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The Immigrant Writer's Representation of the Ancestral Homeland: Case Study of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007)

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Dedication

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating whether immigrant writers, in their attempt to represent their ancestral homelands, are able to transmit accurate, vivid images of the homes they had left behind or if their literary presentation is fogged by the new identity thrown upon them in their new homes which may result in literary misrepresentation. An immigrant, especially an immigrant writer, often undergoes severe identity crises which transmission may be noticed in their work, exceptionally when producing representative literary pieces of their motherland. This often arouses astringent criticism. Khaled Hosseini is an example of these writers; through his novels, the author's effort to pass to the world an image of the average Afghan's life, throughout the country's instability is noticed. Nevertheless, critics believe that his negative outlook for his birth country marks his narratives. Drawing on cultural studies and the post-colonial theory, this thesis aims at investigating whether Khaled Hosseini's work, entitled *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), furnishes distorted truths of his ancestral homeland or if he simply depicts his society's harsh reality. In this novel, the writer crafts the story of two Afghan women — Mariam and Laila — in a venture to describe the chaotic history of Afghanistan and the scheme through which women are mistreated under the patriarchy and the despotic regime. The study shows that Khaled Hosseini does, in fact, misrepresent his ancestral homeland. It is verily undeniable that Afghanistan has its fair share of violence, but Hosseini's description of his people is a mere perpetuation of western beliefs. In an attempt to process his feelings of dislocations, the writer gives contradictory and exaggerated information that reinforce Western stereotypes about Afghan people.

Keywords: Dislocation, Representation, Misrepresentation, Immigrant writer, Ancestral homeland.

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Introduction

Immigrants endure a strong feeling of dislocation every day, not only physically, but mostly mentally, where they lose their sense of home and live in between spaces. The absence of home might create a dilemma of belonging to the immigrant writer which will result in a specific attitude towards literary invention. This type of writings produced by immigrant novelists is called the literature of immigration. It is considered as a category of literature produced by authors who are divided between at least two cultures, national identities, or languages. Since the 1980s, immigration literature has been prominent within the literary studies. From that time, writers and writings about immigration have gained growing interest till the contemporary era.

Writers like Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, and Amy Tan are some of the many names which highly contributed to this literary genre. Khaled Hosseini is another present name within the literature of immigration. He was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. His father was a diplomat in the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother was a high school teacher in Kabul. In 1976, Khaled Hosseini's family moved to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then their homeland had witnessed a bloody communist coup and the invasion of the Soviet Army. The Hosseinis were granted political asylum in the United States, and settled in California. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1988. Afterwards, he entered medical school at the University of California, San Diego, where he earned a medical degree in 1993. In March 2001, while practicing medicine, Hosseini began writing his first novel. Today, Khaled Hosseini is one of the most recognized and bestselling authors in the world. His books, *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013), have been published in over seventy countries and sold more than 40 million copies worldwide.

The literature of immigration is a hybrid literary genre, which is the product of the immigrant writer who is lost between his aim to preserve his national heritage, and his desire to take part within his host culture. The struggle among immigrant novelists to preserve reminiscences of their homeland alongside their wish to assimilate into the host culture, may lead to the creation of an ambivalent literary narrative. Furthermore, this division will result in creating a new hybrid definition of home which combines the life that was left behind, and the life the author has now. It cannot be denied that this division between two categories is difficult, since the writer will fall into perplexity about which side he should embrace. Many immigrant writers fell victims of this trap which led them to be highly criticized by their audience. Consequently, they were accused of misrepresenting their homeland as a result of being dislocated between two homes.

This dissertation seeks to investigate if Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* accurately represents his ancestral homeland or it is a false reflection of his ethnic community. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is one of those literary works that are dedicated to criticize patriarchy and shed light on gender discrimination and women's struggle inside Afghanistan. Hosseini portrays the characters in the novel with a very strong style that effectively offers a glance on the strict laws practiced by the patriarchal regimes on Afghan women and the torture they tolerate in their daily life. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is also set against the background of Afghanistan's recent history from the year of 1964 to 2003. In this novel, Hosseini follows the story of two Afghan women –Mariam and Laila-, who come from different backgrounds and different generations when suddenly their paths intertwine to find themselves living under the same roof, married to the same man. Despite the interesting style of the writer, and the heart touching description of the struggles that the two protagonists face inside and outside their house, one might argue that the narration of the events is not a mere illustration of the reality of Afghanistan, Afghan women, and even the Taliban regime.

Furthermore, Hosseini is accused of misrepresenting his own people and religion, besides hiding a part of the truthful political timeline of the story.

In their article "Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative" Abdullah Mohammad Dagamseh and Olga Golubeva insist on showing that the novel focuses on displaying the positive contributions of the dominant Eurocentric west. Unlike other recent studies of the novel who focus on the situation of Afghan women under the Taliban rule, this study highlights the representations of Afghan children in the novel. The author aims to demonstrate how Hosseini's description of war-torn children contributes to the neo-orientalist and child-rescue discourse, supporting the western intervention in Afghanistan's domestic affairs.

The choice of the novel has been selected consciously for the reason that it corresponds to the criticism under investigation. Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist who aims at describing the various issues of his ancestral homeland, therefore, deliver it to a mainstream audience. However, after rigorous research, Hosseini's writings proved false depictions of his native land at some levels. This dissertation offers further insights on the levels upon which the immigrant writer may show bias towards his western culture which later on results in misrepresentation of his original homeland.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is examined through the theory of cultural studies. In addition to other theoretical concepts like Post-colonialism and Orientalism. Concerning the postcolonial approach, it is used to study the effect of the political status of the ancestral homeland on the immigrant writer's literary inventions. It emphasizes on the concept of dislocation as a cause of misrepresentation of the motherland, stating Salman Rushdie and Homi Bhabha as great contributors to this approach. The novel is also seen through Edward Said's approach of orientalism which links Hosseini's misrepresentation of his native land to

the extent his western culture has on him. The previous theoretical concepts are crucial for the study of this novel, however, Khaled Hosseini's misrepresentation of his ancestral homeland is the main concern of this research.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical one; it is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the literature of immigration along with its causes and aims. The second section seeks to examine the main theme of immigration literature which is dislocation, through the postcolonial theories of Salman Rushdie and Homi Bhabha. Finally, the third section of this chapter analyses various novels produced by immigrant American writers as representations of the ancestral homelands. In this respect, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) are considered as misrepresentations of the writers' ancestral homelands, whereas Mahbod Seraji's *Rooftops of Tehran* (2009) serves as a good representative of Iran.

The second chapter is an analytical one. This chapter is sectioned into two parts. It is devoted to the analysis of Hosseini's portrayal of both men and women and his celebration of ethnic markers. The first section will focus on the writer's stereotypical descriptions of Afghan women as passive through the main female characters Mariam and Laila, as well as Afghan men as violent and barbaric through one of the main male character Rasheed. In addition to that, the second section will deal with the author's celebration of Afghanistan's cultural markers.

The third chapter is also an analytical one. It examines the writer's representation of religion along with the nation's historical timeline. This chapter is divided into two sections. While the first section endeavors to analyse the depiction of religion through Mullah Faizullah, Eid-ul-fitr, the Taliban, the Mujahideen, and the veil, the second section of the chapter deals with the way Khaled Hosseini represents the different invasions and occupations that Afghanistan has gone through.

To conclude with, the value of this study mainly focuses on showing Khaled Hosseini's contradictions in representing his ancestral homeland. It is obvious that the author's dislocation negatively affected his views on his motherland. Moreover, his Western ideologies as an immigrant interfered with his representation of his community. As a result, he ended up reinforcing stereotypes about Afghan people and their culture, in addition to the Islamic religion.

Chapter One: A Theoretical analysis of the Literature of Immigration

This chapter will examine the representation of the ancestral homeland by the immigrant writer, a prevalent theme in immigrant literature. The chapter is divided into three sections; while the first section will address the specificity of immigrant literature, the second section will deal with concept of dislocation as a theme, and also discuss the challenges of representing the homeland. Moreover, the third section will analyze the cases of some immigrant writers whose migration experience made them face a dilemma of belonging which characterizes their works.

I.1.An Introduction to Immigration Literature

Literature of immigration is a literary genre which appeared as a result of the mass migration that the world has witnessed, in addition to the struggles that immigrants endure in the host country. Fatema Pourjafari and Abdolali Vahidpour believe that immigration became prevalent because the traditional settler life-form is replaced by a new nomadic life style which marks the lives of immigrants. They add:

Migration has come to play an increasingly significant role in relation to such basic social foundations such as politics, economics, geography and culture. However, movement and human restlessness has had a remarkable effect on literature (as a particular cultural production) as well. The appearance of a new kind of writing, called literature of migration is the manifestation of this impact. (679)

Literature of immigration tends to be an embodiment of the mental and the physical tribulations that minorities suffer from. However, it may be difficult for the immigrant writer to represent his/her ethnic group fairly because s/he himself/herself may be a victim of these tribulations, that can take the form of feelings of displacement, dislocation and relocation, as well as nostalgia for the homeland. Therefore, the writer's ambivalent feelings find their way into

his/her writing which will capture the oscillation between two affiliations: the original homeland, and the host country.

According to the *Oxford learner's dictionary*, immigration is defined as “the process of coming to live permanently in a different country from the one you were born in”. Pourjafari and Vahidpour, however, offer a more nuanced meaning to the concept of immigration when they argue that, “the trend of displacement and movement made by individuals with the hope to find more personal convenience or better their material or social conditions” (680-1). The first definition introduces immigration in a general way as a process of living far from your birth country. While the other one is a bit more specific and states it as a trend, alongside the aim behind it which is finding a better life outside the borders of your original homeland.

Immigration is a phenomenon that can be the result of several reasons which are explained differently from one critic to another. To Salman Rushdie, "the distinguishing feature of our time is mass migration, mass displacement, globalized finances and industries" (219). Historical events are considered to be a significant cause of mass migration. Amongst the historical events Moslund refers: “the second world war, the demise of the British Empire and the subsequent migration from the former colonies to the west” (1). Besides these reasons, one can add the outstanding developments in the fields of technology and communication which contributed to the improvement of the human life.

