspective remains deliberately obscured throughout the narrative. His character embodies the paradox of moral hypocrisy, wrestling with unresolved guilt while maintaining a façade of ethical superiority. Though he openly criticizes Amir's misconduct, Baba engages in duplicitous behavior, constructing elaborate deceptions that affect family and friends. His selective confession to Rahim Khan serves not as genuine catharsis but as another mechanism of avoidance, perpetuating the concealment of truth from those most profoundly affected—his sons, Amir and Hassan. Baba exemplifies the archetypal character who fails to transcend his psychological burden, remaining entrapped within unresolved trauma that manifests in emotional estrangement from both sons. While externally laudable, his charitable activities are insufficient substitutes for genuine confrontation with his guilt. This inability to directly address his past transgressions prevents authentic redemption before his death.

In contrast, Amir demonstrates a more transformative aptitude for redemption. Initially paralyzed by guilt over his betrayal of Hassan, Amir progresses through stages of inadequacy and self-doubt before mustering the courage to confront his past actions. His return to Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab, Hassan's son, becomes both literal and metaphorical evidence of his psychological transformation and transcendence of trauma. Conversely, Baba's attempts at atonement manifest through indirect gestures. A pivotal moment occurs when Baba remarks, "I wish Hassan had been with us today" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 124), during Amir's high school graduation celebration. This innocuous statement serves as a psychological catalyst for Amir, transforming a moment of triumph

into one haunted by Hassan's spectral presence. The statement exemplifies Baba's indirect expression of paternal emotion toward Hassan, though he remains unable to acknowledge it. The revelation of truth through Rahim Khan's summons to Afghanistan provides retrospective clarity to Baba's earlier behaviors, particularly his emotional response to Hassan and Ali's departure in 1975. These moments illuminate the profound complexity of Baba's relationship with his illegitimate son—a truth he carries to his grave, whether due to overwhelming guilt or insurmountable pride. Baba's character presents a fascinating psychological study of cognitive dissonance and moral complexity. His powerful influence over Amir creates a profound psychological barrier to accepting his father's duplicity. The shame of his actions, particularly in light of his emphatic preaching about honesty and moral rectitude, creates an insurmountable internal conflict. His attempts to suppress guilt through emotional distancing from Amir represent a complex psychological defense mechanism, resulting in an unresolved father-son relationship marked by emotional unavailability and unexpressed truths:

Moreover, fifteen years after I had buried him, I was learning that Baba had been a thief. And a thief of the worst kind, because the things he'd stolen had been sacred: from me the right to know I had a brother, from Hassan his identity, and from Ali his honor. His nang. His namoos... How had Baba brought himself to look Ali in the eye? ...As it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known. We had both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us. And with that came this realization: Rahim Khan summoned me here to atone not just for my sins but for Baba's too. (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 124)

The parallel manifestation of guilt between Baba and Amir represents a significant psychological nexus in Hosseini's narrative. Amir's evolution at thirty-eight transcends mere chronological progression, marking a profound psychological readiness to confront decades-old guilt and pursue authentic atonement. This starkly contrasts Baba, who never achieves the opportunity for paternal or personal reconciliation. Despite his various attempts at compensation, Baba's unresolved inner conflict and unexpiated guilt continue to reverberate through Amir's life, even posthumously. Amir's character demonstrates successful trauma transcendence and generational healing. Hosseini's narrative strategy deliberately challenges reader empathy by initially presenting Amir's complicity in Hassan's abuse. This complex journey from childhood moral failure—rooted in class consciousness, ethnic superiority, and jealousy—to redemptive aspirations represents moral development. According to Khan et al. "*The Kite Runner* is a powerful narrative of personal guilt, redemption, and reconciliation with one's community in a foreign land" (65).

In *The Kite Runner*, parental influence represents a guilt multiplier; Amir's suffocating guilt might have manifested differently without Baba's preferential treatment of Hassan. Baba's emotional absence influenced the brothers' relationship dynamics and potentially precipitated its dissolution.

His paternal detachment intensified Amir's guilt and fostered profound insecurity, evidenced when twenty-two-year-old Amir encounters his father's "look of disgust" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, p. 144). This recurring paternal disapproval, dating from childhood incidents, established a pattern where comfort yielded to demands for stoicism. The psychological consequences manifest in Amir's adult life through persistent self-doubt and achievement dissatisfaction, tainting his educational, literary, and marital accomplishments until his redemptive return to Afghanistan. Hosseini employs the kite as a masterful symbolic device, representing honor in Afghan culture. The narrative's symmetry emerges through Hassan's initial kite-handling expertise, which enables Amir's tournament victory, juxtaposed against Amir's culminating kite retrieval for Sohrab. Though seemingly modest, this final act represents profound character evolution and Amir's quest for redemption through Sohrab, who represents a second chance at moral rectitude. Khan et al. articulate that the novel suggests that healing is possible for individuals and future generations through conscious choice and action. (73) — "there is a way to be good again" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, p. 238).

