

Growth and Salvation

--A Brief Analysis of Amir in “*The Kite Runner*”

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Abstract

The Kite Runner is the first novel of Afghan-American author Khaled-Hosseini. Since its first publication in June 2003, the book has received extensive attention and praise, and has been translated into more than 40 languages. It has been sold over ten million copies in the past seven years. In addition, the book also became the best choice of the French Book Club and the recommended bibliography of the American Book Association in 2006. The theme of the growth first originated in Germany, and later introduced to Europe, the United States, and even the world. Generally speaking, this kind of novel has the certain education significance, and it can give a person the power to grow. *The Kite Runner* is to achieve the acme of perfection point at this point. *The Kite Runner* is a tale of the experience of an immigrant's friendship, betrayal and redemption in the first-person perspective. On the surface, this book seems to involve a lot of social problems, such as friendship and betrayal, the generation gap between father and son, guilt and redemption and so on. But the novel is Amir's personal physical & mental experience. This thesis intends to explore one theme of this story— “Growth and Salvation”, it tells us Amir tries to get rid of the loneliness with a single parent, abandon the fragility of human nature to be a man of justice, of the pursuit of justice and of good nature. I start with the experience of Amir's spiritual salvation to explore how Amir managed to abandon the selfish moral values step by step in the driving force.

Key words: humanity, betrayal, redemption, kite, crime, penalty

I. Introduction

“Khaled·Hosseini was born on March 4, 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan, as the oldest of five children, is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. After graduating from college, he worked as a doctor in California. He has published three novels, the most notably was his 2003 debut *The Kite Runner*, all of which was less partially set in Afghanistan and featured an Afghan as the protagonist. Following the success of *The Kite Runner* he retired from medicine to write in full time.”^[1] His father worked for the Afghan Foreign Consul and his mother taught in a high school in Kabul. In 1976, his family moved to Paris, where his father was a diplomat at the Afghan Embassy. They returned to Afghanistan in 1980 when the Russians entered his country. In America, Hosseini graduated from a high school in 1984 and later enrolled at Santa Clara University and he earned a biology degree in this university. Then, he got his Medical Degree in 1993. He finished his internship at the LosAngels hospital in Cedar-Sinai in 1996.

Hosseini began to write his first novel when he was busy with his medical practice. *The Kite Runner* was published, receiving high attention and praise in 2003. “This is not only a political epic, but also a story about how the choices made when we were a child can affect our adult life.” This is a blockbuster work. The story is about a pair of Afghan friends, but also about the culture of the incredible story. It makes everyone’s soul be stirring”..... Many famous newspapers and magazines have commented on it. Meticulous characters, touching plots moved a large number of readers, and ranked first in continuous 131 weeks in the Amazon and later made by DreamWorks in the big screen. Due to the huge global influence, the author Hosseini was also invited as UNHCR brought her nationwide fame and popularity. Khaled·Hosseini is the first goodwill ambassador. And now, this book was made available in forty-eight countries and became a bestseller in the world. And his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which was published on May 22, 2007, also received extensive attention and high praise. *The Kite Runner* as the first novel of Khaled·Hosseini, is a kind of growth story, tells us a story of redemption. Khaled·Hosseini draws a picture of a full of tragic color in the Afghan history. Each of us can find resonance in this story. Hosseini describes a story about fate from his own experience, and the story is shocking and touching. The book received high praise after it was issued, and got all kinds of awards. In an interview, Hosseini told the public that novel’s prototype of himself. The peaceful life in the past in Kabul was shown in the novel, and reminded Hosseini of his own childhood. Actually, Amir and his father’s immigration to America were the most similar part of the novel. This proved the true meaning that “Art originates from life, and is higher than life”.

The novel tells a story of an ordinary boy named Amir living in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1978, because he betrayed his loyal playmate and brother Hassan. Amir felt sorry for Hassan, so he made up in actual action, and he completed his self-redemption. This novel is a very typical growth story from the perspective of the book’s writing system. The “Growth Novel”, is a common type in modern western literature, originated in Germany. This kind of novel is about the main hero from childhood or young to be of age. It tells of the process from innocence to maturity, and after the realization and transformation to achieve the ultimate success. The novel is in flashbacks of

