Original Article
ISSN (Online): 2582-7472

ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts
Special Issue on Art, Technology, and Society: Emerging Intersections in Visual and Performing Arts Research 7(2s)

AMBIQUITY OF COLONIAL-AFGHAN AGENCY IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S THE KITE RUNNER AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED A POSTCOLONIAL READING

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Received 06 December 2025
Accepted 14 March 2026
Published 28 March 2026

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DOI
10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i2s.2026.7110

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ABSTRACT

This article explores Khaled Hossieni's The Kite Runner and the Mountains Echoed in the context of responsibility to respond on behalf of Afghanistan post 9/11 or reinforces colonial hegemonies. It suggests that while Hosseini's both novels capture that socio-cultural problems like gender, ethnicity and religious extremism in the graveyard of empires. Although the novels oscillate between western exceptionalism and Afghan agency, I argue that the creates an ambiguous identity.

Keywords: Afghan Agency, Khaled Hosseini, Western Exceptionalism

1. INTRODUCTION

Khaled Hosseini's fiction consistently grapples with the vexed construction of Afghan identity across shifting geopolitical, historical, and emotional landscapes. Both Hosseini (2003) and Hosseini (2013) serve as narrative laboratories in which Afghan subjectivity is examined under the long shadow of colonialism, empire, and global displacement. As Hosseini himself has noted in interviews, "memory and loss are central to the Afghan experience," especially among those forced to "carry their homeland with them in pieces" Hosseini (2013). While much attention has been given to Hosseini's popular appeal and diasporic reach, less explored is how his fiction constructs an Afghan identity that is at once intimate and ambivalent at times resisting Western legibility, at other times conforming to its narrative

expectations. Hosseini's novels stage what Homi Bhabha calls the "ambivalence of the colonial encounter," wherein identity is formed not in pure resistance or submission, but through "mimicry" and fractured articulation Bhabha (1994).

In *The Kite Runner*, the protagonist Amir occupies a privileged Pashtun position, "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" Fanon (2004) yet his story unfolds through an exilic lens shaped by American cultural codes . His identity is doubly mediated first by Afghanistan's own internal hierarchies and then by a diasporic consciousness that seeks coherence through acts of narrative retrospection. The novel opens not in Kabul, but in San Francisco, establishing from the outset a spatial and psychological distance that characterizes Amir's recollection of homeland. This distance, however, is not simply diasporic longing but a colonial echo: the gaze with which Amir views his past is deeply implicated in the Western frames of redemption, guilt, and confession.

Hosseini's narrative strategy "translates Afghan pain into a language of individualized trauma that is both legible and consumable for Western audiences" Mitra (2016). This legibility is not politically neutral. It reflects a broader post-9/11 terrain in which Afghan identity has become a site of competing representations constructed by imperial military interests, humanitarian discourses, and global media. Hosseini's fiction walks a delicate line foregrounding Afghan voices and histories, it also shapes them to fit narrative conventions recognizable to Anglophone readers. Hosseini's success in the West "hinges on a narrativization of trauma that is both palatable and redemptive" Sen (2015). The trauma of Hassan, a Hazara child raped by a Pashtun aristocrat's son, resonates with readers as an individual tragedy, yet its ethnonational implications remain largely submerged. The coloniality of Afghanistan's internal ethnic stratification an inheritance of both premodern tribal hierarchies and British imperial boundary making receives scant scrutiny.

And the Mountains Echoed complicates this structure by dispersing voice across multiple narrators, ethnicities, and geographies. The novel's fragmented form resists any singular articulation of Afghan identity as critics like Chelva Kanaganayakam observe, the "reverberating voices" in the novel enact "the very fragmentation it seeks to understand" Kanaganayakam (2014). Hosseini's narrative style mirrors the political fragmentation of postcolonial Afghanistan itself, where national identity has long been contested by local loyalties, external interventions, and enforced migrations. It dramatizes what Elleke Boehmer terms the "diasporic consciousness" a narrative mode where "homeland becomes a zone of symbolic negotiation" Boehmer (2005).