V.4.2. Resilience: Mariam's Path to Self-Realization:

Hosseini's novels demonstrate the profound influence of parental relationships on character development and trauma resolution through intricate intergenerational dynamics. The narrative structure reveals how parental behavior patterns reverberate through generations: Baba's emotional unavailability engenders Amir's deep-seated insecurities, Nana's psychological abuse shapes Mariam's diminished sense of self-worth, and Jalil's belated attempts at reconciliation illustrate the enduring impact of parental decisions. These multilayered relationships illuminate the complex transmission of intergenerational trauma and the formidable challenges inherent in disrupting cycles of guilt and shame.

A Thousand Splendid Suns presents intense explorations of parent-child dynamics through the intersected relationships of Mariam, Nana, Jalil, Laila, and her mother. The brief yet psychologically devastating relationship between Mariam and Nana, culminating in the latter's suicide when Mariam is merely fifteen, leaves an indelible wound in Mariam's psyche that persists until her death. Nana's maternal relationship is characterized by verbal aggression and psychological manipulation, repeatedly emphasizing Mariam's social stigma as a "harami." This behavior represents Nana's psychological projection of guilt, revealing her inability to acknowledge her maternal limitations or pursue meaningful personal growth. Nana's character in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, paralleling Baba in *The Kite Runner*, demonstrates how pride and intransigence can prohibit psychological redemption. Unlike their children, who achieve transformative growth, these parental figures remain entrapped within their unresolved trauma. However, Mariam transcends her

traumatic maternal legacy, establishing an authentic family bond with Laila and embodying the maternal nurturing she never received. This transformation is particularly poignant given Mariam's initial internalization of societal rejection: "She was an illegitimate person who would never have a legitimate claim to the things other people had... love, family, home, acceptance" (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* p. 4). The novel thus illustrates the possibility of breaking destructive intergenerational patterns through conscious choices and psychological resilience, even in the face of profound trauma and societal stigmatization. Mariam's journey from internalized illegitimacy to authentic maternal love demonstrates the potential for transcending inherited trauma through personal transformation and emotional authenticity.

Mariam navigates both a war-torn environment and an internalized sense of guilt for circumstances beyond her control. Unlike Amir, whose guilt stems from his actions, Mariam's undeserved shame makes her situation poignant. An examination of Mariam's transcendence of trauma necessitates an analysis of the contributing factors to her psychological evolution. In "Independency, Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness and Self-Redemption—Interpretation of a *Thousand Splendid Sun*" (2019), Lu elucidates how the sociopolitical milieu surrounding Mariam and Laila catalyzes their character development. A central theme of the novel is the female condition under both domestic and public patriarchal structures. Both protagonists endure violence and manipulation at the hands of their husband, Rasheed, culminating in Mariam's act of justified homicide to preserve her life and those of Laila and her children. (16) This sacrificial act paradoxically leads to Mariam's attainment of inner peace and a profound sense of self-worth that surpasses the validation she sought from her parents. Hosseini challenges conventional notions of familial bonds by elevating the significance of chosen relationships in the characters' lives. Mariam's existential transformation post-Laila's arrival is marked by her newfound understanding of love, companionship, and contentment. Her final reflections before execution encapsulate this metamorphosis:

Though there had been moments of beauty in it, Mariam knew that life, for the most part, had been unkind to her... She wished for so much in those final moments. Yet as she closed her eyes, it was not regret any longer but a sensation of abundant peace that washed over her. She thought of her entry to this world, the harami child of a lowly villager, an unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed. However, 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 she should die this way. Not so bad. This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings. (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 361).

This quotation represents evidence of Mariam's successful transcendence of trauma, reclamation of agency, and capacity for selfless action. Despite enduring rejection and abuse from her husband and her parents, Mariam's resilience in the face of cruelty is remarkable. Unlike her mother, Nana, whose suicide serves as an emotional manipulation, Mariam's actions stem from a place of love and protection. The initial guilt associated with Mariam's "harami" status evolves into a pervasive sense of unworthiness, worsened by her inability to be a mother. This perceived loss of femininity becomes conflated with a karmic punishment for her mother's fate. Parental attitudes, particularly Nana's harsh treatment, significantly contribute to the intensification of Mariam's trauma and diminished self-worth. However, Mariam transcends her "harami" status through a process of self-discovery, deriving meaning from spiritual faith and interpersonal relationships; her sacrifice for Laila and her children. Mariam attains self-consciousness and awakening despite the oppressive patriarchal structures and societal conditions that have shaped her human existence.

