THE DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUPLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Literature

Candidates

Mrs. Amel BOUGUERRA
Mrs. Aicha Nour El Islam MAADADI

Board of Examiners

Mr. ARFICE	University of M'sila	Chairperson
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Mrs. Nassima AMIROUCHE	University of M'sila	Examiner

2018

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In the name of Allah , the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate all praise be to Allah , the lord of the worlds ;and prayers and peace be upon Mohamed his servant and messenger.

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Special thanks for the jury members for devoting a time reading our work.

DEDICATION

All praise to Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

This work is dedicated:

To my dear parents

For their endless love and support.

To my beloved husband

For his encouragement in moments of difficulty and stress

Aicha Nour El Islam

DEDICATION

All praise Allah the most Gracious , the Most Merciful

This thesis is dedicated mainly to my beloved Mother , (May Allah Forgive and have Mercy upon her) , whom I wish had witnessed this moment .

To my Dear Father , the symbol of love and sacrifices,

To my beloved husband ,Sofiane , for his support and encouragement ,

To my dearest little sister , Dounia, symbol of loyalty and friendship ,

To my dearest niece Mohamed Firass and Ghassan Taim Allah , symbols of innocence and Optimism,

To all my Family and people who touch my heart ,

I dedicate this research .

Amel

ABSTRACT

Afghanistan has suffered brutal civil war in addition to foreign invasions in the form of the 1979 Soviet invasion and 2001 U.S invasion . These political and historical instabilities cost Afghanistan a cultural and ideological misconception by the west . It is largely depicted by western writers as the land of terrorist , barbaric, and cultureless people . Khaled Hosseini tried to manipulate these perceptions in his debut novel *The Kite Runner* through an intensive portrayal of Afghanistan's culture , ethnicity, religion and society within a historical context . In this dissertation , we address the question of how Khaled Hosseini could make westerners rethink Afghanistan and its people and eventually an impact on their cultural and ideological perception of the Other. The dissertation provides a vivid analysis of the *Kite Runner's* orientalist aspects, characters , and portrayal of extremism as well as the way it bridges west and east worlds. This analysis goes in parallel with the study of the novel's historical context spanning from monarchical to democratic Afghanistan . The study focuses mainly on how the *Kite Runner* as a New-Orientalist narrative could influence the western public's Understanding of Afghanistan's culture and people .

Key Words: Afghanistan, The Other, Orientalism, Culture, Ideology, 9/11.

INTRODUCTION

> A very large mass of writers, among whom theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborating theories, epics, novels ,social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the orient, its people , customs, "mind" destiny , and so on.
>
> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books,1979), p. 2.

Afghanistan's reputation in the west particularly following the events of September 11, 2001 and America's "war on terror" , has been marked by an ideology that reduces conflict to the idea of "US vs. Them". Media portrayals of the Middle East often incessantly show images of violence, war, and destruction that support the idea[1]. Juxtaposed these images comes the Afghan- American Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* which intertwines the familiar and the foreign , allowing readers to identify and also grappling with the nuances of themes, was able to deconstruct common stereotypes, cultural, and ideological perceptions of Afghanistan by the western world.

A physician by profession, Khaled Hosseini became a popular name in the field of contemporary English literature, with the publication of his first novel *The Kite Runner* in 2003[2]. Written against the background of Afghanistan- a country nearly destroyed by constant war and terrorism. The novel was received surprisingly well by western literary audiences and held a steady spot on the New York Times best-seller list for over one hundred weeks[3], it even inspires the production of an Academy Award-nominated film of the same name[4] directed by Mark Forster and released to worldwide in 2007.

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[1]Alamour Runda .*Searching for Middle Ground : Connecting the East and West through Universal Themes in The Kite Runner* . (Thesis), University of North Carolina at Asheville, (Spring 2015).p: 2.
[2]Som Sudesna ,"That was The night I became Insomniac ": Trauma in Khaled Hosseini 's Kite Runner. *Indian Journal of Research* , Vol. 4, No.7, (July 2015). pp: 29-30.p: 30.
[3] Hunt Sarah, “Can The West Read,” *Oxy Scholar-Occidental College* , March 2009. pp: 1-17. p: 1. http://scholar.oxy.edu/ecls-student/18. (Accessed on December 2017) .
[4] Ibid.

Historically, *The Kite Runner* takes place in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Afghanistan, it is set in Afghanistan, Pakistan and The United states. In this novel, Hosseini tends to depict Afghanistan not only as a country that its people suffered at the hands of foreign invaders and their own people, but also as a country of diverse cultures, ethnicities and throbbing life. The novel tells the story of Afghans within a story. It explores the impact of the cold war , the Soviet Union , the Taliban rule , refugee issue , heterogeneity of Afghan society , tribal tradition , religious extremism , and cultural clash.

Khaled Hosseini is one of the Afghan immigrants who studied in Los Angles, and subtly could adopt and develop in the host country. This is proved from his success in literature and becoming an established writer after releasing *The Kite Runner*[5]. This advantageous aspect enabled him to address the western people , seeks to alliterate and change their ideologies and perceptions already stereotyped in their minds towards the Afghan society and people . The novel portrays the Afghan people as an independent and proud people who for decades have defended their country against invaders and internal clashes.

Afghanistan , officially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country that is located in south Asia. Afghanistan is a culturally mixed nation, a crossroads between the East and the West, and has been an ancient focal point of trade and migration. It has an important geostrategic location, connecting South Asia, Central Asia and Southwest Asia. In the 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in "The Great Game" played between the British Indian Empire and Russian Empire. On August 19, 1919, following the third Anglo-Afghan war, the country regained full independence from the United Kingdom over its foreign affairs[6].

War and the trauma of the Taliban have made Afghanistan an unlikely setting for literary fiction, and have given its writers little opportunity to be heard in the West. However, Khaled

[5] Farlina Nina . *The Issue of Cultural Identity In Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*. (Thesis), State Islamic University " Syarif Hidayatullah" , Jakarta, 2008 .p:12.
[6] Ibid. p: 13.

Hosseini's novel is an attempt to correct this and to remind the world of the anonymity it enjoyed before the Soviet invasion in 1979, the story introduces to its readers a world –the world of Afghan life, which is strange, fascinating and oddly familiar all at the same time. Despite the fact that the events in *The Kite Runner* are fictitious, the information about the political, social, and cultural systems of this Middle Eastern country provides a contrast to the contemporary headlines about Afghanistan being home of terrorism .The selected novel portrays a realistic image of a country which most people know very little about and enables readers to separate the people of a country from its leaders (the Taliban) and groups (terrorists) associated with it.

In this thesis we attempt to give a historical and analytical study of Khaled Hosseini's *Kite Runner* (2003). The referred novel elicits the life of two friends, namely Amir and Hassan, a rich Pashtun and Hazara , an ethnic minority respectively. It also reflects the tumultuous changes to which Afghanistan stands witness. While other immigrant writers dealt mainly with alienation or cultural shock ,hosseini opens our eyes to life in Afghanistan which remained closed to the outside world. Hosseini sketches a largely forgotten Afghanistan before the Soviet war as for many people in the west; Afghanistan is synonymous with the Soviet war and Taliban. Hosseini wants to remind or rather inform people that Afghans were at peace once.

Khaled Hosseini is an expatriate writer , who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 4th, 1965.Hosseini's devotion to his homeland extends beyond his writings. His activism for a better Afghanistan is proof of his love for the country. Since 2006, Hosseini has served as a goodwill ambassador to the United Nations Refugee Agency , in addition to The *Khaled Hosseini Foundation* which provides humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The foundation came into being after a trip Hosseini made to Afghanistan in 2007. Having gone

there for the first time in twenty seven years, Hosseini was immensely disturbed to discover the situation of the country he was born in[7].

Afghan literature is rich in literary tradition . The ancient art of storytelling continues to flourish in Afghanistan. They tell Folklores which concern Afghans life, tradition, values , beliefs and behaviours. Classical poetry and plays are playing very important role in Afghan culture . Most of the Afghan people are uneducated and can't read and write so Folklore and legends told through the medium of songs and storytelling[8]. All these cultural traditions were brilliantly depicted by Khaled Hosseini in the character of Amir and Hassan.

Afghanistan is a multilingual country . There are two languages Dari and Pashtu that is used to communicate. Dari is the Afghan's Farsi language which is an official language in Afghanistan[9]. The use of some Dari words by Khaled Hosseini in *the Kite Runner* apparently demonstrate his influence with his native language.

The Kite Flying from which the writer adopts the title for his novel *The Kite Runner* is a famous game in Afghanistan of Kite Flying tournament. It is an old traditional game in winter. It is a competition which starts early in the morning and doesn't end till only the wining kite flying in the sky. Which kite is cut by the winner is a reward for him. This game was banned in Afghanistan with the rise of Taliban . In this novel, the run and get the last kite is Hassan. He is the best kite runner for Amir who gets every kite without looking the sky. Later on the kite flying creates a conflict between Amir and Hassan.

In 1919, Afghanistan regains independence after the third war against British forces trying to bring the country under their sphere of influence. General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister in 1953. He turns to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. In 1979, Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, eventually, various mujahideen troops fight Soviet

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[7] Khaled Hosseini , *Biography, Books and Facts*-Famous Authors.org. http://www.famousauthors.org/khaled-hosseini (Accessed on December 2017).

[8] Vaishali MPhil ,"Representation of Afghanistan Identity in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner" , *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*,Vol.5, No.4,(April,2016), pp ;142-149, p: 146.

[9] Ibid., p: 147.

forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms. US begins supplying mujahideen with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan completely in 1989. In 1993, Mujahedeen factions agreed on the formation of government with ethnic Tajik, and proclaimed Burhanuddin Rabbani as the president. Factional contests were continued. Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerged as a major challenge to the Rabbani government. In 1996, Taliban seized control of Kabul and introduced hardline version of Islam. Rabbani flees to join anti-Taliban northern alliance. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognized the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. Most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state. In 1999, United Nations imposed an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan hand over Osama bin Laden for trial . The World Trade Centre in the US was attacked on September 11, 2001. Within one month the US and Britain launched air strikes against Afghanistan after Taliban refused to hand over Osama bin Laden. Taliban rule ended in November, 2001[10].

Therefore, in this work, we intend to analyze the novel ; *The Kite Runner* in parallel with the historical progression of Afghanistan. In other words , we shall examine the impact of historical events took place in Afghanistan ,and mostly had a universal influence, on the life of Afghan individuals as well as their role in shaping western perception and ideologies about the other. Additionally, we shall explore different historical periods referred to in the novel in an attempt to uncover the changes they bring to Afghans' life . Moreover, we shall fetch for cultural aspects of Afghanistan and how they are depicted in the novel in order to reveal concealed cultural heritage, multi-ethnicities and different religious tendencies in Afghanistan. With much focus on the characters analyses, considering the relationship between them which demonstrate the socio-cultural layers in Afghanistan.

[10]Shamnad N , *The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini : Historical , Political and Cultural Contexts*. (Project) , *University of Kerala* , Tiruvananthapuram , India. 2010. p: 14-15.

The Objectives stated above will be reached through an intensified study of the novel *The kite Runner*, subsequently, our work will be divided into two chapters:

In the first chapter ,we shall tackle the socio-historical context of the novel .*The Kite Runner* is a story within a story . That is to say , in addition to the fact that it recounts the journey of the protagonist Amir, it emphasises the role of historical progression in Afghanistan, cultural, ethnic and religious aspects and heritage of the same country in providing a better understanding of the writer's intentions. The chapter will shed light on the different cultural, ethnic, religious aspects as well as geographical advantages of Afghanistan. Besides, much focus will be put on the study of the impact of the historical and political events ,in the novel, on the world's perception of Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

The second chapter will be devoted for a detailed analytical study of the selected novel. A considerable focus will be put on the different perceptions of the "*Other* " compared to the "*Other*" portrayed by Khaled Hosseini in *The Kite Runner* . The analysis shall fetch for aspects and characteristics of the "*New Other* " in the main characters of the novel. Subsequently , the role of the characters in representing *the Other* will be given a significant importance that tend to change the world's pre-judgments and stereotypes about the Afghan people. Eventually, a change in the world's perception of the "Other".

Afghanistan is the land of many ethnic groups , so that there are many different cultures and all groups call proudly themselves Afghans. In this study we seek to find answers to a series of questions:

Firstly , how did Hosseini's *the Kite Runner* managed to deconstruct the world's cultural and ideological stereotypes of Afghanistan . In The *Kite Runner* Hosseini portrays his Afghanistan, the celebration of Id, Afghan literature, long schools in summer days and kite flying tournament in winter days in Kabul are mainly depicted in the novel. Secondly, The history of Afghanistan is marked by political instability ,this nation has been disrupted by wars ,Soviet oppression and Taliban throughout its history ,in this concern we wonders how

the historical progression of this nation affected the world perception of Afghanistan . Thirdly, how does the author portray the psychological and historical trauma of the Afghans under this oppression. Fourthly, Amir the protagonist of Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* flee to America along his father (Baba) after the Russian invasion in the 1980's , For Amir, Afghanistan is like two sides of a coin, namely hating and missing, those matters melt to become one .Although Amir and Baba escaped the war they are still haunted by their past and memories , in this respect we are going to unravel the author's attempts to engage a dialogue between East and West so as to bridge a line between them through his first novel .

Both Eastern and Western individuals view Afghanistan as a place of war and centre of terrorism, neglecting the fact that it is a standing country having its own traditions, customs and cultures. However, this study will try to change the perception of readers towards this country as well as showing how literature can play a major role in shaping the readers 'minds and perceptions. The study will also be helpful reference for students of literature and civilization who would conduct researches on Afghanistan .

The novel will be analyzed in the light of **post-colonialism theories**: **Edward Said's** concept of **"*Orientalism*"** and **Gayatri Spivak's** concept of the **"*Subaltern***", side to side with **the historical approach to literature**.

Edward Said's well-known work *"Orientalism"*, is immensely useful in approaching problems of representation within this text. The term "*Orientalism*" as Said defines it in his *1978 introduction* , is *" a way of coming to terms with the orient that is based on the orient's special place in European western experience "* [11]. Said defines an orientalist early on in his introduction as *"Anyone who teaches, write about, or reaches the orient – and applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist-either in its*

[11] Hunt Sarah, "Can The West Read," *Oxy Scholar-Occidental College*. March 2009. pp: 1-17, p: 2.

specific or general aspects" and what he or she does is Orientalism"[12]. Thus, we shall study the ideological creation of *the Other* throughout the representation of the characters such as Amir , the protagonist , and Assef as the antagonist. In other words , we try to find out aspects of the orient in the previously mentioned characters. These particular aspects of cultural identity profoundly affect the two characters and can be depicted as reinforcing a "West versus East " binary, therefore relying upon and sustaining orientalist stereotypes[13].