The ambiguity of Afghan identity in both novels is thus not a failure of representation but a structural condition a reflection of a nation and a people whose sense of self has been continually overwritten by the violence of borders, war, and rescue. The novel "questions whether memory and identity can ever be anything but partial, especially for those shaped by colonization and its aftermath" Chughtai (2016). Through these layered fictions, Hosseini foregrounds a postcolonial subjectivity that remains unresolved, echoing but never fully reclaiming its historical and emotional coherence. These depictions align with Mahmood Mamdani's argument that colonial powers have historically weaponized ethnic divisions to maintain control, as seen in his observation that "the colonial state did not create ethnic identity, but it certainly hardened it into an enduring structure of exclusion" Mamdani (2004).

Religious extremism, often perceived as a self-generated problem in Afghanistan, is in reality deeply entangled with colonial and geopolitical interventions. In *The Kite Runner*, the rise of the Taliban is depicted not merely as a homegrown fundamentalist movement but as an outcome of decades of foreign involvement. The novel subtly alludes to the Cold War-era U.S. funding of the Mujahideen, which created a power vacuum that the Taliban later filled. Assef, the novel's primary antagonist, embodies this ideological shift, transforming from an ordinary schoolyard bully into a brutal Taliban official who justifies violence in the name of religious purity. *And the Mountains Echoed* expands on this theme by illustrating how warlords and extremist factions exploit religious rhetoric to consolidate power. Hosseini's portrayal of these dynamics authenticates Fanon's assertion that colonial violence often begets counter-violence, wherein the oppressed, rather than reclaiming self-determination, internalize and perpetuate the structures of dominance imposed upon them Fanon (2004).

Hosseini's novels provide a compelling critique of Afghanistan's socio-cultural problems, they also raise important questions about the role of external intervention and Afghan agency. Both *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* feature Western characters who, despite their good intentions, reinforce a savior complex that positions Afghans as passive recipients of aid and moral guidance. Amir's journey back to Kabul to rescue Sohrab reflects this trope, as his redemption arc is contingent on his ability to "save" the child rather than empowering him. The foreign doctor Markos in *And the Mountains Echoed* represents the West's humanitarian presence in Afghanistan and the narrative arc inadvertently centers Western action rather than Afghan resilience.

This paper will argue that Hosseini's novels sensitively portray Afghanistan's struggles, they also frame colonial and neocolonial interventions as inevitable solutions, thereby complicating the question of Afghan agency. By examining gender inequality, ethnic discrimination, and religious extremism within a postcolonial framework, this study will explore how *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* both critique and inadvertently reinforce narratives of Western paternalism. The paper will interrogate whether Hosseini's work serves as a vehicle for cultural resistance or accommodation, and whether his global success has contributed to a Western-dominated discourse on Afghanistan that perpetuates dependency rather than self-determination.

2. GENDER INEQUALITY AND PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES

Both *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* depict gender oppression as a pervasive issue in Afghan society, where patriarchal norms dictate women's roles, mobility, and autonomy. In *The Kite Runner*, Soraya's backstory exemplifies the rigid double standards imposed on Afghan women. She is harshly judged for having had a past romantic relationship, while Amir, the novel's protagonist, is not held to the same moral scrutiny for his actions. Her father, General Taheri, represents the deeply ingrained patriarchal ideology that values female chastity above all else. He tells Amir, "She is a decent girl, Amir jan, and she has learned her lesson" Hosseini (2013), implying that female transgression necessitates correction.

