

**CONFRONTING MEMORY: GUILT AND THE QUEST FOR REDEMPTION
IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*, *A THOUSAND SPLENDID
SUNS* AND *THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED***

MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE THESIS

BRIDGET MAGAGULA

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

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MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE THESIS

By

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Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Literature

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the information in this work is my own original work which has neither been submitted for any other award at the University of Malawi nor any institution for the same purpose. Where other people's work has been used, due acknowledgements have been made.

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Full legal name

Signature

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Peter Chintali. Thank you for the incredible encouragement. “For you, a thousand times over”.

To my parents, Declan and Lucy Magagula. I am because you are. I will forever be indebted to you.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the existence of a number of studies that have focused on the portrayal of a character's psyche and how this affects their respective behaviours, there is a gap in respect to how the immediate space that the characters occupy also positively or negatively affects them. This study reads Khaled Hosseini's portrayal of the characters' guilt in his novels, as a product of the social and economic hardships that affects them in the Afghani society. A homodiegetic reading has been used to provide an in-depth analysis of character behaviour in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* who exhibit behaviours that are products of situations they encounter in their daily life. The characters are portrayed as guilt stricken which eventually traumatizes most of them. Furthermore, it focuses on the impact of the authorial power and background on the characters and setting as shown in the texts. The paper argues that Hosseini uses the pen to portray the life in the war-torn Afghanistan hence providing a communal experience of the suffering of the Afghani people to the whole world. This continuously helps address the reasons why writers write; that is, art for art's sake or for social change. Employing Sigmund Freud's analysis of the unconscious, repression and neurosis, the concept of withdraw and isolation in trauma as well Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, this study argues that though Hosseini's books are not autobiographies, there is an existence of the authorial voice in the works in the sense that there is an ever presence of Hosseini's personal experience reflected in all the books under study. It would be interesting to see if this will continue to be the case in his upcoming novels and whether he continues to use the Afghani community as his main setting.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Henry Louis Gates Jr argues that literature is one of the “sites for contest and negotiation, self-fashioning and refashioning” (11). Language, as the medium of expression in literature, depicts not only the identity of the writer but also that of the characters playing various roles in the literary work. The writer’s origin, dwelling place, language, conditions of life, and other experiences that construct his or her identity are reflected in his or her work. Through literature, readers are able to mirror the life that others live as well as gain more knowledge of the world around them. These experiences vary from romantic and happy ones to war and tragedy. As such in the same context, “literature allows us, through vicarious experiences, to understand how other people feel when they have committed a crime, with or without repentance, and how they deal with guilt. It also allows us to project our own emotions onto fictional characters and test situations that we may not encounter in real life” (Nikolajeva 2). As a writer, Khaled Hosseini’s writing focuses on his immediate environment, more specifically his original place of residence, Afghanistan. Through the three works under study, Hosseini mirrors the life of a normal Afghani on daily basis, on the verge of the persisting war and instability. Most critics who have analysed Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* have concentrated on external factors such as cultural variation and ethnic rivalries and discussed how these issues directly influence the actions of the characters in the novel. In the analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, critics have mainly focused on the sexual, physical and mental abuse

that Mariam, the protagonist in the novel, is subjected to, as well as highlighting women's lack of rights in Afghan society. It is also noted by the critics that the issue of class drives the plot of the story in *And the Mountains Echoed*. This research builds on this scholarship to explore how the issues of culture, class and environment play crucial roles in the origination of the various characters' feelings of guilt and how the characters become traumatized in the process. Furthermore, the research aims at analysing how the characters confront their repressed memory of guilt and quests for redemption from their respective predicaments. Most of the critical studies reviewed by this researcher do not relate the external factors that influence the characters' actions and the feelings of guilt that motivate their quests for redemption.

Furthermore, this research reads Hosseini's texts in relation to how *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold can be read. *The Lovely Bones* is a story about a young girl named Susie who was raped and later murdered. Research indicates that the author herself was raped hence this story gives hints of a realistic experience. The findings of this study directly view the author's texts as his confrontation of memory which can be mirrored in the characters' confrontation of memory. This study thus adds to existent literature by analysing the characters' inner feelings of guilt in relation to their quests for redemption.

The general objective of this study is to examine Khaled Hosseini's portrayal of various characters' guilt and their quests to achieve redemption in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*. The specific objectives are to analyze the mental states of the characters; to explore how the experiences of guilt traumatize the characters and lead them to quest for redemption in the novels; and to

determine the extent to which the confrontation of the memory of their wretched past enables them to achieve the redemption which they seek.

The study, through a homodiegetic¹ reading of the texts, argues that Khaled Hosseini portrays guilt and the quest for redemption as products of external factors that affect the psyches of the characters and traumatizes some of them in the process. Such factors vary in each of the three novels. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam struggles with the desire to achieve a sense of belonging in Jalil's family since she is regarded as a bastard or harami as she is referred to by her mother. *The Kite Runner* shows the clash of cultures between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras. *And the Mountains Echoed* also features a character who seeks to achieve belongingness. Nabi who works for the Wahdatis lives on the peripheral. He does not belong to the bourgeoisie like the Wahdati who occupy the centre. He is only a servant in their household. While working for the family, Nabi gets romantically attracted to Nila, Mr Wahdati's wife. It is his attempt to win Nila's love that leads Nabi into actions that lead to his guilt. Nabi initiates the sale of the daughter of his brother-in-law to the Wahdati family that further brings a chain of problems. Saboor sells off Pari in order to support his household.

Guilt seems to be the common feeling that the various characters in the novels experience. According to Lasch, there are mainly three types of guilt namely reparative, depressive and persecutory guilt. The characters under study exhibit the

¹ In this study *homodiegetic* means focusing on the external features of the text. Homodiegetic reading relates to the narrator of a dramatic work who is also the protagonist or the character of a work (Nunning 89). There is a relationship between the literary work and its external world. In this case, literature is seen as a representation of the external age. In this instance therefore, the studying of a work of art cannot be done separately from the proper understanding of the environmental background.

depressive type of guilt in which case they “manifest a capacity for conscientious concern for the other” (2). It is this concern for others that eventually causes the characters who feel guilty to seek redemption. This type of guilt is different from persecutory guilt which is also referred to as narcissistic guilt. Depressive guilt makes people torment themselves because they are in denial and do not want to come to terms with the truth.

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan born American novelist who has been active on the writing scene from 2003. He has written four novels, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *And the Mountains Echoed* and *Sea Prayer*. This study focuses on the first three novels. In these novels, Hosseini presents guilt which is felt by various characters² and shows how these characters seek to attain redemption from the kind of situations which cause their feelings of guilt. Guilt is the state of “finding oneself feeling personally responsible before God and others for the evil that was intended or has been done out of one’s freedom”³. This definition describes the type of guilt that is discussed in this study; this is guilt which originates from a character’s perceived violation of another character’s happiness and peace. The after effects of this guilt become the centrepiece of all the three texts under study. The various characters in the selected works find themselves personally responsible for the destruction of other people’s happiness⁴.

² Guilt is a very common element in literature. Whereas in some texts guilt is evident through the characters actions as in the case of Macbeth in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare or Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, others try to hide their guilt.

³ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/guilt-theology>

⁴ The situation of guilt that some characters find themselves in is so devastating such that some become traumatized in the process when they become aware of the amount of damage that their actions have caused. Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experiences* quotes Sigmund Freud’s definition of trauma as “a wound not inflicted on the body but rather on the mind” (3). This is the sort of wound that takes time to heal. It is experienced, too unexpected and hence is not fully available to the conscious self. In the writing of the three novels, Khaled Hosseini shows the confrontation of memory in which case the various characters who find themselves in the state of being guilt go about

In Christian mythology, redemption refers “to the mystery of God’s deliverance of mankind from the evil of sin and his restoration of man to the state of grace by an act of divine power and merciful love”⁵. Redemption restores man to a state of grace. That is, it restores him to a state of peace and happiness. The various characters who feel guilty in the three novels seek redemption in order to achieve peace and happiness. The three works show how various characters who feel guilty seek redemption. In their respective quests for redemption, the characters undertake specific acts of contrition.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Nabi writes a letter to Pari to inform her about a section of her life that for a long time had been wiped blank. He informs her about her real parents, Saboor and Parwana as well as about her brother Abdullah. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir goes into war-torn Afghanistan in search of Hassan’s son and overcomes various hardships to save him. Amir undertakes this task because he knows that it will enable him to find peace after his cruel treatment of Hassan during their childhood. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Jalil writes a letter to Mariam apologizing for not being there for her after the death of her mother. Mariam provides motherly support to Laila. She becomes a mother to Laila after she struggles with her own loss as a result of war.

Guilt feelings are warranted if an agent knows that he or she has acted in a morally wrong manner. “It might be said that in such a case the agent has a strong reason to

on a quest for redemption. Guilt and redemption are treated as one because redemption of the characters in the book follows upon the guilt. The characters in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* commit various crimes and pass through traumatic experiences. Each of the protagonists meets his or her destiny and seeks his or her redemption in the final count.

⁵ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-andmaps/redemption-theology>

feel guilty and that the agent is justified in having guilt feelings and unjustified in not having guilt feelings which is therefore deemed morally wrong” (Harman 1). As stated by Roger Brooke, “guilt pervades a person’s being, for it is the person himself who is guilty. Guilt is lived and experienced existentially, as we all know, sometimes painfully” (32) One conception of guilt feelings identifies them with feelings of remorse involving deep regret, painful humiliation, distress and self-punishment. These feelings in some instances cause hurt that eventually may lead the person to confront the feeling. It is such feelings that cause the characters in the novels to embark on quests for redemption.

In the three texts under focus, Hosseini brings to light something that he might have possibly repressed for long. Just like the characters that Hosseini portrays in their respective quests for redemption, this paper further argues that through the writing of these three texts, Hosseini confronts his memory in a quest to resolve his inner struggle, dealing with a past and a present that he manages to physically stay away from but not mentally. In his writing, Hosseini comes to terms with his suppressed memory. Psychologists define memory “as the retention of information or experience over time” (King 284). When an event is experienced, it is recorded irrespective of the kind of event it is. Memory provides the continuity of life-the long thread to which are tied our joys and sorrows, knowledge and skills, triumphs and failures and the people and places of our lives (Wood 205). The memory that the brain stores and is further retained helps in influencing a person’s future action. Some events can easily be recalled, but in a case where the actions bring more discomfort than comfort, the mind represses them. Sigmund Freud proposed that unwanted memories can be forgotten by pushing them into the unconscious in a process called repression.

Repression seeks to protect the individual from information that may sometimes bring harm. Sometimes, repression can be considered a special case of motivated forgetting which occurs when individuals forget something because it is so painful or anxiety-laden that remembering is intolerable (King 308). This type of forgetting may be a consequence of the emotional trauma experienced by victims of rape or physical abuse of war veterans, or survivors of earthquakes, plane crashes, and other terrifying events. These emotional traumas may haunt people for many years unless they can put the details out of mind. Even when people have not experienced trauma, they may use motivated forgetting to protect themselves from memories of painful, stressful or otherwise unpleasant circumstances. “Repression does not erase a memory but it makes conscious remembering extremely difficult” (King 308). In this regard therefore, the process of confronting memory means memory which was once encoded and stored now undergoes the process of retrieval. Retrieval occurs when information stored in memory is brought to mind. As it will be discussed, the discussion of how the characters confront their memory in redeeming themselves from the guilt which evidently affects them is not independent of the authors own experience. Just like the characters themselves, the author goes through the process of retrieving his memory when he confronts it.

1.2 Literature Review

The Kite Runner which is Hosseini’s first novel has been reviewed by many scholars. Nina Farlina highlights the variation of culture that is evident in the Afghani society through the Pashtuns and the Hazaras. She distinguishes the Pashtun from the Hazara in Afghanistan, arguing that the Pashtuns seem to be the “superior” ethnic group

which occupies the upper level of the society contrary to the Hazara which is basically viewed by the supposedly “superior” group as the other. According to Farlina,

In this story, the main characters who undergo those conflicts come from a Pashtun and a Hazara ethnic. The Pashtun is described as an ethnic group that has positive attribute and exclusive, namely high social status, honorable, high class, good appearance and success men. Besides, the Hazara has negative attribute, namely low social status, poor, low class, physical defect and low job such as waiter, servant and beggar. [SIC] (15)

Farlina argues that Hosseini presents these ethnic distinctions through Amir who is a Pashtun and Hassan who is a Hazara, and observes that these distinctions cause conflicts and civil war. She further states that the lives of the characters are influenced by their cultural identities which create many problems for them, including internal conflicts.

The problem of ethnic rivalries in *The Kite Runner* has also been widely reviewed by critics. From the onset, *The Kite Runner* depicts an environment of hatred that is brought about by the differences between the ethnic groups. Hosseini presents a scenario of hatred between the Pashtuns and Hazaras, similar to the situation between the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda⁶. There are fights and other forms of violence between the Pashtuns, the supposedly superior ethnic group, and the Hazaras, who are labelled as the other. An example of ethnically motivated violence is the sexual abuse of Hassan, a Hazara, by Assef, a Pashtun. Assef abuses Hassan merely for the fact that he is a Hazara, hence someone of low regard to him.

⁶ In 1994, Rwanda erupted into one of the most appalling cases of mass murder the world has witnessed since World War II. Many of the majority Hutu (about 85% of the population) turned on the Tutsi (About 12% of the population) and moderate Hutu killing an estimated total of 800,000 people(Magnarella 1)

The author's portrayal of these two ethnic sides affected the reception of this book across various societies, especially in Afghanistan. Janette Edwards examines the favourable and unfavourable public responses to *The Kite Runner* following its publication in 2003. The release of the book triggered ethnic conflicts. The film version of *The Kite Runner* was banned by the Afghan Ministry of Culture amidst violence and death threats against the child actors who had played the films protagonists (3). In her critical analysis, Edwards looks at "the outcry in Afghanistan over 'culturally inflammatory' elements of both the novel and the film typically framed by the Anglophone press as the gap between Western liberalism and ethno-religious extremism, and considers those hostilities against antagonisms toward Hosseini's work expressed within the Afghan expatriate communities"(1). Edwards also notes the controversy caused by *The Kite Runner* beyond the Afghan borders among the diasporic communities. These responses by the communities portray the real and typical contemporary experience by the Afghan people shown with accuracy and truth. As an author writing from the diaspora, Hosseini touches on issues that are viewed as taboo in his homeland such as homosexuality. In agreement to this study as stated by Edwards, this paper further argues that Hosseini not only talks about issues that are rendered as taboos but rather also sheds light on issues that for so long have been obscured. Through the world of fiction, Hosseini partially keeps the reader informed on what is happening in the war-torn Afghanistan portrayed in his novels.

In addition, Niraja Saraswat explores guilt and perseverance in *The Kite Runner* as the motivation for an individual to seek redemption and attain the satisfaction of self-fulfilment (166). Saraswat notices that "Amir's desire to redeem himself forms the

heart of the novel” (168). In agreement with Saraswat, this study also argues that a substantial part of Amir’s search for redemption stems from his guilt regarding Hassan. However, on a different angle this study states that Amir’s guilt originates externally from the social environment that he finds himself in, in the unstable environment of Afghanistan. Amir is a victim of his circumstances. That guilt drives the events of the story including Amir’s journey to Kabul to find Sohrab and his confrontation with Assef. Amir lives with the guilt he has built up over the years because of one incident from his childhood. Shahira Banu’s analysis of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* focuses on the tragic war in Afghanistan and its impacts on the lives of ordinary people. She addresses issues pertaining to war and discrimination (180). Banu’s argument concurs with Hosseini’s explanations about his own work. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Hosseini rightly stated that his hope for readers of his texts is that in reading his books there is a communal experience of emotions and that the pain that the characters in the books felt will likewise be understood by others,⁷ hence the readers sharing with him the Afghani experience.