narrative, “The early-afternoon sun sparkled on the water where dozens of miniature boats sailed, propelled by a crisp breeze. Then I glanced up and saw a pair of kites, red with long blue tails.....”^{[2](P1)} Amir walked in a park in San Francisco when he saw the two red kites, a voice from his memory rang in his brain suddenly: for you, a thousand times over. This is from friend and the kite runner Hassan said to him. The protagonist of the novel in the external growth process experienced several stages, childhood, exiled in the United States, and returned to the motherland. From the point of growth of the theme of redemption, the growth process of the protagonist can be subdivided into truth, corrected fault and completed the redemption. The story took place in Afghanistan, at the start of the Amir's childhood. Amir was admired by small Hassan. But his lack of father's love made his heart received distorted. And at the Kite Festival, his distortion broke out and deteriorated, and committed an unforgivable fault. Loyal Hassan was raped, and Amir witnessed everything, but he did not help Hassan, if Amir wanted to grow up, he must correct his fault when he was an adult. After Hassan was obliged to go, Afghanistan was under the invasion of the Soviet Union, Amir and his father exiled in the United States. Then Amir made his own efforts to overcome the setbacks and difficulties caused by exile, then went through a lot of anneal in a foreign country. In the United States, he had his own family and career, and to a certain extent, he was completing his external growth. However, Amir and readers still did not think Amir can be a good man, but Rahim Khan's a call made Amir return to Pakistan, and the call let the story has a turning point.

After returning to Pakistan, Amir started to make up his mistake. Regardless of danger, Amir went back to Afghanistan to save Sohrab from the brutal Taliban Terrorists. The story did not end because Amir did not complete his redemption, he went back to the United States and he shouldered the responsibility of raising his nephew, he completed the salvation finally.

In many people's heart, Afghanistan could remind them of the Soviet war and the Taliban. Hosseini never explained it intentionally, and never wanted to change people's opinions about Afghanistan. And in *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini described Afghanistan before the war started, which was a peaceful and beautiful place to live and play. And Hosseini told us about many political issues, such as poverty, women' lower social status, kidnapping, etc.

This thesis will be in accordance with its written context, regarding *The Kite Runner* as the protagonist Amir's growth process. From the three periods, the pure childhood, the timid youth and the regretful middle age to interpret the growing of from pureness to betray to regret. By describing the passive avoidance and active remedy to deeply expound the hero Amir's growth, combing the father and son, race, social relations on the basis.

II. An analysis why Amir has such a strong racial difference

Afghanistan, a country that has been experiencing the baptism of war, has suffered from the poverty of the country, and it left the overwhelming majority of people. Amir was born in a noble family, and he did not witness the Afghan racial inequality situation. But through others' identity and fate, he saw the survival difficulty of Hazara, Afghan cruel and terrible racism. Actually,

children's world should be full of sunlight and fantasy. In Afghan perennial tough policies of racial discrimination, Amir pure and weak soul was instilled. Moreover, he knew every groups had different rights and treatments, some groups should be respected, and some groups should be despised and spurned. Amir created a small story, and he was looking forward to father's praise but he suffered embarrassment. For his father did not appreciate his interest of loving literature, but father's good friend Rahim Khan gave Amir with great encouragement, which made young Amir be full of confidence in his writing. One day, Amir let Hassan listen to his story, Hassan acted in accordance with his imagination, and brought him great psychological satisfaction. But the Hazara Hassan asked him a question that made him angry: "Why did the man kill his wife? In fact, why did he ever have to feel sad to shed tears? Couldn't he have just smelled an onion?"^{[13](P37)} This question made Amir be angry, because there was no objection to his work and no one dared to provoke his high position. "A voice, cold and dark, suddenly whispered in my ear, what does he know, that illiterate Hazara? He'll never be anything but a cook. How dare he criticize you?"^{[14](P37)} Hassan and Amir were children, Hassan's question was normal, but Amir was mad at his question, and unsatisfied with Hassan's identity. The undesirable habit of racial discrimination has been ingrained in Afghan young innocent generation heart.

Afghanistan had two main ethnic nations, Pashtun and Hazara. The conflict between the two groups was very deep. Amir was a master who was a Pashtun, and Hassan was a Hazara, so he served Amir. Hassan could not have the education rights, and even could not live peacefully, ultimately died in the muzzle of the ethnic conflict. In Afghanistan, people were not friendly to the Hazara. Regardless of war time or peace time, the Hazara could not be treated well. Racial discrimination was deeply rooted in the Afghan, even in children's hearts. Amir made efforts to get the kite competition's victory, his friend Hassan caught the kite for him, but he was hurt by Assef. Amir did not stand out to help Hassan, and he escaped at last. And he comforted himself: "Hassan is a Hazara." Serious racial discrimination influenced Afghan children deeply. Hassan was clever and kind, pure and honest, generous and tolerant, but just because he was a Hazara, he could not have the same rights as Amir. And in the end, he died in a muzzle which was made by the Taliban, just because he was a Hazara. That's why Amir had such a strong racial difference.