The act of immigration carries diverse categories of people, including the category of the intellectuals such as poets, artists, and writers who left their homes willingly or unwillingly, to live in a new land. Intellectuals use their talent to describe their immigrant experience. The Immigrant writers' depiction of the experience of immigration takes the form of creative works which impact the world. That is mainly the reason behind the emergence of the literature of immigration. It specifically aims to elucidate the different aspects of the immigrant life, and to

describe its feelings of displacement and dislocation, two prominent themes in this literary genre. As the Filipino American writer Jessica Hagedorn explains her feeling of dislocation:

I've been moving all the time since I was a child, my life was disrupted early...so this thing about being at home only in airports is question I bring up a lot...home is in my head and includes forever that those in Santa Mesa. It also includes the different homes in which we lived in San Francisco as I was growing up we moved a lot. That shaped my whole life. (qtd. in Bouallegue 15-6)

In this passage, Jessica Hagedorn expresses her feeling of dislocation; she asserts that her constant moving affected her as a child. Moreover, she was in desperate need for a home after being dislocated from both her home of origin, and from what was supposed to be her new home in America. She was prevented from stability during her childhood, which shaped her whole life later as an adult and as a creative writer.

I.2. Dislocation as a Significant Theme in Immigration Literature

Dislocation is a condition experienced by many immigrants. As Russell King, Connell, White, and D. Phil state in their book *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*: «Migration is generally about dislocation and the potential alienation of the individual from both old norms and new contexts” (6). In this context, dislocation is an inevitable feeling that every immigrant goes through throughout his/her life, because s/he has been uprooted from his/her previous home to a new one that might or might not embrace him/her. Therefore, the sense of dislocation usually lies between the nostalgia for the homeland and the desire to create a good life in the host country.

According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, the literal meaning of the word dislocation is “a state in which the usual organization of something is disturbed and does not work or continue in the normal way”. In this context, immigration is considered to be the

disturbing factor of the usual organization of the individual's life, it changes and shapes the individual's life.

Dislocation is a term that describes the physical displacement of individuals after an imperial occupation together with the experiences that follow it (Ashcroft, et al 65). Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffins further explain the term of dislocation:

The term is used to describe the experience of those who have willingly moved from the imperial 'Home' to the colonial margin, but it affects all those who, as a result of colonialism, have been placed in a location that, because of colonial hegemonic practices, needs, in a sense, to be 'reinvented' in language, in narrative and in myth. A term often used to describe the experience of dislocation is Heidegger's term *unheimlich* or *unheimlichkeit* – literally 'unhousedness' or 'not-at-home-ness' – which is also sometimes translated as 'uncanny' or 'uncanniness'. (65)

Accordingly, dislocation can simply be used in the context of the absence of home or having unfamiliar strange feelings towards a new place. Immigration mostly causes unfamiliarity inside the host country, since it is considered as the unknown to immigrants who left their original home for an unfamiliar site. Therefore, immigrants who are displaced from their past, may somehow feel disturbed not only physically but also mentally.

Immigration is a significant phenomenon that pays much attention to the theme of dislocation and displacement. It is not, therefore, surprising that it is the topic through which immigrant writers explore this latter condition, that they themselves suffer from. Joseph O'Connor is an Irish novelist who best expressed this condition through a passage in his book *Ireland in Exile: Irish Writers Abroad*:

You're feeling completely out of place; you don't know why. It's weird... You're home in Ireland, but you're not home really. London is still in your head, or New York, or

Paris. But you're in Ireland...You close your eyes and try to fight back the almost overwhelming urge to be somewhere – anywhere – else. And you realise in that moment that you really are an emigrant now. And that being an emigrant isn't just an address. You realise that it's actually a way of thinking about Ireland. (14)

In this sense, Joseph O'Connor links his sense of being an emigrant to his confusion about the different countries he has been living in, this feeling is not only related to his adopted country, but it further extends to his own birth country, Ireland. After being displaced from his homeland for too long, the writer realizes that he lost his sense of belonging to the same place he should always feel spiritually linked to, and it is not a feeling he is grateful for. Moreover, the literature of immigration is mainly about embodying all the odd feelings that immigrants endure in the host country, including the most important one, which is dislocation.

Detachment from the homeland towards a new one may cause the individual to feel out of place. Immigrants after immigration may gradually or immediately lose their sense of belonging to both their original home and the welcoming land. Furthermore, immigrants will be divided between two places, without actually belonging to either side, because they can neither return to what is left behind, nor easily assimilate or be accepted within the host country. Salman Rushdie explains this issue in his book *Imaginary Homelands*:

It maybe that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge of which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

The works of immigrant writers provide a fertile field to understand the immigrant experience. One of their major concerns is to balance their dual life that is divided between living “back home” and in the present. Furthermore, the writer attempts to represent his homeland to fill in what is lost. Moreover, s/he aims at creating literature that does not correspond exactly to the world they left, but produce fictional stories that are close enough to show a side of their ancestral home.

Representing the original homeland, however, might be challenging for the immigrant writer who is divided between two homes, one belongs to the past and the other to the present. Immigrants are in a constant strife to belong and find a ‘home’ for themselves, which is not an easy process. Homi Bhabha states in his book *The Location of Culture*, that in the present world, immigrants are valued, not for their attachment to their moral and cultural traditions, but by "the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are in the minority" (16). Bhabha dismisses the concept of ‘multiple identities’, that stand between the home and the host culture, claiming that it implies an illusory of distinct sets of identities, which must be chosen and acquired by individuals. This criticism neglects the idea of having a cultural identity, arguing that it is better to encourage difference rather than the homogenizing identity construction that strives to confine and localize culture. Difference manifests itself as a flow of representations that must not be misinterpreted as a reflection of pre-determined ethnic and cultural traits etched in stone by tradition (Costa 12). While articulation of identity might be allied with negotiating heterogeneous identifications in the personal levels, he argues that the whole process is an ambivalent one.

Literature of immigration portrays characters who find themselves having to develop a coping mechanism within the host country, in order to facilitate their assimilation process, since they are expected to separate themselves from their past culture, or else they will not be

appreciated. In this case, the character usually reaches maturity through forming a ‘doubled identity’ which does not mean two identities but it is “the negotiate iterability of identity, its constant repetition, revision, relocation, so that no repetition is the same as the preceding one” (Bhabha12). Bhabha suggests that the immigrant writer should develop a “transnational” theme in his work which neither supports the dominance of national traditions, nor the primacy of human traditions, but rather a portrayal of the in-between. Therefore, “bridging the home and the world” (13).

Nonetheless, it is still challenging to represent the homeland, because there are still some immigrant writers who, consciously or unconsciously fall for the misrepresentation, for the reason that not every writer settles in the in-between easily. Many struggle to pick a side or grasp a little bit of both and Donna Kate Rushkin is one writer who better expressed this tiring situation of in-betweenness as the following:

I've had enough

I'm sick of seeing and touching

both sides of things

sick of being the damn bridge for everybody

I'm sick of filling in your gaps. (qtd in. Smith J. Rosier 26)

In this regard, Rushkin describes the exhaustion of standing in the in-between space, as she wishes to belong to one side because it would be easier. Representation of homelands may be a difficult worry for writers whose life is fragmented in every way possible and they feel responsible for representing each side fairly through their literature. Therefore, the difficulty of this process can cause misrepresentation of homelands or host lands.

I.3. Migration Experiences and the Dilemma of Belonging in immigration Literature

Immigrant writers' yearning for their ancestral homelands inspires them to write about them in an attempt to reclaim their past and origins. However, being no longer in the territories they want to represent, but rather in ones that look nothing like their ancestral homelands makes it difficult for them to recall memories, whether personal or those told by their ancestors. Thus, they start a process of imagination, which is usually influenced by the environment and circumstances they live in. In this regard, Salman Rushdie writes:

Writing my book in North London, looking out through my window on to a city scene totally unlike the ones I was imagining on to paper, I was constantly plagued by this problem, until I felt obliged to face it in the text, to make clear that ... what I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: 'my' India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect. (10)

Salman Rushdie claims that writing about one's country entails writing about one's mental homeland. Actually, he admits that as a modern novelist and immigrant writer, he recognizes that he is writing about "his" India. One which is not "totally recalled", but rather imagined as closely to "real" as possible.

Dislocation is what makes the image blurry for immigrant writers; they do not succeed at representing their homelands as they should, for they no longer "fully" belong to those lands. Undoubtedly, "It may be that when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost" (Rushdie 10-1). Due to these fragmentary images, the writer might unconsciously fall for the trap of misrepresentation, for his attempts to meet the reality, as

possible as he can, would fail. On the other hand, some writers would consciously misrepresent their homelands, simply because representing the homeland does not matter to them as much as serving their present; they do not regard their ancestral homeland as their ideal home and as somewhere to which they or their descendants would return under any conditions. In this concern, Rushdie points out, “The broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also, I believe, a useful tool with which to work in the present” (12).

Some of the immigrant writers do write and attempt to represent their homelands to feel a sort of connection and belonging, which even they might question, while others “present diverse sets of mixed imagery of homeland that is associated with their intentional will to contain in the host culture; thus, their portrayed images are fragmentary images that strive to be in line with their mimetic endeavors to be a part of the host culture” (Lotf et al. 388). Among these immigrants, one can mention, Bharati Mukherjee.

Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian-American writer whose experiences as an immigrant, like most of immigrant writers, has influenced her writings. She spent her life changing locations from India to England, Switzerland, Canada, and finally the United States, this constant movement propels identity split. In this regard, in *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie writes about migration that it is “to lose language and home, to be defined by others, to become invisible, or, even worse, a target; it is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul” (210). Mukherjee as an immigrant in the United States, experienced homelessness, as she could not consider her country of residence “home”; neither could she consider her motherland. Conscious refusal to “fully” integrate into the new host community, countered by an unconscious self-removal from the native country and past marked the writer’s life.

In her novels, Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the manifestation of migration and the consequences it may have on individuals; such as, the dilemma of belonging, alienation,

dislocation, and identity split/loss as a main theme. Most of the writer's novels entail autobiographical aspects; the main characters, whom are generally women migrants in the United States and Canada, find it difficult to adjust in their native country, as well as to assimilate in the host country. They are constantly in an inner conflict between tradition and modernity. Thus, they start a journey of searching for their lost self. On this matter of Mukherjee's portrayal of immigrants, Fakrul Alam points out that "she has written extensively and imaginatively about their successes and failures and has offered us fascinating glimpses into their lives and the Indian diaspora on the basis of a deeply felt and thought-provoking perspectives on immigration" (qtd. in Saikia 6). Portraying characters of one's own origins is no doubt an attempt towards representation, yet the author was highly criticized for her representations. *Jasmine* (1989) is the writer's most controversial novel, the one which made her most accused of misrepresentation.