Sanaubar, Hassan's mother, is ostracized for abandoning her family, a decision that is perceived as an unforgivable betrayal in a society that restricts women's choices. While men like Baba, Amir's father, can engage in extramarital affairs without consequence, Sanaubar is vilified for exercising autonomy. This disparity reflects what Deniz Kandiyoti describes as the patriarchal bargain, wherein women are expected to uphold societal norms in exchange for limited protection within male-dominated structures Kandiyoti (1988). In contrast, women who attempt to defy these expectations face severe social repercussions.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, the motif of female displacement underscores women's lack of agency. The character Pari is separated from her family and sold into a wealthier household, a decision made entirely by men without consideration for her desires. This echoes the commodification of women in patriarchal societies, where they are often treated as economic assets rather than autonomous individuals. The tragic story of Masooma and Parwana further reinforces this theme Parwana's decision to abandon her disabled sister is not merely an act of cruelty but a reflection of how limited options force women into morally fraught decisions. Spivak's argument that the subaltern woman is denied a voice in patriarchal and colonial discourses Spivak (1994) is evident in both novels, where female characters are often defined by their victimhood rather than their agency.

Hosseini's portrayal of gender inequality also intersects with neocolonial narratives of "saving brown women from brown men" Spivak (1994). Post-9/11 discourse has often justified U.S. involvement in Afghanistan under the premise of "saving Afghan women" from oppression, a rhetoric that reproduces colonial-era paternalism. Lila Abu-Lughod critiques this framing, arguing that "cultural explanations for women's suffering often serve as a pretext for political intervention" Abu-Lughod (2002). Hosseini highlights the struggles of Afghan women, his novels also risk reinforcing the Western gaze that perceives gender inequality as an exclusively Afghan problem, rather than a global issue compounded by war, economic instability, and foreign interference.

3. ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AND POWER IMBALANCES

Afghanistan's ethnic hierarchies form a critical backdrop in both *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed*, where Pashtun dominance and Hazara subjugation mirror broader postcolonial structures of racial and ethnic marginalization. The novels illustrate how ethnic identity shapes access to power, privilege, and even survival, reflecting what Mamdani describes as the colonial strategy of ethnic compartmentalization, wherein colonial powers reinforce existing divisions to maintain control Mamdani (2004).

In *The Kite Runner*, this hierarchy is evident in the relationship between Amir, a privileged Pashtun, and Hassan, a Hazara servant. Amir harbors genuine affection for Hassan, he is also conditioned by his social status to perceive him as an inferior. This internalized bias becomes evident when Amir fails to intervene during Hassan's assault by Assef, a Pashtun extremist who later joins the Taliban. Assef's disdain for Hazaras, whom he calls "pollution" Hosseini (2013), reflects real-world ethnic violence, particularly the massacres of Hazaras under the Taliban regime.

And the Mountains Echoed expands this theme by depicting class and ethnic divisions through the story of Nabi, a Hazara servant who works for the wealthy, ethnically ambiguous Wahdati family. While Nabi achieves some degree of social mobility through his employment, he remains acutely aware of his marginal status. His interactions with Mr. Wahdati expose the unspoken rigid boundaries between master and servant, revealing how ethnicity and class remain deeply entwined in Afghan society. This echoes Fanon's analysis of the colonial racial hierarchy, in which power is distributed along rigid ethnic lines, often with an elite class benefiting from the oppression of subordinate groups Fanon (2004).

Hosseini's portrayal of ethnic prejudice critiques internal Afghan differences and condemns the colonial legacies that have intensified these disputes. The British and Soviet occupations, together with U.S. participation in Afghanistan, have contributed to the politicization of ethnic tensions through weaponization. Nevertheless, by emphasizing human tales above systemic forces, Hosseini's novels can individualize ethnic persecution in ways that hide its structural origins. This raises a discussion into whether his work, albeit illuminating injustice, inadvertently bolsters the Western narrative that perceives Afghan culture as intrinsically disjointed and unable to self-govern.