In his review of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Joseph Ryan Bake focuses on the lasting effects of abuse in the life of Mariam, the protagonist. He highlights the sexual, physical, and mental abuse that Mariam goes through from the beginning of the text. Namita Singh discusses Khaled Hosseini’s portrayal of the plight and suffering of Afghan women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. She states that the novel stresses the rights of women which were not previously granted to them. Examples of gender imbalance include “restrictions to education choices that restrict great woman potential in the male dominated world” (88). Basharat Shameem highlights how the

⁷ Talk to Al Jazeera-Khaled Hosseini: ‘Why I write about pain’ YouTube. 4 July, 2014.

persistent condition of conflict and violence in Afghanistan has caused a lot of suffering for women and led them to a situation of double subjugation in the form of patriarchal domination and political oppression. Shameem argues that the “perpetual state of conflict in the history of Afghanistan actually magnified the oppression of women” (2). Anuradha Nongmarthem’s analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* also focuses on the portrayal of women precisely on the view of the power that sisterhood has on fighting patriarchal forces. She makes reference to the bond that exists between Laila and Mariam. The paper analyses the acute exploitation and torture that the women in the novel encounter in the land of Afghanistan and the power that solidarity brings. As demonstrated by these critical reviews, most of the literature on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* focuses on the oppression and vulnerability of women in Afghan society. This study builds on this body of literature to further show that some of Hosseini’s female characters find themselves in situations that psychologically affect them because of the oppression that they encounter.

Several critics have also highlighted issues Hosseini presents in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Jeremy McDonald argues that, in addition to presenting the central love which is broken between Pari and Abdullah, the story enlightens the reader on the existence of class levels in respect to gender, countries and location (1). The novel presents two distinct classes such as the bourgeoisie to which Mr Wahdati, Nila and Pari belong and the proletariat, the class of Saboor and his household. These class distinctions are relevant to this study because the problem of guilt in *And the Mountains Echoed* arises from the desire of the proletariat to rise to a higher class and attain a sense of belonging in their society. In other words, the class differences are responsible for the guilt felt by the characters discussed in this study. In her analysis

of *And the Mountains Echoed*, Lata Mishra examines the plight of children abandoned by their parents, especially mothers. She focuses on the psychological effects of the abandonment on the said children. Concurring with Mishra's findings, the research also highlights the psychological effect of the abandonment of children that directly affects Pari and Abdul after Pari is sold off to the Wahdati family. In her critical analysis of *And the Mountains Echoed* Hiqmar Nur Agustina also notes the destruction that guilt brings in the characters. The other important aspect that she explores is that "as a diaspora, he (Hosseini) realized correctly that he had extreme desire for Afghanistan to be a peaceful, beautiful and comfortable place to be a place to stay" (201). Agustina notes that it is this desire that made Hosseini write the books about his birth place. Agustina's analysis is important because he notes that Hosseini's personal life acted as a muse for the originality of these texts. His research further argues that these works can be read as psychobiography's of Hosseini. Though not completely true life stories, they mirror Hosseini's Afghan and American experiences.

This study contributes to the various readings of these three texts by focusing on the traumatic guilt suffered by characters in the texts and examining how the characters strive to resolve guilt through their individual quests for redemption. Through a homodiegetic reading, the study seeks to broaden knowledge on how external factors have a bearing on the psyches of the characters, affects their actions and in turn cause their feelings of guilt. In *The Kite Runner*, the class and ethnic differences of the characters play significant roles in the origin of the guilt felt by Amir's father, Papa. Amir's guilt originates from his desire to find belonging and acceptance in his father's life. In *And the Mountains Echoed*, the gap between social classes directly causes the

actions that lead to the guilty feelings of the concerned characters in the novel. Nabi acts as a catalyst for the selling off of Pari to the Wahdatis. The selling off of Pari does not only affect Nabi, but also affects Saboor, Pari's father. Nabi sees the deal as a way of achieving a higher economic status and finding love, Saboor's involvement in the deal solely for the economic reasons. His family lives in an impoverished state and selling off Pari seems to be the ideal solution to their problems. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* mainly presents two characters, Jalil and Mariam. The issue of class also stands out in this text. Whereas Mariam's guilt stems from her effort to finding belongingness in her father's life and in turn achieve a higher status that of her father originates from his efforts to avoid losing the status that he has in the society.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The study applies psychoanalytic literary theory to the examination of the characters' feelings of guilt and their quests for redemption. Psychoanalysis is a broad term given to the theories developed by Freud and his followers including Jungian psychoanalysis and Lacanian Psychoanalysis. This theory is appropriate because the study focuses on the inner feelings of the characters in the three novels. Mary Klages states that psychoanalysis is the science of the human mind pioneered and articulated by Sigmund Freud (70). This research employs Sigmund Freud's concept of the unconscious in the analysis of the three texts. This is because the characters seem to initially repress their various feelings into the unconscious but later on confront them. Klages states that, "the unconscious is the realm of thought inaccessible to the conscious rational mind. Thoughts that are repellent or unacceptable to the conscious mind are repressed into the unconscious where psychic energy used to repress unacceptable thoughts causes mental distress (70). The characters who feel guilty

because of their various actions also experience mental suffering consequent to the said actions.

Hosseini sets the three novels in the war-torn environment of Afghanistan. He portrays his characters in the novels as living in this environment which is confused and unstable. The war and instability which is recurrent in the texts causes a lot of suffering and unending loss of life among the people. The wide gap between the rich and the poor aggravates the suffering of the ordinary people. Most of the characters find themselves in states of guilt because they try to live normal lives in situations that are unstable, situations where normalcy seems not to be the order of the day. In all these works, Hosseini mirrors the life of ordinary Afghani and demonstrates his awareness of the effects of catastrophe and oppression on the individual psyche. This awareness is evident in his examination of the psychological consequences of wars, poverty, colonization and domestic abuse that constitute as main themes in his works.

Trauma theory is also applied to the analysis of characters in this study because the novels feature traumatic experiences of the principal characters. According to Cathy Caruth, “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature-the way it was precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). As I demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, the initial point of impact or effect the novels’ characters go through seems far from traumatic. The pain only haunts most of them later after having experienced the situation. This is also what Caruth means when she states that “trauma is always the story of a wound that cries out that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise

available” (4). I read this as the after effect that an event can bring, which brings elements of grief and psychological destruction.

Sigmund Freud also analyses the peculiar and sometimes uncanny way in which catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those who have passed through them. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud states that “the wound of the mind is not like the wound of the body but rather an event that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and it is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again” (qtd in Caruth 10). A traumatic event leaves a wound on the mind, one which may not be noted immediately, but nevertheless haunts a person when she or he least expects it. As I demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, the characters in Hosseini’s works initially do not feel the impact of their actions on other people but belatedly. However, it is the Freudian reality principle that directs their personality to realise the wrong done. Freud further argues that “the basic purpose of human life as revealed by the actual behaviour of people is happiness” (qtd in Caruth 11). He defines happiness narrowly as “correlative with the gratification of our desires according to the pleasure principle which has both positive and negative aspects, that is the experience of intense pleasures and the elimination or avoidance of pain and discomfort”. This can be the source of our suffering, guilt, trauma hence tarnishing our relationships with others (qtd in Caruth 14). In this instance therefore, the pleasure principle is always thrilling up until the reality principle takes form. Ulman and Brothers state that “the theory of trauma is the view that the traumatic experience shatters the individual sense of self in ways those are intolerable. The self is viewed as the centre of mental activity and plays a vital role in organising the meaning of experience” (6). The trauma therefore takes on an unconscious meaning which

challenges and undermines the persons sense of self, and is symbolically represented in the symptoms of trauma. Through the application of trauma theory, this study seeks to analyse the trauma evident through the elements of guilt that are evident in the three texts.

Robert Jay Lifton describes trauma as “near death experiences, death equivalent. In such experiences, people lose touch with links to other humans and to the sense of community or group so basic to human identity (149). In some instances, trauma results in the withdrawal and isolation of the self from others. In Chapter 3, I will demonstrate how this is reflected in some characters’ behaviour in the three novels discussed in this study. Overall, I argue that these novels feature characters who are traumatized by guilt: Mariam, Rasheed and Jalil in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Amir and Amir’s father in *The Kite Runner* and Parwana, Saboor, Nabi and Masooma in *And the Mountains Echoed*. The theory of trauma will be used with a highlight of concepts of detachment, social withdrawal and isolation. As will be evident, detachment as well as social withdraw and isolation is the common characteristic that is shown by most of the characters in the three works. This is evident through Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Abdul and Saboor in *And the Mountains Echoed* as well as Amir in *The Kite Runner*. Intrusive thoughts will also be discussed in relation to Saboor in *And the Mountains Echoed*. The recurrent theme that persistently appears in the discussion of trauma is the element of loss which varies from loss to death as well as loss due to physical distance. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam, Laila and Rasheed experience loss due to death of their loved ones. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir and Papa suffer as a result of a loss of the bond they both had with Hassan,

while in *And the Mountains Echoed*, Abdul and Papa suffer due to the loss that comes in their midst once Pari is sold away to the Wahdati family.

This research also draws from Marxism which broadly encompasses the philosophical, economic, and historical ideas and theories articulated by Karl Marx. “Karl Marx observes that the class which is struggling for mastery mostly gains political power in order to represent its interest as the general interest” (Habib 531). In this case, the dominant group in the society formulates the rules and these have to be abided by everyone. He states that “the class which is ruling material force in society is also the ruling intellectual force” (Habib 531). Having at its disposal the means of production, it is empowered to disseminate its ideas in the realms of law, morality, religion and art as possessing universality. The Marxist concept of class consciousness is particularly relevant to this study as it highlights the class differences which impel some of the characters in the novels to seek mobility from their proletariat status into the bourgeois class. It is this quest for a better class and belonging that leads characters such as Nabi and Saboor in *And the Mountains Echoed* and Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* into conditions of disarray. This quest leads them into situations that consequently bring guilt in their respective lives.

The study also draws on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the subaltern. Subalternity is a term adopted by Gramsci to refer to “those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling class. Subaltern includes peasants, workers and other groups denied access to hegemonic power” (Ashcroft 198). In this study the term subaltern is used to refer to the poor who are subject to the power of the rich. Gramsci’s concept of subalternity is important in this research because it helps in the analysis of the

difference that exists between the rich and the poor in the text. The gap between classes, that is the rich and the poor, is central to the origination of the characters guilt hence the concept of subalternity is very applicable in the analysis of the texts.

Furthermore, the study utilizes Louis Althusser's theory of the subject's construction by ideology. According to Althusser, "ideology is the system of ideas that explains or makes sense of a society" (Ashcroft 203). Marx's notion of ideology is that the ruling class represents its own interest of the people as a whole. In Althusser's philosophy, people of a particular state or nation have to adhere to rules of the state despite their various conflicts of interest. In this regards he describes what he calls the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) which directly support the behaviour that has to be adhered to. These RSA's include the police and government systems. The state works directly with these to ensure that its ideologies are enforced. All members of the state who do not oblige to these, face the consequences of their actions.

Furthermore, Althusser indicated about the enforcement of ideologies through the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Just like RSA's there are also institutions that generate what are seen as codes of conduct for a specific state such as religion, families, school and other systems. The ideas that are derived therefore have to be adhered to at all cost. Upon the introduction of these, humans are subjected to the hegemonic power of the ruling classes and eventually they become interpellated into believing in the discourse propagated by the various state apparatus. These ideologies become the biblical truth for the state. As Klages also states, "ideologies must always be recruiting subjects, getting people to believe in them as 'truth' and to act accordingly" (Klages 43). In agreement with Karl Marx, the presence of the state

apparatuses makes the modern state “a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Habib 531). This concept of ideology is relevant to this research because all works discussed such depict ideologies, both mainly ISA’s that the characters have to adhere to in their various communities and immediate environments. These ideologies directly impact on the kinds of life the characters’ lead. The adherence to these ideologies in their environments in turn leads them to some actions where guilt originates. Since the ideologies mainly favour the ruling class, the subaltern struggles to find their belongingness in such spaces. In these novels, the poor have to adhere to various ideologies as proposed and put in place by the rich thereby further widening the gap between the poor and the rich. In Chapter 2, I further elaborate how RSAs and ISAs work in the narrative contexts of the novels.

The other concept that is recurrent in this study is subjectivity. This concept is synonymous with the assertion of identity as propounded by Rene Descartes – “I think therefore I am” – which confirms the centrality of the autonomous human individual. In this study some of the characters under discussion such as Nabi in *And The Mountains Echoed* and Amir in *The Kite Runner* find themselves in situations where they assert the central element of their individualistic humanity without much regard for the other. The Cartesian individualism of the central characters which seems to be the source of their feelings of guilt later leads to their respective quests for redemption. These quests indicate the desires of the characters to heal their egoistic personalities which become tamed and hurt by the guilt.

The thesis has five chapters. Chapter One introduces the issues to be discussed and provides background information, a literature review and theoretical framework of the

study. Chapter Two critically discusses the actions of the characters which cause feelings of guilt in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Sun* and *And the Mountains Echoed*. Chapter Three highlights the traumatic effects of these actions on the characters and others affected by the actions. The fourth chapter explores how the characters embark on quests to attain redemption from their guilt-stricken situations and assesses whether or not the quests for redemption are successful. Chapter five presents a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Shadows of Remorse: Deconstructing Guilt in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And The Mountains Echoed*

In *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud notes that “if we ask how a person comes to have a sense of guilt, we arrive at an answer which cannot be disputed; a person feels guilty when he does something he knows to be bad” (71). Habib, reading Freud, is of the view that the father of psychoanalysis “postulated that we bear a form of ‘otherness’ within ourselves: we cannot claim fully to comprehend even ourselves, why we act as we do, why we make certain moral and political decisions, why we harbour give religious disposition and intellectual orientations” (571). To a greater extent, this statement is correct in as far as the behaviour of characters in some books is concerned. It can be argued that “far from being based on reason, our thinking is intimately dependent upon the body, upon its instincts of survival and aggression, as well as obstinate features that cannot be dismissed (as in the Cartesian tradition where the mind is treated as a disembodied phenomenon)” (Habib 571). The id which harbours our instincts and desires enables us to address our pleasure principles which likely in most cases are in contradiction with the reality principle. It is for this reason that people act in ways that eventually lead them into conditions of disarray. In some cases, people act in ways that are questionable because they seek to achieve proper survival and wellbeing.

In *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini presents various characters who find themselves in situations that make them

feel guilty. All the three books are set in various environments which directly impact on the lives of the characters. The environment in which each character lives requires effort for the character to survive. All the texts are set in environments that are not peaceful and this condition affects the lives of the characters. Some of the characters' daily experiences are so devastating that they induce states of guilt in the characters. "Freud conceptualized guilt as conflict between the ego and superego functioning to keep one's behaviour in line with moral standards while pushing id inspired transgressions" (Amodio 1). In a case where the pleasure principle wins over the reality principle, there are certain cases when the guilt may develop. This chapter focuses on several characters and assesses how social, cultural and economic factors lead the characters into their situations of guilt.