The psychological damage inflicted on Mariam is evident, nevertheless, she strives for personal growth and redemptively further emphasizes the significance of her awakening and self-consciousness through acts of rebellion against an oppressive society. Mariam's moment of self-awareness, culminating in the killing of her husband, is motivated by an overwhelming need for protection and love. This complex situation highlights the ethical ambiguity of responding to violence with violence while underscoring the dire circumstances that necessitated such action. Moreover, it illustrates the profound influence of environmental factors in shaping individual responses and interpersonal dynamics. "Those who inflict pain on themselves and endure it to alleviate others' suffering are also depicted in the character of Mariam, who sacrificed her life for the sake of alleviating and ending Laila's suffering with their husband Rasheed" (Rasheed & Mahmood 6).

On the other hand, The dynamics between Laila and her mother present parallels and divergences from Mariam's maternal relationship. Unlike Mariam's deprived childhood, Laila benefits from a relative socioeconomic privilege, complete with paternal presence and social connections. However, the maternal relationship deteriorates following the deaths of Laila's brothers in the Soviet conflict, as Mammy's psychological decline manifests in isolation and displaced antagonism toward Babi, whom she holds responsible for their son's military service. Mammy's behavioral patterns reflect psychological defense mechanisms, deflecting genuine emotional processing of her sons' deaths through anger and grief. While her emotional unavailability to Laila remains unjustifiable, her temporary emergence from this dissociative state occurs only when Laila faces mortal danger, echoing Nana's paradoxical awakening during Mariam's attempted paternal reconciliation. However, Mammy's path toward trauma resolution remains incomplete, truncated by

her war-related demise alongside Babi—a narrative junction that precipitates Laila’s integration into Mariam’s life. Both women’s narratives interweave through a persistent pattern of suffering, where devastating reversals invariably follow moments of hope.

The paternal dimension of Mariam’s trauma manifests through Jalil Khan’s calculated emotional distance. Mariam’s poignant reflection encapsulates the fundamental deception of their relationship: “I used to worship you... I sat for hours waiting for you. I worried myself sick that you wouldn’t show up... I didn’t know that you were ashamed of me. You were ashamed of me” (Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, p. 54). This final encounter before Mariam’s arranged marriage to Rasheed and subsequent departure to Kabul marks her recognition of her mother’s prescient warnings about Jalil’s shame-driven detachment. Jalil’s character embodies the complexity of paternal guilt, as his initial displays of affection become suspect through the lens of retrospection—potentially representing attempts at self-absolution rather than authentic paternal affection. His subsequent attempt at reconciliation through an undelivered letter of apology, reaching Laila only after Mariam’s death, underscores the irreversible consequences of his earlier choices. Mariam’s rejection of Jalil’s later attempt at reconciliation represents a powerful assertion of agency, mirroring and inverting his earlier rejection of her. This act of resistance demonstrates her psychological evolution and ability to confront the dissonance between her childhood idealization of her father and his actual character. Jalil’s letter serves as a narrative device illuminating the psychological complexity of his character and his belated recognition of his moral failures:

As you know, I came to Kabul a month ago to speak with you. However, you would not see me. I was disappointed but could not blame you... You were a good daughter, Mariam Jo, and I can never think of you without feeling shame and regret. Regret when it comes to you, Mariam Jo, I have oceans of it. I regret that I did not see you the day you came to Herat... I regret that I did not make you a daughter to me, that I let you live in that place for all those years. And for what? Fear of losing face? Of staining my so-called good name? How little those things matter to me now after all the loss, all the terrible things I have seen in this cursed war... You were a good daughter... and I never deserved you. Now, all I can do is ask for your forgiveness. So, forgive me, Mariam Jo. (393)

In his letter, Jalil articulates profound regret, acknowledging the loss of family members to war—a tragedy that amplifies his awareness of his treatment of Mariam. Despite the communist confiscation of his wealth, he designates Mariam’s inheritance. This action represents Jalil’s belated confrontation with his trauma and guilt, seeking redemption through acknowledgment and repentance, though he considers himself undeserving of forgiveness. His death that same year lends his attempts at reconciliation a particular poignancy. Mariam’s subsequent reflection on her rejection of Jalil during a period of desperate financial need reveals her evolving perspective on paternal relationships. Her

comparison between Jalil and Rasheed—viewing the former’s paternal negligence as preferable to the latter’s domestic tyranny—provides a stark commentary on the precarious position of women in Afghan society.