The protagonist, Jasmine, is an immigrant young beautiful Indian woman in the United States who, in order to survive, changes identities multiple times. She illegally migrates to the United States to continue with her husband's plan to move there as a matter of guilt. Her husband is brutally murdered by religious extremists who wanted to kill her because she represents "Prostitutes! Whores!" (Mukherjee 93). Her Husband's death is an outcome of the religious violence that is embedded in India. Because she is disappointed in herself, she states, "I feel responsible for Prakash's death" (Mukherjee 141). At 24 years old, the heroine ends up living with Bud, a 53-year-old banker with whom she falls pregnant, but to whom she never accepts to get married. All along the novel, we can find some aspects, which represent the Indian pride and warm culture. Jasmine says: "mother senses I have different feelings about family" (Mukherjee 18). Through these words, we can deduce that Bud's mother does appreciate Jasmine for her strong sense of family, which is an Indian characteristic. She also says: "people are getting used to some of my concoctions, even if they make a show of fanning

their mouths. They get disappointed if there's not something Indian on the table" (Mukherjee 13). Through the Indian food she makes, Jasmine manages to make people around her appreciate and kind of adapt to her culture. Darrel _ a neighbor who is secretly in love with her_ as he was thinking of a name to the clubhouse he wanted to make, told her "I was hoping you'd come up with a prettier name. Something in Indian" (Mukherjee 13). This proves that the protagonist succeeds to a certain extent to make him appreciate her Indianness.

The protagonist, however, is not portrayed as someone who is much proud of India, as she hides her Indian past and prefers to never talk about it to neither Bud nor his mother. She says about her conversations with Bud's mom: "I have to be careful about those stories. I have to be careful nearly about everything I say. If I talk about India, I talk about my parents" (Mukherjee 17). Jasmine starts to assume America as her homeland with time. Thus, she attempts to quit the Indian background, but never manages to completely do so. Furthermore, the Indian woman in the novel is portrayed as a woman whose beauty is her only privilege. Jasmine's sister tells her after she went home with the star-shaped wound the astrologer gave her: "Now your face is scarred for life! How will the family ever find you a husband" (Mukherjee 10). With these words, Indian women are stereotyped as women who are nothing without their beauty, and who, by using their beauty, seduce men. In addition, Jasmine tells Bud's ex-wife: "He chose me I did nothing to encourage it" after the latter tells her: "I suppose you never asked, are you a married man? You just batted your big black eyes and told him how wonderful he was, didn't you?" (Mukherjee 141). Jasmine does not seem like she really loves Bud, what she loves about him is that he "[keeps her] out of trouble" (Mukherjee 211) and "gives [her] a good home" (209), and this is why she seduced him at the first place.

The protagonist is also so materialistic that she starts thinking of inheritance as soon as she falls pregnant. She says: "Eventually we'll take over Mother Ripple Meyer's house" (Mukherjee 15). The baby for her is a winning card to take over the house she has always

wanted, and to no longer feel inferior in front of Kiren, Bud's ex-wife, who lives in the big house she kept after divorce. In his article, "Gold-Digger: Reading the Marital and National Romance in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*", Ninh regards the novel as "rather than presenting a compensatory dynamic whereby a useful feminism may be extracted and salvaged from the narrative's cultural nationalism, the novel makes itself convenient to both patriarchal and Western anxieties" (146). The novel does not attempt to breakdown stereotypes about India, or serve feminism as it should, but rather takes account of both patriarchal and Western thoughts about the orient. In other words, by reinforcing stereotypical images about India, the novel celebrates the West.

In the same vein, Amy Tan can be considered as another controversial author whose representation of the original country generates a heated debate. Amy Tan is a Chinese-American writer who also has many contributions in the American literary sphere, yet *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) is her most famous, as well as most controversial work. Like Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, this novel is also believed to reinforce stereotypical images. *The Joy Luck Club* is the product of representation. In an attempt to represent the Chinese-American experience and the Chinese culture, Amy tan describes the lives of four Asian women who fled China in the 1940s and their four very Americanized daughters. On the one hand, the author emphasizes the Chinese mothers' preservation of their mother culture. Jing-mei says about her mother: "The week before she died, she called me, full of pride, full of life: "Auntie Lin cooked red bean soup for Joy Luck. I'm going to cook black sesame-seed soup" (Tan 7). Food is a means of connection to one's own ethnic group and maintenance of one's cultural identity. It is such an important aspect of Chinese culture. Thus, Tan's novel does not fail to show a good representation of the Chinese culture from this angle. Moreover, the author portrays Chinese women as women who still enjoy the little things despite the tragedies and not "sit and wait for [their] own deaths with proper somber faces" (Tan 12). The protagonist mother says:

So, we decided to hold parties and pretend each week had become the new year. Each week we could forget past wrongs done to us. We weren't allowed to think a bad thought. We feasted, we laughed, we played games, lost and won, we told the best stories. And each week, we could hope to be lucky. That hope was our only joy. And that's how we came to call our little parties Joy Luck. (Tan 12)

On the other hand, the novel focuses on and articulates the negative aspects of Chinese culture, whereas it only points out positive aspects about America as the best refuge. Every mother's past story in China is a tragedy. The work invites readers to stereotype the Chinese as a cruel, oppressive, sexist, negative, and inhumane people. The negative culture is what causes the mothers' tragedies. Lindo was obliged by her own mother to marry a 10 years old boy she never knew before the wedding. After the wedding, her mother-in-law mistreats her, as she did not have a baby with her son who is too young to be a husband. Yingying was married to a husband who has no ties with loyalty, which causes her mental instability that leads her to kill her baby. Another woman whose tragedy influenced her child is An Mei's mother. This latter's mother threw her out of the family because she was raped. Consequently, she made her own daughter live in her misery by marrying the rapist and committing suicide at the end. However, the mothers' experiences in America seem to be all positive. The United States was their refuge from oppression, and the only place where they could provide their daughters with comfort.

In addition, the Chinese culture the mothers brought and carried with them seems to be the only reason for which they had conflicts with their daughters. In his article, "Constructing the Other: A Critical Reading of *The Joy Luck Club*", which is a criticism of the movie that has the same plot as the novel, Jing Yin points out that it "constructed the mothers as the carriers of the negative Other, Chinese culture, who would pollute the positive Self" (14). This misrepresentation of China renders Amy Tan another author who celebrates the West.

While some immigrant authors like Bharati Mukherjee and Amy Tan are claimed to fall for misrepresentation, others like Mahbod Seraji are believed to have taken a big step towards the perfect representation. Mahbod Seraji is an Iranian-American writer who sought to break the stereotypical ideas that Iranian men, especially Muslims, are terrorists, evil, violent, and sexually deviant men. In his novel, *Rooftops of Tehran* (2009), Seraji tells the story of Pasha, a seventeen-year-old boy who lives on the rooftop of a middle-class family house, and who falls in love with Zari, a next-door neighbor and his friend's fiancée, but never admits it as a matter of loyalty to his friend. After his friend's death, Pasha admits his love to Zari, and the latter reciprocates; nevertheless, insists that Pasha should not let his feelings for her interfere with his plans to become a filmmaker in the United States.

One of the ways with which Seraji attempted to break down the stereotypes is "introducing the missing element of romance and spiritual love in Iranian male-female relationships" (Fotouhi 212). Pasha's protection of Zari, their near kiss on the rooftop, Pasha's temporary insanity, as he thinks of losing her, and many more, are all humane emotions and actions that turn down the "violent, sexually deviant Iranians" stereotypes. Another way of proving the stereotypes wrong is "humor". In her article, "The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Islamic Revolution", Goulia Ghardash khani points out that "Humor, both as a style of narration and in performative art (e.g. in stand-up comedies), comes to be highlighted as a mode of resistance challenging the power structures that pinpoint the image of the Middle Eastern man as terrorist and essentially evil" (4). All along the novel, there are many scenes where the characters' sense of humor is present, especially Pasha and his friend Ahmed. One of those is when Iraj keeps staring at Ahmed's sister:

"stop looking at her or I'll break my pledge to the sacred brotherhood of the boxing fraternity."

"Sacred brotherhood of the boxing fraternity?" I whisper under my breath with a smile.

“Brotherhood and fraternity mean the same thing. You shouldn’t use them in the same sentence.”

“Oh, you shut up.” Ahmed laughs. (Seraji 13-4)

The Islam revolution did not only widen the East/West, or Iran/West dichotomies, but also created contradictions between Iranians themselves. In this concern, Edward Said claims in his article “*Orientalism*” that the “modern Orient... participates in its own Orientalizing” (325). Consequently, male Iranian authors, like Mahbod Seraji, made and are still making contributions to literature to gain universal recognition, the thing which they succeeded at doing to a great extent.

To conclude, Immigrant literature is the type of literature that is usually written by immigrants about their immigration experiences and dislocation. While nostalgia to the homeland and the will to integrate in the host country gets some writers to, consciously or unconsciously, produce contradictory works which put them in the category of misrepresentatives, such as Bharati Mukherjee and Amy Tan, others like Mahbod Seraji manage to receive little criticism about their representations, for they avoid stereotypical descriptions as much as possible.

In order to achieve a deep understanding of immigrant writers’ representation of their ancestral homelands, Khaled Hosseini’s representation of his own homeland, Afghanistan, in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is going to be analyzed. This thesis will offer an analysis of the author’s contradictory descriptions, studying each notion in relation to his dislocation. The following chapter is dedicated to reveal Khaled Hosseini’s contradiction in his portrayal of Afghan Male Women and their celebration of the ethnic markers.

Chapter Two: Analyzing Hosseini's Representation of Afghan men and women besides his celebration of cultural markers

The second chapter is an analytical one, it is divided into two parts. It is devoted to the analysis of Khaled Hosseini's contradictory representation of his ancestral homeland. The first section focuses on the writer's portrayal of Afghan men and women through the main characters. Furthermore, the second section analyzes the celebration of cultural markers all along the novel.