There are a number of theories that are applied to the analysis of the characters who experience problems of guilt in the three novels. In the analysis of these characters, this research mainly draws on psychoanalysis and Marxism, specifically focusing on the concepts of ideology, alienation and hegemony in Marxism and Freud's concept of the unconscious in Psychoanalysis'. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* presents characters that manifest feelings of guilt. Two of these characters get themselves in this state as a result of their struggles to achieve upward class mobility and gain a sense of social belonging. These struggles can be explained through the Marxist conception of class relations. Marxism describes class relations and social conflicts in terms of economic factors that manipulate the political life of people in society.

2.2 Guilt in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* presents several examples of situations that reflect the Marxist perspective. The characters in the text are from different social classes whereby Jalil, Mariam's father is from the upper class, Nana, Mariam's mother and Mariam are from the lower classes. In this novel, the story centres around the main character Mariam whose guilt originates from the scenario where her mother commits suicide solely because she does not listen to her. Mariam is referred to as a "harami" by her mother because she was rejected by her father during pregnancy. Mariam's mother is excluded from the society and marginalised. She becomes alienated in her own society. Mary Klages states that, "alienation means feeling alien, foreign or estranged to something or someone" (5). Nana's loneliness makes her so obsessed with motherhood that she becomes extremely possessive of her daughter who is her only child. Since Mariam's childhood her mother keeps telling her that her father never really loves her. At one point, Nana tells Mariam "And don't let him charm you. He betrayed us, your beloved father. He cast us out of his big fancy house like we were nothing to him. He did it happily" (6). That emphasise he has not been part of them when she was growing up.

However, Mariam gets a different version of the story from her father, Jalil, to the effect that her mother used to work as a house help for his parents, till the time he got her pregnant. Jalil could not marry her due to the difference in class between them. His parents could never give consent to a marriage between the two. Mariam's mother was therefore banished from the premises to the outskirts of Herat where she lived with Mariam. Her father made sure that he provided for Mariam and her mother. Every month, Mariam and her mother got groceries to support them in their day to

day lives. Mariam's mother believed that the monthly provisions of food by Jalil were "his idea of penance" (11). A way of showing that he was really guilt.

A problem arises when Mariam desires to spend her birthday in the town of Herat at a cinema which is owned by her father so that she can watch her favourite cartoon film. The father initially promises to take her to the cinema, but he eventually fails to keep the promise. Mariam reacts to this failure by disobeying her mother and going to Herat without her consent. "She waited until her legs were stiff. This time she did not go back to the *kolba*. She rolled up the legs of her trouser to the knees, crossed the stream, and, for the first time in her life headed down the hill for Herat" (21). When she gets there, Mariam realizes the true character of her father. He ignores her and tells the gateman to inform her that he is not around. Yet Mariam is convinced that she has seen him peeping through the window.

Her gaze skimmed over all of these things before they found a face, across the garden, in an upstairs window. The face was there for only an instant, a flash, but long enough. Long enough for Mariam to see the eyes widen, the mouth open then it snapped away from view. A hand appeared and frantically pulled out a card. The curtains fell short (24).

As quoted above, Mariam notices that her father is present at this moment. To make matters worse, "he lets her sleep on the streets" (25). Mariam feels extremely betrayed considering that she has had much hope and love for her father. She trusted her father so much that she thought all that her mother had said about him were lies. The next day Mariam is taken back by the servant to the village, where they are confronted by a sad site.

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 (25).

Mariam's mother has died. She has committed suicide upon realizing that Mariam has gone to Herat without informing her. Mariam's mother already belongs to the peripheral since she is marginalised by Jalil. This supports World Health Organisations findings that 'suicide impacts on the most vulnerable of the world's populations and highly prevalent in already marginalised and discriminated groups and society' (3). Nana feels betrayed by her own daughter and Mariam cannot forgive herself for going to Herat without her mother's consent. Nana had once told Mariam that "You're all I have" (14). Mariam finds herself responsible for her mother's death. She had always thought that her father told her the absolute truth, the gospel truth. On the contrary, she had discovered the true picture of her father, the one that he had hidden from her for so long. By the time she has learnt the danger of a single sided story, a lot of damage has already been done.

The suicide is a tragedy for Mariam. After the death of her mother, Mariam is taken into her father's house where she is not wanted by any of her father's wives. Her life is hurdled by anxiety. World Health Organisation states that, "the impact of suicide on families, friends and communities is devastating and far reaching, even long after the persons dear to them have taken their own lives" (1). At a certain time, when she is living in her father's house, Mariam loses her sense of belonging and recalls her mother telling her that "when I am gone you will have nothing" (28). She feels absolutely lost and 'othered' in Jalil's household. One day her step mothers gather around her in the living room. "Have you been comfortable?" Nargis, who had a small chin, and curly black hair asked, "We hope you've been comfortable. This...ordeal ...

must be very hard for you. So difficult” (31). Even though they seem to have an interest in her life, Jalil’s wives do not really care about the well-being of Mariam. Despite the fact that this household is what she initially desired to live in, she wishes her mother were around. Jalil’s wives inform Mariam about the purpose for the meeting. They tell her that they have found a suitor for her to which Mariam responds negatively. One of the wives, Afsoon, engages Mariam in a conversation:

‘Now he is a little older than you,’ Afsoon chimed in. ‘But he can’t be more than ... forty. Fourty five at the most. Wouldn’t you say, Nargis?’ ‘Yes. But I’ve seen nine-year-old girls given to men twenty years older than your suitor, Mariam. We all have. What are you, fifteen? That’s a good solid marrying age for a girl.’ (32)

This presents the family as an oppressive apparatus. Jalil’s wives use this to voice out their desires which form the basis that it is okay for young women to be married off. Mariam has no choice but to abide by it. Being a subaltern subject further marginalizes Mariam in this instance. In an attempt to avoid being forced into an early marriage, Mariam proposes that she goes and stays with Mullah Faizullah who is another influential person in her life. However, her request is rejected by her step mothers who say that he does not need to be caring for Mariam since he is aging.

Mariam has a very good relationship with Mullah Faizullah. This is evident through her background as well as how she acts during his presence. Mullah Faizullah was a close ally of her mother and cared for her and taught her some of the early lessons of her life. At one time, he pays her a visit while at Jalil’s home and for once, Mariam feels relieved because she actually feels there is someone who cares around. “When she saw her friend at the door, his white beard and his amiable toothless smile, Mariam felt tears stinging the corners of her eyes again. She swung her feet over the

side of the bed and hurried over. She kissed his hand as always and he kissed her brow” (29).

When Mullah asks how Mariam is fairing, she opens up and says: “I keep thinking of what she said to me before I left” (30). At this point Mariam is making reference to her mother. However, Mullah assures Mariam that what her mother did to herself is not Mariam’s fault but her own. “*Nay, nay, nay.*” Mullah Faizullah out his hand on her knee. “Your mother, may Allah forgive her, was a troubled and unhappy woman, Mariam jo. She did a terrible thing to herself” (30) He states that she was at fault because Allah does not approve of her to take her life. Despite all this assurance, Mariam still regards herself as the catalyst of the chain of events that eventually led to the death of her mother. This is in line with Bedford’s argument that states that “the feeling of guilt can lead to a negative assessment of the self, and therefore is believed to motivate via a reduction in self-esteem” (5). This is exactly how Mariam feels after the death of her mother. She wishes she still lived with her mother in that confined house on the outskirts of the city. Mariam is eventually married off to an old man named Rasheed, who has been married before despite her objection to the arranged marriage.

Mariam’s guilt stems from her analysis of the events that led to her mother’s death. Mariam believes that she was at fault and accepts the blame that she thinks she deserves. She does not repress her feelings of guilt but acknowledges her conscience and faces the wrong that she had done. The main cause of the actions that lead to Mariam’s guilt is her desire to be closer to her father. By disobeying her mother and secretly visiting her father, Mariam betrays the person who really cared about her without any consideration of what the world had to say.

Jalil also harbours guilty feelings. Freud argues that “guilt feelings constitute a decisive element in the control of the ego by the superego. Guilt feelings generated by the superego when the ego contravenes its orders assure the submission of individuals to social values and norms” (Extebarria 106) Unlike Mariam who openly acknowledges how bad she feels, Jalil manifests his guilt through his words and actions. From the onset of the novel, every week Jalil visits his daughter, Mariam, with varieties of provisions for their upkeep. The daughter stays with his mother on the outskirts of Herat. We learn that Jalil impregnated Mariam's mother, Nana, but he could not marry her because he already had wives of higher status unlike Nana who was only a servant in the household. She wept with regret at the fact that she had given herself to Jalil as she got harsh treatment when she discovered that she was expecting a child. They were tears of grief, anger and disillusionment but mainly tears of a deep, deep shame of how foolishly she had given herself to Jalil (35).

Jalil's guilt is further seen during the plotting by his wives to marry Mariam off to Rasheed. Upon learning about the plot, Mariam is devastated. She feels so unloved by the wives and seeks help from the only person that she hopes cares in the room, her father. The unfortunate thing is that Jalil seems to have nothing to do about it. He can hardly give a contrary view to the wives' decision and therefore tells Mariam not to make it hard for him. When Mariam tells him to “say something” he responds by saying “Goddamn it, Mariam, don't do this to me,” (34). Jalil's response is a defensive mechanism. He is in denial to face the fact that he is not giving Mariam the support that she deserves from her father. At a time when Mariam tries to get him to tell the

wives that he will not let them force his daughter into marriage, Mariam is saddened by the feedback that she receives.

‘Actually, your father has already given Rasheed his answer,’ Afsoon said. ‘Rasheed is here in Herat; he has come all the way from Kabul. The Nikka will be tomorrow morning and then there is a bus leaving for Kabul at noon’ (33).

Jalil appears to blame Mariam for putting him in an awkward position and being the victim of the situation, yet he is party to the wives’ plot against Mariam. This is Jalil’s way of removing guilt. “An individual who is feeling guilty has to make reparation to remove guilt and restore self-esteem. For much of the time, reparation is to change behaviour to avoid the negative impacts and feelings (Bedford et al 19). Jalil’s efforts are basically his attempt at reparation. As a way of coping with his guilt for not doing anything when Mariam needs him most, Jalil assures Mariam of visits when she goes away to live with Rasheed. “I’ll visit you,” he muttered. “I will come to Kabul and see you. We’ll” (31). By stating this, Jalil seems to acknowledge his guilt. In response, Mariam angrily says “No No ... Don’t come. I won’t see you. Don’t you come. I don’t want to hear from you. Ever, ever, ever” (37). At this point, Mariam means every word that she says and she does not want to come across Jalil again. Mariam realizes that she has lost her mother through her behaviour by sticking to someone who shows lack of care to her.

Another character who is tormented by feelings of guilt in the text is Rasheed. This is the man who Mariam is married off to. When Mariam meets Rasheed, he is battling with his own guilt which actually destroys their union in the marriage. Rasheed lost his wife during childbirth but most painfully he lost his son due to a drowning

accident in a lake named Ghargha. During one encounter that Mariam makes with her neighbours, one of the ladies Wajma opens up to her about the events that lead to the death of Rasheed's son.

The boy went into the water unnoticed. They spotted him a while later, floating face down. People rushed to help, half trying to wake up the boy, the other half the father. Someone bent over the boy, did the... mouth to mouth thing you're supposed to do. It was pointless. They could all see that. The boy was gone (139).

Wajma still lets Mariam in on the main reason why the accident happened. Rasheed's guilt mainly originates from the fact that at the time of the accident he was busy drinking a type of beer called *Sharab* instead of watching over his son. "Did you know that he used to drink Sharab back then that he was crying drunk that day? It's true. Crying drunk is what I heard" (139). This is the reason why he cannot forgive himself. When Mariam first meets Rasheed, she is in the dark about this sad background. Even the way the author presents Rasheed does not reveal the internal battles that he is fighting. He seems to have repressed the tragic event, but it resurfaces after he marries Mariam.

When Mariam gets married to Rasheed, she suffers a series of miscarriages which deeply frustrate Rasheed who desperately needs a child as a replacement of his lost son. This feeling of loss is something that Rasheed has been repressing for a long time and he hopes that Mariam will finally enable him to restore the peace that he has been lacking. He, however, seems to be in denial and does not want to confront the reality and come to terms with the fact that he lost his son as a result of his careless mistake. As Carter observes, "The tensions caused between the need of the truth to resurface and the determination of the self_to repress them can lead to serious mental

disturbance, what Freud called neurosis, involving compulsive behaviour and obsessive modes of thinking” (70). This is exactly what affects Rasheed. Rasheed’s guilt is further accelerated by a deep need for gratification: the ‘replacement’ of his lost son. The failure to achieve this in the shortest time possible leads him in some strange behaviour. Mariam’s continual miscarriages hurt Rasheed so intensely that he eventually degenerates into an abusive husband. It can be argued that “guilt feelings create a need for punishment, which tends to turn into self-punishment and can lead the person to failure in many activities” (1). It is this self-punishment that changes Rasheed’s character when he tries to project his pain on others. After some time, the social environment loses its peace and becomes unstable as rebel forces attack the land. Mariam and Rasheed take in a girl who is the only survivor of a bomb that leaves her parents dead in their household. Eventually Rasheed marries this young girl who is known as Laila.

2.3 Confronting Guilt in *And the Mountains Echoed*

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini also portrays various characters who engage in actions that eventually lead them into states of guilt. The struggle for power and the means of production rife in capitalist societies, as described by Karl Marx, is evident in this text. Habib echoes Marx by arguing that “the bourgeoisie has centralized means of production and has concentrated property in a few hands” (528). This situation is evident in the novel whereby the gap between the rich and the poor is so wide that it is implicated in the origination of the characters’ guilt. Saboor is induced by poverty to sell his daughter, Pari, to a wealthy family, the Wahdatis.

In this text Hosseini uses multiple voices to tell the multi-generational story. The guilty feelings of a number of characters in the novel are revealed through these various narrative voices. From the onset, the narration focuses on the journey that Pari and Abdullah, in the company of their father, Saboor, make to the city known as Kabul. This journey later leads to the selling of Pari to the Wahdatis. The initial moment when Pari, Abdullah and their father start off on this journey already foreshadows that the events that are yet to happen are not pleasant. Saboor does not want Abdullah to be part of the journey. 'I told you to go home, boy', he said with a pained look" (40). Saboor struggles when he tries to deny Abdullah the opportunity to be on this journey with them. 'You were supposed to stay home,' Father said. 'With your mother and Iqbal. Like I told you to' (41). When Abdullah insists on joining them, his father says "All right, then. Come.... But there won't be any crying. You hear me?" (41). This statement foreshadows that the end results of this journey are not going to be pleasant.

The Wahdati family buys Pari from Saboor because Mrs Wahdati, also referred to as Nila, cannot conceive. Saboor agrees to sell his daughter because he is in great need of income to support his family. As argued by Marx, "one of the main sins of capitalism was that it reduced all human relations to commercial relations. Even the family cannot escape such commodification". Marx states that, to the bourgeois man, the wife is reduced to a mere instrument of production (Habib 534). This argument can be related to the case of Pari, a whole human being who is in the end commodified as a means of income. When he hands over his daughter to the Wahdatis, Saboor thinks that it is an easy transaction, but he soon discovers that it is a lot harder than he ever imagined. The absence of Pari at their home makes life even

harder for Abdullah, her brother. The selling of Pari causes Saboor to become ill-tempered and hostile towards his family. As Pari states, “Father had never before hit Abdullah. So when he did, when he whacked the side of his head, just above the ear--hard, suddenly, and with an open palm--tears of surprise sprung to Abdullah’s eyes. He quickly blinked them back” (39).