In *And the Mountains Echoed,* religious institutions are shown as culpable in perpetuating socio-economic disparities. The village mullahs frequently perpetuate existing power systems instead of promoting justice. This reflects Talal Asad's argument that political Islam is not an archaic remnant of the past but a modern phenomenon shaped by colonial disruptions Asad (2003). Hosseini's portrayal of Islamic fanaticism supports this perspective, indicating that the Taliban's emergence is inextricably linked to the extensive history of colonial intervention and Cold War dynamics.

4. COLONIAL SOLUTIONS AND THE LOSS OF AFGHAN AGENCY

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* expose the socio-cultural problems within Afghanistan, they also present colonial and neocolonial solutions that paradoxically reinforce foreign dominance rather than restoring Afghan self-determination. Both novels depict Afghanistan as a nation trapped between internal struggles and external interventions, where Western influence is often positioned as the necessary corrective to Afghan instability. However, these "solutions" come at the cost of Afghan agency, as Western actors or Westernized Afghans frequently assume the role of saviors.

5. WESTERN INTERVENTIONS AND THE MYTH OF LIBERATION

One of the most pervasive colonial narratives in literature is the idea that Western intervention is necessary to "rescue" non-Western nations from their internal failures. Both *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* participate in this discourse, albeit in complex ways, by portraying Western presence as a stabilizing force in Afghanistan's trajectory. Hosseini's narratives are deeply critical of Afghanistan's socio-political turmoil, they often frame the West as the inevitable solution to these crises, reinforcing "White-Savior Industrial Complex," where Western intervention is depicted as both benevolent and indispensable Cole (2012).

In *The Kite Runner*, the protagonist Amir, who has spent most of his life in the United States, returns to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab, the son of his deceased Hazara friend, Hassan. This mission of redemption is framed as a moral necessity, with Amir serving as the agent of change. His journey aligns with a classic neo-colonial rescue narrative, wherein a Westernized figure intervenes to liberate a helpless Afghan child from oppression. This trope is deeply tied to "imperialist nostalgia," where former colonizers assume the burden of "saving" the very people they helped displace Walia (2013). Amir's actions reinforce the idea that Afghanistan's survival hinges on external intervention rather than indigenous resilience.

Similarly, *And the Mountains Echoed* features the character of Markos, a Greek doctor who provides medical aid to Afghan civilians. Markos is depicted as a compassionate humanitarian, his presence underscores a larger pattern of Western paternalism, where Afghanistan's medical and infrastructural deficiencies are addressed primarily by foreign actors. This portrayal, while highlighting the genuine impact of humanitarian efforts, risks perpetuating the dependency model, which Spivak critiques as a strategy that renders the colonized subject perpetually in need of salvation Spivak (1994). The novel does not fully interrogate how such interventions, while immediately beneficial, contribute to the long-term erosion of Afghan self-sufficiency.

By positioning Western figures as the catalysts for meaningful change, Hosseini's novels reinforce a neo-colonial logic that suggests Afghanistan's problems cannot be solved without foreign intervention. Fanon's critique that postcolonial nations often remain economically and ideologically tethered to their former colonizers, unable to assert true sovereignty Fanon (2004). Hosseini's works are not overtly propagandistic, they risk normalizing the assumption that Afghan agency is inherently limited, requiring external forces to facilitate progress.

6. MIGRATION, EXILE, AND THE DISPLACEMENT OF IDENTITY

Another way in which Afghan agency is compromised in Hosseini's novels is through the recurring theme of migration and exile, which function as both survival mechanisms and tools of cultural displacement. The departure of key Afghan characters from their homeland suggests that escape rather than resistance is the only viable path to a better future.

In *The Kite Runner*, exile often depicted as a form of liberation, frequently entails the erasure of native identity in favor of Western assimilation Said (1978). Amir's family seeks refuge in the United States after the Soviet invasion, where they assimilate into American society. Amir's eventual success as a novelist in California reinforces the notion that Afghan identity can only flourish outside of Afghanistan, a theme that echoes colonial narratives of the "civilizing influence" of the West. Soraya's character arc suggests that Afghan women can only achieve autonomy in exile, as her life in the U.S. allows her freedoms that were denied to her in Kabul.