Mariam and Laila's parallel trajectories illustrate the power of resilience in overcoming adversity. Mariam’s evolution from “harami” to “a person of consequence” demonstrates how spiritual awareness can facilitate personal transformation. At the beginning of Mariam’s journey, her relationship with faith shapes her character development: “Mariam had strong spirituality which can be seen in her conscience. Mariam’s conscience related to humans (habluminnnas) is reflected by her positive thinking of humans, kindness, obedience to her parents and her husband, sympathy, and patience” (*A Thousand Splendid Sun*, p. 66). Similarly, Laila’s journey through loss and hardship to find a chosen family with Mariam exemplifies the strength of female solidarity in confronting societal constraints. Mariam’s spirituality transforms conventional obligations into meaningful expressions of love and purpose. Her faith provides a framework for transcending cultural limitations and finding purpose despite societal restrictions. This spiritual foundation enables her to transform personally and create a lasting impact through relationships and sacrifice.

The Kite Runner and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* explore trauma transcendence through distinct yet parallel narrative arcs. While *The Kite Runner* examines male-centric guilt through Amir’s betrayal and subsequent redemption, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* investigates female resilience through Mariam’s undeserved shame and ultimate self-realization. The novels present contrasting paths to psychological healing: Amir achieves redemption through confrontation with his past and rescue of Sohrab, while Mariam finds transcendence through sacrifice and protection of her chosen family. Both novels demonstrate how societal hierarchies shape individual trauma - ethnic discrimination in *The Kite Runner* and gender oppression in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The psychological evolution of the protagonists reveals intriguing parallels. Amir and Mariam struggle with parental relationships that fundamentally shape their development - Amir’s desperate pursuit of Baba’s approval mirrors Mariam’s yearning for Jalil’s acknowledgment. The novels’ treatment of social hierarchies provides compelling contrasts; while *The Kite Runner* explores how ethnic privilege enables moral compromise, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* examines how gender hierarchy constrains female agency. Nevertheless, the two works suggest that genuine healing requires personal transformation and resistance against systemic oppression.

V. CONCLUSION:

This study employs psychoanalytic theory to examine the intricate dynamics of trauma transcendence and psychological redemption in Hosseini's literary works. The narratives demonstrate that overcoming traumatic experiences requires active engagement with psychological wounds rather than passive acknowledgment, demanding both the recognition of past transgressions and the fortitude to effect transformative change. Through thorough character analysis, the research reveals divergent trajectories in processing trauma and guilt. While characters like Baba and Nana remain perpetually ensnared within unresolved psychological burdens, Amir and Mariam achieve profound transformation through deep self-awareness and confrontation with traumatic experiences. Amir's journey, marked by his betrayal of Hassan and subsequent guilt, and Mariam's path, shaped by her abusive marriage and ultimate sacrifice, illustrate how redemption emerges through self-awareness, sacrificial action, and spiritual growth.

The examination of gender-specific trauma responses reveals distinct coping mechanisms and paths to redemption between male and female characters. The contrast between Baba's avoidance and Amir's active confrontation of past transgressions demonstrates how genuine redemption demands more than acknowledgment - it requires active engagement with one's past, willingness to sacrifice, and courage to effect meaningful change. Characters who successfully transcend psychological wounds demonstrate remarkable agency through conscious acknowledgment of moral failings, sacrificial actions, and the development of authentic relationships. Mariam exemplifies how spirituality functions as an instrumental framework for psychological transformation, with her faith facilitating the navigation of cultural constraints and the discovery of existential purpose. Her spiritual beliefs provide comfort and guidance and catalyze personal growth, shaping her understanding of forgiveness and ultimate sacrifice.

As this study illuminates the complex psychological mechanisms through which characters navigate trauma, including cognitive processes of memory and perception, emotional responses to guilt and shame, and behavioral strategies for coping and adaptation, it aims to contribute to trauma studies in literature by demonstrating how fictional narratives illustrate intricate psychological processes. It reveals that genuine healing transcends mere regret and implies that the path to psychological redemption presents formidable challenges, offering possibilities for both individual healing and intergenerational transformation. This study paves the way for further cross-cultural examinations of guilt and redemption themes in contemporary war literature, particularly exploring the psychological impacts of displacement and exile on character development, thereby expanding applications of psychoanalytic theory to contemporary fiction.