The study of the western perception of *the Other* can't be fulfilled without reference to Gayatri Spivak's *" The voice of the Subaltern theory* " of dealing with the other. She is Known for her best Known essay "Can The Subaltern Speak " ?. In this Essay she exposes the irony that the subalterns have awakened to a consciousness of their own rights by making practical utterances against unjust domination and inequality . She denounces the harm done to women/ Third World women and non-Europeans . She wants to give voice to the subalterns who can not speak or who are silent . She attacks Eurocentric attitudes of the west . She holds that knowledge is never innocent , it is always operated by western interest and power . For Spivak Knowledge is like any other commodity or product that is exported from the west to the Third World . The western scholars have always presented themselves and their knowledge about the Eastern cultures as objective. The knowledge about the Third World is always constructed with the political and economical interest of the West[14] .Hosseini, presents many male characters who are dominated by other men in the name of Islamic rules and by their ethnic differences . This constitutes the double marginalization in Afghanistan. Additionally , *the Kite Runner* picturizes the journey of the subaltern characters, who are suppressed and denied from their speech in Afghanistan.

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[12] Rekha Chitra , " Reinforcing The Stereotypic Binaries: Orientalist reading of Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner" . *The Criterion International Journal In English* .Korattil House , India.(June 2013) .Vol 4, No 3. pp: 1-7 . p: 2.

[13] Hunt Sarah, "Can The West Read," *Oxy Scholar-Occidental College*. March 2009. pp: 1-17, p: 8.

[14] Ambesange Paraveen V. " Post Colonialism : Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak ", *Research Journal of Recent Studies*, Vol.5, No. 8. August 2016. pp: 47-50.p: 48.

Furthermore, an excellent text to examine from a Marxist literary perspective would be *the Kite Runner* because the quintessential conflict in *the Kite Runner* is the relationship between the main character, Amir, and his servant, Hassan. Their very relationship is defined by social status-Amir is Pashtun, which in turn makes him the wealthier, socially accepted Afghani. Hassan, on the other hand, is one of his family's servants, a Hazara who, because of his ethnicity, is the social outcast[15].

Finally, New historicism perspective requires more than reading the work , it rather requires relating the text to some historical documents of that time . *The kite Runner* is set upon a historical background of Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion, The rise of the so called Taliban , the events of September 11, 2011, and Ethnic conflicts are profoundly portrayed in relation with characters progress in *the Kite Runner*. Thus, a historical approach serves as bridge between historical progression and character development in the studied novel. This latter will be better understood when referred to its historical settings.

"Afghanistan", over the past few decades has had various understandings and connotations attached to it and sadly, everything narrows to violence , bloodshed, and terrorism. The world has gone aloof to the mainland and somewhere forgotten the rich heritage and culture that the country once stood for[16]. Khaled Hosseini claims that,*" Too often, stories about Afghanistan center around the various wars, the opium trade , the war on terrorism. Precious little is said about the Afghan people, their traditions, how they lived in their country and how they manage abroad exiles*"[17], the historical progression of Afghanistan has shaded its cultural identity. *The Kite Runner* is the first novel by an Afghan-American author, written in English language, this provided a new platform to reach the Western audience.

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[15]Putz Kristin ,"The Kite Runner from Marxist perspective", *Minnesota English Journal Online*,(April 2015). https://minnesotaenglishjournalonline.org/category/literary-theory/Marxist-theory/ . (Accessed on November, 2017) .

[16]Gopi Anjita , "Resurrecting Afghanistan :Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner ", *Research Journal of English Language and Literature* , Vol 5, No 3. July-September 2017. pp: 234-238.p: 234.

[17]Khaled Hosseini , *Quotes- BrainyQuote* : https://www.brainyquote.com .(Accessed on November , 2017).

"*Afghanistan's countryside is nothing but battlefields, expanses of sand, and cemeteries*."[18], Yasmina Khadra writes in *The Swallows of Kabul* , a story set in Kabul under the rule of the Taliban, this extraordinary novel takes readers into the grim realities of Afghanistan, it illustrates the effects of repression on a pair of Kabul couples, a harrowing novel of life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. The story begins with the scene of a prostitute being stoned to death and ends with a madman being beaten to death; Khadra's Afghanistan is a place barely fit for human habitation, the author offers the readers an insight into the complexities of the Muslim world and into a society that violence and hypocrisy have brought to the edge of despair.

"Shooting Kabul"[19]by *N.H Senzai* is a powerful story of an Afghan American refugees that struggles not only with normal difficulties of fitting in as immigrants ,but also with the prejudice shown to Muslims. From the terror of a narrow midnight escape from the Taliban, and the tragic loss of the youngest child to America, the family's life took a turn for the worse after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.By setting the story in late 2001, N.H Senzai is able to explore the repercussions of 9/11 on Muslim Americans. The victims of 9/11 aren't just those who died in the attacks, but also the people who have faced racism and Islamophobia. *N.H Senzai* in another novel entitled ,*Saving Kabul Corner*, which is often described as a companion book to Shooing Kabul , is able to portray successfully the dynamics of Afghan culture, history and political wrangling plus their immigrant experience.

Because *"History is the third parent*."[20], this is the declarative opening line of the *Blind Man Garden* by Nadeem Aslam ,what the characters are up against , what Afghanistan is up against is a superpower called History, a force for older than America or Islam. Aslam in the *Blind Man's Garden* shows the struggles within Islam, particularly the tension between extremist Islam and its counterpoint. Tara, a strong female character in the novel questions:

[18] Khadra Yasmina . *The Swallows of Kabul* . New York : Anchor , 2005. p: 1.
[19] Webb James , Review: "A timely story of Afghanistan.", *BookPage*, July ,(2010). https://bookpage.com/reviews/6572-n-h-senzai-shooting-kabul#.WlDPb7gs-ZB(Accessed on December , 2017).
[20] Lasdun James," The Blind Man's Garden by Nadeem Aslam – review." *The Guardian*, (January,2013). http://www.theguardian.com . (Accessed on December , 2017).

"What strange times are these, when Muslims must fear other Muslims ".*The Blind Man's Garden* unveils the perilous conditions of post 9/11 Afghanistan, its themes range from love and martyrdom to the torturing of terror suspects and the "grooming" of jihadist fighters to religious devotion, nationalism, and war.

For most people around the world, especially the West, the Taliban and Islam are far removed from their personal experiences. What little they know is filtered through media and misinformation by those who stand to benefit from the conflicts and wars. Most of works written on Afghanistan focus on the outcomes of war and how the Afghans were victimized under the Taliban rule ,neglecting the cultural and historical aspects of this community. However , Khaled Hosseini in *the Kite Runner* highlights the Afghan culture, tradition and history before and during the war. *"The kite Runner is filled with details of culture and society of Afghani people it includes more depth and more description of the city and its people*", Ruth R.Caillouet argues in her article entitled *"The Other Side of Terrorism and The Children of Afghanistan"*[21]. In another article *" Kabul Transit "*[22],by Lori Muntz, the author praises the work of Hosseini saying that it provides a platform for readers to create their own assumption of Afghanistan and how they are crafted , it provides a possibility for critical thinking and reflective judgment.

[21]Ruth R Caillouet , "The Other Side of Terrorism and the Children of Afghanistan."*The English Journal*, Published by National Council of Teachers of English. Vol.96, No.2. (Nov,2006), pp: 28-33.p: 31.
[22]Muntz Lori , "The Kite Runner", "Kabul Transit." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*. Published by: Midwest Modern Language Association.Vol. 41.No. 1 (Spring ,2006), pp: 111-120.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

Afghanistan's culture and heritage have long been tyrannically veiled behind its tumultuous political and military history since 1978. The fact that this country encountered several critical events that come to be concerning not only Afghanistan but obviously the whole world , it becomes a cultureless country for most if not all of the world . Actually, Afghanistan lost its true cultural identity and was forced to wear a new one forged by the world public which in its turn was compelled to perceive Afghanistan that is forged by a history which is replete with wars and violent conflicts.

However, Afghanistan has a far longer history as a distinct national entity with continuity to the present than most of its neighbors . It is, for example, two hundred years older than Pakistan , which was created only in 1947. The contrast with the Central Asian states to the north , which date from the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, and their administratively delineated , largely artificial border, is even greater[23]. Contrary to the general world views, that Afghanistan is the land of war , terror …etc which ravaged its real cultural identity and heritage, Afghanistan can be effectively governed and politically stable.

The monarchical state that ruled from 1933 to 1973 differed in many ways from the typical modern state in industrialized countries .It did not penetrate deeply into the countryside in large parts of the country , nor was it very successful developmentally. It did , however, keep the peace and maintain order , was perceived as legitimate internally and externally , maintained reasonable control over its borders, exercised independent diplomacy in a difficult region, and limited and monitored the activities of foreigners with the country.

[23]Byrd William. "Lessons from Afghanistan's History for the current Transition and Beyond" , *United States Institute of Peace* , Special Report 314 ,September 2012, p: 2.
http://www.usip.org . (Accessed on March , 2018).

Therefore, in this chapter , with reference to *the Kite Runner* , we intend to unveil cultural diversity ,ethnic multiplicity as well as social composition in Afghanistan, so as to purify the country's image and perception to the world. The chapter will also tackle the historical progression of Afghanistan in an attempt to clarify the idea that Afghan people in a way or another were not the only responsible for their misperception by the world but foreign invasions and external interventions had a great impact in shaping the image of Afghanistan and Afghan people in the minds of worldwide audience.

1. Afghanistan at the Crossroads of Cultures

Afghanistan is the quintessential "crossroads of cultures " where the civilizations of the Near East , Central Asia , South Asia ,and China interacted over the millennia in a constantly shifting mixture of trade, emulation, migration, imperial formations, and periodic conflict[24] . Due to its strategic location , Afghanistan witnessed closely a variety of cultures as diverse as the Bronze Age cities of Bactria , the Persian Empire , the Islamic dynasties …etc. The country inherited a great unique treasure that encompasses both heritage and cultures in different parts of its land. A great portion of the country's cultural heritage was kept in the Kabul National Museum and a number of it was preserved in the Archaeological institute.

Afghanistan has a literature which is highly influenced by foreign conquests of old civilizations. The Afghan Folklore and old Legends show a deep penetration of the Persian Literature in Afghan's life . In reference to *the Kite Runner* , Khaled Hosseini depicts this cultural influence through the two main characters in the novel : Amir and Hassan . Hassan represents the uneducated Afghan while Amir is the educated who used to tell his own written stories to Hassan . Amir usually told Hassan stories like the story of *Shahn amah* which is 10th century epic of ancient Persian heroes . Amir says that Hassan likes his stories, *"He likes it all the chapters, the Shahs of old, Feridoun ,Zal , and Rudabeh. But his favorite story and mine*

[24]Gil J. Stein, " The War Ravaged Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan: An Overview of Projects of Assessment , Mitigation , and Preservation" , *Published by The American Schools of Oriental Research, Near Eastern Archaeology* , Vol.78 ,No. 3 . (September 2015) .p: 187-195 .p:187.

was "Rostom and Sohrab" the great warrior Rostom…"[25]. Hassan was obsessed by the stories to the extent he named his son Sohrab from the story's name.

1.1. Afghanistan The Landlocked

Afghanistan is a land locked country , one of the 12 Asian landlocked countries that have no coastlines, It has an area of approximately 250,000 square miles, It is the 41st largest nation in the world based on its area. It is located at the intersection of the Iranian plateau , the central Asian steppes, and the Indian subcontinent . It is bordered by Iran in the west , Pakistan in the south and east , Turkmenistan , Uzbekistan , and Tajikistan in the north , and China in the easternmost region[26] . It stretches 1300 Kilometers from the Southwest to Northeast and has a general width of about 600 Kilometers. Shaped like a frying pan its handle forces its way through the pamirs for a distance of 320 Kilometers at height ranging between 20000 to 25000 feet . This narrow stretch of territory known as the Wakhan corridor was carved by British to prevent the Russians from having a direct access to their possessions in India.

The outstanding geographic feature of Afghanistan is its mountain range , the Hindu Kush. This formidable range creates the major pitch of Afghanistan from northeast to southwest and, along with its subsidiary ranges ,divides Afghanistan into three distinct geographic regions , which roughly can be designated as the central highlands ,the northern plains , and the southwestern plateau. Several mountain ranges effectively isolate the interior of the country from the moisture-laden winds that blow from the Indian Ocean . This accounts for the dryness of the climate[27].

In general , Afghanistan has extremely cold winters and hot summers typical of a semiarid steppe climate. There are many regional variations, however . While the mountain regions of

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[25]Khaled Hosseini , *The Kite Runner* , Riverhead, 2003. Print. p : 27.

[26]Cheryl Bernard, Ole Kvaerno and Others , " *Afghanistan State and Society , Great Power Politics , and the Way Ahead* ": findings from an international conference , Copenhagen ,Denmark , 2007". Center for Middle East Public Policy, Published by the Rand Corporation. 2008. pp: 1-92. p: 75. http://www.rand.org. (Accessed on April, 2018)

[27]Victor P. Petrov , Frank R. Allchin and Others , "*Afghanistan*." Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018. http://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/history-geography. (Accessed on April, 2018).

the northeast have a subarctic climate with dry , cold winters , the mountainous areas on the border of Pakistan are influenced by the Indian monsoons , usually coming between July and September and bringing maritime tropical air masses with humidity and ruins . In addition , strong winds blow almost daily in the southeast during the summer . Local variation is also produced by differences in elevation . The weather in winter and early spring is strongly influenced by cold air masses from the Atlantic low from the northwest ; these two air masses bring snowfall and severe cold in the highlands and rain in the lower elevations[28].

Afghanistan , as most of the world landlocked countries, has been suffering from dependence on its neighbor countries. Unlike maritime countries which enjoy a total independence to access world markets, landlocked countries often lag behind their maritime neighbors in overall development and external trade. landlocked economies suffer from different economic constraints due to distance from major markets , dependence on coastal neighbors for ocean access , and lack of alternative transit routes resulting in a weak economy and infrastructure that is vulnerable to the policies of their neighbors[29].

1.2. Afghanistan 'Social, Ethnic and Religious Composition

The outstanding social feature of life in Afghanistan is its local tribal or ethnic divisions. People's primary loyalty is , respectively , their own kin , village, tribe , or ethnic group , generally glossed as *qawm*[30]. They frequently overlap in areas with mixed populations, and hide the crosscutting patterns of intermarriage, bilingualism, and unity through common geography[31]. Whether small or large , ethnic groups division is the result of history , where many people entered Afghanistan , eventually , they created a society with multiple cultural practices and languages.