II.1. The Portrayal of Afghan Men and Women in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

The events that occur in countries during the colonial period and afterwards prompt the writers to write a type of literature that denounces the terrible consequences that colonialism leaves on the ancestral homelands, this type of literature is called "post-colonial literature". Khaled Hosseini is one of the most famous writers who contributed to Post-colonial literature; he is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. He spent his first eight years in Afghanistan, the country he later left with his family seeking political protection in the United States, where he was taught, received a medical degree, and turned to writing. The writer is best-known for his three novels *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). The two first works are the author's most criticized ones for the way they represent Afghanistan and Afghan people.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a fascinating novel that tells the story of Mariam and Laila. Two Afghan women who by chance find themselves living under the same roof, married to the same abusive man, Rasheed. The novel begins by telling the story of Mariam, the illegitimate child of Nana and Jalil. Mariam lives with her mother in a lonely place outside of Herat, a small city in Afghanistan. While her mother was a harsh woman with a temper, Jalil, her father, was

a cheerful man who visited her once a week carrying so much love, affection, and gifts. He is Mariam's window; through which she sees the world outside her little house, and she loves him very much for that. However, according to Nana, Jalil is nothing but a liar. A liar who abandons her when she is carrying his child, and she makes sure Mariam is reminded of that. On her fifteenth birthday, Mariam is devastated that her father did not appear as he promised, so, she so courageously goes to find him. Her father being a wealthy popular man, it is easy for her to find his house, but he refuses to let her in. After spending the night in front of his door, Mariam eventually comes back to her house, only to find that her mother had committed suicide because she thought that her daughter left her for a life with her father. A life with Jalil does happen ultimately, but is not as sweet as she always imagined, now that she knows the ugly truth about him alongside losing the only person who cared for her. Moreover, Jalil forces her to marry Rasheed, a widowed shoemaker from Kabul who is twice her age. Rasheed treats her decently at the beginning, but after she suffers multiple miscarriages, he starts to show his abusive side. Laila on the other side is just a little girl who lives on the same street as Mariam and Rasheed. She is very bright and beautiful and she spends most of her time with either her father, or her best friend Tariq. Laila has two older brother who die while doing *Jihad* during the soviet invasion, which makes her relationship with her mother unstable due to her sorrow for her sons. A few years later, war reaches Kabul and living conditions worsen day after day, therefore, leaving becomes necessary. Tariq's family is the first to decide to leave. Consequently, Laila and Tariq admit that they are in love and engage in a sexual intercourse. Laila's parents decide to leave Afghanistan as well, but while they pack, a rocket hits their house, killing both of them and injuring her. When she wakes up, she finds herself in Mariam and Rasheed's house. Receiving a news that Tariq has lost his soul while finding out that she is carrying his child, Laila accepts Rasheed's offer of marriage. Mariam is threatened by Laila at the beginning and wants nothing to do with her, but after Laila gives birth to Aziza, the two

women form a bond through the child. After a few years, Laila gives birth to a son, Zalmai. Then one afternoon, when Rasheed is at work, she is surprised to see a man standing at her door; Tariq. Accordingly, Laila and Mariam realize that Rasheed hired a man to tell Laila about Tariq's untrue demise so she would not leave. Rasheed savagely beats Laila after he discovers Tariq has visited her. Therefore, Mariam kills Rasheed with a shovel to protect Laila. The next day, Mariam turns herself to the Taliban who execute her, in order to offer Laila a new life with Tariq and her children.

Patriarchal systems do prevent women from their slightest rights: love-marriages, freedom of choice, education, and many more. Consequently, writers, like Khaled Hosseini, tend to represent and speak for the oppressed women in their homelands in an intention to make their situations better by getting the world to hear their voices and making it easier for them to protest and speak for themselves. In his works, Khaled Hosseini speaks on behalf of all those oppressed women he met once he visited his homeland, those whose daily lives are a real struggle due to the Taliban's restrictions on women and the patriarchal community that they live in. Those women are the women about whom the author writes. In her article "A Thousand Splendid Suns: Sanctuary and Resistance", Rebecca A. Stuhr argues that "Hosseini's women, much like the country of Afghanistan itself, appear to be propelled by the whims of outside forces, familial and societal, with little chance of influencing their own lives and futures" (53). Through the characters of Mariam and Laila, Khaled Hosseini depicts the hardships that Afghan women encounter in a country like Afghanistan, which witnessed many attacks and invasions. They cannot choose their own destinies because of their inferior position in the society. According to the writer, Afghan women are not treated as humans, but objects, or rather personal properties to men with which they can do whatever they wish. Rasheed, for instance, says: "a woman's face is her husband's business" (47). Even their faces, which are parts of their own bodies, are not something they have the choice over.

The representation of the oppressed Afghan women and the sufferings they face because of their male counterpart; the sexist Afghan men seems to be Hosseini's chief concern. Nevertheless, those representations happen to be contradictory and exaggerated, reinforcing stereotypical, Orientalized, and negative views about the Orient. Dislocation causes immigrant authors to face a dilemma of belonging which results in an ambivalent type of literature. In-betweenness puts them in a state of confusion, which is reflected in their works. In other words, trapped between the will to represent the ancestral homeland and the will to integrate in the host culture, novelists produce contradictory works which reflect both their nostalgia for a home once left behind, and another of new opportunities. Khaled Hosseini as an American citizen seems to have developed an identity which is highly influenced by the West. His ideologies are much closer to the West rather than the East, this results in his adoption of the Western stereotypes about Afghanistan. Being integrated enough in the Western World, the writer draws an image about his ancestral homeland which is based on the false Western assumptions and is far from giving a clear and real view about it. In fact, Orientalist representations of the Orient as the "Other" are not realistic, but rather imaginative representations based on Western anxieties showing no faithfulness to the truth (Said 272-3).

The writer's novels are believed to be orientalist, because they meet Orientalism in many points. *A thousand Splendid Suns'* author portrays Afghan women as oppressed, voiceless, victimized, uneducated, and domestic, women whose only weapon against oppression and violence is "*tahamul*, Endure" (18). As Mariam confesses a will to get educated, her mother answers: "There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school" (17), "Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure" (18) she adds. Then she insists: "It's our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It's all we have. Do you understand?" (18). Third World Women being presented as defenseless victims is a stereotype that orientalists tend to emphasize, the thing that Khaled Hosseini contributed

to. Even if unconsciously, the Afghan-born writer contributes to a great extent to the phenomenon of Orientalism, which in turn contributes greatly to destroying the image of the East. Bertens points out:

For Said, Western representations of the Orient, no matter how well intentioned, have always been part of this damaging discourse. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have always been complicit with the workings of Western power. Even those Orientalists who are clearly in sympathy with Oriental peoples and their cultures — and Said finds a substantial number of them — cannot overcome their Eurocentric perspective and have unintentionally contributed to Western domination. (204)

Representing the Orient is not necessarily an intentional attempt to belittle it. It may be an attempt to show sympathy and support towards people who suffer all kinds of violence, be it physical, sexual or psychological. However, it is not easy to transcend the ideas and beliefs firmly rooted in one's mind, which causes writers to deviate from the intended path and unconsciously glorify the West at the expense of the East.

Most of Hosseini's passages show passivity and a lack of freedom when it comes to Afghan women, the thing which might not be forcibly wrong, but still exaggerated. For instance, "[i]n Afghanistan there are some women, in a city in eastern Afghanistan called Khost, where women are in higher positions in their clans. They wear 'male' clothes and act 'manly'" (qtd. in Hansson and Henriksson, 24). Nevertheless, the writer insists on portraying all Afghan women as oppressed and passive.

The depiction of the Afghan woman as passive, oppressed, and victimized parallels the portrayal of the Afghan man as barbaric, sexually attracted, violent, and uncivilized. Hosseini's men are portrayed as violent pervert men from whom their wives are afraid. Rasheed portrays a prominent oriental figure. His married behavior and that of all those Oriental-portrayed

figures in the novel is shown in a way that indicates that Afghan men are uncivilized and perverts. The reason why Mariam refuses to marry Rasheed at first is the fear from the physical relation which her mother instills in her, “It was the thought of these intimacies in particular, which she imagined as painful acts of perversity, that filled her with dread and made her break out in a sweat” (53). Even after they got married and Rasheed was kind enough to her leaving her time to get used to being a wife, she did not cease to think about the moment “Rasheed might at last decide to do to her what husbands did to their wives” (67). Western couples’ physical relation is always described in association with passion and pleasure, whereas that of Middle Eastern ones is often associated with violence. This dichotomy has to do with men, as romantic in the case of the Western, and fundamentally violent when it comes to the Eastern. Furthermore, through Rasheed, Afghan men are also regarded as men who only consider their wives as baby-making machines and who are only proud to have boys. As Mariam loses many babies because of health complications, Rasheed becomes a completely different person to her. He mistreats her and no longer considers her as a wife. However, once he gets married to another woman, Laila, and knows she is pregnant, he gives her many privileges. The privileges Rasheed gives her are soon taken away when he learns that the baby is a girl. The sexist man overlooks the fact that the baby is not his, hoping for a boy, but once the girl was born, he showed her no love or mercy. Moreover, his “big, square, ruddy face”, “hooked nose”, “flushed cheeks that gave the impression of sly cheerfulness”, “watery, bloodshot eyes”, and “crowded teeth” (57) in addition to his nails which are “yellow-brown, like the inside of a rotting apple (57), and “smoky breath” (63) are regarded as an unattractive characteristic of the Orient. The way Khaled Hosseini describes this character is eerily similar to the descriptions produced by Westerners about the Orient. Eastern men are described as inferior not only in their ideologies, but also in their looks.

Non-patriarchal figures are also present in Khaled Hosseini's plot, the most prominent of which, is Hakim. Laila's father is someone who is educated and to whom his daughter's education matters, he thinks that "a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated" (118). The positive healthy atmosphere he provides his daughter, helps her get through life hardships, namely the patriarchal community she lives in and the misfortunes that the country witnesses in war times. Nevertheless, he is seen as an odd figure in his community. Hakim and similar men to him are seen as "soft men" (75) who by giving their women freedom, "think they're being modern men, intellectuals, on account of their education" (75). In fact, Khaled Hosseini kills this character in the novel before reaching its half; he kills one of the very few men who are against patriarchy. After he kills the symbol of civilization, he gets his daughter to live in patriarchy, like every other woman in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The murder of this man symbolizes that civilized men stand no chance in Afghanistan; they are not welcome in a country where patriarchy reigns. Remarkably, the author emphasizes that his ancestral homeland is not one where intellectual men belong.

Finally, instead of producing a work which reduces or beats stereotypes about both Afghan genders, Khaled Hosseini produced a contradictory one which reinforces those stereotypes. His descriptions of Laila and Mariam's daily life with Rasheed makes Western readers perceive Afghan women as passive in front of their men's violence. These descriptions are not the only contradictory aspect in the novel, the celebration of cultural markers is another aspect on which the light should be shed.