And the Mountains Echoed presents a similar narrative through the character of Pari, who is taken from Afghanistan as a child and raised in France. Unlike her biological brother Abdullah, who remains in Afghanistan and suffers economic hardships, Pari experiences relative privilege due to her Western upbringing. However, her displacement results in a ruptured sense of self, as she struggles to connect with her Afghan heritage. This reinforces what Bhabha describes as the "unhomely" condition of the postcolonial subject, where individuals exist in a liminal space between cultures, belonging fully to neither Bhabha (1994).

Hosseini does not romanticize exile, his novels present migration as the only viable escape from Afghanistan's turmoil, suggesting that Afghan self-determination is unattainable within the country itself. This underpin with neocolonial rhetoric that frames the West as the ultimate refuge for the oppressed, reinforcing a dependency on Western spaces for security and prosperity.

7. REPRESENTATION OF AFGHANISTAN IN GLOBAL NARRATIVES

One of the most significant ways in which Afghan agency is diminished is through its representation in global literary and media narratives. Hosseini's novels, while offering deeply personal and humanistic portrayals of Afghan lives, have also been instrumental in shaping Western perceptions of Afghanistan a country often viewed through the lens of war, suffering, and victimhood.

Hosseini's status as an Afghan-American writer places his work at the intersection of Western literary markets and Afghan cultural representation. His novels have played a significant role in shaping global perceptions of Afghanistan, particularly for readers unfamiliar with the country's history and struggles. World literature often functions as a bridge between cultures, but it is also subject to the expectations and biases of its primary readership Damrosch (2003). *The Kite Runner*, in particular, became one of the most widely read novels about Afghanistan, influencing how international audiences understood the impact of war, ethnic tensions, and political upheaval. This global recognition comes with a responsibility to challenge rather than reinforce dominant narratives.

Post-9/11 literature about Afghanistan has largely adhered to "world literature market," wherein non-Western narratives are filtered through Western frameworks to make them palatable for global audiences Damrosch (2003). *The Kite Runner* became one of the most widely read books about Afghanistan, its reception in the West often emphasized its themes of trauma and oppression, reinforcing the stereotype of Afghanistan as a helpless nation in need of salvation. As Dabashi critiques, such narratives, while offering visibility to marginalized voices, often commodify suffering in ways that align with Western expectations Dabashi (2012).

Additionally, *And the Mountains Echoed* follows a fragmented, multi-perspective narrative that includes Western characters whose actions influence Afghan lives. This structure reflects "strategic exoticism," where postcolonial literature is marketed in ways that emphasize its cultural difference while making it accessible to Western readers

Huggan (2001). The discourse undoubtedly raises awareness about Afghan struggles, his novels also contribute to the broader Orientalist discourse that positions Afghanistan as a land defined by tragedy, rather than as a dynamic society with its own agency.

This dynamic raises the question: Do Hosseini's novels challenge or reinforce Western hegemony. On the one hand, they provide an important counterpoint to reductive geopolitical narratives that portray Afghans as faceless victims. On the other, they inadvertently perpetuate a literary neocolonialism, wherein Afghan identity is mediated through Western consumption. As Ahmed argues, "Even when representing resistance, postcolonial literature must be mindful of the power structures within which it circulates" Ahmed (2014).

Hosseini's novels illuminate the struggles of Afghan people with remarkable emotional depth, they also participate in colonial and neocolonial frameworks that limit Afghan agency. By portraying Western intervention as a necessary solution, migration as the primary means of survival, and Afghanistan as a place of perpetual crisis, these narratives risk reinforcing hegemonic structures rather than challenging them.