[28]Ibid.
[29]Lahiri Bidisha and Feroz K Masjidi, "Landlocked countries : A way to Integrate with Coastal Economies", *Journal of Economic Integration jei*, vol.27,No.4 , December 2012. p: 505-519, p: 518.
[30]Barfield Thomas , *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* . Princeton University Press , New Jersey, 2012 , p: 18.
[31]Ibid., p: 19.

Afghanistan's main ethnic composition includes the Pashtun , Tajik, Hazara , Uzbek , Baluchi, and Turkoman people . The Afghan nation is a very heterogeneous population , comprising at least 22languages in which Pashtu and Dari are considered the official languages and are spoken by 85 percent of the people . About 99percent of the population is Muslims, representing both Sunni and Shia Muslims . The majority of Hazara and Qizilbash are Shia , while the majority of Pashtuns , Tajik , Uzbek, Turkoman and Baluchi people are Sunni . Until recent times , other religions were also represented in Afghanistan . In Kabul and in a few other urban cities , exclusive communities of Hindus , Sikhs , and Jews co-existed within the Muslim population .

The creation of the Durrani monarchy in 1747 triggered a dramatic turning point in the history of the vast region wedged between the river Oxus and Indus , when the ethnic group, called "Pashtun" constituted an overwhelming majority . The ethnic diversity of Afghanistan has led it to one of the major dynamics of civil war in the country . The Afghan ethnic groups have lived together for more than 5000 years in this region and have united mutually many times against the Great Empire of Britain and Soviet union and crashed them and preserved their freedom[32]. Richard Tapper , an Anthropologist reflects that :

> "Contrary to many common assumptions , the various ethnic groups such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazara , Turkmens , Baluchs , Nuristanis and others have evolved into a mix of Afghans with a fairly common culture , psychology and ethos. For example , Pashtuns from the eastern and western parts of Afghanistan have more in common with Tajiks and Uzbeks from the north than with Pashtuns of Pakistan. A more accurate conclusion may be that although they are ethnically diverse, The Afghans have mingled into one distinct identity, historically, politically and socially . It is this distinction that prevented Afghanistan from disintegrating as has been the case in ethnically divided countries such as the former Yugoslavia."[33]

[32]Muhammad S. Mazhar , Samee O. Khan and Others , "Ethnic Factor In Afghanistan", *Journal of Political Studies* , Vol.19, No. 2. 2012. pp: 98-109. p: 98.
[33]Richard Tapper ,*What is 'Afghan culture'*? An anthropologist reflects . https://www.soas.ac.uk . (Accessed on May13th , 2018).

The geostrategic location of Afghanistan has attracted many world powers for their very vested interests[34] . These powers used Afghanistan's ethnic diversity for their privilege , they created conflicts among those ethnic groups, Edward Said (1994) *described these conflicts as " Residue of Imperialism"* wherein he argues that the colonizer didn't just create a chasm between tribes but grooved "*divide to rule*" policy[35] . Eventually , the multi-ethnicity of the country had played a crucial role in preventing the country's progress as a nation.

The origins of the various ethnic groups in Afghanistan are the subject of much speculation and legend . Though having few indigenous ethnic groups, yet Afghanistan is neither a self-contained ethnic unit , nor its national culture is uniform. The diversity is as a result of Afghanistan's location at the peripheries of the world's great empires . The lines between these ethnicities are distinct , based either on language, religion or race[36].

Pashtuns are known to be one of the largest tribal societies in the world .Concentrated in the southern and eastern part of Afghanistan , they are the largest ethnic group in the country . They have been dominating since the mid-eighteenth century . In *the Kite Runner*, Amir remembers his past Pashtun setting of his house :

> The living room downstairs had curved wall with custom-built cabinets. Inside sat framed family pictures : an old grain photo of my grandfather and King Nadir Shah taken in 1931, two years before the King's assassination ; they are standing over a dead deer , dressed in knee-high boots, rifles slung over their shoulders [37].

This description of the picture mirrors the life of the Pashtuns who were considered to be the royal clan in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns , on the bases of religious standards, exploit other ethnic groups from different religious orientations, most notably the Hazaras . Pashtuns consider themselves as real Afghans , and that Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns . This idea is clear when Assef taunts Hassan then says :

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[34]Muhammad S. Mazhar , Samee O. Khan and Others , "Ethnic Factor In Afghanistan". p: 98.
[35]Sharma Akshay and Amitabh V. Dwivedi, "Re-reading Khaled Hosseini's works : A Revival of the Lost Afghan ", *India's Higher Education Authority UGC Approved List of Journals Serial Number 49042*, Vol. 18 , No. 4 , (April, 2018) . pp: 1-13. p: 6.
[36]Muhammad S. Mazhar, Samee O. Khan and Others , "Ethnic Factor In Afghanistan", p: 97.
[37]*The Kite Runner* , p: 5

> Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns .It always has been , always will be . We are the true Afghans , The pure Afghans , not this Flat-Nose here . His people pollute our homeland , our Watan . They dirty our Blood ."He made a sweeping ,grandiose gesture with his hands ." Afghanistan for Pashtuns , I say .That's my vision .[38]

All of the Pashtuns follow a strict code of honor called Pashtunwali . As a result of the Soviet war , and its accompanying political fragmentation among the tribes and empowerment of other ethnic groups , the role played by the Pashtuns in the Afghan society and the emerging power structure has somewhat declined[39]

Hazaras are regarded as not being native like Uzbeks , they came as a part of invading hordes of Genghis Khan in the 13th century. they comprise of 7 percent of the total population, settled in Hazarajat and have adopted Dari or Persian as their language. They are the poorest and the most marginalized ethnic community of the country. Amir describes the struggle between the Pashtun and the Hazaras and the marginalization of the Hazaras:

> Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century , but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with unspeakable violence "[…]My people had killed the Hazaras , driven them their lands , burned their homes , and sold their women […] The reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims , while Hazaras were Shi'a […] People called Hazaras mice-eating , flat-nose ,load-carrying donkeys. [40]

Tajiks are known for being better educated and skilled , they are the second largest ethnic group after the Pashtuns . The Soviet war and the civil war with Pashtuns has brought Tajiks into scene . They have remained influential in post 9/11 period. Uzbeks as an ethnic group occupy an important geopolitical landscape between the Hindu Kush and the Central Asian region beyond the Amudarya. Uzbeks are one of the smallest ethnic groups in Afghanistan[41] . Turkmen Share a border ethnicity, and language with people from Turkmenistan . Nuristan share culture and history with north west bordering regions of Pakistan. They were known for

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[38]*The Kite Runner* , p: 35.
[39]Muhammad S. Mazhar , Samee O. Khan and Others, "*Ethnic Factor In Afghanistan",* p:101.
[40]*The Kite Runner* , p: 8.
[41]Muhammad S. Mazhar, Samee O. Khan and Others , "*Ethnic Factor In Afghanistan",* p:101

being unbelievers after they converted to Islam in the late nineteenth century .Baluchi share common features with people of Baluchistan province in Pakistan.

There has been a long history of an ethnic hierarchy within Afghanistan .It has created imbalances in wealth , influence and education within its society . Traditionally Pashtuns have dominated the country because they are the presumed majority of the population . As a result, many of the other ethnic groups have not had a strong voice within the society[42].

2. Historical Progression of Afghanistan In Relation to The Novel

> As long as the country was occupied by Soviet troops the situation invited interpretation along cold war lines: Moscow was supporting its surrogates , the west the Mujahedin . On the surface it was all about national liberation ; resistance to the foreigners , the oppressors , the unbelievers . But not sooner had the occupiers been driven off then the civil war broke out. Nothing remained of the ideological shell…the war of every one against everyone else took its course …what remains is the armed mob.
>
> Huns M. Enzensberger. Quoted in Sharma, Akshay and Amitabh V.Dwivedi. "Re-reading Khaled Hosseini's works : A Revival of the Lost Afghan *", India's Higher Education Authority UGC Approved List of Journals Serial Number 49042*, Vol. 18 , No. 4 ,(April, 2018) . pp: 1-13.p.5.

The Kite Runner is a beautifully crafted novel that is set in a country that is in process of being destroyed . The novel directly links its plot to the Afghan history , geography, ethnic groups , the Soviet invasion , the rise of the Taliban , 9/11 and US invasion . It spans the period from before the 1979 Soviet invasion until the reconstruction following the fall of Taliban[43].

Thus, it is central and preliminary in our study to have a brief foray into Afghanistan's modern history , through examining the previous events and their contribution in shaping worldwide views about Afghanistan.

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[42] Sheetlal K. Daswani , Amnesty International - USA ,*"The Kite Runner Companion Curriculum*". http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/pdf/Kiterunnerhigh.pdf (Accessed on April , 2018).
[43]Gopi Anjita , "Resurrecting Afghanistan : Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner ". p: 235.

2.1. Pre-Soviet Invasion Years

Afghanistan as a state was born in the mid-eighteenth century as a dynastic, expansionist Pashtun-led power under Ahmed Shah Durrani (1747-72),who conquered Delhi and took over parts of the Indian subcontinent . The country was molded into its present territorial boundaries during a century-long process of wars and diplomacy known as the Great Game – a geopolitical rivalry between British interests in India to the East and South , Russia expanding from the North , and to some extent Iran to the West . Three Anglo-Afghan wars were waged during that time : from 1829 to 1842,1878 to 1880, and briefly in 1919. The period also saw numerous other violent incidents and brief skirmishes with outside powers, many internecine revolts and succession struggle , and internal invasions by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) to unify the country . Afghanistan became a buffer state between the British and Russian empires, and in the process was both buffeted and strengthened . From 1880 until the end of 1979, no foreign troops occupied Kabul or other Afghan cities. For several decades following the Anglo- Afghan war in 1919, when restrictions on Afghan foreign policy that the British Empire had imposed were removed , Afghanistan was left somewhat alone . The country went through a major but aborted reform process under King Amanullah (1919-29) and then maintained its neutrality during WW2 . Afghanistan's geopolitical role again became important during the Cold War , when it benefited from major Soviet and US assistance programs. The 1950's, 1960's , and 1970's saw gradual modernization in what remained a very poor country with extremely low social indicators . After enjoying its longest period of relative peace and stability under King Zahir Shah (1933-73) , Afghanistan saw increasing instability leading to a bloodless coup by the King Mohammad Daoud in 1973, then a bloody communist coup and takeover in 1978, and finally

the Soviet occupation starting at the end of 1979, which led to more than two decades of debilitating conflict[44].

The Kite Runner presents more realistic picture about the previously mentioned events :

> They hadn't shot much of anything that night of July 17th1973 . Kabul awoke the next morning to find that the monarchy was a thing of the past. The King ,Zahir Shah , was away in Italy . In his absence , his cousin Daoud Khan ended the King's forty-year reign with a bloodless coup. [45]

The change in the political authority orientation started by the previously so called a king, Mohammed Daoud Khan, who overtook authority after the coup on the 17th of July , has apparently ended up with the declaration of Afghanistan as a Republic in 1973 and Mohammed Daoud Khan announced himself as the first president of the Republic of Afghanistan . The unpopularity of Mohammed Daoud Khan 's reforms and most notably the rising power of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) resulted in another coup which took place in the year 1978.

2.2. The Soviet Invasion To Afghanistan

The existence of the Soviet Communism ideology can be attributed with the rise of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1973 . This pro-Moscow communist Party, originally an underground force , participated on the coup in 1973 when it helped Daoud to get the power . However , soon PDPA started to threaten its former ally Daud as it tried to gain power in the country . It also got more support from the people who were not satisfied with Daud 's government and also from the soviet Union [46] . The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan launched a revolution known as the Saur Revolution or the April Revolution against the ruling government of Mohammed Daud Khan in 1978 .

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[44]Byrd William. "Lessons from Afghanistan's History for the current Transition and Beyond" , *United States Institute of Peace* , Special Report 314 ,September 2012, p.2.
http://www.usip.org . (Accessed on March , 2018).
[45]*The Kite Runner* , p: 32
[46]Pleskotova Marie ,"*Teaching Moral Values through Khaled Hosseini's Novels"*, (PhD) , Palacke University in Olomouchi ,V Olomouci dne 27, 2012. p 12.

The revolution meant a change in the way the Afghan people live . The communists killed the president and all his family .The prime minister and general secretary of the PDPA Nur Mohammed Taraki was elected as the new president , and declared the new Democratic Republic of Afghanistan . The reforms made by the New communist party in power such as land distribution, women liberty, equality between the two sexes ….etc which tend to modernize the Afghan society, were widely opposed by the Afghan people and more specifically Muslims. Moreover, strengthening of right winged authorities and Muslim activists who were supported by the Muslims who came from the surrounding countries to fight in the name of Allah. These so called Mujahedins played their big role in the following war years[47] .

The communist Party was faced by a harsh opposition from the Mujahedins guerillas, side by side with an internal dispute within the Party itself later on . The country was getting uncontrollable . The Communist Party officials repeatedly asked for a military intervention from the Soviet Union. The Soviet didn't interfere at first and denied all the requests from The communist Party officials, it was until 1979 when Foreign affairs minister Hafizullah Amin managed to get power ,after killing Taraki and being not able to hold the country safe, his requests were answered by the Soviet Union Authorities to fight Mujahedins who were increasing in number and power. Khaled Hosseini, in *the Kite Runner*, vividly describes Afghanistan during the first Soviet Invasion and predicts its future , the following lines proves how Russians attacked Afghanistan :

> Huddled together in the dining room and waiting for the sun to rise , none of us had any notion that a way of life had ended . Our way of life . If not quite yet , then at least it was the beginning of end . The end , the official end, would come first in April 1978 with the communist coup d'etat , and then in December 1979, when Russian tanks would roll into the very same streets where Hassan and I played , bringing the death of the Afghanistan I knew and marking the start of still ongoing era of bloodletting.[48]

[47]Pleskotova Marie ,"*Teaching Moral Values through Khaled Hosseini's Novels"*, p: 13.
[48]*The Kite Runner* , p: 32

The rule of Hafizullah was known as the bloodiest therefore led to a bad reputation of communist leaders as well as a critical view from the neighboring and world countries that started to support Mujahedins militarily . Due to the harsh fight many Afghan people were compelled to leave their homeland and property and seek for help in other countries as refugees .Likewise , in *the Kite Runner* , Amir and his father are also destined to leave their country, he describes the way they left in the following lines :

> Standing on the shoulder of the road, I thought the way we'd left the house where I'd lived my entire life ,as if we were going out for a bite : dishes smeared with *kofta* piled in the kitchen sink; laundry in the wicker basket in the foyer ;beds unmade ; Baba's business suits hanging in the closet .Tapestries still hung on the walls of the living room and my mother's books still crowded the shelves in Baba's study . The signs of our elopement were subtle : My parents 'wedding picture was gone , as was the grainy photograph of my grandfather and King Nader Shah standing over the dead deer. A few items were missed from the closets. The leather-bound notebook Rahim Khan had given me five years earlier was gone.[49]

Immediately after Amin was killed by his allies , Barak Karmal who was an ambassador , became the new president . This later launched a program to calm down conflicts and take over the country. Unfortunately his program did not work out and the struggle lasted for more than ten years. The aim of the Soviet invasion is to prevent Mujahedins forces from overthrowing the official Afghan government but they never succeeded in suppressing their resistance[50].The rising power of the Afghan opposition forces , cruelty and absurdity of the fights , led to negotiation about the presence of the Soviets in Afghanistan . It took a long time , but finally the last Soviet soldiers left Afghanistan on the 14th February of 1989.