II.2. Celebration of Cultural Markers in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Celebrating the native culture has always been significant in immigration literature. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is one literary invention that contains several markers which praise the Afghan community. Through this novel, Hosseini first introduces to the reader an

Afghanistan that existed before wars and invasions. He describes it as a country that is rich of culture and beauty. Hosseini celebrates the fact that his ancestral homeland was not a place of war as it is now, but it was a place of arts and science, and the birth of many writers and poets. As it is described in the passage where Jalil, Mariam's father, is recounting stories to her when she was little:

Like the time he told her that Herat, the city where Mariam was born, in 1956, had once been the cradle of Persian culture, the home of writers, painters, and Sufis. "You couldn't stretch a leg here without poking a poet in the ass", he laughed...He described to her the green wheat fields of Herat, the orchards, the vines pregnant with plump grapes, the city's crowded vaulted bazaars. (4-5)

Hosseini attempts to show the glory of his country through these rich descriptions. The charming history lessons also continue in another scene where Babi, Laila's father, teaches her afghan poetry and history (109). It is seen that he strives to portray a beautiful picture for Afghanistan, that it was much more than battle fields and blood loss.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a novel that takes place in Afghanistan but it is originally written in English. When going through it, it can be noticed that Hosseini sometimes uses words in Dari which is one of the official languages in Afghanistan. It is Khaled Hosseini's 'thing' to use his mother tongue language throughout his novels when he attempts to deliver powerful meanings to the reader. Alongside many other words, *Nang* and *Namoos*, honor and pride, are two words which noticeably appeared not only in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, but also *The Kite Runner*. Hosseini could have used the English version of the words, however, he purposely put them in Dari, because the reader could only feel their weight in the Afghan culture if they were in that language, "Sometimes they even put their feet in front of me, the women do, for measurements, and their husbands stand there and watch . . . They don't see that they're

spoiling their own *nang* and *namoos*, their honor and pride” (70). As an immigrant writer, he constantly struggles to prove how much he honors his ancestral homeland by showing that even though he uses English for his writings, his language of origin is still irreplaceable.

As an immigrant in the USA, Hosseini is aware that the concept of family in his host culture differs from what it is in the Afghan culture. The common values of family in the USA mostly encourage individualism and personal independence. Children usually leave households after graduation and are responsible for their own selves, without the help of their parents, while family members in the Afghan culture are connected. Barbara Robson and Juliene Lipson with Farid Younos and Mariam Mehdi assert in their paper “The Afghans, Their History, and Culture”:

A key difference between Afghan and mainstream American cultures is that the latter stresses the independence of the individual while the former emphasizes the individual’s dependence on the family. "In Afghanistan, life doesn't belong to just one person," an Afghan commented. "Every decision is connected to the family – we are all tied together." (25)

For that reason, Hosseini celebrates the theme of family in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, as an attempt to show that family in Afghanistan is the most precious thing one can possess. Even if it sometimes felt like a burden, it was still worth carrying.

Mother-daughter relationship is one of many examples that Hosseini depicts significantly in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to show the value of family. It is portrayed first by Mariam and her mother Nana, who live alone in the outskirts of Gul Daman, just a few kilometers away from the big city of Herat. Mariam is the illegitimate child of Nana and Jalil. When her mother’s belly starts swelling, Jalil kicks her out of his house as his wives request to. Nana is a woman who has seen nothing but rejection throughout her life. When she is only

17, her fiancée leaves her a few days before the wedding because of an epileptic disease she is suffering from. Afterwards, her father leaves forever after he hears that she is carrying an illegitimate child. Jalil sees Nana and their daughter as a crime that he so recklessly commits and that needs to be hidden. Therefore, he buries the human evidence that is his daughter, in an isolated cottage that Nana called a “rathole” (9). Nana never received reassurance, thus, never gives it to her daughter. But that does not mean she hates her child, she loves her dearly. However, Mariam is all she had left, and she could not bear the idea that she might one day leave her for a new life with her father. Therefore, her life purpose is to make Mariam stay with her no matter what. Even if that means pushing her to see the ugly truth about the man she very much loves. Although Nana is harsh to her daughter most of the time, they do enjoy their time together. She taught her how to cook and be self-reliant, as Hosseini describes their routine:

Mariam and Nana milked the goats, fed the hens, and collected eggs. They made bread together. Nana showed her how to knead dough, how to kindle the tandoor and slap the flattened dough into its inner walls. Nana taught her to sew too, and to cook rice and all the different toppings: *shalqam* stew with turnip, spinach *sabzi*, cauliflower with ginger.

(15)

The portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship between Nana and Mariam is the strongest in the novel, in fact, it is what determines almost the rest of the whole story. Despite the fact that Nana was not the perfect mother one can wish for, she gave up a life of her own to protect Mariam. Through their relationship, Hosseini shows that family in the Afghan culture is sacred. Family members are inseparable, once one is born into a family, s/he is tied to the other members forever. This is confirmed in the novel when Nana ended her own life when she thought that Mariam abandoned her to live with Jalil.

Mother sacrifice is not unfamiliar in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. While Nana chooses death over a life without her daughter, Fariba or Mammy, Laila's mother, can barely stand to be alive when her two boys Ahmed and Noor, lose their young souls while doing *Jihad*. Life as a whole, is not meaningful anymore to her, "Mammy lay in bed most days. She wore black. She picked at her hair and gnawed on the mole below her lip...as if she would run into the boys sooner or later if she just kept walking into the room where they had once slept" (139). Mammy dedicates what remains of her life to her sons, even after their death. As war grew more dangerous, her husband, Babi, suggests leaving Afghanistan, however, she is determined to stay in the land that her sons died for, "Leaving Afghanistan had been unthinkable to her while Ahmad and Noor were still alive. Now that they were *Shaheed*, packing up and running was a betrayal, a disavowal of the sacrifice her sons had made" (149).

A Thousand Splendid Suns, is very considerable of mothers' unconditional love. Hosseini demonstrates through his character, Fariba, that the Afghan mother's love can deeply grow that it starts hurting other people in her family. In order to honor her sons, she loses a relationship with her daughter Laila who longs for the mother-daughter bond since her brothers' leaving. The commitment to the family is significant to the characters of this novel, it is crucial to the point where it starts to seem unfair to other characters who deserve the same dedication and sacrifice. Hosseini seeks to celebrate his Afghan culture through different aspects and characters in his novel, yet, the reader may also understand through Fariba's character that sons matter more than daughters in the Afghan culture.

Khaled Hosseini's efforts to portray a positive picture about his birth country Afghanistan are undeniable. However, as an immigrant writer, one may argue that his novel falsifies the truth to some extent, which is a trap some immigrant writers may fall into as a result of their attachment to their host culture. Bouallegue uses the Vietnamese-American Writer Le Ly Hayslip to discuss the idea of immigrant writers who misrepresent their native

culture. Bouallegue argues that, “[p]eople who carry two cultures have to consider both sides, since cultures differ between East and West” (16). Hosseini’s attempt to write a hybrid type of literature to satisfy both his Afghan and American cultures resulted in what one would say, ‘exaggeration’ in describing the negative aspects of the Afghan culture and life in general.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini directly points to the Afghan culture, as a culture of murder and cruelty. It is described through the character of Nana, who tells her daughter that it was better for her father to kill her, after knowing she was carrying an illegitimate child:

‘Sometimes,’ Nana said early one morning, as she was feeding the chickens outside the *kolba*, ‘I wish my father had had the stomach to sharpen one of his knives and do the honorable thing. It might have been better for me’ ... ‘But he was a coward, my father. He didn’t have the *dil*, the heart, for it’. (6-7)

Hosseini describes the act of killing as something that is not only common, but also honorable in the Afghan culture. He pictures that all men ascertain their masculine authority through their right to end a woman’s life if she committed a mistake. Moreover, he portrays a strong picture to the reader that murder is justified in Afghanistan. Accordingly, Hosseini shows that he has an obvious preference for western culture through reinforcing stereotypes of Afghan men.

Khaled Hosseini is an incredible story teller who mastered the art of changing the chaos inside his head into thoughts on paper. Sadly, he used his extraordinary talent to unleash a barbaric picture of the land he was born and raised in out in the world. As it was said earlier, an immigrant writer is someone who may misrepresent his/her homeland either intentionally or unintentionally depending on the amount of influence his/her host land has upon him/her. Hosseini delivers conscious and clear bias to his western culture through many passages throughout his novels. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hakim tells his wife Fariba, when he was

trying to convince her to leave Afghanistan, “‘Fariba, all these people know is war,’ said Babi ‘they learned to walk with a milk bottle in one hand and a gun in the other’” (177). The amount of violence Afghanistan had witnessed over the past decades is undeniable, however, there is a huge difference between describing a place as violent and assert that its violence is inherent. Hosseini represents his people as cruel, irrational, murderers who know nothing but war. Furthermore, he confirms the stereotypical image the Americans have on Afghans.

Many passages in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, emphasize Hosseini’s will to erase cultural and religious markers in the Afghan culture. He attempts to show similarities between American females who are liberal and free from any societal boundaries, and Afghan females who seek to be free but are limited by cultural rules imposed on them. Laila does not feel the joy any pregnant woman would experience when she finds out she will have a child, in fact, out of hate for her husband, she chooses abortion. However, she cannot bring herself to murder her unborn child because the world around her consisted of enough murderers and she:

“could not accept what the Mujahideen readily had: that sometimes in war innocent life had to be taken. Her war was against Rasheed. The baby was blameless and there had been enough killing already. Laila had seen enough killing of innocents caught in the cross fire of enemies”. (Hosseini277)

Allison Mader comments that the author of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* succeeded in getting the Western readers to sympathize and relate to the characters because “The characters in Hosseini’s novel with whom the reader is asked to identify are not different in a way that will unsettle the reader. Only the novel’s evil characters are represented as different” (83). Accordingly, the authors’ ambition to gain the compassion of American women towards Afghan women is clearly stated in the normalization of the concept of abortion in the Afghan society.

To conclude with, Khaled Hosseini is indeed one of the most criticized immigrant authors who is accused of misrepresenting his ancestral homeland. His novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* contains direct and indirect misrepresentation of Afghan males who are pictured as cruel, barbaric men, with nothing but a need to control their women. And women who are passive and submissive to men, inside and outside their households. Moreover, though he celebrates his Afghan culture between lines, Hosseini does not only wrench the picture of his people, but also his whole country Afghanistan.