III. The main character: Amir

A. Freudian Theory.

"Modern psychology has a good influence on literature and literary criticism. Freud researches such as realizing dreams, satisfying sexual desire, unconscious behavior to change the concepts of our actions. By proving the unconscious fears and desires of symbolic and language, Freud also extends the understanding that how symbolic and language play an important role.

The classification methods of psychological criticism are different, there are three kinds of ways that were used frequently:

1) The writer's writing process: what is the essence of literary talent? How can literature be related to normal brain function?

2) To do psychological research on individual writers. Now most of literary biographies, using psychology to understand its object's psychology and behavior.

3) Analysis of the fictional characters in the literature."^{[3](P126)}

Sociological criticism, means that studying literature under a political background and on the basis of acceptable culture. The critic W·Scott said: "The art is not created in a vacuum. It is not just a personal work, but a writer writes works in specific time and space; And he is an important member of this society, because he served as the spokesman for the role."^{[4](P129)}The relationship between literature and society, sometimes, we evaluate how the society influences the writer's creation according to the author's social status.

B. Amir's growing experiences

When Khaled·Hosseini wrote this novel, Afghanistan was occupied by Russia and under the Taliban's threat. The current situation was very chaotic, and Afghanistan had a racial discrimination. Living in Kabul, the capital of Afghan, Amir and Hassan had a corresponding to their own social status of behavior in the subconscious. The superiority of national existed in every Pushtun' bones. was a relative poor nation, Hazaras were workers, porters, servants and so on. Under an extremely volatile situation, the Afghan people had no security, the fear of everything accompanied them. Therefore, Afghanistan was full of ethnic conflicts, and the Afghan people, especially the Hazara, they had no right to get a stable life. There were brutal racial conflicts every day.

Hosseini was a typical writer who was representative in colonial place. He was born in Afghanistan, then he followed his parents moved to Iran, France. Finally, He settled in the United States and got a Doctor degree. He had a successful career and a happy family. In fact, he should be content with his present situation, but he missed his hometown day and night. Hosseini always cared about Afghanistan, which was full of war. Although he lived in an environment that was superior in the United States, he couldn't find the habitat of the soul. Compared with American senior intellectuals, Hosseini was always an outsider and always being in the edge of the status, he would never be able to enter the core and the mainstream of society. So, Hosseini wrote "*The Kite Runner*" when he could have a rest, he insisted finally. Maybe only in this way could he release his soul.

Unlike with Hosseini, Amir tried to forget the past. He worked very hard in order to get a stable life in the United States. However, the restless soul always did not let him own this pureness, even if he successfully completed his university study and became a writer. He could never erase his friendship between Hassan, and tried to find a way to erase his Afghan identity. Similar life experiences and identities were the connection between the author Hosseini and the hero of this novel Amir. Hosseini wanted to let readers have a better understanding of the novel's theme and the information that he wanted to convey by using Psychoanalytic Criticism and Sociological

Criticism. Amir seemed to decide to destroy his relationship with Afghanistan, but the cultural identity that rooted in Afghan made Amir could never leave his hometown with one second. Therefore, we had a good understanding why Rahim Khan's call could let Amir back to Afghanistan easily.

The theme of "*The Kite Runner*" is the protagonist Amir's spiritual growth path. Amir, who lived in Afghan rich area, got along well with his servant's son Hassan. It can be said that Amir had an innocent childhood under father's love both before the age of twelve. After 1975, Amir betrayed, framed and deceived his friend Hassan in the influence of timid character, until the middle age he committed the sin he made when he was a child, making the heart be peaceful. The author combined the national feelings with racial discrimination, war, friendship and family integration to show the heart to the world, and he deduced a spiritual song of growth.