The war between the Russians and the Talibans created poverty , economic crisis , fear and uncertainty of life in Afghanistan . The war destroyed public villages , streets , and other physical structures of Afghanistan . These things are presented very clearly in *the Kite*

[49]*The Kite Runner* , p: 97-98

[50] Pleskotova Marie ,*Teaching Moral Values through Khaled Hosseini's Novels* , p: 14.

Runner. Khaled Hosseini tries to present the situation of the after war period and the hardship of Afghanistan's people: Amir says :

> We had crossed the border and signs of poverty were everywhere . On either side of the road I saw chains of little villages sprouting here and there , like discarded toys among the rocks , broken mud houses and huts consisting of little more than four wooden poles and a tattered cloth as a roof . I saw children dressed in rags chasing a soccer ball outside the huts . A few miles later , I spotted a cluster of men sitting on their haunches , like a row of crows , on the carcass of an old burned-out Soviet tank , the wind fluttering the edges of the blankets thrown around them . Behind them , a woman in brown *burqa* carried a large clay pot on shoulders , down a rutted path toward a string of mud houses . [51]

2.3. The Civil War and The Rise of Taliban

Putting an end to the Soviet occupation did not mean the end of conflicts in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, factions which were once united broke into rival factions confronting each other to control and get into power. Violence did not stop and attempts by the ruling government to prevent these confrontations were gone in vain . The country was divided between various individual commanders , who were supported by several foreign , western or Muslim countries. The country was torn by fierce fighting . The common men feared all of these factions very much as the rule of any one of them meant absolute hell for the residents of Afghanistan . Rahim Khan in *the Kite Runner* expresses how Afghans feared the Afghanistan under any of these religious factions:

> "The infighting between the factions was fierce and no one knew if they would live to see the end of the day . Our ears become accustomed to the rumble of gunfire , our eyes familiar with the sight of men digging bodies of piles of rubble . Kabul in those days...Was as close as you could get to that proverbial hell on earth "[52]

[51] *The Kite Runner* , p: 203.
[52] Ibid., p:185-186.

The most fragmented part was the south and east of Afghanistan , home of the future strongest force in the country- Taliban[53].

In November 1986, Mohammad Najibullah was elected president of Afghanistan. He attempted to introduce a "national reconciliation" program , but with little success[54]. The fact that the withdrawal of the Soviets had left the country in complete mess and devastation, made the issue of bringing stability to the country a very hard task. As a result of this fighting among mujahideen forces , the pro-Moscow regime of president Najibullah was able to cling to power for three years after the Soviet withdrawal. In April 1992 , Kabul finally fell to elements of the mujahideen , who then established a new government. Mujahideen leaders agreed to introduce rotating presidency , starting with Burhanuddin Rabbani . However, disputes broke out over the division of the government posts, and the fighting flared again. Pashtun leaders were particularly concerned about the makeup of the government and resented having to hand over power to other ethnic groups after more than 250 years of uninterrupted Pashtun rule[55]. Khaled Hosseini , through the character of Rahim Kan provides a detailed description of the reality of Afghanistan during the period 1992 to 1996 :

> […][W]hen the Northern Alliance took over Kabul between 1992 and 1996 different factions claimed different parts of Kabul , " If you went from the Shar-e-Nau section to Kerteh-Parwan to buy a carpet , you risked getting shot by a sniper or getting blown up by a rocket – if you got passed all the checkpoints , that was . You practically needed a visa to go from one neighborhood to the other . So people just stayed put, prayed the next rocket wouldn't hit their home ." He told me how people knocked holes in the walls of their homes so they could bypass the dangerous streets and would move down the block from hole to hole. In other parts , people moved about in underground tunnels . [56]

The Taliban ,which comes from the Persian Durrani word "*Talib"* that means "*a religious student* ", was initially a mixture of mujahedeen who fought against the Soviet invasion in

[53]Pleskotova Marie , *Teaching Moral Values through Khaled Hosseini's Novels* , p: 15.
[54] Jones Seth G ."The Age of Insurgency". In Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan : Rand Counterinsurgency Study. *Santa Monica , CA; Pittsburgh*, PA: RAND Corporation, 2008. Vol. 4 ,pp: 25-36. p: 27.
[55]Ibid.
[56]*The Kite Runner* , p: 174.

the 1980's , and a group of Pashtun tribesmen who spent time in Pakistani religious schools , or madrassas , and received assistance from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI). The Group's leaders practiced Wahhabism , an orthodox form of Sunni Islam similar to that practiced in Saudi Arabia .With the help of government defections, the Taliban emerged as a force in Afghan politics in 1994 in the midst of a civil war between forces in southern and northern Afghanistan. They gained an initial territorial foothold in the southern city of Kandahar , and over the next two years expanded their influence through a mixture of force, negotiation , and payoffs. In the 1996 , the Taliban captured capital Kabul and took control of the national government[57].

Taliban came with an objective to purge Afghan society from criminals and make peace at large . The Islamist orientation was the inspirational and guiding force in Taliban's governance . Mullah Mohammad was declared Amir-ul-Momineen by the 1200 Islamic scholars in 1996. Taliban changed the name of Afghanistan from Islamic State of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan . In pursuance of their Islamic inspiration , their first and foremost task was to declare Islamic Sharia as the law of land and Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan . To eradicate crimes and infighting from society , a powerful unified and all pervasive Islamic government was considered vital across the country[58]. Afghan people , Pashtun ethnic group specifically, saw Taliban members as heroes when they got into power ending factional confrontations in 1996 . However, Taliban activities later shocked the Afghan people and mostly the Hazaras ethnic minority. Rahim Khan talking to Amir , in *the Kite Runner,* gives a strong description of hopeful then frustrated Afghan people and Hazaras sufferings during Taliban rule:

> "I told you how we all celebrated in 1996 when Taliban rolled in and put an end to the daily fighting . I remember coming home that night and finding Hassan […] listening

[57]Jayshree Bajoria , "*The Taliban in Afghanistan"*, Council on Foreign Relations , 2011. http://www.cfc.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551. (Accessed on April,2018)

[58]Dr Qamar Fatima, "The Rise and Fall of Taliban Regime(1994-2001)In Afghanistan : The Internal Dynamics", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS),* Vol 19. No 1. (Jan.2014). pp: 35-46. p: 40 .

> to the radio . He had sober look in his eyes . I asked him what was wrong , and he just shook his head". "God help the Hazaras now ".[…]"The war is over , Hassan " I said . "There is going to be peace ,Inshallah, and happiness and calm . No more rockets , no more killing , no more funerals !". […]A few weeks later , the Taliban banned kite fighting . And two years later , in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif. [59]

Taliban formulated their policies under their own self-styled interpretation of Sharia: a great number of decrees were issued . These decrees specially focused on the role of women in society . The women fully denied from education , employment and any other social, recreational activities. However, men were made subject to a strict dress code and shaving became a prohibited act[60]. Taliban create a discourse of God to dominate people , they impose their activities in the name of God , *the Kite runner* gives a clear vision about their rule of law :

> "Every sinner must be punished in a manner befitting his sin!" the cleric repeated into the mike , lowering his voice , enunciating each word slowly , dramatically ." And what manner of punishment , brothers and sisters ,befits the adulterers ? How shall we punish those who dishonor the sanctity of marriage ? How shall we deal with those who spit in the face of God ? How shall we answer those who throw stones at the windows of God's house ? WE SHALL THROW THE STONES BACK!"[61]

Due to Taliban's Human rights violations, people were either dead or in refugee camps in Pakistan. Hosseini, through the voices of Amir and Farid , visualizes the situation of the Afghan people during Taliban rule in the following extract:

> Most of those people , he said , were either dead or in refugee camps in Pakistan . "And sometimes the dead are luckier ," he said .He pointed to the crumbled, charred remains of a tiny village . It was just a tuft of blackened , roofless walls now . I saw a dog sleeping along one of the walls. " I had a friend there once," Farid said ." He was very good bicycle repairman . He played the table well too The Taliban killed him and his family and burned his.

[59]*The Kite Runner* , p: 187.
[60]Dr Qamar Fatima, "The Rise and Fall of Taliban Regime(1994-2001)In Afghanistan" : p: 40.
[61]*The Kite Runner* , p: 236 .

village ." We drove past the burned village , and the dog didn't move.[62]

Taliban was also known by its cultural and religious intolerance . They banned some sports like kite flying: Rahim Khan says : "*A few weeks later , the Taliban banned kite fighting. And two years later , in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif*[63]. They destroyed Afghanistan's cultural Heritage which are built hundreds of years ago . They destroy the giant Buddhas in the Bamiyan . In *The Kite Runner*, Amir questioning :*"What heritage ?"I said. "The Taliban have destroyed what heritage Afghan had . You saw what they did to the giant Buddhas in Bamiyan".*[64]

Taliban received financial support from various sources. the support provided by the Pakistani ISI strengthened the link between the ISI and Taliban as time went on and continued to play a key role in the Expansion of the Taliban movement. Saudi Arabia was another important ally and source of Taliban's financial and material supplies , it played a crucial role in advancing and consolidating Taliban power in major cities like Jalalabad and Kabul . In addition to this outside support , there was an internal and very lucrative source of income. Whenever the Taliban captured a territory , they encouraged the existing drug trade by not placing prohibitions on the growth and sale of opium poppy provided that it preserve a share in the profit . In addition to the permission of the poppy cultivation , the Taliban opened a new source of income, by using the basis of Islam such as *Zakat* to convince people donate their money. Local commanders also imposed taxes to build their own wealth and support their troops . This money funded weapons, ammunition , and fuel ; provided food and clothes for the combatants ; and paid the salaries , transport and bonuses that the Taliban leadership allowed to its fighters[65].

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[62]*The Kite Runner*, p: 214.
[63]Ibid., p: 187.
[64]Ibid., p: 294.
[65]Rachid Ahmed , *Taliban , Military Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia ,* New Heaven and London: Yale University Press , (2001) , p: 124.

It is debatable whether the Taliban would have , absent international dynamics post 9/11, managed to consolidate their control . By 2001, aside from growing signs of splits are dissents within the Taliban leadership, the tribal Pashtuns demonstrated growing resentment against the strictures and corruption of Taliban rule and their lack of consideration for the suffering population , even in Kandahar , their heartland[66] . Local opposition to Taliban control grew not only because of the Taliban's brutal rule but also due to their failure to provide the economic goods. Even absent international intervention, this upsurge of opposition would have at the very least posed serious challenges to regime consolidation[67] . When the Taliban were outset from their last base , Kandahar, in December 2001 , their departure was welcomed not just by the Hazaras , Uzbeks , and Tajiks but also in Pashtun-majority southern and eastern Afghanistan . *The Kite Runner* depicts Afghan people' satisfaction with the Taliban violations, Rahim Khan explains :

> People were so tired of constant fighting , tired of the rockets , the gunfire , the explosions , tired of watching Gulbuddin and his cohorts firing on anything that moved . The Alliance did more damage to Kabul than the Shorawi.[68]

There was little resistance to the international intervention countrywide . While the Taliban's ethnic and military rivals supported the international intervention , many co-opted commanders chose , once again to join the winning side . Given the lack of domestic ownership , the Taliban's politico-religious order also fast collapsed[69].However, after nearly six years of their collapse , the Taliban have re-emerged , leading an insurgency which aimed at destabilizing the country's main heartlands.

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[66]Rachid Ahmed , *Taliban : The Story of the Afghan Warlords* , London : Pan Books , (2008). p: 85.
[67] Ibid., p: 79.
[68]*The Kite Runner* , p: 174
[69]Cheryl , Bernard, Ole Kvaerno and Others , " *Afghanistan State and Society , Great Power Politics , and the Way Ahead":* findings from an international conference , Copenhagen, Denmark , 2007.Published by Rand Corporation . 2008.pp:1-95.p: 57.
http://www.rand.org. (Accessed on April, 2018).

2.4. The 9/ 11 events and the American Intervention in Afghanistan

As mentioned before, Afghanistan during the civil war, and more specifically the Taliban governance, that was characterized by religious extremism, has apparently offer a shelter for many other religious factions in the world. These later share with Taliban some basic beliefs ,ideologies , and doctrines such as Jihad in the name of Allah as well as the tendency toward Islamic crusades . Some of these factions like Al Qaeda , led by Osama Be Laden ,were accused of many terrorist attacks in the world. Before his arrival to Afghanistan, bin Laden was known to American intelligence and was established among ultra-fundamentalists along with other Islamic figures on the fringe of the Islamic scholarly community. He was a fundraiser and preacher[70].

Al Qaeda was accused of many terrorist attacks in the world and therefore condemned by international community as being a terrorist organization. Many attempts were made by the U.S. to have the Taliban hand over bin Laden [71]. The Taliban Used a list of excuses over time as to why they would not and could not hand over bin Laden . It is no coincidence that in the Pashtunwali code , a guest is to be protected even if it means dying[72].

On September 11, 2001 , the United States suffered shocking terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Most agree that the attacks were perpetrated by Osama bin Laden and several of his al Qaeda followers and that these same non-state actors had been behind previous attacks on the U.S.S. Cole and U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. On October 7, 2001, the United States used massive military force in self-defense against such ongoing processes of armed attack by bin Laden and members of al Qaeda in Afghanistan. At that time , the United States also used massive military force against members of the armed forces of Taliban regime in

[70]Abdel Bari Atwan , *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* , Berkeley: University of California Press , 2008.p: 221.
[71]Gutman Roy, *How We Missed The Story : Osama Bin Laden , the Taliban , and the Hijacking of Afghanistan ,* Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace , 2008 . p: 153.
[72]Schultheis Rob , *Hunting Bin Laden : How Al-Qaeda is winning the War on Terror* , New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008 , p: 14.