Chapter Three: The Analysis of the Portrayal of Religion and Historical Timeline in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

The third chapter is an analytical one; it aims at analyzing the portrayal of religion and historical timeline in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. This chapter offers more insights into Hosseini's representation of his native land. It is mainly divided into two sections. While the first section aims at analyzing the representations and misrepresentations of religion in the novel, the second one is concerned with analyzing how the writer represented the historical timeline of Afghanistan.

III.1. Portrayal of Religion in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Descriptions of religion have been the most controversial descriptions in human history, namely those of Islam and the Muslim world. Misinformation in most Western media promotes stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, which leads to arousing doubt, suspicion, and fear in the hearts of the West, and creates reasons for alienation from everything related to the Islamic religion. In this regard, Edward Said states: "both the electronic and print media have been awash with demeaning stereotypes that lump together Islam and terrorism, or Arabs and violence, or the Orient and tyranny" (407). Consequently, literary Western descriptions sometimes come up to be negative, reinforcing stereotypical ideas about Islam, due to Islamophobia and trauma. According to Mader Allison, "[w]estern representations of the Muslim world have evolved ..., yet only within a prescribed matrix of bad behavior" (45). The problem of distorting the image of Islam and Muslims as terrorist and violent has intensified with the different events that the world witnessed, among which one can mention: The Arab Spring revolutions, sectarian conflicts, and the 9/11 attacks. The creation of offensive stereotypes of Islam and Muslims and their consolidation in the Western mind is an old and renewed phenomenon, as Islam has been subjected to abuse and distortion since ancient times.

Indeed, it is still the most abused, distorted, and insulted religion in Western societies, because Islam represents a very dangerous civilizational challenge for the West. Thus, Muslim writers found it necessary to spread the true image of Islam, yet these defensive representations might deviate from their intended path.

Religion is another aspect that Khaled Hosseini tackles in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, yet it is also another contradictory one. In the first half of the novel, which recounts Mariam's traumatizing childhood before the arrival of the Taliban, readers are introduced to Mullah Faizullah as "Mariam's favorite, other than Jalil" (17). Hosseini created this religious figure to deny those stereotypes that the media propagates about the Islam that it is a religion of terrorism, violence, and patriarchy. While the Mariam's closest people: Nana, Jalil, and later on Rasheed rejected her, Mullah Faizullah played a big role in her life. The elderly village Koran tutor was the kindest, most supportive, and most honest person to her during his religious teaching and even afterwards; "[i]t was Mullah Faizullah who had held her hand, guided the pencil in it along the rise of each *alef*, the curve of each *beh*, the three dots of each *seh*" (18). Mullah Faizullah even "[taught] Mariam the five daily *namaz* prayers and [tutored] her in Koran recitation" (18). Through this character, Hosseini emphasizes that Islam is a peaceful religion, which neither justifies violence nor encourages it, and which does not discriminate people based on their gender.

Interestingly, in addition to Ramadan and prayer, the author depicted one of the greatest rituals of Islam, which is Eid-ul-fitr. El-Eidis depicted in Hosseini's novel as the occasion when relatives and loved ones gather, no matter how busy they are throughout the year. Indeed, Hosseini did not fail to give a good image of this occasion. Each Eid "Jalil would visit Mariam and Nana. Dressed in suit and tie, he would come bearing Eid presents" and Mullah Faizullah "would come too. He would bring Mariam chocolate candy wrapped in foil, a basketful of dyed

boiled eggs, [and] cookies” (83). Similarly, or even better, Mariam spent the Eid with her husband Rasheed:

They went to Shar-e-Nau, where kids romped about in new shirts and beaded, brightly colored vests and compared Eid gifts. Women brandished platters of sweets. Mariam saw festive lanterns hanging from shop windows, heard music blaring from loudspeakers”, even strangers who do not know her “called out *"Eid mubarak"* to her as they passed. (84-5)

Nevertheless, Hosseini, later on in the novel, replaces the peaceful image of Islam by a terrorizing one when it comes to the extremism of the Taliban. The writer depicts the Afghan life after the arrival of the Taliban as an extremely miserable one, as the Taliban set many rules that limit the Afghan people’s daily life, especially women. The message that includes those rules is played in every possible way: loudspeakers, the radio, and even flyers tossed into the streets (269). The message starts with this statement: “Our watan is now known as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. These are the laws that we will enforce and you will obey” and a long list of laws followed threatening men and women alike (269). However, what “[a]ll [men] had to do was grow a beard, which [they] did, and visit the mosque, which [they] also did” (272), whereas women’s freedom was limited, they had to be “accompanied by a mahram, a male relative” whenever they go out (270). They also were not allowed to work, which made the situation very difficult on widow women who had to put their children in orphanages, because they could not afford to feed them. Actually, “Mariam heard of a neighborhood widow who had ground some dried bread, laced it with rat poison, and fed it to all seven of her children. She had saved the biggest portion for herself” (294-5). The violation of women rights and preventing them from work to feed their families is not the Taliban’s only fault one can trace here, but also the collapse of the economy and the standard of living of individuals during their period of rule. Even Rasheed, whose financial situation was good enough, is drowned in debts

and ends up facing difficulties to feed his wives and children, which makes him put his daughter, Aziza, in an orphanage.

Although Afghanistan has suffered at the hands of other oppressive invaders as the Russians and the Americans, Khaled Hosseini overlooks these past experiences and focuses exclusively on the Taliban's rule. In this concern, Mader Allison points out that "[i]t should be underscored ... that the novel ... at times misrepresents or oversimplifies the conditions that cultivated the Taliban, and does not explore Western involvement with as much scrutiny" (156). Hosseini's descriptions of the Taliban occupation seem to be more precise and harsher than those of foreign occupations. Remarkably, he presents the Afghan man as a fundamentally violent man by asserting that the Taliban is composed of young Afghans who, despite their violence, are seen as "pure and incorruptible" (266) by Afghan men like Rasheed who are considered as not less violent for not finding anything wrong with them. For these facts, Allison believes that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* "provides an image of a fundamentally violent nation" (73). The depictions of Afghan men as violent hints that the external interventions are not the ones who brought violence and instability in the nation and that the country is already violent. Besides, these external interventions are depicted as less brutal than the domestic rule. In this concern, Coeli Fitzpatrick finds that "[t]here are few things Hosseini portrays more positively in Afghanistan than foreign occupations, which for all their 'errors' are never as bad as indigenous rule" (qtd. in Allison 71). By lumping together violence, Afghanistan, and Islam in addition to showing that the West gave more freedom to the Afghan people during its invasions, Hosseini is believed to support the West's use of civilization as a pretext to colonize nations. Moreover, although Laila's father witnesses the Soviet occupation when the country is seriously unstable, Laila still thinks that witnessing the Taliban rule "would have crippled him" (271). The Islamic rule is depicted as the worst that the country has ever experienced.

The Taliban was not the only Islamic faction that Afghanistan witnessed, nor it is the only faction that Khaled Hosseini insisted on showing as one of the worst factions and occupations that have passed in the history of Afghanistan, the Mujahideen also are shown in the novel as violent and ruthless people whose religion incites them to unjustly shed blood:

Morning brought no relief. The muezzin's call for *namaz* rang out, and the Mujahideen set down their guns, faced west, and prayed. Then the rugs were folded, the guns loaded, and the mountains fired on Kabul, and Kabul fired back at the mountains, as Laila and the rest of the city watched as helpless as old Santiago watching the sharks take bites out of his prize fish. (180)

Through the portrayal of the Mujahideen praying before carrying weapons and starting the daily process of killing people, Khaled Hosseini shows a terrible picture of Islam as a religion that calls and incites violence and murder. Defending the Taliban, Rasheed tells Laila: “Do you know how many people the Mujahideen killed in Kabul alone these last four years? Fifty thousand *Fifty thousand!* Is it so insensible, by comparison, to chop the hands off a few thieves? Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. It's in the Koran” (273). The Mujahideen, in their struggle for power, ended up causing a bloody civil war in the country, the thing which Islam does not accept or justify. According to the MS. Magazine, “[t]he mujahideen fought amongst themselves over control of the country. During this civil war, more Afghans were killed, cities were destroyed, and women suffered human rights violations” (Sima Samar). Killing one’s own brothers unjustly for the sake of power is not a characteristic of Muslims, yet Khaled Hosseini chose a part of one of the verses of the Quran that pray for justice, “eye for an eye ... tooth for a tooth”, and misplaced it in this context, making it seem like a justification for brutality. A non-Muslim reader reading this passage might assume Islam is a violent religion that encourages people to strip themselves off mercy and forgiveness, which is not truthful.

In fact, Khaled Hosseini tends to misrepresent everything which is related to Islam. The veil or burqa, which are considered as symbols of Islam, are presented “as visual proxy for women’s oppression” (Allison 73). In other words, a veiled woman equals an oppressed one. Women in the novel have no choice or personal will over wearing the burqa; both Mariam and Laila do not even know how to wear it once they are obliged to. Moreover, for both of them, wearing it precedes a life in which they have no freedom, but oppression. In this regard, Zempi points out that “[w]ithin the Orientalist framework, the veiled female body became the symbol for Islam. Essentially, the wearing of the veil was seen as evidence of the subjugation of women in Islam based on the premise that women were forced to wear the veil by Muslim men” (8). Instead of creating Muslim women characters who proudly wear their veils, Hosseini preferred to follow the orientalist stereotypes about the veiled Muslim women, and seems to involve no woman in his novel who was not obliged to wear it or one who is veiled and free at the same time. In contrast to Rasheed’s wives who grudgingly wear the burqa, Fariba who is the wife of an intellectual whose ideologies are not much far from the Western and who is free to live her life the way she wants, walks in “the streets alone with nothing on her head but a scarf” (75). Whatsoever, about the portrayal of Third World Women in the American fashion magazines, argues that they represent them “as forced to wear a veil or burqa and [portray] their own national American women as the ideal. Veiled women are portrayed as a uniformly oppressed, unhappy, passive and primitive group that is something the West should feel pity towards” (qtd. in Hansson and Henriksson 8). Muslim women are always perceived as inferior to the Western women, especially veiled ones, because the veil is seen as a limitation of these women’s freedom and something which determines their inferiority. The Muslim woman being portrayed as the oppressed “Other” of the ideal Western woman is one of the representations that the West cherishes. Remarkably, the author’s descriptions of his female characters made him contribute to widening the gap between “Us” and the “Other”.