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* depict Afghanistan as a nation burdened by socio-cultural problems and subjected to colonial and neocolonial interventions, a more nuanced reading suggests that these novels also offer moments of Afghan resilience and resistance. The critique that Hosseini reinforces Western hegemony and dependency, while valid, does not fully account for the ways in which his characters assert agency within oppressive structures.

8. DOES HOSSEINI CHALLENGE OR PERPETUATE COLONIAL DISCOURSE

A dominant chunk of Hosseini's novels is that they cater to Western audiences by depicting Afghanistan as a land of suffering, thereby reinforcing the "Orientalist gaze" Said (1978). However, an alternative reading suggests that his novels actively challenge and complicate Western assumptions about Afghanistan by exposing the failures of both internal and external forces.

The Kite Runner initially follows a Western-friendly rescue narrative with Amir returning to Afghanistan to save Sohrab the novel ultimately questions the effectiveness of Western intervention. Amir's attempt to bring Sohrab to the U.S. is not a triumphant resolution but a fraught and deeply ambivalent process. Sohrab's trauma does not simply disappear upon his arrival in the West, and his attempted suicide challenges the assumption that exile equates to salvation. By denying Amir the full redemption he seeks, the novel suggests that Afghanistan's wounds cannot be healed through individual acts of heroism or Western aid alone.

And the Mountains Echoed presents a more fragmented and ambiguous narrative that resists simplistic moral binaries. The novel does not position Western characters like Markos as unambiguous saviors; rather, it acknowledges their limitations. Markos, despite his medical expertise, cannot heal the deeper wounds of cultural displacement and historical trauma. Instead of reinforcing the idea that Afghan futures depend on Western intervention, the novel presents a decentralized narrative that distributes power and agency across multiple perspectives, including those of Afghan characters.

Hosseini's works may fit within the post-9/11 literary market, which often commodifies non-Western suffering, they also complicate and resist purely colonial readings by highlighting the inadequacies of Western solutions. "The mere presence of Western actors in a narrative does not inherently make it complicit in neocolonial discourse; what matters is how those interventions are framed" .

9. CAN EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS EVER BE BENEFICIAL

A strong postcolonial reading of Hosseini's novels is that they frame Western intervention as the only viable solution to Afghanistan's problems. However, this argument assumes that all external interventions are inherently neocolonial and overlooks instances where such involvement has been positively transformative.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Markos, undoubtedly a foreign figure, does not impose Western ideals on Afghanistan. He actively engages with Afghan communities on their own terms, learning their language and customs rather than imposing his own worldview. Unlike colonial-era missionaries or aid workers who viewed non-Western societies as inherently inferior, Markos's role is more aligned with solidarity rather than saviorhood. This aligns with Paul Farmer's

concept of "accompaniment," wherein humanitarian work is conducted alongside local communities rather than for them Farmer (2004).

Amir's return to Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner* can be seen as reinforcing a neo-colonial rescue narrative, it is also an acknowledgment of the diasporic Afghan responsibility to their homeland. Amir does not arrive as an outsider imposing change but as someone seeking to reconcile with his past. His actions reflect what Bhabha describes as "re-membering the nation," where fragmented histories and identities are actively reconstructed Bhabha (1994).

These examples suggest that not all forms of external intervention are inherently disempowering. The question is not simply whether foreign involvement is good or bad but whether it is conducted in ways that empower local communities rather than undermine their agency.

10. LOSS OF AGENCY VS. FORMS OF AFGHAN RESISTANCE

Hosseini's Afghan characters, particularly women and Hazaras, are often depicted as victims rather than agents of change. While this is true in many instances, there are also moments where characters resist oppression in ways that challenge reductive readings of the novels.

In *The Kite Runner*, Hassan is frequently read as a passive victim, his refusal to relinquish the kite to Assef and his unwavering loyalty to Amir can also be seen as acts of resistance. Though Hassan ultimately suffers for his defiance, his actions challenge the idea that Afghan subaltern characters are entirely powerless. His quiet dignity in the face of oppression aligns with "the weapons of the weak," where resistance does not always take the form of overt rebellion but can be embedded in daily acts of defiance Scott (1985).