Afghanistan[73]. Khaled Hosseini portrayes the events and their impact on Afghanistan as follows:

> Tuesday morning last September , the Twin Towers crumbling down and ,overnight , the world changed . The American flag suddenly appeared everywhere , on the antennae of yellow cabs weaving around traffic , on the lapels of pedestrians walking the sidewalks in steady stream […] soon after the attacks , America bombed Afghanistan , the Northern Alliance moved in , and the Taliban scurried like rats into the caves .[74]

The events prompted President Bush , to state , "*We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbored them "*, referring to Taliban . Eventually, thousands of Taliban fighters and their followers had found sanctuary in Pakistan's federally administrative tribal area at the center of the border as well as the west and the north west frontiers. Taliban and some other religious extremists are operating in both sides in Pakistan and Afghanistan .

The international community put a lot of pressure on Pakistan Government to take effective actions against the Taliban , detaining Taliban leaders and closing command and control centers. It persisted on preventing the flow of funds , arms and ammunition to the Taliban which came from the Pakistani border provinces known as being pro-Taliban .

In the spring and summer of 2002 , Taliban and other forces began to conduct offensive operations to overthrew the Afghan government and coerce the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces. In April , for example , Taliban and jihadist forces conducted a series of offensive attacks in Kandahar , Khowst , Nangarhar, Kabul , and other Afghan provinces[75]. These operations marked the return of Taliban to the conflict scene . Despite efforts made by Taliban and other jihadist groups to prevent the establishment of The government that

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[73]Jordan J. Paust , "War and Enemy Status After 9/11: Attacks on the Laws of War", *Yale Journal of International Law* . Article 5.Vol 28, No 2.(2003) .pp:325-335 . p: 325.
[74]*The Kite Runner* , p: 316.
[75]Jones Seth G ."The Age of Insurgency". In Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan : Rand Counterinsurgency Study. p: 26.

excluded the participation of the Taliban members , the Afghan people succeeded to elect a new parliament as well as a new president.

The U.S led coalition intervention in Afghanistan marked the down of new tumultuous, unstable and confronting country. The fight continues and the suffering of the Afghan people didn't reach a calm steady point. Afghanistan acquires a new name , Taliban, therefore the world's perception of the country becomes associated with the deeds of Taliban. The Afghan people suffered both from a harsh history and unfair perception by the worldwide audience .

2.5. Post-War Afghanistan

In 2002, the United States orchestrated the overthrow of Taliban regime using a combination of special operations forces , air power , and support from indigenous allies[76]. Although Afghanistan was still suffering continuous fighting and limitless conflicts, the United States along with the United Nations and coalition allies , started to think about ways to assist Afghans rebuild their country at all the levels . These reconstruction efforts were largely welcomed by Afghanistan leaders. They signed what is known as the Bonn Agreement, which highlighted the main points to achieve peace and security , reestablishing the government institutions as well as reconstructing Afghanistan[77]. The portrayal of these events is clear in *The Kite runner* through the following extract:

> […] and people sipping lattes at Starbucks were talking about the battle of Kunduz , the Taliban's last stronghold in the north That December , Pashtuns , Tajiks , Uzbecks , and Hazaras gathered in Bonn and , under the watchful eye of the UN , began the process that might someday end over twenty years of unhappiness in their Watan.[78]

The United States efforts of reconstructing the country had achieved some progress in some areas . In addition , a central government could be established with a democratic constitution, new currency , new army and police force became all reality for the Afghans . The first ever

[76]Seth G Jones . "Establishing Law and Order After Conflict , Chapter: Afghanistan " . p: 61.
[77]Ibid .
[78]*The Kite Runner* , p: 316.

democratic elections were held in 2004, where Afghans chose their leader and first democratic president Hamid Karzai. Women enjoy far greater freedom than they do during the Taliban regime , and girls become allowed to enter schools and pursue studies.

But unless there is notable improvements in stemming critical security threats , it is unlikely that Afghanistan will become a viable and stable country[79]. The reconstructions have not curbed several critical security threats to the state .Terrorists attacks have increased considerably against Afghan civilians and foreign workers since January 2002, as well as the number of deaths from terrorist attacks. Moreover, the cultivation and production of opium poppy, which presents the main financial source for the Taliban regime, have risen since 2001. Warlords and regional commanders still control substantial territory , although the central government has made progress in curbing the power of some warlords . despite the huge efforts , Afghanistan is still suffering the lack of unfuctioning justice.

[79]Seth G Jones . "Establishing Law and Order After Conflict , Chapter: Afghanistan " , p: 63.

CHAPTER TWO:READING TO KNOW THE OTHER:

A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

> I Know what you want .You want a story that won't surprise you . That will confirm what you already know . That won't make you see higher or further or differently. You want a flat story . An immobile story .You want dry , yeastless factuality .
>
> Martel .Y. *Life of Pi* , New York : Harcourt . 2001. p: 302

In this chapter we are going to discuss how Hosseini dealt with Afghanistan's historical progression and otherness, and how they affected his characters' lives and relationships, as well as how he portrayed Islam in Afghanistan and its perception by the West. There were many themes tackled in *The Kite Runner*, yet marginalization and denigration of *the Other* in Afghanistan was the most current. Tribal conflicts between ethnic groups in Afghanistan were the backbone of the novel's events affecting Afghan's psychology and social values.

Hosseini in *The Kite Runner* also tried to present Islam in its real essence against the Western stereotypical presentation of Islam as the other , because of the huge rivalry between Islam and Christianity, helped by the 9/11 attacks and the huge propaganda against Islam, the West perceives Muslims as *the Other* and vice versa. Hosseini made a clear cut between Islam as a religion based on mercy and redemption, and Islam which is used by extremists as an alibi on which they hang their terrorist actions.

Knowledge about Muslims and the West's relationship with predominantly Muslim countries , such as Afghanistan , has been largely shaped by *Orientalism* as an intellectual orientation to legitimize colonialism. Without an awareness of how they are reading *the Other* , negative generalizations have been created .

This chapter spots the light on the social, ethnic and *Racial Otherness* in *The Kite Runner* which affected the Afghans prototyped by the characters in the novel, how Hosseini portrayed Islam and how could he approach the two the West and East.

1. *Otherness* As A Postcolonial Issue

> People are always tempted to divide people into us and them, the in-group and the other, our civilization and those barbarians. Scholars have analysed the world in terms of the Orient and the Occident, North and South, centre and periphery, the West and the rest.
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> Huntington, P, S, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York : Simon & Schuster. 1996 .p: 32.

In 1978, when Edward Said published his book *Orientalism*, it provides a crucial view to postcolonial studies. In which Said identifies series of assumption that the West makes about the East. Edward Said declares:

> For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West. To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a kind of cultural and intellectual proletariat useful for the Orient list's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will [80]

The term "*Orientalism"* as Said defines it in his 1978 introduction, is a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on *the Orient's* special place in European Western experience. It is important to note that the concept of *Orientalism* is an ideological creation that, in Said's words again, *is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident* . This ideological creation of *the Orient* essentially allows the West to begin to approach and deal with the "*Otherness"* of *the Orient* and their culture, customs, and beliefs.[81]. So, *the Orient* can only exist in relation to the West as an "incorporated weak partner" .Therefore, when observing these kinds of relationships between the West and East, and characters within Hosseini's text, such as that

[80]Edward Said , *Orientalism* , New York : Vintage Books, 1978. p: 208.
[81] Hunt Sarah, "*Can The West Read*," *Oxy Scholar-Occidental College* , March 2009 .pp: 1-17, p: 3.

between Amir and Hassan, it is clear that Hosseini is delivering to his readers an "*Orientalized*" Afghan culture that uses an internal Orientalist to reflect specifically American political and psychological needs.

And here we have no intention to classify Hosseini as a true Orientalist by Said's terms. Said defines an Orientalist early on in his introduction as anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches *the Orient* and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist either in its specific or general aspects and that what he or she does is *Orientalism*. However, since Hosseini as an Afghan-American is occupying a hybrid position of being comprised of both East and West, his work resists being classified as Orientalist.[82]

Therefore Said calls for a new treatment of *the Orient* by authors belonging to *the Orient* rather than depending on a second hand representation .Said also help us to explore the process of constructing binary oppositions and what made these oppositions came to being.

Following the events of 9/11, some critics have made the argument that we are dealing with a second generation of *Orientalism,* what has been commonly known as "*New Orientalism*". Where Said´s *Orientalism* was focused on the East and the eroticizing of the "*Other"* , New Orientalism centers specifically on the Middle East and the Arab World . Shahid Alam clarifies that :

> What makes this repackaged Orientalism new are its intentions, its proponents, and the enemy it has targeted for destruction.[83]

The Other is no longer portrayed as just barbaric and primitive but consciously portrayed as evil and less: less civilized, less modern, less moral and oppressive. Stephan Morton affirms that:

> Throughout the history of western culture and thought there are certain people, concepts and ideas that are defined as "Other": as monsters, aliens or savages who threaten the values of civilized society, or the stability of

[82]Rekha Chitra ,"Reinforcing the Stereotypic Binaries: Orientalist reading of Hosseini's The Kite Runner", p: 2.
[83]Alam, M. Shahid. *Challenging the New Orientalism: Dissenting Essays on the War Against Islam* . North Haledon: Islamic Publications International , January 1st , 2007.

> the rational human self". Such "Others" have included death , the unconscious and madness, as well as the Oriental, non-western "Other", the foreigner. In the structure of western thought, the "Other" is relegated to a place outside of or exterior to the normal, civilised values of western culture.[84]

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is a powerful and approachable characterization of Afghan cultural identity which creates a "bridge of understanding" between the West and Afghan culture, to identify the stereotypical, or perhaps Orientalist way of understanding the relationship between the East and the West. It bridges the gap between Western literary audience and the culture of the Middle East.

Afghanistan has witnessed a long history of foreign interference by the Greeks, Persians, Turk, British, Indians and Russians .This country suffered postcolonial legacy of ethnic and tribal bloody conflicts which created a social stratification and ethnic conflicts. In brief this gave birth to otherness which is deeply rooted in colonialism, which has also been associated with marginalized people, those who by virtue of their difference from the dominant group , have been disempowered, robbed of a voice in the social , religious, and political world. So, we ask: Who is *the Other* ? , or precisely who represents *the Other* in *the kite runner*?.

The Other maybe defined as the one who is different, in gender , race, religion or wealth. Emmanuel Levinas explains the "*Other"* as "the self", because the self cannot exist, cannot have a concept of itself as a self without *the Other* . And again in Said's words, Muslims represent the Other for Westerners, and the Westerners represent the deepest and most recurring images of *the Other*.

In *The Kite Runner* both the Pashtun and the Hazara represent *the Other* for each other. Therefore, the Hazara are stereotyped by the Pashtun as illiterate, passive, slaves, and filthy naive with distinctive physical appearance evidently because of the Hazara's racial difference and ancestry as well as being Shi'a Muslims. In the novel, Assef addressed Amir asking him, how he can call Hassan a "friend" considering that he is a Hazara. Assef claims that:

[84]Morton .S. *Gayatri Chakravosty Spivak* . London: Routledge, 2003 . p: 37.

"Afghanistan is the land of Pashtun , it always has been and always will be"[85]. He argues that the Pashtun are the true, pure Afghans, "*the Hazara people pollute their homeland, or as he puts Watan, not this Flat-Nose Hazara as he describes Hassan"*[86] . Amir replies in return screaming*: " he is not his friend, he is his servant".*[87] Bhabha explains this kind of stereotyping the Pashtun practices against the Hazara as an ideological construction based on the concept of "fixity" which is a sign of cultural, historical and racial difference in the discourse of colonialism.

It is clearly seen that the superior dominant social group fixes the inferior one with descriptions that identify them, by which they rob their voice so they can't identify themselves, and finally find themselves robbed of their identity as well. This racial or ethnic segregation represent the way individuals or social groups view one another, *the Other* is seen as enviable and corrupt minority.

For instance, for Baba the "*Bearded men*" represents *the Other* ; for the Sunni Shi'a are *the Other* and vice versa. For Assef not only the Hazara are *the Other* since he stereotypes them as dogs ,but also all the Pashtuns who do not apply the Sharia were segregated as well .The Hazara in Afghanistan stands as the racial, social and religious *Other*, were alienated, marginalized and oppressed.

The Orientalist stereotyping is also seen in the characters of both Amir the protagonist and Assef, the antagonist of the novel. While Western readers attempt to deal with the "*Otherness*" of Amir through self-recognition, they rely on the Orientalist stereotypes to cast Assef the position of Oriental inferiority.

The Western readers come to find the character of Assef as pagan, savage, criminal and needing reform. Thus , Oriental characters are always inferior to their Western counterparts. However, Amir's Western identity progresses and develops throughout the novel becoming a

[85] *The Kite Runner* , p: 40.
[86]Ibid.
[87]Ibid., p: 41.

more modern, liberal, Western character whereas Assef only develops by becoming an increasingly inferior and villainous "Oriental" character. Hence , over the course of the novel, the function of the modern American West and a traditional Muslim world are juxtaposed, creating binary opposition, which in turn inflames the differences between the two opposites and ultimately sustains the dominance of Western power structures over the East.[88]

2. The Effects of Otherness and History on the Characters

2.1. Baba And Ali

Ali is a Hazara, his parents were killed by two men from a wealthy family in Kabul leaving him alone at an early age. The judge who were Amir's grandfather, ordered the two men to go to Kandahar and serve in the army. *"Amir's grandfather brought the young Ali with him and ordered the servants to tutor him but to be kind to him*".[89].As we notice the punishment for killing the Hazara couple was just one year in the army. And the young Hazara was sent to be a servant, as if he was destined from birth to be a servant for being a Hazara . During those years, Ali and Baba were very close to each other since they grew up together, played together but Baba never referred to Ali as his friend.

Ali has always been loyal to Baba and Amir, his son. Toophan Agha or Baba rewarded Ali by having an affair with his wife Sanaubar who later runs away with a group of musicians leaving poor Ali alone with the new-born Hassan who is in fact Baba's son, but the truth isn't revealed until the end of the story. The kind of relation that Baba and Ali share is a kind of slavery, exploitation of the weak , inferior Hazara.

2.2.Baba And Amir

Amir and his Baba are so different in personality and attitudes to the point that, Baba said to Rahim Khan that Amir is always buried in his books or shuffling around the house like he's lost in some dreams, Baba is making a comparison between him when he was young and his

[88] Hunt Sarah, "*Can The West Read*," *Oxy Scholar-Occidental College* , March 2009. pp: 1-17, p: 17.
[89] *The Kite Runner* , p: 21.

son Amir saying that he wasn't like that and neither were any of the kids he grew up with. He even says that" *there is something missing in Amir that Amir troubles him in a way he can't express and if he hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of his wife, he'd never believe that he is his son*".[90]

On the other hand , Baba was Amir's idol , he is the strong fearless man, respectful ,wealthy, the star of every party, and the generous charity donor .Baba shaped Amir's personality and faith in an Afghan society where the male dominates and women have little if any rights or even presence.