To sum up, Khaled Hosseini's representations of religion are highly controversial. On the one hand, his portrayal of Mullah Faizullah does not match the pure religious man's characteristics: kind, wise, charitable, and helpful. On the other hand, the way he represents the Islamic rule as a corrupt one and the women's veil as an indicator of oppression is a misrepresentation of Islam. The reason why Hosseini happened to make such contradictory descriptions stems from the Western influence on his ideas and beliefs. This influence is the same reason that made the writer misrepresent Afghanistan's historical timeline.

III.2. Afghanistan's Historical Timeline in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

A Thousand Splendid Suns is considered as historical and war fiction written by the Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. The plot of the story is linked to several non-fictional historical events that Afghanistan had gone through: prior to the establishment of the Republic of Afghanistan and following 9/11 attacks. Hosseini's novel is set in 1964, when King Zahir Shah is the ruler of the country which currently maintained stability and order (11). In 1973, King Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin Daoud Khan, as Hosseini depicts in the novel, "His cousin Douad Khan did it while the king was in Italy getting medical treatment...Anyway, Afghanistan is no longer monarchy, Mariam. You see, it's a republic now. And Douad Khan is the president" (23). Hosseini divides the plotline of the story into a prewar and postwar Afghanistan, by setting the Soviet invasion in 1979 as the plot twist. He represents the first period as being peaceful, even after the fall of the monarchy, Hosseini states that Daoud Khan seizes power in a bloodless coup (23). On the other side, the second period is a mere chaos. The country witnessed several stages of war, each stage was defined by a fluctuating level of brutality.

The story of Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is "one invader after another" as was summarized by a taxi driver near the beginning of the book who made sure to thoroughly name them "Macedonians. Sassanians. Arabs. Mongols. Now the Soviets" (144). The latter's

invasion was marked in the book by the assassination of Daoud Khan in 1978 at the hands of Muhammad Taraki _the leader of the Afghan Communist Party_ which paved the way for communism as the country's doctrine. Hosseini's views of these Soviets were cleverly presented in the book as follows:

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

(113)

In this regard, Hosseini chose an abominated character, Shanzai, Laila's fanatic teacher who worships the Soviets to accentuate the Afghans' refusal of these invaders represented as America's number one nemesis. The Afghan-American writer used Shanzai as an agent that shares a largely unpopular opinion solely for the purpose of substantiating what would be considered as American views towards their eastern enemy.

In early 1980's, Hosseini first introduces *Jihad* to the reader as a rebel against the soviet invaders. Consequently, Afghans fled to Pakistan and Iran due to the increased dangers of the war. In the novel, Hosseini declares that the Mujahideen rose arms with the help of Americans in 1986, "Particularly now that the American president, Reagan, had started shipping the Mujahideen Stinger Missiles to down the Soviet helicopters" (114). Shortly after, the Soviets left Kabul after being defeated by the Mujahideen. Hosseini hands the victory of the Mujahideen to the help of the Americans. He briefly describes the American intervention as a moral act during this period, overlooking Britain's past colonial engagement in Afghanistan.

The expected peace after the Soviets' defeat never took place. After the glory, the Mujahideen had witnessed, Afghans did not know how to cope with the new reality; they are now free people, they had no enemy to defeat, no war to fight except the one within themselves. The situation was, as Hosseini had put it, that "The only enemy an Afghan cannot defeat is himself" (139) which is clearly an allusion to Afghans' violent nature. In this sense, the inability of the author's community to reach and maintain peace is noticeably implied. The latter suggestion is distinct in various levels throughout the novel, as shown in the following passage, "The Mujahideen, armed to the teeth but now lacking a common enemy, had found the enemy in each other" (176). This quote marks the beginning of a brutal and long-lasting civil war which eventually grew into a nationwide crisis when "fighting had broken out between the Mujahideen factions" (184) and the country was faced with debilitating decay.

The faction Hosseini speaks of is the Taliban; a group of young Pashtun men who were born and raised in refugee camps near Pakistan, they were taught Shari'a by mullahs (263). Moreover, The Taliban emerged in 1996 as a group who aims to bring justice to Afghanistan by applying the Shari'a law and abolishing the Mujahideen's rule. Hosseini dedicates a considerable portion of his novel to criticize both the Mujahideen and the Taliban, each in a different way. As previously stated, the Mujahideen first appeared in an attempt to rescue their country from the Soviets, yet, after prevailing their purpose, they initiated a new battle, this time against themselves. They are depicted in the novel as a merciless group of Afghans who killed an enormous number of innocent people:

The Mujahideen are. In plain daylight, at gunpoint. They drag boys right off the streets. And when soldiers from a rival militia capture these boys, they torture them. I heard they electrocute them-it's what I heard-that they crush their balls with pliers. They make the boys lead them to their homes. Then they break in, kill their fathers, rape their sisters and mothers." (246)

Apparently, the Mujahideen are pictured to be extremely savage in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, with no trace of positive side. Whereby the Taliban are shuffled between good and bad. Hosseini introduces them differently from the perspective of several characters. In a conversation between Laila and Rasheed about the Taliban, each character takes a contrasting opinion:

“They're savages,” Laila said.

“You think?” he said. “Compared to what? The Soviets killed a million people. Do you know how many people the Mujahideen killed in Kabul alone these last four years? Fifty thousand. Fifty thousand! Is it so insensible, by comparison, to chop the hands off a few thieves?”. (271)

At first, it might be seen that Hosseini is defending the Taliban through Rasheed. However, Rasheed is obviously stated as a villain in the whole story, he is a brutal man who tortures his wives. Readers are not meant to identify nor sympathies with him. Laila on the other side, is a woman warrior who is struggling to maintain a life for herself and her children. Accordingly, everything said by Rasheed is meant to be disagreed with, and the other way around with Laila. Thereby, Hosseini is stressing the idea that the Taliban are nothing but a reflection of Rasheed who is the most loathed character in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

One quarter away to the end of the novel, Hosseini first presents the American intervention in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. Hosseini's bias towards his western identity is plainly confirmed in this period. At the beginning of the novel, the Afghan-born American author names the invaders of Afghanistan as “Macedonians. Sassanians. Arabs. Mongols. Now the Soviets” (144). Americans in addition to the British appear to be absent from his list. When it comes to everything that has to do with his host country, America, Hosseini is understandably cautious. After George W. Bush declares war on Afghanistan, the news is presented in the

novel as being set on a TV screen with Tariq and Laila watching. Laila who does not speak English, only notices that “George W. Bush is speaking. There is a big American flag behind him. At one point, his voice wavers, and Laila thinks he is going to weep” (373). Accordingly, Hosseini’s vivid description of Bush’s announcement reveals the possibility of his aim to make the reader sympathize with him. Furthermore, he explains the American intervention as follow:

The Taliban have announced that they won't relinquish bin Laden because he is a *Mehman*, a guest, who has found sanctuary in Afghanistan and it is against the *Pashunwali* code of ethics to turn over a guest. Tariq chuckles bitterly, and Laila hears in his chuckle that he is revolted by this distortion of an honorable Pashtun custom, this misrepresentation of his people's ways. (373)

In this case, Hosseini states that the reason of the US involvement in Afghanistan is mainly linked to the Taliban’s refusal of turning in Bin Laden, thus, he insinuates that the war his ancestral home is suffering from till today primarily exists due to the Taliban provoking the US. In their article "Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns as a Child-Rescue and Neo-Orientalist Narrative" Abdullah Mohammad Dagamseh and Olga Golubeva state that “Hosseini rightly shows the harm done by the Mujahidin, Taliban, and the Soviet army. But in doing so, he also underrepresents the contributions of Western participants” (3). Between a homeland and a host land, Hosseini may be accused of showing preference to the latter as he seems to continually justify the long-lasting American involvement, without any sign of defense towards his people. Moreover, He depicts Tariq as being angry with the Taliban over their misrepresentation of the Pashtun. Ironically, Hosseini himself is a Pashtun who has not done his best to represent his own people.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a bestseller and an extremely popular book club selection which gained so much fame among western readers. When readers are introduced to this text,

they are likely to accept whatever it carries, since their common level of knowledge is primarily limited when it comes to political and global issues. Intentionally or not, Hosseini portrays a controversial vision of Afghanistan. After the Soviet invasion, Hosseini describes its brutality through different passages amongst his book. Moreover, he offers some positive aspects that came along with the soviet invasion; like the day Laila remembers when Babi told her that it was a good time to be a woman in Afghanistan during the communist rule (251), because women had more opportunities and freedoms. Hosseini uses Laila's memory of her father saying these words to express her grief for the days that will never come back, now that Afghanistan is under the Mujahideen rule. The author emphasizes the idea that Afghanistan under the Soviet rule was a better place than under the Mujahideen's. The situation of the country under the Taliban regime only got worst according to Hosseini. It worsened to the point where "Laila was glad, when the Taliban went to work, that Babi wasn't around to witness it. It would have crippled him" (269). In an earlier scene, when Babi was a live, he has a conversation with his daughter Laila that goes as follow:

"As much as I love this land, some days I think about leaving it," Babi said. "Where to?" said Laila. "Any place where it's easy to forget...it is a big world. Maybe America. Somewhere near the sea. Like California." Babi said the Americans were a generous people. They would help them with money and food for a while, until they could get on their feet. (153)

In this context, Babi, who is pictured by Hosseini as the most educated man in the whole novel, informs Laila that he regularly thinks about leaving Afghanistan for America, he further compliments Americans as being nice and helpful. Later in the novel, Laila asserts that her father would have been devastated by Afghanistan's situation under the Taliban regime if he was a live. It might be seen that Babi is a fictional reflection of Hosseini, who is siding with the west at the expense of his birth country. Hosseini's text supports the delusion of Western

superiority by supporting Western prejudices about the rest of the world, despite the fact that "Western civilization" is nothing more than ideological fiction typified by "detached superiority for a handful of ideals and ideas." (Said 349). Consequently, the western reader who does not have so much knowledge about Afghanistan, may form a pessimistic look based on Hosseini's narrative.