And the Mountains Echoed portrays various forms of Afghan resilience. Parwana's decision to leave Masooma behind is often interpreted as a tragic betrayal, but it can also be read as an assertion of survival in a society that affords women few choices. Pari, despite her displacement, actively seeks out her lost heritage later in life, demonstrating an agency that transcends imposed boundaries. These moments suggest that Afghan characters are not merely passive subjects of history but active participants in shaping their own fates.

Hosseini's portrayal of resistance is not always framed in the grand narratives of revolution or warfare but in the intimate, everyday struggles of individuals navigating power structures. "The assumption that Third World women lack agency overlooks the ways in which they negotiate, resist, and redefine their roles within oppressive systems" Mohanty (2003). Hosseini's characters, even when constrained by historical forces, exhibit a quieter, more complex form of resistance that challenges simplistic victim narratives.

While critiques of Hosseini's novels as reinforcing colonial and neocolonial narratives are valid, an alternative reading suggests that his works also contain moments of resistance, agency, and critique of Western paternalism. His depiction of Western intervention is not always celebratory, and his Afghan characters while often constrained find ways to assert their autonomy within difficult circumstances. By examining the complexities of Afghan agency, the potential benefits of external aid, and the nuanced forms of resistance embedded within the texts, Hosseini's narratives cannot be reduced to mere reproductions of Western hegemony.

11. CONCLUSION

In both *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed*, Khaled Hosseini offers no clear restitution of a national identity fractured by war, migration, and colonial echoes. Hosseini's fiction "foregrounds the impossibility of full narrative restitution in the face of historical and personal trauma" Rice (2010). His novels construct Afghan subjectivity as layered, contested, and diasporically inflected an identity that is always emerging and never fully resolved. The protagonists in these texts, particularly Amir and Pari, do not return to a coherent homeland but navigate emotional and geographic terrains where memory itself is unstable, and belonging is haunted by both personal and historical erasures. This affective instability echoes what Edward Said identifies as the exile's epistemology "a discontinuous state of being," one that enables critical distance yet also sustains psychic dislocation Said (2000).

Hosseini's narrative ambivalence its refusal to deliver a neatly bordered Afghan identity invites a postcolonial reading attentive to how power operates not just through empire, but through the subtler economies of storytelling, memory, and global reception. As Salem (2013) argues, the post-9/11 American literary market has shaped which Afghan stories circulate, privileging narratives of trauma and redemption over those of political resistance or systemic

critique. Hosseini's protagonists, caught between cultural guilt and narrative restoration, become emblematic "cosmopolitan empathy" an emotional economy that simultaneously enables and delimits cross-cultural understanding Gunew (2009).

The novels affective appeal to Western readers through motifs of familial loss, sacrifice, and homecoming functions both as an act of translation and a subtle form of containment. These are not simply Afghan stories; they are Afghan stories that pass through the filter of global humanitarianism and diasporic melancholia. Hosseini uses fragmentation not as a stylistic flourish but as a moral imperative to reflect the dislocation of a people whose lives have been dispersed by war, exile, and empire Jilani (2014). The ambiguity of Afghan colonial identity in Hosseini's fiction, then, is not a thematic accident but a political strategy. It foregrounds a fractured self that is emblematic of postcolonial entanglement one shaped by imperial legacy, internal stratification, and the transnational gaze.

Hosseini's contribution lies in his ability to render Afghan lives with narrative intimacy while exposing the structural limits of representation itself. On contrary to resolving identity, his novels provoke reflection on its instability on the silences and absences that attend postcolonial storytelling. Hosseini's work participates in a broader literary project not to recover a lost Afghanistan, but to map the shifting terrains where Afghan identity continues to be imagined, contested, and re-written in the wake of empire.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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