The transaction that leads to the selling off of Pari does not even change the situation in the household. It seems to render Saboor more ‘invalid’ in the household than productive. According to Sigmund Freud, “guilt feelings act as an inhibitor factor of personality. They inhibit not only transgressions of the individuals moral norms but also many aspects of his or her life including the most productive and creative ones (1).

As evident from the onset, Saboor feels bad about what he was about to do but the desire to obtain some funds stood in the way of his mercy. Prior to the journey, Saboor told his children a story about a family that had to make a sacrifice of their most loved child to save the rest of the children in the household. In this case, therefore, as Saboor puts it, Pari “is the finger that had to be cut to save the hand” (101). Saboor suffers internal battles as a result of the guilt that he feels for selling his daughter. Abdullah’s words, below, depict the situation that Saboor is currently facing:

Sometimes, in unguarded moments, he caught father’s face clouding over, drawn into confusing shades of emotion. Father looked diminished to him now, stripped of something essential. He loomed sluggishly about the house or else sat in the heat of their big new cast-iron stove, little Iqbal on his lap, and stared unseeingly into the flames. His voice dragged now in a way that Abdullah did not remember, as

though something weighed on each word he spoke. He shrank into long silences, his face closed off. He didn't tell stories anymore, had not told one since he and Abdullah had returned from Kabul. (100)

He at times tries to reach out to Abdullah by apologizing for the pain he had caused. "It had to be her: I am sorry, Abdullah. She had to be the one. The finger cut to save the hand. (101). Saboor has a hard time managing his family. Even when Nabi, his wife's brother, offers to help he resists. Saboor thinks that by accepting Nabi's support he will prove to be less a man since he cannot provide for his family. He is the kind of man who wants to shoulder his family's responsibilities alone. Therefore, he believed that the selling of Pari would enable him to support his family and address some of his financial hardships.

The impoverished condition of Saboor illustrates the gap that exists between the poor and the rich in his society. When Saboor visits the Wahdati family during the selling of Pari, it is evident that the Wahdatis are a well-to-do family. The affluence displayed in their house indicates that they are rich unlike the family of Saboor which, according to Nabi's description, has a carpet in their house as their greatest treasure. The material contrast between the two families reflects disparate conditions of the bourgeoisie and the working class as described by Habib in Marxist terms:

The bourgeoisie has centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The correlative of this is the oppression and exploitation of the working classes: In proportion as the bourgeoisie that is, capital, is developed; a class of labourers who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piece meal, are a commodity. (528)

In this case, the Wahdatis belong to the bourgeoisie class whereas Saboor and Nabi are mere labourers whose function is to enable the bourgeoisie to achieve their goal of economic prosperity. The labourers, also called proletariats in Marxist terms, are oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie; consequently, they struggle to survive. This condition forces them to find other means of sustaining their lives rather than by simply working for the bourgeoisie. Therefore, Saboor sells his daughter to the Wahdatis as an alternative means of acquiring the financial means with which to support the rest of his family. He believes that it is his duty to ensure the well-being of his family despite the social and political crisis that their environment is facing.

Nabi's guilt is evident in the letter that he writes to Markos. Nabi was the catalyst for the selling off of Pari by Saboor to the Wahdatis. In this letter Nabi explains the devastating effects of the actions that he caused. In the first instance, despite the fact that Saboor benefited financially from the transaction, Nabi orchestrated the whole plan as a means of achieving his personal ends. Nabi's goal is to get favours from Mrs Wahdati, more specifically her love attention. He is romantically attracted to Nila Wahdati and he hopes that giving her the only thing she lacks, a child, will bind them more than they are currently. He expresses his egoistic desires by arranging and ensuring that Pari is sold off. When Nabi first starts working for the Wahdatis, Mr Wahdati is single. He eventually marries a young wife by the name of Nila who Nabi starts desiring romantically as revealed in his admission that: "I had never in my life encountered a young woman like Nila. Everything she did--the way she spoke, the way she walked, dressed, smiled--was a novelty to me" (176). However, the difference in class between them makes it difficult for him to actualize his romantic desires. Nabi tries to overcome the class difference problem by providing Nila with

her greatest treasured desire. When he discovers that Nila cannot conceive a child of her own, he quickly thinks that one way of winning Nila's love would be by giving her a child, the one thing that she seems to desire most, but cannot get. Nabi learns about Nila's problem when she goes to his home with him and she looks keenly at Saboor's children. This discovery propels Nabi to convince Saboor to sell off Pari by emphasizing the financial gains to be accrued from the transaction. "I knew he needed money for he had told me of his struggles" (204). What Nabi does not know is the fact that the coming of Pari would actually draw him and Nila further from each other than he could anticipate. So when Pari makes her way into the household things change. Nila spends more of her time with her new daughter and sidelines Nabi. His imagined strong means of winning Nila's love turns out to be the weakness that leads to him losing the expected love bond with her. Eventually, Mr Wahdati's health starts deteriorating and over the course of time Nila and Mr. Wadhati's marriage comes to an end. Nila takes Pari with her back to her home country, France.

After the collapse of his romantic dream, Nabi cannot live with the fact that his personal desires lead to the sadness of Saboor and his family. The departure of Nila and Pari is actually a double loss for Nabi because he loses sight of both his niece, someone he had become a stranger to, and Nila, the woman he had hoped to get romantically involved with. He recalls the devastation that this double loss caused him. His relationship with Saboor and his family came to an end, something that he had never imagined. "Whatever the reason, I was in the end the instrument of his family's rupture. Saboor did not want to set eyes on me again and I understood. I stopped my monthly visits. I never saw any of them again" (212).

Another character who struggles with guilt is Parwana. Parwana has a twin sister whose name is Masooma. When we first meet these in the text Masooma seems to be the apple in everyone's eyes. Parwana feels "othered" in all these situations. She is not as physically attractive as Masooma, hence she is mostly disregarded by people. As time goes by Parwana tries to win the affection of Saboor. Since their childhood, Parwana had secretly been making passes on Saboor. But then, it is Masooma who takes credit for her sister's efforts. Expectedly, Saboor falls in love with Masooma. An example is of a note book that Parwana buys for Saboor so that he can write stories in it. Unfortunately, Parwana is shy to give it to Saboor, she keeps telling herself that she will give it to him the next day. On the other hand, Masooma thinks otherwise.

I found it in the house, Masooma said later. Was it yours? I'll pay you back for it somehow, I promise. You don't mind, do you? I just thought it was perfect for him. For his stories. Did you see the look on him? Did you, Parwana? Parwana said no, she didn't mind, but inside she was crumpling. Over and over she pictured how her sister and Saboor had smiled at each other, the look they shared between them.
(119)

This causes some anger in Parwana and one day as they play Masooma is accidentally injured when she falls down due to Parwana's action. This injury causes her to become an invalid, and she can no longer do things that she used to do on her own. Although the accident occurs because she had been angered by Masooma, Parwana devotes her time taking care of her sister. She feels guilty and blames herself for being responsible for Masooma's injury. Parwana struggles very much with her conscience. "It takes strenuous effort at times like this to remember, to not lose sight of one unshakeable truth: This is her own handiwork, this mess. Nothing that has befallen

her is unjust or undue. This is what she deserves” (105). Because of the feeling that she deserves everything that is happening to her, Parwana does not neglect Masooma in any way and makes sure that she gets all the help that she needs.

Although Masooma seems to be a victim of circumstances that made her invalid, she also reveals feelings of guilt in both her actions and speech. She feels that she is actually making Parwana go through so much trouble just to ensure her well-being. Consequently, Masooma just wants to give up on life. I’m tired, Parwana. It’s not a life; what I have. My existence is a punishment to us both (140). When she says this, Masooma has requested her sister to escort her to town, to see her brother Nabi. However, Masooma makes the request as part of a plan she has devised to relieve Parwana once and for all. As they embark on this journey, Masooma has already planned that this journey’s destination will not be Nabi’s home in town as she has made Parwana to think. She is however heading towards her place of rest. On the way to town, the two sisters pass through a bushy forest area, and this is where Masooma decides should be her final destination. Before they reach their supposed destination, Nabi’s home, they pass through the bushy area. While passing through, Masooma tells Parwana that her end goal is to be abandoned in the bush. The effects of the working of the superego vary from person to person. This is the reason why even the characters’ quests for redemption vary. Psychoanalytic critique of the superego has focused almost exclusively upon its destructive manifestation in the life of an individual, in self-punishment, self-sabotage, masochism, depression and suicide (Carveth 12).

The cases of Masooma and Parwana demonstrate their individual subjectivities. Although these are twins, each one of them is clearly selfish by nature. Masooma's popularity makes her so egoistic that all she cares about is herself and she is not concerned about how her actions affect her sister. It is only after the injury that renders her an invalid that her attitude changes. On Parwana's part, guilt because of her role in the accident makes her selfless. Despite all the harm that Masooma inflicted on her, she provides necessary support to her sister. She even forgoes her personal life for the sake of Masooma, even though the situation with Masooma's invalidity is a result of her own actions.

2.4 Representation of Guilt in *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner is a story about the coming of age of Amir who is presented both as a boy and as a grown up man. Amir's guilt originates from his deliberate failure to support his friend Hassan when he needed him most. Amir betrays Hassan in an effort to prove his worth to his father. Growing up, Amir does not get what he feels is the recognition that a son deserves from a father. His efforts to get close to his father seem fruitless.

At one time when he hears news about a kite contest, Amir is determined to fly a kite until he wins so as to please his father. He is well supported by Hassan who is a son of their servant. Amir manages to fly the kite and wins. Hassan in delight tells Amir to give him the kite to complete the running for him. Hassan is a selfless young man and he is willing to do anything that can make Amir happy. As he flies the kite, Hassan meets a group of Pashtun boys led by Assef. Assef has always had deep hatred for Hassan especially due to the fact that he is not a Pashtun but a Hazara. The ethnic

rivalry that exists between the Pashtuns and Hazara's depict the hegemonic powers that exists in the society. Hegemony is described as the kind of cultural power wielded by the dominant ideas of a culture or society (Klages 35). In the Afghan society, the Pashtuns are portrayed as a superior group as compared to the Hazara's. This makes the Pashtun's a hegemonic culture.

Hosseini presents ethnic clashes as central issues in this text and shows how the Hazaras are an "othered" ethnic group. Nina Baym's discussion of issues of cultural identity highlights the importance of analysing the cultural identities of the characters especially considering that this is origin of conflict in the book, the source of the rising action. Assef, a pashtun regards his own kind as the superior group and thinks that he is justified to ill-treat the Hazaras since they are supposedly an inferior ethnic group. According to this state, the political ideology upholds the Pashtuns as the superior ethnic group unlike the Hazaras and this is a thing that the people have to abide to. The superiority status that the Pashtuns have over the Hazara's creates a lot of problems in the society. Since the Pashtuns are the dominant group, they seem to have a voice over all other minority cultures. As argued by Louis Althusser, "a dominant system of ideology is accepted as a common sense view of things by the dominated classes and this interest of the dominant classes are secured" (Selden et al 97).

Assef tries to take the kite from Hassan but being the loving person that he is, Hassan cannot just let go of the kite. He knows how much this means to Amir and he is willing to do everything to protect it. Eventually, Amir starts searching for Hassan having noted that he has been gone for some time. After making some enquiries, he

sees Hassan in a ditch with Assef and his friends trying to get the kite from him. Hassan completely refuses to give Assef and his crew the kite. In revenge, Assef rapes Hassan so as to ensure that he pays for making him a fool and not obeying his command.

Assef knelt behind Hassan, put his hands on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans. Dropped his underwear. He positioned himself behind Hassan. Hassan didn't struggle. (42)

Amir does nothing to defend Hassan from the sexual assault, and this inaction is the origin of his guilt. "I stopped watching, turned away from the alley. Something warm was running down my wrist. I blinked, saw, I was still biting down on my fists" (42). Instead of defending Hassan, Amir goes away and ensures that Hassan should not even notice his presence near the scene.

I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan-- the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past--and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran (2).

Following this incident, Amir withdraws himself from Hassan and is not readily available to play with him as has always been the case. He keeps to himself despite various attempts by Hassan to continue with their friendship.

Amir struggles with his guilt as a result of failure to defend Hassan against Assef. The morality instilled in Amir by the society helps him recognise this. As Mishra argues "we feel guilty because we have a conscience dictated by a set of moral values set

before us” (74). Consequently, the relationship between Hassan and Amir becomes sour as Amir continues to isolate himself and avoids direct encounters with Hassan because he does not want to confront himself. Amir ensures that his end goal is achieved and ‘others’ Hassan instead.

I didn’t speak to Hassan until the middle of the next week. I had just half-eaten my lunch and Hassan was doing the dishes. I was walking upstairs, going to my room, when he asked if I wanted to hike up the hill. I said I was tired. Hassan looked tired too—he’d lost weight and gray circles had formed under his puffed-up eyes. But when he asked again, I reluctantly agreed. (47)

The presence of Hassan in the household makes life a living hell for Amir, therefore he devises a plan to get rid of him once and for all.

Amir's father, referred to as Baba, also harbours feelings of guilt that he has had for a long time. When he first appears in the novel, Amir complains about not being loved by his father the way he feels he deserves. Amir talks about a few occasions when he tries to have some time alone with his father, all of which are fruitless. However, it is his father’s close friend Rahim Khan who gives Amir’s attention whenever he needs it. In some circumstances, his father only spends time with Amir in the presence of Hassan, situations which do not really please Amir. For a long time Amir does not understand why his father acts the way he does. At one point when Amir tries to get rid of Hassan and his father, Ali, Baba is very defensive about them, which really surprises Amir.

And you think I’m just not going to throw him out;” He just turned to me now, his face as red as a tulip. ‘I’ve never laid a hand on you, Amir, but you ever say that again...’ He looked away, shaking his head. ‘You bring me shame. And Hassan...Hassan’s not going

anywhere, do you understand?’ [...]. ‘Hassan’s not going anywhere,’ Baba snapped. He dug a new hole with a trowel, striking the dirt harder than he had to. ‘He’s staying right here with us, where he belongs. This is his home and we’re his family. Don’t you ever ask me that question again! (48)

When he hears this, Amir does not really understand the emotions and seriousness of his father. Sadly, he only gets to understand it all after his father’s death. It is at that time when Amir visits Rahim Khan who has summoned him when Rahim really gets sick, he learns about a secret that his father had kept till the time of his death. This secret was about Hassan. Shockingly, Amir learns that Baba was Hassan's biological father and not Ali as it was publicly known. Rahim recounts to Amir the reason why this had been kept a secret. “People would talk. All that a man had back then, all that he was, was his honour, his name, and if people talked...We couldn’t tell anyone, surely you can see that” (120).

Baba had failed to publicly declare Hassan as his own son because of the kind of honour that he had as a person. In the first place, the class that he belonged to was completely different from that of Hassan's mother. He was a Pashtun and Hassan’s mother was a Hazara. In addition to the issue of personal honour, the difference of class prevented Baba from declaring Hassan as his own child. The variation in the ethnicity prevents Baba from fathering Hassan to the best. Amir later learns that Baba’s absence in his (Amir’s) life would have a correlation with his failure to declare his love for Hassan. The fact that he could not be a father enough to both Amir and Hassan is the origin of his guilt.