Near the end of the novel, Laila and Tariq move back to Kabul after immigrating to Pakistan because Laila could not bear life away. She admits that she cannot live in Pakistan even if it is more peaceful than Kabul because "This isn't home. Kabul is, and back there so much is happening, a lot of it good. I want to be a part of it all. I want to do something. I want to contribute" (379). This passage may carry Hosseini's sincere feelings towards his ancestral homeland since he himself is an immigrant. It might be explained that some parts of him still miss where he grew up and want to do something with what is happening there.

In April 2003, Hosseini presents the last image on Afghanistan in his novel. As He has put it, "The drought has ended. It snowed at last this past winter, knee-deep and now it has been raining for days. The Kabul River is flowing once again. Its spring floods have washed away Titanic City" (396). The vivid image Hosseini draws at the end of the novel might have been a positive addition if he did not link it to the post 9/11 attacks. Dagamseh and Golubeva state that "Hosseini gives the novel a happy ending, and even though the Mujahedeen and the Taliban tried very hard to destroy Laila's dream, the American invasion made it possible" (9). It is not coincidental that Kabul was dusty and grey all along the novel, and suddenly Hosseini states that the people "need Kabul to be green again" (396). It might seem that the author chose to trigger the Afghan's hope only during this exact period in order to give the reader the illusion that it is always America that gives hope. Therefore, the comment given by Tariq, the Pashtun character, about the declared war against Afghanistan by George W. Bush, summarizes it all when he says, "It may not be such a bad thing" (374).

In summary, religion takes center stage in terms of portrayal in the novel. Although Hosseini depicted the Mullahs to be good men unlike other Afghan men, he also elucidated the Islamic religion to be cruel. Furthermore, Afghanistan has a rich history that goes beyond 1964 unlike Hosseini had put it. The events of the story mostly begin in 1974 when the country was going through its darkest political phase. As an immigrant writer who is split between a country of origin and another that offered a new life outside the walls of war, Hosseini surely shows preference for the host country.

Conclusion

Immigrant literature is the literature in which immigrant writers find space to express the various experiences and feelings they endure in a country completely different from their ancestral homeland. This type of literature is not limited to the personal experiences of individuals, some writers also prefer to use writing to introduce their countries and draw the world's attention to them. Actually, Nostalgia for the homeland or for the ancestors' tales about this homeland prompts these writers to make of their works windows overlooking these countries, which makes them more of representations that must be up to the responsibility placed on them. Nevertheless, living in an environment quite different from that to which one originally belongs makes it difficult for the immigrant writer to achieve the ideal representation of his ancestral country. Most of these writers end up producing contradictory representations that reflect both cases, the desire for stability and the quest to be accepted by the host country as well as the nostalgia for everything that pertains to the ancestral country and the desire to pass it on. Thus, this makes these writers vulnerable to criticism.

One of these notable writers is the Afghan-born American novelist Khaled Hosseini. Through his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), the author tends to give his readers glimpses about his ancestral homeland, Afghanistan, and the different internal issues and external interventions and invasions that the country witnesses. However, Hosseini was harshly criticized and accused of not depicting the truth. Consequently, this study attempted to analyze Hosseini's novel through the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhaba and Salman Rushdie, in addition to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Moreover, various contradictory literary works of immigrant Afghan writers have been devoted to illustrate the immigrant writers' representations of the ancestral homelands. Among these novels, *Jasmine* (1989) by the Indian-born American writer Bharati Mukherjee which entails autobiographical aspects. In the novel, the author celebrates ethnic markers, such as food. However, in her portrayal of the Indian

woman, she limits the Indian women's potential to their beauty, making them seem like they are sex objects and materialistic individuals. Therefore, Mukherjee is a misrepresentative of India. Another literary text is *the Joy Luck Club* (1989) by the Chinese-born American novelist Amy Tan. Tan is another writer who celebrates ethnic markers. However, she depicts China as a country of tragedies, while America is depicted as the best refuge for the protagonists. Consequently, *the Joy Luck Club* is another misrepresentation of its writer's ancestral homeland. In contrast to these writers, Mahbod Seraji seems to have succeeded at achieving a good representation of his ancestral homeland. In his novel, Seraji denies all the stereotypes produced about Iranian men using Romance and Humor as the main strategies.

This dissertation tried to analyze the contradictory aspects in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. One of these aspects is the portrayal of male and female Afghan individuals. Hosseini denounces the patriarchy that Afghan women suffer in attempt to show a solidarity with these women. Nevertheless, his depictions reinforce Western stereotypes about both men and women. Through the characters of Mariam and Laila, Afghan women are stereotyped as oppressed and passive women who are more like servants to their husbands. Rasheed is portrayed as a violent and uncivilized man who has no feelings towards any of his wives, and only treats them good when they are pregnant. He only considers them baby-making machines.

Another contradictory aspect in the novel is the author's celebration of cultural markers. Hosseini's use of the Dari language each now and then, and his depiction of Afghanistan as a nation which is culturally rich is considered as a celebration of one's own culture. Nevertheless, Afghanistan culture is later on depicted as one which normalizes the murder of women. Furthermore, violence is depicted as a part of the Afghan nature.

The writer's portrayal of religion in the novel happens to be another contradictory aspect. Through the character of Mullah Faizullah, religious men are depicted as kind and helping persons who have no ties with violence. Besides, the representation of Eid-ul-fitr is another good thing the writer portrayed about Islam; he depicted it as a day in which there is no violence, but only love and share of joyful moments. However, the writer's representations of the Taliban and the Mujahideen as brutal Afghan individuals, reinforces stereotypes about both the Islamic rule as an extremely bad one, or even the worst, and Muslims as fundamentally violent. Moreover, the veil is another thing about religion that Hosseini misrepresents in his novel. The author depicts the veil as an indicator of women's oppression and inferiority.

Finally, the last contradictory aspect this study examined is the nation's history. The main focus of this section is the way Hosseini positioned the historical timeline of the story. In addition to his depictions of the several invaders that Afghanistan had gone through in this period. He described the brutality of each invader in a different way, showing preference to his host country at the expense of his original homeland.

Indeed, Khaled Hosseini's representation of Afghanistan in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* seems to be contradictory. Due to his "in-betweenness", the author ended up taking two sides instead of one, these two sides reflect both his appreciation to his ancestral homeland and his will to integrate in the host culture, as well as to be accepted by Western people. A good representation of Afghanistan, is one which beats stereotypes about it instead of reinforcing them. In this concern, Allison states that "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* offers a worldview designed to reassure Western (primarily American) readers that their nation's intervention in Afghanistan is morally sound" (73). The writer's adoption of Western Orientalized stereotypes about the Orient and Western ideologies explain the celebration of the West that marks his novel. Thus, this study shows that Khaled Hosseini is a misrepresentative of his ancestral homeland.

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق مما إذا كان الكتاب المهاجرون، في محاولتهم لتمثيل أوطانهم الأم، قادرين على نقل صور دقيقة وحيوية للأوطان التي تركوها وراءهم أو إذا كان عرضهم الأدبي مشوشًا بسبب الهوية الجديدة التي ألقيت عليهم في أوطانهم الجديدة مما يمكن أن يؤدي إلى تحريف أدبي. غالبًا ما يمر المهاجر، وخاصة الكاتب المهاجر، بأزمات هوية حادة يمكن ملاحظة انتقالها إلى عملهم، خاصة عند إنتاج قطع أدبية تمثيلية لوطنهم الأم. هذا غالبًا ما يثير النقد الصارم. خالد حسيني مثال لهؤلاء الكتاب. من خلال رواياته، لوحظت جهود المؤلف لتمرير صورة لحياة الأفغان العاديين للعالم، طوال فترة عدم الاستقرار في البلاد. ومع ذلك، يعتقد النقاد أن نظراته السلبية عن موطنه تميز رواياته. بالاعتماد على الدراسات الثقافية ونظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى التحقق مما إذا كان عمل خالد حسيني، بعنوان "ألف شمس ساطعة"، يقدم حقائق مشوهة عن وطنه الأم أو أنه يصور ببساطة الواقع القاسي لمجتمعه. في هذه الرواية، يصوغ الكاتب قصة امرأتين أفغانيتين - مريم وليلى - بهدف وصف التاريخ الفوضوي لأفغانستان والمخطط الذي يتم من خلاله إساءة معاملة النساء في ظل النظام الأبوي والنظام الاستبدادي. تظهر الدراسة أن خالد حسيني، في الواقع، يحرف صورة وطنه الأم. لا يمكن إنكار أن أفغانستان نصيبها العادل من العنف، لكن وصف حسيني لشعبه هو مجرد استمرار للمعتقدات الغربية. في محاولة لمعالجة مشاعر التفكك التي يعاني منها، قدم الكاتب معلومات متناقضة ومبالغ فيها تعزز الصور النمطية الغربية عن الشعب الأفغاني.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à déterminer si les écrivains immigrés, dans leur tentative de représenter leurs patries ancestrales, sont capables de transmettre des images précises et vivantes des maisons qu'ils ont laissées derrière eux ou si leur présentation littéraire est brouillée par la nouvelle identité qui leur est imposée dans leur nouvelles maisons qui peuvent entraîner une fausse représentation littéraire. Un immigrant, surtout un écrivain immigrant, subit souvent de graves crises d'identité dont la transmission peut être constatée dans leur travail, exceptionnellement lors de la production d'œuvres littéraires représentatives de leur patrie. Cela suscite souvent de vives critiques. Khaled Hosseini est un exemple de ces écrivains ; à travers ses romans, on remarque l'effort de l'auteur pour transmettre au monde une image de la vie de l'Afghan moyen à travers l'instabilité du pays. S'appuyant sur les études culturelles et la théorie postcoloniale, cette thèse vise à déterminer si l'œuvre de Khaled Hosseini, intitulée *Mille Soleils Splendides* (2007), fournit des vérités déformées sur sa patrie ancestrale ou s'il dépeint simplement la dure réalité de sa société. Dans ce roman, l'écrivain raconte l'histoire de deux femmes afghanes - Mariam et Laila - dans le but de décrire l'histoire chaotique de l'Afghanistan et le stratagème par lequel les femmes sont maltraitées sous le patriarcat et le régime despotique. L'étude montre que Khaled Hosseini déforme, en fait, sa patrie ancestrale. Il est vraiment indéniable que l'Afghanistan a sa part de violence, mais la description que fait Hosseini de son peuple n'est qu'une simple perpétuation des croyances occidentales. Dans une tentative de traiter ses sentiments de dislocations, l'écrivain donne des informations contradictoires et exagérées qui renforcent les stéréotypes occidentaux sur le peuple afghan.