REFERENCES

- Akhtar, Salman. *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books, 2009. Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. London: Vintage, [2011]2012.
- APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2nd edition, APA Reference Book Collection, 2015. <https://dictionary.apa.org/>
- Carveth, Donald L. "The Immoral Superego: Conscience as the Fourth Element in the Structural Theory of the Mind." *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 23.1 (2015): 206-223.
-*The Still Small Voice: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience*. Karnac Books, 2013.
- "Self-Punishment as Guilt Evasion: Theoretical Issues." *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 14.2 (2006): 176-98.
- Collins, Caitlyn. "Is Maternal Guilt A Cross-national Experience?" *Qualitative Sociology* 44.1, 2021: 1–29.
- Fathi, Toni Ibnul, and Nur Ahmadi. "An Analysis of Psychological Conflicts in Khaled Hussaini's Novel *The Kite Runner*." *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 1.1 (2020): 21-30.
- Frankl, Victor. *Man's Search For Meaning: An Introduction To Logo Therapy* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Touchstone, 1984.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Sigmund Freud. The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*. Modern Library, 2012.
- ---. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Joan Riviere, Garden City Pub. Co., 1943.
- ---. "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men (Contributions to the Psychology of Love I)." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XI (1910): *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works*. 1957. 163-176.
- ---. *The Ego and the Id. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIX (1923- 1925): *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, 1-66. 1923.
- *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*. (Originally published in 1894). Read Books Limited, 2014.
- Frosh, Stephen. *A Brief Introduction to Psychoanalytic Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Gordan, Marzieh, and Areej Saad Almutairi. "Resistance, A Facet of Post-Colonialism in Women Characters of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 2.3 (2013): 240-247.
- Hossain, Md Mahroof. "Psychoanalytic theory used in English literature: A descriptive study." *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Linguistics & Education* 17.1 (2017): 41-46.
- Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009.
- ---. *The Kite Runner*. Penguin, 2003.
- Imran, Muhammad, and Sayed M. Ismail. "Khaled Hosseini's women as modern archetypes: A study of obedient, resistant and empowered Afghan women." *Frontiers in Sociology* 7 (2022): 1041435.
- Irawan, Dedy, Fadhil Sofian Hadi, and Usamah Abdurrahman. "Hamka's critique on Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalytic." *TSAQAFAH* 19.1 (2023).

- Jackson, Leonard. *Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the New Sciences of Mind*. Routledge, 2014.
- Kabeer, Haseena, and Priyanka Chaudhary. "Afghan Minorities and Ethnic Tension in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*." *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine* 7.03: 2020.
- Khan, Imdad Ullah, Saood Khan, and Ayesha Perveen. "Sacrificing and Saving the Lamb: Betrayal, Guilt, and Redemption in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini." *Progressive Research Journal of Arts & Humanities (PRJAH)* 4.1 (2022): 65-75.
- Lacan, Jacques, and Jacques-Alain Miller. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Lu, Wenjing. "Independency, Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness and Self-Redemption— Interpretation of *A Thousand Splendid Sun*." *Advances in Literary Study* 7.1 (2019): 15-20.
- Mijolla, Alain De. [Eds] *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. New York: Thomson Gale, 2005.
- Rasheed, Lamiaa Ahmed, and Elaff Tariq Mahmood, "Khaled Hussein's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: A Study of Women's Capacity of Grappling with Suffering" *Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities* (2022) 29 (1) 13-1.
- Sejuti, Sami Jannat, and Md Kabir Biswas. "The Political and the Personal Intertwining: A Study of the Parallel Vision of War in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*." *Contemporary Literary Review India* 9.3 (2022): 48-64.
- Shinebourne, Pnina. "Trauma and culture: on Freud's writing about trauma and its resonances in contemporary cultural discourse." *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 22.3 (2006): 335-345.
- Saraswat, N. "Theme of Identity and Redemption in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*". *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies*. 1(5): 166 -175. (2014).<https://pesquisa.bvsalud.org/portal/resource/pt/sea-175949>
- Tamara, Ajeng Pancar, and Muhammad Rifqi. *Amir's Anxiety and Motive in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*. Diss. Dian Nuswantoro University, 2013.
- Ury, C. The Nietzschean monster: Reconsidering guilt in developmental theory. *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis / Revue canadienne de psychanalyses*, 6(1), 51-74. 1998.
- Westerink, Herman. "Front Matter." *A Dark Trace: Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, 1st ed., Leuven University Press, 2013, p. I-IV. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qdx21.1>. Accessed June 3, 2023.