2.5 Guilt as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Guilt affects people in different ways. However, the key element rests in the quest to find a sense of peace hence overcoming the guilt. As argued by Brooke, “guilt is lived before it is reflectively known. This existential fact is what makes possible the experience of unconscious guilt, and it suggests that all guilt is, at a certain early point, unconscious” (38). To live guilt free is to live fully open, present and responsive to the world. Sometimes there are attempts to undo the past or deny the identity that is formed with the status of guilt. However, this cannot be fully escaped; one remains tied to the past. According to Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria handout, guilt gives a ‘sense of remorse for thought, feelings, or attitudes that were or are negative, uncomplimentary, or non-accepting concerning yourself or others’ (1). Guilt can be a motivator for positive change; in other words, when we do something wrong and we feel guilty about it, the feelings can motivate us to change our behaviour so that we don’t make the same mistakes or negative choices. On the other hand, as argued by Carveth, “we cannot be blind to the fact that sometimes what we have been taught does not correspond with what we desire but we have focussed on situations in which what we have been taught is moral while what we feel or desire is immoral or antisocial” (3). This contradiction of the conscious and societal needs is also a large contributor of guilt in the texts.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 After Effects: Reading Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*

In his writing, Khaled Hosseini confronts his repressed feelings of trauma as hinted by his personal background. “Repression is the involuntary rejection from consciousness of painful or disagreeable ideas, memories, feelings and impulses” (Myers 34). As someone who experienced war as well as someone who still has relations in Afghanistan, Hosseini reveals his repressed feelings in his works. All the three novels discussed in this study depict events that reflect real life situations in present day Afghanistan. These are death, abuse of women, and poverty, all of which are caused by war. Hosseini, who is originally from Afghanistan, represents the trauma that people suffer as a result of war. He makes this representation through the behaviour of characters in all the three novels, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*. It is evident that the characters, some of whom are in various states of guilt, are also in a state of disarray and have no peace of mind. Some characters show symptoms of withdrawal which is one of the common elements of trauma.

Schooler defines trauma as “an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm” (2). The harm can be physical or emotional, real or perceived, and it can threaten the child or someone close to him or her. Trauma can be the result of a single event or it can be result from exposure to multiple events over time. In most situations, trauma forces the victim to remain silent about the traumatic episode when

the victim is physically vulnerable and fears further violence or death. This forced silence necessarily sharpens subsequent reactions to the trauma. Psychological trauma is caused by various occurrences that affect people differently. According to Negin Heidarizadeh “typical causes of psychoanalytic trauma are sexual abuse, employment discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence and particularly childhood experiences. Other known causes include catastrophic events, war, treachery, betrayal and sexual abuse” (189). According to Jeffry Alexander trauma explains “naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actors’ sense of well-being. The reaction to such shattering events is experienced as an immediate and unreflexively response]” (7). In some situations, trauma bears serious long term negative consequences. Traumatic memories affect the mind of the affected persons. In most situations, the effects of trauma can be seen through the actions of the victims.

When a person suffers effects of trauma after some time, the condition is referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a serious, potentially debilitating condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a life-threatening event such as natural disaster serious accident, terrorist incident, sudden death of a loved one, war; or rape or other violent personal assault” (ADAA 2). Some people ably recover from traumatic events, but some experience severe distress, anxiety, and depression for months or even years. They frequently re-experience the event through intrusive thoughts, upsetting reminders, or nightmares; relating, concentrating or sleeping become difficult. They often feel detached or estranged from loved ones. Post-traumatic stress lingers for

prolonged periods of time in people and affects their various actions. Once one is affected by PTSD, it is hard to really focus on anything else without obstructions.

In the three texts discussed in this study, the characters do not experience traumatic stress immediately after their actions. They feel the stress after some time as they start coming to terms with reality. When this happens, the victims are unable to act as normally as they would routinely do. Eventually, the victims can only deal with the trauma after they face the consequences of their actions. Spiegel describes the essence of traumatic stress as helpless “loss of control over one’s body. The mental inscription of such terrifying experiences sometimes take the form of loss of control over parts of one’s mind, identity, memory, and consciousness just as physical control is regained” (1). This loss of control is exactly what causes suffering.

The characters in the three novels exhibit typical symptoms of psychic trauma that affect their personalities. According to Cathy Caruth, “psychic trauma involves intense personal suffering but it also involves the recognition of realities that most victims had not yet begun to face” (viii). As evident in the three texts, one of the main symptoms of psychic trauma is the victim’s social withdrawal and isolation. In other words, the victim withdraws the self from other people as he or she tries to confront and deal with the feelings pertaining to the trauma. Sang-Bin Baek argues that,

Post-traumatic stress disorder occurs after an intense stressful situation such as fatal disasters, captivity, and sexual abuse. This patient suffers from psychic numbness, autonomic arousal symptoms, and reappearance of stressful memories. Due to these symptoms, social isolation is deepening and this patient has a social phobia (5).

From Baek's argument we can conclude that for a person to be traumatised they must face events that should affect their psyche.

3.2 Traumatic Experience in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, one of the characters who is traumatized is Mariam. As already highlighted in the second chapter of this study, Mariam has a hard time coming to terms with the death of her mother. After her mother commits suicide, she is temporarily taken into her father's household where she lives with several of his wives and his other children. While in Jalil's house, Mariam withdraws herself and suffers social isolation as she comes to terms with the loss of her mother. Mariam demonstrates one of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder when she holds "negative beliefs, guilt and self-blame and a persistent negative emotional state" (ADAA 4). She keeps to herself not only because she feels that she is not welcome in the household but also because she is traumatized by the sudden departure of her mother.

Except for when she had to use the bathroom down the hall, Mariam stayed in the room. The girl with the tattoo, the one who had opened the gates to her, brought her meals on a tray: lamb kebab, *sabzi*, *aus* soup. Most of it went uneaten. Jalil came back several times a day, sat on the bed beside her, and asked her if she was all right. "You could eat downstairs with the rest of us," he said but without much conviction. He understood a little too readily when Mariam said she preferred to eat alone (27).

She is the cause of her mother's death and she deeply regrets her action of going to town when her mother had countlessly alerted her to the fact that Jalil was not the good person that she had all along thought he was. As already noted, Mariam is

eventually married off to Rasheed. When she moves into the new household, her feelings have not stabilized, and she further chooses to live in isolation. In the first place, she does not like the idea of being married off to Rasheed, and the situation is aggravated by her knowledge that this marriage is a result of her own doing. She cries with deep regret and Rasheed tells her that he does not stand the sound of a woman crying.

When Rasheed tells Mariam that she can sleep in her room because he does not like sharing his bed with anyone, she is very happy. Rasheed says “I hope you don’t mind. I’m accustomed to sleeping alone” (40). Mariam does not tell him how much she is relieved to be told this. She finds this as one of the pleasing ideas upon her arrival at his residence, her new home.

Mariam’s father, Jalil, is also psychologically traumatized by his lack of support for her when she needs him most. As *A Thousand Splendid Suns* comes to an end, the reader learns about various efforts that Jalil makes to talk to Mariam all of which are futile. Jalil wants to meet Mariam to amend the situation that he helped putting her in just after the loss of her mother. Jalil’s trauma and guilt emanate from his failure to prevent the marrying off of Mariam to Rasheed immediately after the death of her mother as well as not being fully there for her as a father. Jalil realizes that he should have defended Mariam against his wives’ plot to get rid of her through this arranged marriage.

Trauma is also caused by loss. In a case of devastating loss due to war or normal death, the bereaved are sometimes left traumatized. In some instances, therapy is

required for the affected individual to recover from the trauma. Mariam has no access to such treatment. Worse still for her, she has more traumatic experiences by suffering a number of miscarriages while she is in Rasheed's house. These miscarriages badly affect her marriage which is already unstable. Rasheed is in deep need of a child and Mariam fails to grant him his need. This failure further destabilizes the marriage. Mariam herself greatly needs a child just like Rasheed does. Mariam is severely traumatized by the losses. After one of the miscarriages she proposes that they accord their lost baby a proper burial as a way of dealing with the traumatic loss. But the response that she gets from her husband is negative:

‘I’ve been thinking, that maybe we should have a proper burial for the baby, I mean. Just us, a few prayers, nothing more.’ Mariam had been thinking about it for a while. She didn’t want to forget this baby. It didn’t seem right, not to mark this loss in some way that was permanent. ‘What for? It’s idiotic.’ ‘It would make me feel better I think.’ ‘Then you do it,’ he said sharply. ‘I’ve already buried one son. I won’t bury another.’ (62)

Rasheed abuses Mariam both physically and mentally. While in his household, she is not given a chance to interact with the outside world such that Rasheed is the only person that she can talk to. This social deprivation makes her suffer inside with no one to talk to and painfully reminds her of her mother, someone that she could easily talk to.

Another character who is traumatized in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is Laila. Laila lives next door to Rasheed and Mariam. As a child, she grows up in an environment that faces a lot of civil unrest. War seems to be the order of the day and it is this same war whose effects traumatize her. Thabet et al argue in “The Relationship Between

Trauma Due to War, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Fear among Palestinian Children” that “in contrast to peace time disasters, stressors during war are generally multiple, diverse, chronic, and recurrent such as the exposure to bombardment, witnessing killing of close relatives and friends displacement from the area” (171). This can be seen in Laila’s characteristic, she suffers double trauma, loss of relatives in war as well as exposure to the stressors in the time of war.

Laila loses all her family members to war. In the first instance, it is her brothers Ahmed and Noor who die while in the battle field when they go to fight for their country. This affects Laila a lot. However, it is the loss of her parents that severely affects her. Laila’s parents are killed when a rocket destroys their house as they plan to flee to a safe place. Laila is the only survivor who survives with some injuries. It was Rasheed who found the girl, who dug her from beneath the rubble (124). When she is taken into the household of Mariam and Rasheed, suffering from the injuries, Mariam helps nursing her back to her health. Although Laila regains stability in her health, she has to deal with the gruesome loss of her loved ones. Furthermore, Laila’s suffering is worsened by the absence of her lover, Tariq. Tariq and his family left the land for Ghazir during the time when the unrest began. The two lovers lost contact with each other, and Laila has absolutely no idea of Tariq’s whereabouts. Laila badly misses Tariq as she wishes he were around to help her heal from her family loss. Rasheed complicates Laila’s situation by marrying her, regardless of the fact that she is very young. As a survivor, Laila does not tell her predicament to anyone. She harbours her trauma all to herself which further proves devastating. In agreement with Dori Laub, not telling a story proves even harder. Dori Laub argues the survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story. They also needed to tell

their story in order to survive (78). Keeping the story sometimes proves even more harmful than opening up. For most victims, opening up brings a sense of comfort and relief and this is the reason why talking to psychiatrist is an ideal way of dealing with trauma.

Though abusive, Rasheed is himself traumatized with the devastating loss of his son who dies at the lake, as already noted in chapter two of this study. The trauma that he suffers because of this loss turns him into an abusive husband to Mariam and Laila. Rasheed depicts the feelings of emotional numbness and avoidance of activities that are reminders of the trauma, loss of interest in everything, as well as withdrawal from friends. This is what changes his personality such that he becomes estranged from his neighbours. Dori Laub argues that

Survivors who do not tell their story become victims of a distorted memory, that is, of a forcibly imposed ‘external evil’ which causes an endless struggle with and over a delusion. The ‘not telling of the story’ serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor’s daily life (79).

Laub’s account of survivors who do not tell their story resonates with Rasheed. He becomes very possessive and does not want them to interact with the outside world anyhow. When Mariam wants to go out, he tells her to always make sure that she is covered up. And when he realizes that Laila had some romantic affection for Tariq, he devises a plan to ensure that Tariq vanishes from Laila’s life. He tells a man, named Abdul Sharif, to bring a message announcing Tariq’s death when Tariq is actually alive. Rasheed wants the women to be his and his alone.

Rasheed marries Laila because of Mariam's failure to give him a child due to the various miscarriages that she suffers. He then becomes abusive to Mariam and gives her a hard time in the household, thereby aggravating her suffering. Ironically, Laila herself makes life hard for Mariam the very person who nursed her back to health when she first came into the household with war injuries. When Rasheed eventually gets a son, he becomes so attached to the boy that he shows no regard for either of his wives and for his other child who is female. For him the end goal is getting a male child and once he gets him, nothing else seems to matter.

3.3 Confronting Trauma in *The Kite Runner*

In *The Kite Runner*, the main character who is traumatized by his own wrong actions is Amir. Before Amir seeks redemption for his wrongs, he has a hard time dealing with his guilt. He goes through psychological torture as he tries to come to terms with his guilt. As argued by Cathy Caruth, "trauma does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not fully owned" (151). Amir keeps his distance from Hassan once he witnesses his rape before he fully comes into term with the fact that he has betrayed his friend. When he realizes that he has done wrong he withdraws himself from Hassan while in his father's household and keeps himself in isolation. He leads an isolated existence. He is not what he appears or tries to be. Attuned to his identity as a damaging person, his existence recedes from the open world-disclosure that constitutes his guilt existence.

Amir cannot face Hassan after betraying their friendship, and therefore avoids encounters with him as much as possible. In one instance, Amir gives Hassan a cold shoulder confirming his intentional withdrawal from him. The quote below indicates

words spoken by Amir. Amir is speaking about Hassan. This happens during the time when Hassan makes numerous efforts to make amends with Amir which seems futile.

He asked me to read to himself from the Shabnamar and I told him I'd changed my mind. Told him I just wanted to go back to my room. He looked away and shrugged. We walked back down the way we'd gone up in silence. And for the first time in my life, I couldn't wait for spring. (47)

The change in the relationship between Hassan and Amir is noted even by Hassan's father and Amir's father. These two individually make efforts to ask about the lost love between their sons, who could initially not be separated from each other. Amir lies his way out because he does not want to look bad in the eyes of the elders. As already noted in Chapter 2, Amir tries to get rid of Hassan and Ali. In an effort to deal with his situation, Amir asks his father if it would be possible to send Hassan and Ali away from the household and employ new servants, and his father rejects the request.

'I grew up with Ali,' he said through clenched teeth. 'My father took him in, he loved Ali like his own his own son. Forty years Ali's been with my family. Forty goddamn years. And you think I'm just going to throw him out?' He turned to me now, his face as a tulip. 'I've never laid a hand on you, Amir, but you ever say that again...' He looked away, shaking his head. 'You bring me shame. And Hassan...Hassan's not going anywhere, do you understand?' (48)

This was so because Amir was traumatised with guilt and shame because of what happened to Hassan.

3.4 Representation of Trauma in *And the Mountains Echoed*

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Saboor deals with the ‘loss’ of his daughter Pari, who he sells off to the Wahdati family. The absence of Pari has more devastating effects in Saboor’s family than he had ever anticipated. It puts the family’s life into a state of desolation. The pain that the loss of Pari would cause is foreshadowed by Saboor’s attitude at the beginning of the journey to the city where she is sold off. As they travel in the forest, “Abdullah could tell from the expression on his father’s face that there would be no story tonight” (68). Saboor is the kind of father who likes telling his children tales but his attitude on this day shows that something is wrong and he cannot tell them any stories. Furthermore, the advice that Saboor gives to Abdullah as they embark on the journey also foreshadows the sad event that is yet to come. When Abdullah insists on travelling with them against his father’s objections, Saboor gives him ominous advice: “I won’t have any crying. No crying. I won’t have it” (997). Eventually the business transaction with the Wahdatis is concluded and Pari begins a new life with Nila and her husband, as well as with Nabi, her supposed uncle as the house help.