Baba has raised Amir on his own and he wanted to make him a real Pashtun, so he was disappointed when he saw his son incapable of defending himself arguing that a boy who can't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything. Maybe Baba here is influenced by his Afghan culture that Afghanistan needs strong men to defend it not men addicted to books, even Amir's car sickness was considered as a weakness, and caused Baba embarrassment and disappointment.

When Baba and Amir flee to America, the source of embarrassment and disappointment for Baba turned out to be a blessing and the cause of Amir success in America. There in America the father- son relationship improved and Hassan fitted well in the western society, unlike Baba who found troubles working for others, living in a small rented house, speaking a new language and adapting in a new culture and lifestyle. After his father dies and his return to Afghanistan, Amir discovers the truth of Hassan being his half-brother, realizing that his Baba has committed the unforgivable sin which is "theft", Baba has stolen Ali and Hassan right to know the truth. And finally Amir realizes that he shares so many in common with his father, as they both mistreated Hassan and Ali.

[90]Ibid., p: 19

2.3.Amir And Hassan

Hassan accompanied Amir nearly everywhere and whenever people ask about Hassan they use the phrase "your Hazara" as if Hassan was some kind of property. Actually, Amir loved Hassan, he always say that Hassan is more than a friend, almost a brother to him (almost not like or is a brother to me).Amir and Hassan were inseparable, they called themselves "the Sultans of Kabul", they played, laughed and grew up together. But deeply Amir as a Pashtun never forgets or overcome the differences between him and Hassan and he acted upon his Pashtun uprisings. Amir believed that history isn't easy to overcome, neither is religion .In the end, he was a Pashtun and Hassan was a Hazara, he was Sunni and Hassan was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that nothing.[91]Assef confirms his screaming at Hassan's face:

> But before you sacrifice yourself for him, think about this: would he do the same for you? Have you ever wondered why he never includes you in the games when he has guests? Why he only plays with you when no one else is around? I'll tell you why, Hazara. Because to him, you‘re nothing but an ugly pet. Something he can play with when he's bored, something he can kick when he's angry. Don't ever fool yourself and think you're something more.[92]

Hassan was innocent, courageous and naïve, he was always there for Amir, he protected him from other children even Assef and he listened to all his stories with eagerness and passion. Amir was a weak and unsecured child who grew up under the shadow of his father and wealth. He used his position and knowledge to belittle Hassan who would grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras? Amir used to say.

In fact despite all the social and ethnic differences Amir and Hassan shares a strong friendship, this can be proven in the deep feeling of guilt that hunted Amir for years after betraying Hassan, by choosing to run while Hassan was being raped by Assef. Amir says:

> Hassan knew I'd seen everything in that alley, that I stood there and done nothing. He knew I had betrayed him and

[91]Ibid., p: 21.
[92]Ibid., p: 72.

> yet he was rescuing me once again, maybe for the last time. I loved him in that moment, loved him more than I'd ever loved anyone, and I wanted to tell them all that I was the snake in the grass, the monster in the lake. I wasn't worthy of this sacrifice. I was a liar, a cheat, and a thief.[93]

Amir at the beginning of the novel declares even before he knew that Hassan is his brother that it's wrong what they say about the past, during his years in America he learned about how he can bury it. But when he returned to Afghanistan, he realized that he have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years. All this means that he didn't forget what he did and that he can't forgive himself for that.

2.4.Rahim Khan

Rahim Khan is Baba's closest friend and secret keeper. He is from a well- known, wealthy and reputable family in Kabul. Rahim Khan was a great Pashtun, a man of massive knowledge but yet single, as many characters in the novel Rahim was victimized by ethnic differences and tribalism. On Amir's thirteenth birthday Rahim Khan shared Amir a secret ,he says that : *"[He] had once fell in love with Homaira who were a Hazara, the daughter of their neighbors servants. She was as beautiful as a pari, light brown hair, big hazel eyes*."[94]

When Rahim Khan decided to marry Homaira a big conflict started in the family, *his* brother Jalal blames him and says*: "you should have seen the look on my father's face when I told him. My mother actually fainted…My father actually went to fetch his hunting rifle before my father stopped him"*[95]. Obviously intermarriage between a Pashtun and a Hazara is forbidden and socially unacceptable. Unfortunately the Hazara is the one to be punished .On the same day Rahim Khan announced his desire to marry Homaira , his father put Homaira and her family on a lorry and sent them off to Hazarajat, and he never saw her again. Homaira here in the novel represents the despised socially, ethnically and racially inferior other. Rahim Khan tries to justify his surrender saying that *:" you don't order someone to*

[93]Ibid., p:105.
[94]Ibid., p:83.
[95]Ibid., p:84.

polish your shoes one day and call them sister the next"[96]. So we understand here that he has accepted his destiny and his society's decision that his beloved one is inferior to him and won't be a suitable wife for him.

2.5.Assef And Taliban

Assef was described by Khaled Hosseini as a savage villain. He is Amir's neighbor antagonist. Assef is the son of an Afghan father and a German mother and ironically, he is of mixed origin, an advocate of Pashtun dominance over the Hazara. Assef gave Amir a Biography of Hitler on his birthday, which Hosseini associated this gift with Assef's future vision for Afghanistan which is shown in his abuse and segregation of Hassan the Hazara. In fact Assef told Amir that it was too late for Hitler but not for them (the Pashtuns) , and here Assef is symbolizing the Taliban and all the Afghan holding the same ideology.

After the Taliban defeat of the Russian, they became the hero of the country, Rahim Khan said that when the Taliban rolled in and kicked the Alliance out of Kabul, he actually danced on the street, and he wasn't alone. People were celebrating , greeting the Taliban in the streets. People were so tired of the constant fighting , tired of the rockets and the gunfire.

Along the story Hosseini tried to compare between the life in Afghanistan before and during the Taliban rule in which they destroyed the country, robbed the people and tried to massacre the Hazara. In a conversation between Amir and Assef, Assef narrates proudly, *"you should have been with me in Mazar*[97]*,August 1998"*[98]. Where they left the Hazara out for the dogs, breaking their doors down, sweeping the barrel of their machine gun and fire .Assef describes these terrifying deeds as a liberating feeling, knowing that you are doing God's work.

[96]Ibid., p:85.
[97]Mazar: A massacre in 1998 where hundreds of Hazara were killed brutally by the Taliban.
[98] *Kite Runner*, p: 242.

3. The Westernized Protagonist and The Bad Muslim

> Somewhere in the Middle East a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and between their bows to Mecca, putting together bomb to blow up an American airliner. During the 1970s and1980s Americans consumed millions of Japanese cars, T V sets, cameras, and electronic gadgets without being "Japanized" and indeed while becoming considerably more antagonistic toward Japan. Only naive arrogance can lead Westerners to assume that non-Westerners will become "Westernized" by acquiring Western goods.
>
> Huntington, P, S, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York : Simon & Schuster. 1996 .p: 58.

The notion of Westernization in the Middle East raises a number of interrelated issues; it refers to a process by which Middle Eastern countries engaged Western political and cultural philosophy in search for modernity. Many historians have defined Westernization narrowly as the "all-out adoption of the Western model," which they contrast to "modernization", however, Modernity and Westernization cannot be separated. And even when Western models were not adopted, the West provided the terms of: industrialization, women's rights, secular law, the bureaucratic state, and popular sovereignty.

Like the British and the French before them, the Soviets and the United States in their rivalry in the Middle East tried to create societies and polities in their own image. The alternative program was democracy not the imitations of Western democracies but a newly made democracy that allow them to control the Middle East and play them like a puppet[99]. Back on 2006, former CIA Chief James Woolsey anticipated the future of the Middle East Countries saying that *: "They will make us an Islam that suits them"* [100].

Following September 11, there were new rounds of cultural talk. This talk has made religion a political category, differentiating "good Muslims" from "bad Muslims", rather

[99] Ellen Amster, *Westernization - Middle East* – Bibliography ,2001. http://science.jrank.org/pages/8153/Westernization-Middle-East.html (Accessed on April 24th ,2018).
[100] James Woosely, "*An Islam Made By CAI- Syrian facts* ," 2017. http://www.syrianfacts.com (Accessed on April , 2018).

than terrorists from civilians. There appeared a new link between Islam and terrorism which became a central media concern, as Said writes*: "The media have…covered Islam"*[101]: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it "known" .So, beyond the simple but radical suggestion that if there are good Muslims and bad Muslims, there must also be good Westerners and bad Westerners[102]. Khaled Hosseini recalls the September 11, 2001 terrorist acts on the United States and how this event changed Americans' interest in Afghanistan:

> It was the year many Americans first learned where Kabul, the country's capital, was and who the Taliban were. To a great extent, Americans had pictured Afghanistan as a land of cave-dwelling terrorists[103].

In this passage we are going to highlight the American presence in the novel that doesn't have to be an American character but a reference to the west in term of culture, life or commodities. Regardless of what kind of presence, it is usually on one of these three aspects: the savior, the teacher, or the modern/moral. However, morality and modernity may not always be associated, but in this novel it only proves the whole theory of "*Orientalism*" where *the Occident* is inferior to *the Orient*. So the West's modernity functions as a contrast to the primitivism in the East, and it is this lack of modernity that enforces a view of the East as evil.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini , is a story centered on the life of a man named Amir along his friend Hassan who grew up together in Kabul in the 1970's.Amir and his father, a successful businessman , immigrated to the United States after the Soviets invasion , and the novel begins with Amir receiving a phone call many years later from an old friend from the life he has left behind.

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[101] Edward Said, *Orientalism* , New York : Vintage Books , 1978 . p.4.

[102]Mahmood Mamdani, "*Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism"*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227604920_Good_Muslim_Bad_Muslim_A_Political_Perspective_on_Culture_and_Terrorism , (Accessed on April,2018)

[103]Khaled Hosseini . Quoted in Angemeer , D. Alicia . *Reading The Other and Reading Ourselves : An Interpretive Study of Amazon.com Reviewers on Bestsellers about Muslims,* (PhD) , University of Pittsburgh , United States . 2012. p: 68.

Amir the protagonist of the story surprises the western readers by not being very different from them, as Amir ’childhood is familiar to the Western culture. A boy growing up in a rich family, in a nice house, raised by a single father who is portrayed as fairly secular. And this lack of a strict Muslim upbringing removes him from the stereotype of a Muslim fundamentalist, and when Baba refers *to the* Mullahs as *"self-righteous monkeys, claiming that they do nothing but thumb their prayer beads and recite a book written in a tongue they don't even understand*."[104] He sounds like any non-religious Western man. Amir grew up watching American Westerns, drinking Coca-Cola, taking rides in his father's American-made Ford Mustang, and his daily activities involved playing and pulling pranks just like any other children. The point that Hosseini is trying to highlight here, is not to make the readers forget that the story is set in Afghanistan, and that the characters are "modernized", but in order for the readers to better grasp the story.[105]

Amir is the novel's narrator and we are told the story from his perspective. But he is not the average hero; he is perhaps the character in the novel with the biggest character flaw of them all, because he allowed Hassan to be abused . He is the rich kid who gets away with the betrayal of his best friend and never has to answer for what he did. However when Amir returns to Afghanistan to make up for his horrifying deeds he committed years before, it gives him the chance to redeem himself and shifts from being a "Bad Muslim" to a "Good Muslim".

In contrast with the notion of "Good Muslim" vs. "Bad Muslim", we have the characters of Amir and Assef. Assef ,a character which can be fairly described as a "Bad Muslim", he is portrayed in the story as blood thirsty and a Hitler-like character from early childhood when he bullies and rapes Hassan, and later in the novel becomes a Taliban leader holding Sohrab prisoner. Assef is by far the manifestation of evil and cruelty in the story. Assef addresses

[104]*The Kite Runner* , p: 17.
[105]Katrine Ornehaug Dale, *What Happens in Afghanistan, Does Not Stay in Afghanistan* , (Thesis), University of Oslo, 2016 . p: 14.

Amir , kissing the prayer beads, that he doesn't "*know the meaning of the word liberating until you let the bullets fly, knowing that you are free of guilt, virtuous, good and decent, doing God's job"*[106]. Amir describes:

> He leaned toward me, like a man about to share a great secret. 'You don't know the meaning of the word "liberating" until you´ve done that, stood in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly, free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you're doing God's work. It's breathtaking." He kissed the prayer beads, tilted his head.[107]

However Amir represents the western presence in the story, when he returns to Afghanistan as fully Americanized as he is; he becomes the contrast to his old friends; his old home; his old life. In a conversation he makes with Assef: "*Assef talks about taking the garbage out of Afghanistan, and Amir replies that in the west, they have an expression for that, they call it ethnic cleansing"*[108].This is adult Amir, returning from America, explaining the situation in Afghanistan to the man who has lived there all his life.

What Amir and Assef have in common is that they are both Afghans; they grew up in the same neighborhood in Kabul; they have the same cultural and socioeconomic background, they both mistreated Hassan, although not to the same extent; and they are both Muslim. Yet there is no question regarding which of the two is the "good Muslim".

Speaking of the "Good Muslim", we must refer to the character of Hassan. Despite his shortcomings in the novel, Hassan plays a changing role in the story. Hassan is a Hazara and Shi'a Muslim whose mother rejects and leaves him at birth, he is a loyal friend and servant as Amir says, Hassan never denied Amir anything. Even after the incident of his rape he remains the ideal example of friendship. So, Hassan with no doubts is a "Good Muslim", Hassan's character enjoys a certain features that the West deliberately ignore to focus only on the "Bad Muslim" image they want to reinforce.

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[106]*The Kite Runner* , p: 277.
[107]Mahmood Mamdani, "*Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism".* https://www.researchgate.net (Accessed on April , 2018)
[108]*The Kite Runner*, p: 284.

4. The Portrait of Islam In *The Kite Runner*

Following the events of 9/11, the world's view of Islam changed. For westerners all Muslims are terrorists, pagan and primitive, their women wear Hijab and their men hold old Russian made guns. Despite the fact that Islam as a religion shares common points with Christianity and Judaism, it is so poorly understood by westerners.

The Kite Runner is set in Afghanistan, where the majority of the population are Muslim, and there are lot of references to Muslims and their beliefs in the novel. For example, *"The 10th day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the Muslim calendar, and the first three days of Eid-ul-Adha, or Eid-e-Qorban, as Afghans call it - a day to celebrate how the prophet Ibrahim almost sacrificed his own son for God. Baba has handpicked the sheep again this year, a powder white one with crooked black ears"*[109].