The aftermath of this transaction is devastating to the household of Saboor. The remaining family members drift apart because their point of connection is gone. Saboor blames himself for his actions and suffers the consequences in silence, mostly in isolation. Saboor experiences the symptom of “re-experiencing a traumatic event through intrusive distressing recollections, flashbacks and nightmare” (ADAA 2). During his lone time, Saboor is haunted by memories of the instance when he left Pari with Wahdatis family. He relives and has a recollection constantly in forms of flashbacks. In one instance, as noted already in this study, Saboor opens up and tells

Abdullah that “It had to be her”. I am sorry, Abdullah. She had to be the one. The finger cut, to save the hand (101). This statement shows how ambivalent Saboor feels about the absence of Pari in the family. He is very sad about what he did to her, at the same time he states how important his action was for the survival of the family.

The relationship between Saboor and his son Abdullah becomes sour. Abdullah and Pari were closely connected to each other as Abdullah was more like a mother to Pari after the death of their mother. The selling off of Pari is therefore similar to the loss of a daughter to Abdullah. Life does not seem to have meaning for him anymore; consequently, he leads a solitary life. Abdullah depicts the emotions of anger and pain over his father’s decision. As Caruth argues, in a traumatized situation “one feels anger, guilt or shame whenever one is unable (refuses) to accept the necessity and unavailability of what happened” (85). Therefore, the departure of Pari from the household does not only traumatize Saboor but also affects Abdullah who feels extremely lonely.

But there was no forgetting. Pari hovered, unbidden, at the edge of Abdullah’s vision everywhere he went. She was like the dust that clung to his shirt. She was like the silences that had become so frequent at the house, silences that welled up between their words, sometimes cold and hollow, sometimes pregnant with things that went unsaid, like a cloud filled with rain that never fell (101).

The quotation above clearly expresses the feeling of Abdullah upon the ‘loss’ of his beloved sister Pari. Abdullah withdraws himself from his father and the world and grieves in loneliness. In his old age, Abdullah names his own daughter Pari as a remembrance of the beloved sister he lost when they were young.

As already discussed, in *And the Mountains Echoed* Parwana is distressed by the accident which renders Masooma an invalid, because she takes responsibility for the accident. Consequently, Parwana devotes her time to taking care of her twin sister. In the process of caring for Masooma, Parwana believes that nothing that befalls her is unjust for it is what she deserves. When Masooma soils her linens Parwana sighs and surveys them, dreading the work that awaits her. "I'll get you cleaned up", she says (105).

Parwana takes care of her sister tirelessly. On the other hand Masooma feels like she is troubling her sister and this makes her sad. At another time when Masooma soils herself again, Parwana tries to make some hot water to use in cleaning her, but Masooma questions why she bothers to heat the water. "Why the warm water?" Masooma says. "Why the trouble? You don't have to" (107). Masooma then tells Parwana not to bother preparing hot water for cleaning her since she will not feel it. Her injury made her lose her sense of feeling therefore she is unable to tell the difference between cold and hot water. In effect, both sisters are victims of this situation and greatly distressed by it. Masooma is distressed for being in a situation where she cannot do things on her own, and Parwana is burdened by the duty of taking care of all of her sister's needs.

When Masooma realizes that Parwana will perpetually be tied to the responsibility of caring for her, she decides to release her by giving up on her life. Again as already discussed, Masooma tells Parwana to leave her in a forest to die, after initially pretending that they go to town so that she pays a visit to their brother Nabi. Parwana is, at first not happy with what Masooma's suicidal suggestion in the forest: "Let's

just go back, Parwana says her throat beginning to close. I can't let you go. You're not. Masooma is crying now. I am letting you go. I am releasing you" (143). Masooma remains firm in her decision and says to her sister: "If you ever loved me, Parwana, if you were ever my true sister, then leave. No kisses. No goodbyes. Don't make me beg" (143). Eventually, Parwana reluctantly gives in to Masooma's request. At this point, both of the women seem to confront their respective situations of distress and trauma and attempt to resolve them.

Nabi's actions in facilitating the selling off of Pari to the Wahdatis also cause him guilt and distress. Nabi reveals all this in the letter he writes to Markos describing the destructiveness of his actions. The selling off of Pari did not seem to be gruesome at the discussion stage. The enormity of the transaction only became evident later through its after effects. Nabi felt the gravity of the event at the beginning but ignored it.

Pari slung over my shoulder, panic-stricken, kicking her legs, shrieking, Abollah! Abdollah! as I whisked her away. Abdullah, screaming his sister's name, trying to fight past his father. Nila, wide-eyed, her mouth covered with both hands, perhaps to silence her own scream. It weighs on me. All this time has passed, Mr Markos, and it still weighs on me (209).

The sad thing about Pari's presence in the Wahdatis residence is not only that it was a reminder of the pain Nabi had caused to Abdullah and his whole family, but also because it led to the marginalization of Nabi himself in the household.

The other consequence of Pari's arrival was one I had not anticipated. I receded into the background. Judge me charitably, Mr Markos, and remember that I was a young man, but I admit I had hopes, foolish as they might have been (121).

The coming in of Pari made Mrs Wadhvani so attached to her that she never interacted with Nabi as much as she did before. Her priorities completely changed. Nabi recalls the irony of his position: “I had uncovered the source of her unhappiness and delivered an antidote”. (211).

When Nabi visits Saboor’s family he also gets a cold reception. Everyone seems not to have anything to do with him anymore. Saboor says to Nabi “And don’t feel like you have to come out and see us anymore” (213). Saboor does not want to set eyes on Nabi again and Nabi understands. He stops his monthly visits and from then onwards he never saw any of his family members again. Nabi becomes estranged even from Pari who ceases to refer to him as uncle and starts treating him as a mere servant as highlighted in the quote below;

She was instructed not to call me Kaka Nabi any longer, for instance, but simply Nabi. And her mistakes were gently corrected, by me included, over and over until he came to believe that we bore no relation to each other. I became for her Nabi the cook and Nabi the driver (209).

From this discussion, it is evident that different people react differently to various traumatic situations. In some cases, the destructive extent of the trauma is only felt after sometime; while in others the effects are sudden and drastic. However, one common element is the fact that the affected individuals eventually come to terms with their problems despite the variation in the length of time it takes the various victims to deal with their pain. Different people react differently to various traumatic situations. “The effects of trauma are debilitating even at times life threatening. The power the symptoms of trauma have over a person seems overwhelming. But

harnessing that power can become liberating. The rewards are full life empowered by overcoming that adversity” (Cullen 38). Dealing with trauma brings an element of joy and fulfilment.

3.5 Critical Analysis of Trauma in literary texts (Characters)

The common factor with regard to the characters discussed in this study is that all the three texts are set in an environment that is unstable and, consequently, impacts negatively on their lives as individuals. The causes of the instability of the environment range from civil war, economic problems to ethnic differences. Most people recover from traumatic events, even though the recovery period varies from one person to another. Some frequently re-experience the event through intrusive thoughts, upsetting reminders or nightmares; relating, concentrating or sleeping becomes difficult (ADAA 1). In recent years, PTSD is not only experienced by survivors of natural catastrophes but also victims of rape and child abuse (Caruth 13). As Caruth argues, “to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (13). As it has been shown, this is a common element among the characters under discussion. A traumatic taunt returns to a person against the persons will.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a very familiar crisis that affects most people especially those from unstable environments. Even though other countries such as Afghanistan have the ability of sourcing help from counselling psychologists, there is still a big problem that a lot of people encounter. Various characters in the three texts depict PTSD symptoms. The traumatic experiences that the characters depict are mostly emotional. Whereas some characters are traumatised by a single distinct event, other characters such as Mariam are traumatised as a result of exposure to multiple

events in her life. This begins from the point of her mother's death, to the moment she is married off and finally to the persistent miscarriages that she experiences. All these events shatter the characters' well-being. Isolation and withdrawal seem to be a common symptom among most of the characters. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Mariam and Rasheed reflect this symptom. This is also similar to Abdul and Saboor in *And The Mountains Echoed* and Amir in *The Kite Runner*. The common feature that exists among most of these characters is that their trauma erupts from loss. Just like Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Abdul and Saboor (in *And The Mountains Echoed*) also become traumatised as a result of 'loss' of their sister and daughter respectively.

Written works sometimes mirror the authors' lives. Even though upon the production of the work of art, the text is read independent of the author as argued by scholarship supporting the death of an author where the interpretation of the text is left for the readers, sometimes the author's background still plays a big role in the reading of the text. The concept of loss also foregrounds Hosseini's own experiences. Hosseini's loss originates from his loss of relatives as well as the loss of his history through the destruction of his home country, a once developed country that has in recent times turned into ruins due to war. As a survivor of the most grievous traumatic experiences Hosseini uses writing as a tool to voice out his experiences.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Quest for Redemption in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*

In the three works under study, Hosseini seeks not only to retrieve memories of the war as experienced by the Afghanis but to further describe the life within the very instruments of the war. In his autobiographical interviews, Hosseini states that he sees his life in some of the characters he presents even though the works are not autobiographies. The three texts can be termed as Hosseini's personal quest for redemption. Each of the characters that he uses personally portrays a story of selfishness and selflessness, the element of acceptance as well as forgiveness. In addition to presenting the characters engaging in actions that cause them feelings of guilt, Hosseini also presents each character's quest for redemption from guilt, as well as seeks reconciliation with the victim of the said action. Some of the characters achieve the redemption which they seek, while others do not clearly achieve the objectives of their quests. Regardless of this difference, it is clear that most of the characters embark on their respective quests for the sake of achieving peace of mind. They seek this peace of mind so that they can live with themselves again without struggling with their inner feelings of guilt. This chapter analyses the various characters' quests for redemption and examines the extent to which each character succeeds or fails to achieve the objective of his or her quest.

In most cases, people who experienced trauma may use motivated forgetting to protect themselves from memories painful, stressful, or otherwise unpleasant circumstances. According to Habib

Subsequent psychologists and literary critics, developing Freud ideas, have extended the field of psychoanalysis criticism to encompass analysis of the motives of an author or readers and fiction characters, relating to a text to features of the author, biography such as childhood memories, relationship to parent; the nature of the creative process; the psychology of readers responses to literary texts; interpretation of symbols. (139)

As indicated in the above quote, in some instances, there is undeniably a relationship between the texts in relation to the authors' background such as the author's biography. As argued by Bloom, 'Hosseini has also related certain incidents from his life that inspired him to write his book. More specifically, he remembers a family cook he befriended when he was a young boy. Hosseini found out that the cook could not read or write, as prejudice against the Hazara left most uneducated, with no access to schooling' (13). The existence of the Hazaras who are an 'othered' ethnic group therefore bears a resemblance to Hosseini's realistic life. This work relates the studying of Hosseini's texts in relation to Hosseini himself.

Psychoanalysis is the basic theory that is used in the analysis of the characters' quests for redemption in all the three novels. Psychoanalysis aims at bringing out that which is in the unconscious world into consciousness. Psychoanalysis is not only a theory of the human mind but a practice for curing those who are considered mentally disturbed. The aim of psychoanalysis is to "uncover the hidden causes of the neurosis in order to relieve the patients of his or her conflict, so dissolving the distressing

symptoms” (Eagleton 138). The unconscious includes all those frightening desires and painful thoughts and feeling that the conscious mind finds too distressing to acknowledge and deal with. As it has been noted in the preceding chapters, the guilt that the characters’ feel is repressed in the initial stages. However, the guilt eventually gets into some of the characters’ consciousness and torments them. This tormenting that the characters go through reveals elements of the psychological problem known as neurosis which among other symptoms is showcased through phobias, hysteria, depression and anxiety. It is this suffering that causes the affected characters to embark on their quests for redemption. In addition to psychoanalysis, the discussion will further draw on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the subaltern in the examination of the gap between the rich and the poor which directly affects the characters’ actions.

This chapter argues that, in their quest for redemption, the characters confront their hidden memories which are repressed in their unconscious. These thoughts are unacceptable to the conscious and hence are repressed into the unconscious where they are imprisoned by psychic energy. Most psychologists hold that the energy used to repress unaccountable thoughts causes forms of mental distress or illness, such as neurosis and psychosis. “Taking into account guilt’s negative effects in the individual, Freud poses the need to confront its disturbing dynamism. It is necessary to eliminate the negative effects of a sense of guilt, which is mostly unconscious and other times excessive and equally disturbing even if it is conscious” (Etxebarria 101). Redemption therefore is an attempt at eliminating this guilt.

By definition, what resides in the unconscious is inaccessible to the conscious mind through any direct route, you cannot think about what is unconscious. Through

mechanisms such as condensation and displacement, the unconscious encodes its messages in forms that like dreams and stories need to be analysed and interpreted. “Freud and many psychoanalyses’ after him, posited that the creation of art and literature as well as myth, appeared as expressions of the unconscious” (Klages 87). This study therefore treats Hosseini’s texts as an expression of his mind.

4.2 Quest for Redemption in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Rasheed confronts his persistent memory of the loss of his son. Michael Anderson states that “sometimes we confront reminders of experiences that sadden us-as when after a death or a broken relationship, objects and places evoke memories of a lost person” (189). Rasheed seeks redemption from guilt through fathering another son to replace the one he lost as a result of his carelessness. It has been noted that in this novel, Rasheed is extremely devastated by the death of his son due to drowning. He cannot forgive himself for not watching over his son as he was swimming.

The boy went into the water unnoticed. They spotted him a while later, floating face down. People rushed to help half trying to wake up the boy the other half the father. Someone bent over the boy, did the...mouth to mouth thing you’re supposed to do. It was pointless. They could all see that the boy was gone (139).

As an effect of this loss, Rasheed diverts his anger to Mariam. Rasheed is in denial about his son’s death. According to Myers “Denial is the refusal to acknowledge the existence or severity of unpleasant external realities or internal thoughts and feelings” (455). The fact that Mariam has persistent miscarriages only makes things worse. He is desperately in need of a child, a son to be precise. This need is evident in the way he supports Mariam in her pregnancy until she suffers the grief of child loss. The

coming in of Laila, a young girl who he later takes as the second wife, gives him a sense of hope, especially when, in no time, she discovers that she is expecting a child. She becomes the new ray of hope for Rasheed. At this point, Rasheed has no idea that the pregnancy is not even his but that of Tariq, Laila's lover. In due course, Laila gives birth but instead of bringing joy to Rasheed, she provokes his hatred because the baby is female. He needs a male child as a direct replacement of his lost child. Rasheed therefore in this instance fails in his quest for redemption because his guilt and self-blame can only be relieved by the birth of a male child. Eventually Laila conceives again and this time she gives birth to a male child who Rasheed loves more than anything. He spends much of his time with his son Zalmai and is willing to do anything just for him to be happy. The presence of the son actually draws Rasheed further from his daughter, Aziza, than he was before.

Rasheed's happiness with the birth of the male child shows that he has achieved some sense of redemption. At this point, Rasheed is more attached to his son, than to his wife.

When Zalmai was born, Rasheed had moved him into the bed he shared with Laila. He had bought him a new crib and had lions and crouching leopards painted on the side panels. He'd paid for new clothes, new rattles, new bottles, and new diapers, even though they could not afford them and Aziza's old ones were still serviceable (176).

As evident in the quote above, Rasheed treasures his son so much that he is willing to do anything to make him happy, and he does not care at all about Laila's daughter. "Most days Laila was deprived of her son. Rasheed took him to the shop, let him crawl around under his crowded workbench, play with old rubber soles and spare

scraps of leather” (171). The birth of the son, Zalmai, is the achievement of Rasheed’s quest. He can finally live in peace. However, the ending of the story does not guarantee him the rest that he had aspired to get. He is eventually killed by Laila and Mariam during one of his abusive encounters with them. The women have had enough and they join forces to deal with the patriarch who oppresses them once and for all.

Again, as previously discussed, another character who is tormented by guilt, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, is Mariam who persistently blames herself for the death of her mother. Her mother hangs herself because Mariam goes to see her father in town without her mother’s knowledge and in disregard of her advice against such a visit. Mariam lives with this guilt for a long time and the situation is aggravated by the fact that she suffers a lot at the hands of Rasheed to whom she is married off to after her mother’s death. She realizes that if her mother was around, she would not have been forced into marriage and feels betrayed by her father. Unlike Rasheed who is comforted by the birth of his son Zalmai, Mariam does not find a way to make amends with herself for being the cause of her mother’s death. She is only able to achieve some sense of peace with herself by rendering motherly support to Laila who loses her parents in the course of the war when their home is destroyed by a bomb. Laila’s parents die and she is rescued and taken into Rasheed and Mariam’s home where they take care of her as their own.

However, Mariam is emotionally devastated when Rasheed eventually takes Laila as his second wife following Mariam’s failure to mother a child for him. She becomes angry with this new arrangement. It is their ill-treatment by Rasheed that makes

Mariam and Laila join forces against him in their daily endeavours. Eventually Mariam kills their abusive husband when he is beating up Laila.

And so Mariam raised the shovel high, raised it as high as she could, arching it so it touched the small of her back. She turned it so the sharp edge was vertical, 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 (211).

Agreeing with Namita Singh's arguments in the analysis of the text, it is evident that the domination of males over women in the Afghani communities causes more havoc than good. As women who are suffering in an unstable community, the family oppression brings a double dose of oppression. After Mariam kills Rasheed, she tries very hard to protect Laila from being implicated in the crime. She advises Laila to flee the land so that she cannot be found by the authorities and named as a guilty party to the crime.

'When they do, they'll find you as guilty as me. Tariq too. I won't have the two of you living on the run, like fugitives. What will happen to your children if you're caught?' Laila's eyes brimming, stinging. 'Who will take care of them then? The Taliban? Think like a mother, Laila jo. Think like a mother, I am.' (214)

Mariam's self-sacrifice as indicated in the quote above, sharply contrasts with her earlier egoistic behaviour when she disobeyed her mother. Here, Mariam puts the life and happiness of Laila and her children before her own so that she is the one who suffers the consequences of the actions that cause Rasheed's death. For me, it ends here. There's nothing more I want. Everything I'd ever wished for as a little girl you've already given me. You and your children have made me so very happy. It's all

right, Laila jo. This is all right. Don't be sad (217). Mariam dies by hanging for the killing of Rasheed. Together the women form a big force to reckon with. As Singh argues "the actions of these characters symbolises their strength to endure things as they join together in feminist retaliation against the man who has taken away their rights to live according to their own choices" (88).

Jalil also tries to deal with his guilt after he impregnates Nana, the family's servant. Due to their class differences, Nana left Jalil's family as soon as it was realized that she was pregnant, and went to live on the outskirts of the town where Jalil's residence was. Jalil then attempted to deal with his guilt by sending Nana and her daughter Mariam household provisions every month. Mariam recollects the monthly trips Jalil's sons made to their house with the provisions:

One of Mariam's earliest memories was the sound of a wheelbarrow's squeaky iron wheels bouncing over rocks. The wheel barrow came once a month, filled with rice, flour, tea, sugar, cooking oil, soap, toothpaste. It was pushed by two of Mariam's half-brothers, usually Muhsin and Ramin, sometimes Ramin and Farhad. (10)

However, despite these provisions, Mariam's mother is not convinced that Jalil deserves the attention that Mariam gives him. His actions seem to indicate a quest for redemption from the guilt which he actually does not publicly show, the guilt that he denies and represses. Jalil represses his guilt in the initial stages but eventually suffers due to this. He becomes traumatized. Relating to Erikson's argument "to describe people as traumatized is to say that they have withdrawn into a kind of protective envelop, a place of mute, acting loneliness, in which the traumatic experience is treated as a solitary burden that needs to be expunged by acts of denial and resistance"

(184). Jalil does not initially want to accept that he is wrong and this is an element that he suppresses.

Jalil knows that Mariam does not have the chance to chat with him as much as his other children do. Therefore, as a further attempt to relieve his guilt for not being able to accommodate her in his household, he makes efforts to visit Mariam weekly, every Thursday and spends some time with her. These visits are the ones that Mariam always looks forward to. A major indication of Jalil's quest for redemption is evident towards the end of the novel through a letter that he writes to Mariam. Unfortunately, Mariam does not get a chance to read the letter because she has been executed for killing Rasheed by the time that Laila gets hold of the letter. In the letter, Jalil apologises to Mariam for betraying her love for him by marrying her off to Rasheed when he was supposed to be her main pillar of support after the death of her mother. In the letter Jalil shows his deep sense of remorse.

It is at this point that Jalil clearly shows his quest for redemption from the bondage of guilt, which he refers to as regret. In this instance therefore, the superego has taken control of his id and illusive pleasures that he has been granting. "The superego is equivalent to the conscience or moral sensibility, an integral voice that tells us what is right or wrong, and that creates emotions of fear and guilt for transgressions"(Klages 82). We can evidently see Jalil's confrontation with his memory through a written piece. It is however hard to ascertain the success or failure of the quest because the victim of his actions does not read the letter. It is only Laila who reads it. However, Jalil states that earlier on he had made efforts to talk to Mariam which were futile.

Therefore, according to him, this letter still brings him some comfort and peace of mind because he has apologized for his sins.

In the discussion of the quest for redemption in *The Kite Runner*, the research draws on Louis Althusser's theory of the subject's construction by ideology. Karl Marx defines ideology as the "mechanism by which unequal social relations are produced" (qtd in Ashcroft 223). As evident in my earlier discussion in this study, ideologies that cause unequal social relations between different ethnic groups play a crucial role in the origination of characters' guilt in the text. The ideology that is socially constructed which portrays Pashtuns as superior and the Hazaras as inferior damage the social relations of the two ethnic groups. The study further draws from Sigmund Freud's concept of the unconscious in the analysis of the various characters' psyches as they quest for redemption.

4.3 Quest for Redemption in *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner is a story in which the main character, Amir, is on a quest for redemption because of the guilt he feels after failing to protect his friend, Hassan, when the latter needs him most. As the story begins, Amir receives a phone call from Rahim Khan, his father's old-time friend. Amir's response reveals his feelings of guilt as he says to himself: "Standing in the kitchen with the receiver to my ear, I knew it wasn't just Rahim Khan on the line. It was my past of unatoned sins" (2). It has been a while since they last met. Rahim Khan is currently based in Pakistan, and when they meet again, Rahim Khan informs Amir about Hassan and how he died. Rahim Khan also tells Amir about his father's long-term secret, one which he kept until his death.

Furthermore, Rahim Khan informs Amir about Hassan's son, Sohrab, who is stranded in one of Afghanistan's orphanages, and urgently needs help.

Rahim Khan adds that he called Amir to ask him to go to Afghanistan to get Sohrab out of the country. "There is a way to be good again, he'd said. A way to end the cycle" (122). By this time, Afghanistan is at war and the environment is not safe for travellers, especially someone like Amir who had been aware of the situation for a long time. Though it has been a while, the memory of what had happened still hovers in his mind such that though he is a resident of America presently, he cannot just do away with his trespasses. It is during this same encounter with Rahim that Amir learns that Hassan had all along known that Amir saw what Assef did to him though he stayed idle and pretended not to have any idea about the physical and sexual abuse that his friend had gone through. As argued by Niraja Saraswat, "Amir's 'unatoned sins' as they are described in the novels opening chapter, have plagued his conscience and cast an oppressive shadow over his joys and triumph".

Amir goes to Afghanistan in search of Hassan's son despite the instability of the country. This journey is the most significant quest for redemption that Amir undertakes because, according to him, finding Hassan's son would bring him a deep sense of peace. This is because finding the boy would be like dressing the old wound that was inflicted on Hassan. Amir's quest for redemption resembles that of Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in the sense that they both become selfless and put the lives of others ahead of theirs. This is contrary to their initial conduct in which they are egoistic. As evident, the superego guides Amir to be able to differentiate wrong from right. In a situation where Amir can further abide to his instincts and drives as

commanded by the Id, he chooses otherwise so as to overcome his condition. In the initial instance he represses his fear, his phobias, but at this point confronts them hence dealing with his state of neurosis.

In the course of his search for Hassan's son, Amir discovers from the owners of the orphanage that the young boy was taken by are the Taliban. Upon visiting where the Taliban live, Amir comes face to face with Assef and physically fights with him for the boy's life. The fight with Assef is, effectively, Amir's revenge on him. In this confrontation, Amir feels that he has, at long last, done what he should have done a long time before, when Assef assaulted Hassan. Amir wins the fight with the help of Sohrab, Hassan's son. As he leaves with the boy, Amir says:

I stumbled down the hallway; Sohrab's little hand in mine. I took a final look over my shoulder. The guards were huddled over Assef doing something to his face. Then I understood: the brass ball was still stuck in his empty eye socket. The whole world rocking up and down, swooping side to side, I hobbled down the steps, leaning on Sohrab. From above, Assef's screams went on and on, the cries of a wounded animal. We made it outside, into daylight, my arm around Sohrab's shoulder, and I saw Farid running toward us (158).

As already noted, Amir eventually takes the young boy out of Afghanistan to Pakistan. He later overcomes obstacles with the immigration department and finally goes to America with him. Upon arrival in America it takes some time for the boy to settle down and feel at home. Sohrab eventually settles in the household and Amir and his wife Soraya raise him as their own child. In effect, Amir's rescue and adoption of Hassan's son symbolize the relative success of his quest for redemption from his guilt for failing to intervene in Hassan's assault by Assef in their youth. Sharing with

Saraswat's argument, it can be rightly said that 'Amir's quest to redeem himself makes up the heart of the novel' (169).

Amir's father does not achieve similar redemption from his own guilt. He lives his whole life in a state of guilt unknown to his son, Amir. From the beginning of the novel, Amir's image of Papa is that he does not appreciate his presence; instead, he prefers Hassan, a son of their household servant Ali to him. Amir does everything possible to please his father without knowing that Hassan is actually his biological brother. As already noted, Amir learns about the secret when he visits Rahim Khan, long after his father's death. Amir learns that his father also fathered Hassan because Ali could not impregnate his wife. However due to the class and ethnicity difference between himself and Hassan's mother, Papa could not publicly show that Hassan was his own flesh.

Throughout his life, Papa is troubled by his failure to publicly acknowledge Hassan as his biological son. Like Jalil in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, he quests for redemption from his guilt by providing for Hassan in various ways. As Amir observes, "Baba never missed Hassan's birthday. For a while he used to ask Hassan what he wanted, but he gave up doing that because Hassan was always too modest to actually suggest a present" (24). As a result, Papa tries to surprise Hassan in different ways, making up for not being father enough to him. In addition, he always tries to have Hassan around him, and when he notices that there is discord between Amir and Hassan, he asks Amir what the problem is. Papa's love for Hassan is also evident when Amir accuses him of stealing his watch. Amir sets this up in an attempt to get rid of Hassan because he is sure that his father cannot forgive a crime like theft. However, to Amir's

surprise, Papa forgives Hassan even though the innocent boy acknowledges the false accusation. Papa cannot just let his biological son go. It already hurts him that he cannot publicly claim the relationship. Therefore, sending the young boy and his “father”, Ali, out of the premises is unacceptable to Papa.

According to Rahim Khan, Amir’s father behaved in ways that seem to have been attempts at redeeming himself from the guilt of not being the ideal father that Hassan always needed.

I think everything he did, feeding the poor on the streets, building orphanages, giving money to friends in need, it was all his way of redeeming himself. And that I believe is what true redemption is Amir Jan; when guilt leads to good. (163)

As quoted above, it can be rightly said that as a way of dealing with his guilt, Amir’s father uses sublimation as a defensive mechanism. Terry Eagleton describes sublimation as “coping with desires we cannot fulfil by directing them towards a more socially valued end” (131). By feeding the poor, Amir’s father switches and harnesses his instincts for a greater end.

Another character who is on a quest for redemption in *The Kite Runner* is Sanaubar, Hassan’s biological mother. When the story begins, Sanaubar has already gone from home and left the child under the care of the father. She has gone on an entertainment spree with some band and effectively abandons her motherly duties. After some years of gallivanting Sanaubar returns home wretched and in bad health. The return of Sanaubar is very emotional, more than her leaving ever was. Sanaubar cries that coming back had been a mistake maybe even worse than leaving (114). Hassan and

his wife nurse her back to health. After the birth of Hassan's son, Sanaubar cares for the child as if he is her own. "It was Sanaubar who delivered Hassan's son" (114) and the baby "became the center of her existence" (115). She is a hands-on grandmother and provides all the required support for the child until she breathes her last.

She sewed clothes for him, built him toys from scraps of wood, rags, and dried grass. When he caught a fever, she stayed up all night, and fasted for three days. She burned isfand for him on a skillet to cast out nazar, the evil eye. By the time Sohrab was two, he was calling her Sasa. The two of them were inseparable. (114)

By the time she passes away, Sanaubar seems to be at peace with herself. "Sanaubar looked calm, at peace, like she did not mind dying now" (115). Sanaubar's attachment to her grandson is the perfect way she makes up for the lost time, the time that she never got to spend with her son Hassan. Her full presence in the life of Sohrab until her death is her redemption. As described in the above quotation, she dies "at peace, like she did not mind dying". She has managed to achieve her redemption at long last.

4.4 Quest for Redemption in *And the Mountains Echoed*

And the Mountains Echoed mainly presents two characters, Parwana and Nabi who are on a quest for redemption. As already noted in the foregoing chapters, Parwana causes the accident that makes Masooma become an invalid. Consequently, Parwana lives her life in accordance with Masooma's needs because she believes that this is the only way through which she can achieve some redemption from her guilt of having put her sister in such a situation. Parwana carries out this responsibility until Masooma releases her in the forest where she decides to die alone, as noted already.

When Parwana leaves Masooma alone in the forest, she does not feel guilty about the situation since she acts on Masooma's instructions. By this time Parwana has devoted much of her time trying to deal with her guilt for being responsible for Masooma's invalid condition. This point can be said to be a moment of redemption for both Parwana and Masooma. It is evident in the novel that, although Masooma is a victim of the situation, she blames herself for troubling her sister as much as Parwana blames herself for being the cause of Masooma's invalid condition. Therefore, by releasing Parwana from the responsibility of caring for her selflessly, Masooma also feels redeemed from her own guilt.