The kite tournament symbolizes the fighting between Afghan government and Mujahidin, whose hands are covered with blood , exactly like the hands of a Kite Flyer . While Amir is the Sunni Pashtun who directs the Kite, Hassan the Shiest Hazara is the assistant and the Servant who runs behind the Kite. This , emphasizes the Sunni Pashtun intolerance and marginalization of different Islamic orientations (Hazaras).

Religion in *The Kite Runner* can be interpreted differently, for Baba a man who drinks and capable of having an affair with his friend's wife, there is only one sin. In *The Kite Runner* Baba claims that: "*Now, no matter what the Mullah teaches, there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft"*[110]. Baba, Amir's father was secular in his religious views he hated religious men who won't allow minor sins. Baba tells Amir once that: *"[He]'ll never learn anything of value from those bearded idiots"*[111]. For Baba religion is all about morality, pride, honor and courage, and a religious man is a man with a respectful honorable rank in his society and among his people. When Baba and Amir encountered a

[109]Ibid., p:67.
[110]Ibid., p:19.
[111]Ibid., p:18.

Russian soldier, on their way out of Afghanistan and the soldier demanded ,a half hour with the lady in the back of the truck , Baba asks him*: "where is your shame…War doesn't negate decency. It demands it, even more than in times of peace"* [112].

Amir was never religious himself since he was strongly influenced by his father Amir as a young boy regularly questioned whether God exists or not we only found him praying twice. Firstly, when his father got sick and he bowed his head to the ground and recited half -forgotten verses from the Koran, and asked for kindness from a God , he wasn't sure he existed. Secondly, when Sohrab tried to cut himself, and Amir saw a great deal of blood , his tongue murmured a prayer again*; "La illahail Allah, Muhammad rasul ullah, promising God to do Namaz, Zakat and fast*."[113]

Main characters in *The Kite Runner* practices Sunni Islam and there's clearly a very strong division in both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, when Amir finds a book in his mother's library speaking about the Hazara the teacher's reaction says it all, when Amir showed the book to the teacher pointing at the chapter on Hazaras , the teacher screamed, referring to the Hazara as a disease, this is what Shi'a do best, picture themselves as martyrs.

However, Assef represents extremism in Islam. A childhood bully who rapes Hassan and later becomes a Taliban member, killing hundreds of Hazara and even stone a man and a woman to death, claiming that they are following God's order.[114]We see here how the Taliban rules in the name of God, beats, kills, rapes, stones and brutalize women, we see how years of war and colonialism ripped their humanism, kindness and mercy towards their own people. Hosseini when saying; what mission is that, is questioning Taliban religion which has nothing to do with Islam. Susan Froetschel states that:

> They [the Taliban] did nothing!" She straightened up so fast that a splash of tea spilled over the side of her cup, splattering on the floor" .They tried to ban everything

[112]Ibid., p:126.
[113]Ibid., p: 304.
[114]Farlina Nina, *The issue of cultural identity in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner* , (Thesis), University of Jakarta, 2008 ,p: 25.

> besides the Holy Quran, anything that didn´t fit with their twisted idea of Islam.[115]

Thought religious extremism does not only exist in Islam, it is also found in Christianity, Judaism and other religions as a western scholar named James Michener argues that:

> I have been studying Islam for many years, I cannot see any valid reason why this religion and others cannot cooperate. I know that some fanatic men in Islam preach Jihad (holy war) against unbelievers and that they try to assassinate their own leaders to foment such war. But no sensible Muslim listens to them. They're today's equivalent of the hot-headed Christian knights who, in the Middle ages vowed to exterminate all Muslims. Age cures such rashness.[116]

Hosseini in *The Kite Runner* discusses a very sensitive cultural issue in Afghanistan that the Afghan would probably prefer to keep inside their boundaries. Clearly there is a misrepresentation of Islam in the western mind, according to Michener:

> Many Westerners, accustomed by their history books to believe that Muslims are barbarous infidels, find it difficult to comprehend how profoundly our intellectual life has been influenced by Muslim scholars in the field of science, medicine, mathematics, geography and philosophy. Crusades who invaded the Holy land to fight Muslims returned to Europe with new ideas of love, poetry, chivalry, warfare and government. Our concept of what a university should be was deeply modified by Muslim scholars.[117]

Hosseini, in *The Kite Runner*, is trying to enhance the image of Islam by showing the tolerance of Islam mainly in Amir's character. Amir returns to God when he found himself lost and hopeless by praying and fasting, Amir like any human being makes mistakes and was given the chance of redemption, after all this is what the whole story is all about, finding a way to be good again. "*Say if you love Allah, follow me so Allah will love you and forgive your sins and Allah is the forgiving and merciful*" .(Surat Aal Imran, verse 31).

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[115] Susan Froetschel, *Fear of Beauty*, New York : Prometheus Books , 2013 , p.45
[116] James Michener , *Islam A Western View* , Reader's Digest ,*Dar El Imen* , 1955. p: 74.
[117] Ibid.

Hosseini is also trying to show that Islam is not about punishing the guilt and restricts people freedom by forbidding things as Baba and Taliban showed Amir, Amir discovers later in the novel that he was given the wrong idea about Islam that his father was wrong about many things especially the relation between God and people.

Hosseini has also mentioned in his novel the struggle that the Afghan face when reading Quran and learning things written in another language, learning to recite ayats[118] from the Koran, struggling with the linguistic problem in Arabic. The writer refers to how the Shia destroys the concepts of Islam and distorts its image in the world. At the contrary of Amir and his father, Hassan and Ali practiced all their religious duties only to prove the idea of "Good Muslim" and "Bad Muslim".

5. Bridging The Line Between The East and The West

The topic between the Middle East society and Western society has always been a riveting topic since its ideology and culture are usually polarized, Middle East , with focus on Afghanistan represents conservative system of society with strict religion and culture. Meanwhile, the Western society represents liberal constructions of society.

Hosseini's debut novel *The Kite Runner* depicts a powerful and complex Afghan-American cultural identity against the backdrops of modern Afghanistan[119]. The novel was intentionally written to target the western reader, it is written in America in English language . Though Hosseini is an unknown Afghan writer, the novel was received surprisingly well by western literary audience. It was clear Hosseini's Afghan-American coming tale had struck an emotional nerve within readers, investigating powerful connections between themselves and the world that Hosseini describes with such blunt honesty .

One of the main causes that make westerns interested in *The Kite Runner* , is the fact that the novel has a historical relevance resonated with a post-9/11society. After the events of 9/11

[118]Ayats: verses from the holy Quran.
[119]Rekha Chitra , " Reinforcing The Stereotypic Binaries: Orientalist reading of Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner" . p: 1.

westerns were eager to know about their new ventured enemy. Therefore, *the Kite Runner* might deliver information in an accessible manner about the place that became a U.S. preoccupation again after 9/11. The events had resulted in a " brining home" of images of a violent and demonic Middle East in need of humanizing .State and media in the United states deployed useful binary paradigms for understanding complicated Western relations with the Middle East , *The Kite Runner* apparently challenges this binary[120] . When understanding the circumstances behind the events of 9/11, it would be as to why American popular audience sought this "bridge of understanding" between themselves and the culture of the Middle East.

Another cause that attracts Western readers is Hosseini's powerful characterization of Afghan cultural identity. Amir the protagonist of the novel is portrayed in completely opposite way that westerners thought to discover about an Afghan, Middle East, Muslim protagonist. Contrary to what westerners assume about the people of the east, Amir is portrayed so far in a way that makes him not different from westerners. Subsequently, this factor leads westerners to build a bridge between themselves and Khaled Hosseini's protagonist Amir. They recognized the unfamiliar which becomes familiar through reading of the novel. However, the character of Assef may juxtapose all what have already said about Easterners ,*The Kite Runner* portrays both good and bad Easterner.

The previous mentioned aspects in *The Kite Runner* compelled the Western reader to rethink the East. So, the novel succeeded in building a bridge between western readers and the Afghan people ,who presumably presents the bad "*Other* ". The Novel could even change western perception of the old notions associated with the "*Other*".

5.1.The Use of Universal Themes

Universal themes found in *the Kite Runner*, themes like love, redemption, guilt, jealousy, father-son relationship, war , betrayal, loss and others helped to construct a cultural bridge between the West and the East . Afghans , like Westerners experience love and loss. When

[120]Hunt Sarah, *Can The West Read, Oxy Scholar-Occidental College*, March 2009. pp: 1-17. p: 2 .

reading *the Kite Runner*, the audience is supposed to see themselves inside the characters' experiences in a broad sense[121]. Readers may have never lost a best friend to targeted ethnic cleansing , but they might have , like Amir , lost a friend that they never had the chance to apologize to or tell how much they cared for them[122] . The novel clarifies that individual experiences are not necessarily universal , the fact that Amir encountered a bad experience in his life , doesn't mean all Afghans have had this experience. *The Kite Runner* subtly shows the different types of people who are recognized to be Afghans; those who are rich , poor , those who stayed in Afghanistan , and who fled the country , the educated and those who are not , and so on . Like Western society, *The Kite Runner* focuses on the idea that there are individual as well as national experiences in Afghanistan .

Father-son relationship is very obvious theme in *the Kite Runner* through the depiction of Amir's relationship with his father . Because Amir's mother Sofia died when giving him birth, he thinks that his father "*hated [him] a little . And why not ? After all [he] had killed his beloved wife , his beautiful princess ,hadn't [he]"*[123], for that reason. Though Amir knows his father's feelings towards him , still he admires his father and feel jealous from his father's relationship with Hassan . A very illustrative example is Baba 's treatment of Hassan as a second son , helping Hassan to have a surgery to repair his cleft lip led Amir to wish that" *he had some kind of scar that would beget Baba's sympathy"*[124] . Being a child is difficult to experience feelings of loving someone will never love you. Amir's complicated relationship with his father is nothing new to audiences and literature across space and time . Readers can relate to Amir's experience and understand his feelings of inadequacy and guilt that led him to sacrifice his friend Hassan. The way Baba treats Amir , to make him a certain type of boys, is

[121]Alamour Runda .*Searching for Middle Ground : Connecting the East and West through Universal Themes in The Kite Runner* . (Thesis), University of North Carolina at Asheville, (Spring 2015). p: 8.
[122]Ibid.
[123]*The Kite Runner* , p:19.
[124]Ibid. p: 46.

not limited to Afghan father-son relationship but rather a universal relationship that every one even westerns could experience such feelings.

Geography and setting play a crucial role in making *the Kite Runner* a universal novel. Hosseini elaborated the stereotypic pictures Americans hold about Afghanistan as a country of warlords , extremism and conflicts . Hosseini carefully *"fleshes out the cartoonish picture many American have of Afghanistan as a culture of warlords and cave hideouts"* [125].Amir's own home is far from being a cave hideout with its *"broad entryway flanked by rosebushes…marble floors and wide windows…intricate mosaic tiles…gold-stitched tapestries …[and] a crystal chandelier [hanging] from the vaulted ceiling"*[126] . Hosseini could depict the other side of confronting Afghanistan , stating that while there are military barracks in Kabul , there are also creeks, pomegranate trees , walls of corn, and lakes where " *the water was a deep blue and sunlight glittered on its looking glass – clear surface* "[127] . Hosseini portrays Afghan people enjoying a familiar daily life : Amir and his father eating a picnic by the lake , afternoon trips to the movie theatre to see American westerns . Other signs of a familiar childhood can be noticed in the kite flying tournaments as well as playing soccer in the streets.

War is another theme in *the Kite Runner* that Hosseini succeeded to make universal. Afghan people were compelled to be part of the Afghan wars . Choosing the "Lesser of two evils", referring to Taliban and the Soviets, is not a foreign decision for western readers . Although circumstances may be different, readers might think of the same choice . When Amir goes to Peshawar to meet Rahim Khan , he learns from him all what happened in Afghanistan since Amir's departure . Rahim Khan reflects back to 1995 when *" the Shorawi were defeated and long gone and Kabul belonged to Massoud Rabbani and the Mujahidin"*[128]. Rahim Khan recounts the coming of Taliban and the end of conflicts, and how people

[125]O'Rourke Meghan , "*The Kite Runner : Do I really have to read it ?* " , Slate , (July , 2005) . http://www.slate.com (Accessed on May, 2018).
[126]*The Kite Runner* , p: 4.
[127]Ibid., p:14.
[128]Ibid., p: 212.

thought that there would be *" no more rockets , no more killing , no more funerals "*[129]. Afghan people in *the Kite Runner* were seeking to get rid of war atrocities, They don't want Taliban to govern them but it seems to be the only unintended and inevitable choice that they suffer its consequences later. Such decision contribute widely in the continuation of wars in Afghanistan .

Readers of *the Kite Runner* , could also get a sense of the role of war in changing daily life as well as devastating landscape. *In the Kite Runner* , When Amir retuned back to his homeland Afghanistan looking for the son of his brother in law , he was surprised about what his country has become , he reflects ," when Kabul finally did unroll before us, I was certain , absolutely certain , that he has taken a wrong turn somewhere …Rubble and beggars . Everywhere I looked , that was what I saw ". The shock of seeing your old life changed by time or conversely being the one left behind may also trigger a sense of familiarity with readers . This reaction is what literary critic and professor of English at Bruch College , Timothy Aubry , writes about . He writes that " *the sympathy articulated by reviewers of the Kite Runner often synthesizes a sense of sameness and a sense of otherness , exemplifying a fertile tension , which mediates both their perceptions of the represented foreign characters and , at least in the moment of reading , their first perceptions of themselves "*[130].The hope then is that the memories of this connectedness follow readers into other realms of their lives and into other instances of interacting with the Middle East .