Nabi is the second character who seeks redemption from guilt in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Again, as discussed in the preceding chapters, Nabi feels guilty for masterminding the selling of Pari to the Wadhatis family in his effort to win the love and affection of Nila, the madam. By being the catalyst selling Pari to Wadhati's family, Nabi is operating on what Freud calls the 'pleasure principle'. The pleasure principle brings to light the idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the kind of consequence that it may bring. His deep regret for his actions, particularly his role in the separation of Pari from her brother Abdullah, is evident in the following quotation:

But all these years later, I still feel my heart clench. The memory of it forces its way to the fore. How could it not? I took those two helpless children, in whom love of the simplest and purest kind had found expression and I tore one from the other. I will never forget the sudden emotional mayhem. (207)

Nabi's attempt to overcome his guilt brings shows his confrontation of his personality that dwelled much in the pleasure than reality principle. Nabi's quest for redemption,

just like Jalil's in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is shown through the written word. In both these situations, the culprits' inability to meet their victims makes them express in writing their sorrow for bringing pain in the lives of the victims. Jalil expresses his apology to Mariam in writing because she never grants him an audience to give a proper apology. Nabi writes a letter which he later sends to Mr. Markos explaining the circumstances that surrounded Pari's selling off. He explains how heavy his heart feels about his regrettable actions. "It weighs on me. All this time has passed Mr. Markos, and it still weigh on me" (207). By this time Pari is in France where her mother took her to following her separation from Mr Wadhavi once he got very sick. In the letter, Nabi states how much he wants Mr. Markos to make an effort to contact Pari and apologize to her on his behalf for the pain his actions caused by separating her from her family, especially from Abdullah.

Below is an excerpt of the letter that Nabi writes to Mr Markos explaining about the events that led to their family's breakdown.

The second is that you try to find my niece Pari after I am gone. If she is still alive; it may not prove too difficult. This internet is a wondrous tool. As you can see enclosed in the envelop along with this letter is my will in which I leave the house, the money, and my few belongings to her. I ask that you give her both the letter and the will. And please tell her, tell her that I cannot know the myriad consequences of what I set in motion. Tell her I took solace only in hope. Hope that perhaps, wherever she is now, she has found as much peace, grace, love and happiness as this world allows. (265)

Markos ensures that Pari gets proper communication about all the events that had unfolded. When Pari learns about her origin, more specifically about her brother Abdullah, she travels back to Afghanistan on a quest for her brother so that she can

try to rekindle their lost love. For a long time Pari had felt a gap in her history though she could not really understand what it was.

What Pari had always wanted from her mother was the glue to bond together her loose, disjointed scrap of memory, to turn them into some sort of cohesive narrative. But Maman never said much. She always withheld details of her life and of their life together in Kabul. She kept Pari at a remove from her shared past and eventually Pari stopped asking. (444)

After the communication from Nabi, Pari gets to understand why for so long she had felt a gap in her life, a gap that no one would properly explain to her.

Pari said she had been unaware of her own history herself and would have probably died without knowing it if not for the letter left behind by her step uncle, Nabi; before his own death in Kabul in which he had detailed the events of her childhood among other things. (767)

However, Pari learns that Abdullah has a condition that has led him to forget everything about his past. Pari struggles to make her brother remember her. Their relationship was destroyed by Nabi's selfishness. It is not easy for them but Pari is at least happy to finally be united with her brother. As Pari finds her brother, Nabi is not physically present. Nabi has rightly confronted his memory about the events that led to the selling of Pari and he has made his wrongs right. However, his desire for the truth to be known has been achieved. It can therefore be argued that just like in Jalil's case, Nabi has achieved some redemption.

It has been observed in this study that the achievement of redemption for each character discussed, namely, Mariam, Rasheed, Nabi, Saboor, Amir, and Amir's father, is preceded by personal realization of the wrongs each one of them has done

against other characters in the novels. For most of them, apology to the victims is also key to the achievement of redemption. Some of the characters use various forms of actions and communication to show how apologetic they are for their wrong doing. By coming to terms with their wrongful actions, regardless of their causes, the characters demonstrate their attempts to transcend the regrettable past and transform themselves into better people as they have been redeemed from their feelings of guilt. Others such as Jalil and Nabi express their apologies in writing because they are unable to meet their victims in person. This would seem to make their acknowledgement of wrong doing less effective than it would be if they apologized to their victims through the spoken word. According to Jacques Derrida's conception of the priority of speech over writing:

The spoken word is given a higher value because the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously. There is no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech, and listener, since the speaker hears himself speak at the same moment the listener does. This immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean and know what we have said. (Derrida 9)

This quotation indicates that the ideal form of communication is the spoken word because it derives power and immediacy from the presence of both speaker and listener, whereas the written word lacks such presence and immediacy. The belief of superiority of speech over written language is referred to as phonocentrism. "Phonocentrism treats writing as a contaminated form of speech. Speech, we attribute to it a 'presence' which we take to be lacking in writing" (Klages 165). However, as explained in the study, the situations in which Jalil and Nabi find themselves do not enable them to get the physical presence of their victims for them

to express spoken apologies. In such circumstances, therefore, their written apologies suffice as full apologies, and facilitate their achievement of redemption from their conditions of guilt.

Resolution of guilt requires the subject openly and unequivocally confessing of himself as a damaging, guilty person to a significant other. Brooke describes what is sought through confession to be absolution not punishment (34). The end goal of peace of mind is that which brings about freedom. Once this is achieved, the subject achieves openness in the world again.

The quest for redemption as discussed in this chapter directly reflects the confrontation of not only the characters memory, but also that of the author. According to Louis Althusser, "art makes us see in a distanced way the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes" (qtd in Selden et al 97). In his writing, Hosseini moves between fantasy and reality. In his portrayal of Afghanistan's political instability, he moves between using elements that are true about the land and the people and a bit of fantasy as portrayed through the characters. As argued by Akshay Sharma, "The common thread that links Khaled Hosseini's novels apart from them being set in and representative of society and complex history-is the fact that each character in these fictional works sets out on a journey that is determined and to a large extent linked to the country's turbulent historical and social background" (1).

In one of his interviews, Hosseini was quizzed about whether his characters portray his personal life, he specifically answered that whereas his books are not

autobiographies, he can somehow see himself in the characters that he develops. Hosseini specifically gives an example of a character from *The Kite Runner* Amir who together with his friend Hassan flies kites in Kabul. *The Kite Runner* being Hosseini's first book mirrors a lot of experiences of the land and how it presents the gap between the rich and the poor. In an interview titled "Khaled Hosseini - 'The Kite Runner' Part 1" Hosseini states that he uses a lot of his personal memories to recreate the city of Kabul as well as to recreate Amir and Hassan. Hosseini recounts the kite running experience as common among the Afghan boys and talks about this as a sport that he himself liked playing while he was young and still lived in Afghanistan. He also explains about women figures as portrayed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as real examples of women that he had personally encountered, or heard experiences about. The persistent war and continuous suffering as well as loss that characters such as Laila in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* encounter are real issues that some of his relations or people that he knew have undergone. As evident therefore, the writing process for Hosseini proves to be more than writing as an industry, but rather what Terry Eagleton terms "product of social consciousness, a world vision" (28). The writing process for Hosseini can be equated to the process of having an access to the unconscious with the author taking the role of the producer. According to Eagleton, "dreams provide our main, but not only access to the unconscious. There are also what Freud calls 'parapraxes', unaccountable slips of the tongue, failures of memory, bungling, misreading and mislaying which can be traced to the unconscious wishes and intentions" (137). Hosseini's writing may not be necessarily through the interpretation of dreams, but rather what Freud describes as phantasies. "A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which finds its fulfilment in the

creative work” (Habib 581). These experiences that he went through and those that he still comes across as a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador to Afghanistan furnish him with a lot of realistic details.

These books have the ever-presence of the author’s voice felt. Writers of stories of trauma get a chance to stop existing and start living once they put their thoughts on paper. As Foster notes ‘narrators are like cats. They may talk about other people, but the world is mostly about them (67). His novels carry a mission of redemption but also a voice of the past and the present. Hosseini just like his characters confront memory. Finally, the quote below further expresses the core of the argument that this paper states. In an interview, Hosseini rightly affirms that:

We had a lot of family and friends in Kabul. And the communist coup as opposed to the coup that happened in ’73 was actually violent. A lot of people rounded up and executed, a lot of people were imprisoned. Virtually anybody that was affiliated or associated with the previous regime or the royal family was persecuted, imprisoned, killed, rounded up, or disappeared. And so we would hear news of friends and acquaintances and occasionally family members to whom that had happened, that were either in prison or worse, had just disappeared and nobody knew where they were, and some of them never turned up. My wife’s uncle was a very famous singer and composer in Kabul who had been quite vocal about his dislike for the communists and so on and he disappeared. And to this day, we have no idea what happened to him. So that sort of thing, we began to hear news over in Europe of mass executions and really just horror stories. So it was surreal, and it also kind of hit home in a very real way.⁸

⁸ American Academy of Achievement. Khaled Hosseini, M.D. Biography and Interview. <https://www.achievement.org/achiever/khaled-hosseini/>.

As quoted above, it is evident that his personal experiences had and still have an impact on how Hosseini lives his life in the present day.

This chapter has discussed the characters' confrontation of memory through quest for redemption to ensure that they make peace with themselves. As already stated, Hosseini argues that he sees his texts as mirrors of his personal experiences. To this effect, it can be argued that this research implicitly explores Hosseini's lived experience through his creative works. As a person who managed to directly address the evils of war in Afghanistan, Hosseini not only writes to let the world know about the evil wrong on his society by war but further goes on to support the victims of war as a goodwill ambassador of the UNHCR. As explored in this chapter, the quest for redemption makes one become responsible and strive to do right.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Conclusion

The three books discussed in this work are authored by Khaled Hosseini which brings a great perspective in the study. They all share the common feature of being set in Afghanistan and abroad (America and Europe). They all show basic elements of a community that is unstable. The thesis has expressed the argument that the author mirrors realism in the fictional works. Some of the elements that show the truth of these elements are the setting and the life of the characters. The texts portray a war-torn nation of Afghanistan and the problems that this brings and this does not differ with the present situations in Afghanistan.

This study has argued that external forces in the various environments where the various characters live influence the actions that cause their feelings of guilt. Living in an unstable environment of Afghanistan, the characters encounter various socio-economic conditions and challenges that render them helpless. As discussed in Chapter 2, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam's guilt originates from a desire to belong to an upper class as well as from love for her father. Being of a lower class, Mariam wishes to lead life like that of the bourgeoisie but she fails to do so. Other characters who find themselves in this situation are Nabi and Saboor in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Saboor sells Pari in order to improve earn some money with which to support the rest of his family. He does not want to seek financial any help from Nabi because he believes it is a man's responsibility to take care of his family. He sees Pari as a sacrifice to be offered to save his household. Nabi facilitates the

selling of Pari to fulfil his selfish desire of winning Mrs Wahdati's love and to change his social class. Nabi believes that he can easily win Nila's affection through the existence of Pari in the house which turns out to be totally opposite.

Jalil's guilt in *The Kite Runner* is also rooted in his desire not to degrade himself in terms of class. Upon impregnating a servant in his household, he cannot really marry her even though he takes responsibility of the pregnancy. As a result, he segregates the woman from his household and embarks on weekly visits to outskirts of the city because he does not want to tarnish his bourgeoisie image. On the other hand the characters in *And the Mountains Echoed*, namely Parwana and Masooma, find themselves in devastating situations because of striving to find a sense of belonging in the society. Parwana has a split personality and feels like she is 'othered' by her sister Masooma. This feeling eventually pushes her to the edge and she causes an accident that renders her sister helpless as an invalid. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir's father dies with unredeemed guilt because of ethnic prejudices in his society. Amir learns from Rahim Khan that his father also fathered Hassan but he could not publicly acknowledge the boy because of the class and ethnic differences between him and Hassan's mother. Hassan was mothered by a Hazara woman and Amir's father was a Pashtun. Hazara's were marginalized in the society where the political ideologies appraised the Pashtuns. It was against this background that Amir did not get as much love from his father as he expected to.

Chapter 3 examined how the various conditions of guilt cause some of the characters to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders that are manifested in their behaviour. Parwana and Masooma in *And the Mountains Echoed* have been discussed with

reference to this problem. The effects of trauma have also been analysed in relation to the behaviour of Laila and Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Furthermore, in *The Kite Runner*, Amir and Hassan behave in ways that indicate effects of the traumatic assault of Hassan by Assef, witnessed by Amir without doing anything about it. This event left them helpless and strained their relationship.

This research has further discussed the quests for redemption made by the various characters who have been discussed. This quest comes as a result of the characters direct confrontation of their respective pasts. As stated in the chapter, the neurosis which affects the characters and in turn leading some of them into traumatic state is only healed once the characters embark in confronting their pasts. While some of the characters encounter challenges as they attempt to redeem themselves from their situations of guilt, most of them succeed in their quests for redemption. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, it can be said that Mariam achieves her quest because she ably raises Laila as her own child, and at the end sacrifices her life for Laila when she takes the blame for the murder of Rasheed. On the other hand, Rasheed also manages to fulfil his quest when Laila finally gives birth to a male child. The birth of the male child fulfils his desire for a child to replace the one he lost. However, the ending is tragic for him when he is killed by Mariam during one of his abusive rants.

Jalil's quest for redemption encounters a lot of problems because when he makes an effort to meet Mariam she refuses to see him. Mariam does not want to meet him because she feels devastated by his betrayal of her when she once loved him most as her father. Eventually, Jalil pours his heart out to Mariam through a letter which unfortunately Mariam does not get to read because by this time she has been executed

for killing Rasheed. It can therefore be said that Jalil makes an effort to get forgiveness from Mariam although he fails to communicate with her, and the success of his quest for redemption is not evident.

Nabi's quest for redemption in *And the Mountains Echoed* can be said to be relatively successful. He is unable to live with the fact that he destroyed the relationship of children who were closely bonded to each other. For this reason, therefore, he instructs Markos to make an effort to find Pari and clearly explain how sorry he was. Even though Nabi does not get to see the results of his effort, it can be said that his quest is partially achieved. Pari manages to trace her long lost brother Abdullah even though he hardly recognized her because he is suffering from memory loss. Parwana's quest for redemption is achieved because she takes care of her sister until the sister, Masooma, instructs her to abandon her in the forest to die. Masooma tells Parwana to leave her so that for once Parwana can live her life. Masooma's own redemption can also be said to have been achieved because she is able to release Parwana from a hard responsibility of caring for her.

In *The Kite Runner* Amir achieves his redemption from the guilt he feels for betraying his bond of friendship with Hassan. As advised by Rahim Khan, he goes into a war-torn Afghanistan to rescue Hassan's son and takes care of him like his own child. In as much as most writers are fictional writers, this study has argued that through the same fiction one can directly write about their own experiences and other peoples experience. As an Afghan, it is always thrilling to look forward to more texts that Hosseini can bring out to see if there would be continuity in his story line and the issues that he addresses. That is, issues that affects multi generations individually as

well as communally. His writing can therefore be referred to as a marriage between his experiences as a refugee and art.

Much of the literature about Hosseini used by this study was extracted from youtube video's and written reviews. However, an interview with the author would have furnished the research with even better detail of the issues that the research grapples with. For future research, there is a need of reviewing the author's voice in his upcoming works (such as *Sea Prayer*) to see if it still echoes his previous or if it will be a departure from his usual.

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