Redemption, Guilt and betrayal are three universal themes tackled in *the Kite Runner*. Amir's and Hassan , Soraya runs away with a foreigner, Baba and Hassan , and other characters committed sins then felt guilty and feel the need to redeem . For example, Amir resents his choice to be a coward when Hassan is raped : *" I[Amir]watched Hassan get raped, I said to no one …A part of me was hoping someone would wake up and hear , so I wouldn't*

[129]Ibid., p: 213.
[130]Timothy Aubry. Quoted in Alamour, Runda .*Searching for Middle Ground : Connecting the East and West through Universal Themes in The Kite Runner* . (Thesis), University of North Carolina at Asheville, Spring 2015.p: 10.

have to live with this lie anymore…I was going to get away with it"[131]. Amir feels that his guilt is taking over his life , he feels that he is going to get away with his betrayal and yet he feels terrible. Amir as a remorse he ignores Hassan and blot him out . He lies to his father and accuses Hassan :*" …I took a couple of the envelopes of cash from the pile of gifts and my watch , and tiptoed out …I lifted Hassan's mattress and planted my new watch and a handful of Afghani bills under it "*[132]. However, Amir's burden doesn't get lighter , so he decided to live far to bury his memories , he says:" *For me, America was a place to bury my memories"*[133] , but it didn't work out. It was until several years later that Amir finds a way to redeem his guilt of betrayal , when Rahim Khan granted him a way for redemption: *" There is a way to be good again, he[Rahim Khan]'d said .Away to end the cycle . With a little boy. An orphan .Hassan's son .Somewhere in Kabul"*[134]. Rescuing Hassan's son is the way for Amir to redeem his guilt. Universality can be sensed by readers , we all begin in innocence , we all become guilty , no guilt is forgotten so long as the conscious still know it . Readers may reflect Amir's feeling on themselves , and so far taking the decisions when experiencing the same situation

A very important factor that contributes in making *the Kite Runner* a Universal novel , connecting the West and the East , is its historical and cultural knowledge . *The Kite Runner* is a rich source for historical and cultural studies. Hosseini's educative (Didactic) theme is intended to teach people facts about his country's history and culture. *The Kite Runner* enriches Afghanistan's cultural drop , giving readers realistic imagery to become absorbed in. Through the memories of Amir , readers' senses become enlivened with real Afghan surroundings :

> We chased the Kochi, the nomads who passed through Kabul on their way to the mountains of the north . We would hear their caravans approaching our neighborhood ,

[131]*The Kite Runner* , p: 86.
[132]Ibid., p: 104.
[133]Ibid., p: 129.
[134]Ibid., p: 226-227.

> the mewling of their sheep , the baaing of their goats , the jingle of bells around their camel's necks. We'd run outside to watch the caravan plod through our street , men with dusty , weather-beaten faces and women dressed in long , colorful shawls , beads and silver bracelets around their wrists and ankles .[135]

Hosseini continues readers' education from cultural specifics to the people themselves . Amir takes care to credit the honor that his people value through the idealized depiction of his father , Baba : *" Lore has it my father once wrestled a black bear in Baluchistan with his bare hands . I have imagined Baba's wrestling match countless times , even dreamt about it . And in those dreams , I can never tell Baba from the bear "*[136]. Amir reinvents Afghan individuals for the mainstream American readers , revisiting their respect and unity countless times in the novel .

The Kite Runner , if not succeeding to change , reduces stereotypes about Afghanistan and provides a clear understanding of cultures and history. The western misconceptions of the East are to be revised , excluding generalizations and ideological norms about the East. Hosseini comments on the use of universal themes:

> "Because its themes of friendship , betrayal , guilt , redemption and the uneasy love between fathers and sons are universal , and not specifically Afghan , the book has been able to reach across cultural ,racial , religious and gender gaps to resonate with readers of varying backgrounds".[137]

In this quotation Hosseini emphasizes that the use of universal themes is a smart way to connect westerners of different backgrounds with easterners, invite them to read Eastern literature , and most importantly to change their presumed ideological and cultural perceptions of the 'Other'. Hosseini tears down barriers to bring the East and West together again by establishing universality even within a foreign context. Hosseini didn't write *the Kite*

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[135]Ibid., p: 26.
[136]Ibid., p: 12.
[137]Khaled Hosseini .Quoted in Sushree Samita Raj, "Reading Khaled Hosseini's novels through the lenses of Orientalism", *An International Refereed/Peer-reviewed English e-Journal* , Vol.3, No.5 . (February 2018) .pp: 351-356 , p: 354.

Runner to glorify or vilify Afghanistan , instead , he tried to open a new window for westerners to see Afghan culture; people's daily lives nuances .

5.2. Westerners Need To Read About *The Other* .

> In short, since 9/11, knowing about the Muslim Middle East is not a luxury , it is a matter of life and death. We need to know if "they" and their many constellations of cultures out there are really the media-package , neat rows of prayer driven by faith , emotions , and instinct .We hear that some blow themselves up just to someone else might die in the process . It seems so unnatural , so wrong . Didn't these same people write delightful poetry at one time ? Didn't they welcome an exiled Jewish community fleeing Spain in the late fifteenth century? What happened? Something says we must find a candle , for there has to be more to the elephant .
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> Keshavarz, F, *Jasmine and Stars : Reading More than Lolita in Tehran* , Chapel Hills , NC: University of North Carolina Press , 2007, p 2.

In the aftermath of the September 11th , 2001 attacks , Afghanistan was portrayed in popular media as a country where the government allowed terrorist organization to operate within its borders and committed human rights abuse against its own people[138] . Edward Said reveals that the public discourse in the United States has encouraged the development of a Good U.S. Citizen in contrast to the Bad Muslim *Other:*

> Since September 11th , terror and terrorism have been thrust into the public consciousness with amazing insistencies. In the United States , the principle emphasis has been on the distinction between our good and their evil. You are either with us , says George Bush , or against us . We represent a humane culture , they ,violence and hatred. We are civilized ; they are barbarians…their civilization(Islam) is deeply opposed to ours (the West).[139]

Western audience were not satisfied with those portrayals which make them believe that Afghanistan, as a Muslim country, has forever been a chaotic country . Therefore they were looking for a pure source to know about *the Other* , a work produced by a writer who

[138]Wardana Tomi , *The Impact of Afghan Conflicts as Portrayed in The Kite Runner* , (Thesis), University of Andalas, Padang , Indonesia . 2011. p: 2.
[139] Edward Said , *Humanism and Democratic Critic* ,New York: Colombia UP , 2004.p: 8.

experienced the country's culture , people, and history . Western literary works insisted on portraying *the Other* as cultureless, barbaric , uneducated and so on ,trying to convince their audience that those people need to be civilized. Subsequently , provide justifications for their governmental policies towards *the Other* .

Khaled Hosseini as an expatriate writer, who experienced Afghanistan during its peaceful days, seems to be a perfect source for westerners eager to know the real Afghan people. The critic Allen Webb , in his research about American students , revealed that *" Identifying with characters from contemporary literature by a living Middle East Writer was transforming their Understanding and building a bridge between Americans and Palestinian experiences"*[140]. The novel provides a concise historical information , Webb argues that: " *Reading Middle East literature , learning about the culture and history , and thinking critically about the representations of the Middle Eastern people helped us become more savvy viewers [of media]"*[141].

Westerners believe that *the Other* can be understood by finding a representative *Native Informant* . This latter is defined by *Morton* as a label " *conventionally used in ethnography to describe indigenous people who provide information about non-western societies to western ethnographers"*[142].*The Kite Runner* is one of the first works published after the September 11th , 2001, written in English by an Afghan-American writer. It provides a contradiction to the previously held assumptions about Afghanistan and its people, it has become an alternate lens to view this part of the world. Webb states that the images and impressions Americans have been receiving are *" distort(ing) the life and realities of Middle East people"*[143] . Thus, *the Kite Runner* becomes a vital tool for removing the fear and mystique of a largely stereotyped and misunderstood region.

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[140] Webb Allen , "Literature from the Modern Middle East : Making a Living Connection " ,*English Journal98*, Published by National Council of Teachers of English , Vol. 98. No. 3. (Jan, 2009) ,pp: 80-88 . p : 81.
[141]Ibid .p : 86.
[142]Morton , S. Quoted in Angemeer D. Alicia , *Reading The Other and Reading Ourselves : An Interpretive Study of Amazon.com Reviewers on Bestsellers about Muslims* , (PhD) , University of Pittsburgh , 2012.p: 34.
[143]Webb Allen , "*Literature from the Modern Middle East : Making a Living Connection* " .p: 85.

Khaled Hosseini's heritage enables him to vividly mirror the culture , history , people of his country to western readers, by making a cultural and historical bridge between the two worlds. Literary scholars such as Mashael Al-Sudeary speaks about the novel's potential to break through stereotypes and build bridges across cultures: " *Hosseini has enraptured readers not only in the West but all over the world, who no longer flinch at the name of Afghanistan , but are striving to be familiar with and sympathetic to its multitudinous problems and conflicts "*[144], she goes on to say that the novel " *rectifies the narrow view of the west and opens up new vistas for the East"*[145].Hosseini believes that despite the many media stories about Afghanistan ,*"little has been said about the Afghan people themselves , their culture, and their traditions- how they lived in their country and how they managed abroad as exiles"* . Throughout each page of this novel, readers can find that the author is telling a story he has invented from his life experience as an Afghan American and from what he imagines about those who lived through the turmoil he dramatizes. To create a unique story about Afghan people , Hosseini knits together Dialectical phrases of Dari and Pashtu with Afghan history , cultural traditions , humor , and social criticism. Even though Khaled Hosseini lived away from Afghanistan during these decades , he has captured mostly authentic Afghan experience by relying on eyewitness, media reports , television or radios[146]. Stella Agloo Baksh describes *the Kite Runner* as a haunting and extraordinary novel by an Afghan writer residing in the United States . According to Baksh , the novel :

> Launches readers into the realities of Afghan society , using the political events of Afghanistan from 1970's to 2001 to foreground a touching and memorable story of friendship between two boys of differing social class and ethnic backgrounds . It foregrounds the complexity and difficulty of the achievement of personal salvation and the recognition of self.[147]

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[144]Al-Sudeary Mashael , "Power of Relations in the Kite Runner: A New Historicist Reading ", *Arab Journal for The Humanities* . MSU Encore , 2007. Vol.27.No.107. pp: 233-249.p: 247.
[145] Ibid.
[146]Kohistani Arezo , " Khaled Hosseini : The Kite runner .New York : Riverhead Books , 2003" , *Reason And Respect* ,Article 15, (Fall 2005) .Vol. 1, No. 2 . p: 20.
[147]Stella Agloo Baksh ,"Ghost of the Past ". *Canadian Literature* , Vol.184. (Spring 2005) ,pp: 143-144, p: 143.

As mentioned before, that the main readers of *the Kite Runner* are not the Afghans . The novel clicks so powerfully with American readers .It pays particular attention to the "hot topics" such as extremism , fundamentalism , Taliban , and women's rights in Afghanistan. The writer introduces his readers with life in Afghanistan by explaining some basic facts with a particular tilt of mind[148]. Through a subtle presentation of Afghanistan ,Hosseini successfully wielded great influence on the preconceptions, beliefs ,and ideologies of the readers . He uses literature to cause readers accept ideological messages.

[148]Muhammad Asghar and Ghulam Murtaza, " The Level of Power Relationship in the Kite Runner ", *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* . (2013). No.1.pp: 71-77.p: 73.

Conclusion

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini had a historical relevance to post 9/11 events, that some critics saw it as if Hosseini as an Afghan writer was trying to loosen the tight of segregation of Afghan immigrants in America. Maybe Hosseini was trying to defend his home country by showing the other side of Afghanistan, the oppressed people, the inhuman governance and the stolen childhood ; when Amir visited the orphanage in search of Sohrab (Hassan's son), the director of the orphanage told Amir that there are a lot of children in Afghanistan but little childhood . Maybe Hosseini is trying to display a new vision and change the Western feelings towards Afghanistan from hatred to sympathy. *The Kite Runner* represents itself as a challenging novel to the binary opposition between the West and the Middle East by establishing a bridge of understanding to the other culture, to show the West and the world that there are more in Afghanistan than the sounds of riffles, bombs and gunfire.

Hosseini begins his novel with a powerful sentence that is often quoted from his book, there is a way to be good again, to symbolize hope in the most hopeless situation in Afghanistan, hope for Amir to redeem and correct the wrong he committed, hope for Afghanistan to establish a new government that would bring peace and stability to the country, and hope for Afghanistan that one day will come and a new generation of Afghan children whose ears would not know the sounds of bombs and guns.

The Kite Runner is a novel written by Khaled Hosseini , an Afghan American writer. Its events take place in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Afghanistan. But it is not a story about the history and situation in Afghanistan; it is a lot more than that. It is a story about people, about the themes of: family, friendship, love, war, betrayal, redemption, racism, tribalism and migration. All these themes were discussed by Hosseini in a beautiful realistic way which introduces the readers to the world of Afghanistan that is strange, fascinating and yet familiar at the same time.

Khaled Hosseini has focused on the cultural identity in the novel; due to the situation in Afghanistan being divided by ethnicity, and his focus is illustrated in the two main characters in the novel: Amir and Hassan. Amir a rich Shi'a Pashtun boy and Hassan the Sunni Hazara poor boy. Despite their friendship their relationship were destroyed by the ethnic and cultural differences.

The Pashtun represents the majority, superior ethnic group in Afghanistan which segregates the Hazara's minority, these practices of discrimination and cruelty towards the Hazara leads us back to Edward Said's most widely known work Orientalism that approaches the problem of representation of the Other, which we have discussed deeply in our research. The other in Afghanistan is the Hazaras and the other for the West is the Middle East. The other is always portrayed as primitive, less and in need of civilization. Otherness has and still been a real issue in Afghanistan that affected deeply the country and its people both their individual and collective memory which is reflected in this novel .

Khaled Hosseini's writings balanced between being clear and powerful, he managed to make his novel approachable to the western readers by creating a character (Amir) that is both familiar and represents the other in an attempt to enhance the image of the other.

Finally, The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is an unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant , it is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country that is often stereotyped by people all over the world as a war zone neglecting its people, their culture and traditions, but Khaled Hosseini came to change these wrong perceptions about his home land, introducing us to the world and life of Agha.

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الملخص

عانت أفغانستان من مرارة الحرب الأهلية , إضافة الى الاحتلال الخارجي في شكل كل من الاحتلال السوفيتي عام 1979 والأمريكي عام 2001. عدم الاستقرار السياسي كبد أفغانستان سوء فهم ثقافي وفكري من طرف الغرب . فالغرب غالبا ما يصور أفغانستان على أنها بلاد الإرهاب, البربر, وشعب بلا ثقافة . خالد حسيني عمل على تغيير منظور الغرب لبلاده من خلال روايته "عداء الطائرة الورقية", أين قام بتصوير شامل للثقافة الأفغانية , العرقية , الدينية, و الاجتماعية ضمن محتوى تاريخي . في هذه المذكرة نتساءل كيف استطاع خالد حسيني أن يجعل المجتمع الغربي يعيد النظر حول منظوره لأفغانستان و شعبها. ومنه التأثير على الرؤية الثقافية والفكرية للآخر . المذكرة تتناول تحليل دقيق لصفات التشريق في شخصيات الرواية , تصوير التشدد الإسلامي,بالإضافة الى طريقة ربط الغرب بالعالم الشرقي . هذا التحليل يكون بالتوازي مع دراسة المضمون التاريخي للرواية , الممتد من فترة الحكم الملكي الى غاية الحكم الديمقراطي في أفغانستان . الدراسة تركز أساسا على رواية "عداء الطائرة الورقية" باعتبارها عمل ينتمي الى الاستشراق الجديد و كيفية تأثيرها على المجتمع الغربي ومفهومه لأفغانستان , ثقافتها , و شعبها .