The story began in Amir's childhood in Afghanistan, the novel showed us a picture of 1963 in Afghanistan in the first person. Amir born in a rich family, and his father was a Pushtun, the son of a judge, a successful businessman. Superior family condition not only let Amir live comfortably, also let him gain the best playmate, the purest friendship, Hassan, the son of a servant. Amir and Hassan were the most excellent "kite fighter" and "the kite runner", which was a great achievement in Afghanistan who loved kite competition. As the hero of Amir's childhood, his father has always occupied a very important position in his growth path, the man had a record of cutting fourteen kites a day, and he preferred to get along with Hassan. Amir just wanted to get father's recognition, but he failed, he gradually realized that he could get his father's attention and love by getting the victory in the annual kite competition. To a certain extent, his father as the childhood guide of Amir, and he seemed like straightforward and honest, full of a sense of justice. Meanwhile, when he faced his son who had different character, he showed a kind of disappointment that he could not hide. All of this made by Amir who had a deep desire to get his father's recognition, he learned to look down on himself and envy others. In Amir's childhood, his father played a contradictory role, on the one hand, he was disappointed with Amir's cowardice; On the other hand, he did not hide his concern for his son. In fact, the father filled his heart with love and tolerance to teach, affect and change his son. In this way, tall and brave father led Amir to spend an innocent childhood.

Juvenile period is the key period of growth. In fact, the author started this novel with "I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbing mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out....."^{[5](P1)} This section of Amir's inner monologue confession, permanently fixed in his mind at the age of twelve. In Afghanistan's annual kite competition, "kite fighter" Amir and "the kite runner" Hassan won the championship with their perfect cooperation. But behind the success was that Hassan helped Amir to get the broken kite and unfortunately got sexual assaulted by Pushtun children Assef who admired Nazi. Amir saw everything happened to Hassan, but he didn't stand out to stop this tragedy out of his cowardice. Amir knew what everything meant. Shame and guilt made him be unable to

face Hassan, could only frame Hassan for stealing the watch to let Hassan's father Ali and Hassan leave his home, the two friends never meet each other again. At the road of growing, Amir stepped a wrong step.

Amir's father as the most majesty role in a family, we could know what Freud said in "An Introduction to Psychoanalysis perspective", he was always the "enemy" in his son's subconsciousness. The protagonist Amir was jealous of his father's concern of Hassan, using a variety of means to frame him and ultimately made him homeless. Was it not a kind of resistance to his father? Although he seemed to be immersed in his father's concern, he owned the same concern with the servant's son, the seeds of "abomination" and "jealousy" were seeded in Amir's heart. This was one of the reasons for his timid character. When described Hassan was chasing a broken kite for Amir, the novel launched their dialogue: "I dropped next to him, lay on a thin patch of snow, wheezing, 'You're wasting our time. It was going the other way, didn't you see?' Hassan popped a mulberry in his mouth. 'It's coming,' he said. I could hardly breathe and he didn't even sound tired. 'How do you know?' I said. 'I know.' 'How can you know?' He turned to me. A few sweat beads rolled from his bald scalp. 'Would I ever lie to you, Amir agha?' Suddenly I decided to toy with him a little. 'I don't know. Would you?' 'I'd sooner eat dirt,' he said with a look of indignation."^{[6](P58)} Loyal as Hassan, lucky as Amir, they dreamed and read books together under a persimmon tree. The boy Hassan who chased kites for Amir, who bore all mistakes without hesitation, was betrayed by his best friend. It was very difficult for us to imagine what was on his mind when Hassan was taken away by Ali. Maybe there were anger, unwillingness, and confusion. For Amir, this was just a helpless child made a mistake that in order to get his father's appreciation. To some extent, this was the inevitable test that he would have to embark on the journey of growth. However, even if it did not happen this time, when it happened next time, maybe he would do the same thing, because in the heart of Amir "Never regard Hassan as my friend," "I am a Pushtun. He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?"^{[7](P85)} Despite he was guilty, Amir was still trying to redeem himself by justifying himself. At that time, he didn't realize his own mistake, and he continued to hurt Hassan cruelly just like Assef in his heart. Meanwhile, his salvation should be started when he had that feeling.

Amir settled in the United States after leaving Afghanistan. Amir could not forget Hassan, could not forget his own betrayal, and the guilt would not be reduced with the passage of time. Facing the mistakes made when he was young, he was painful and regretful when he was in America. When Amir accidentally heard from the gatekeeper Rahim Khan that Hassan was his half brother, then not only his father's image in his mind became a contradictory community, but also what made him painful was that he hurt his biological brother. Amir could no longer ignore the voice in this heart, his sense of justice was awakened, and the memories of with good friend, good playmate and good brother Hassan appeared in his brain, and the step that he and his father did not step out before Hassan died, now should be stepped out. Amir and his father owed Hassan an explanation, and eventually Amir went back to rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab.

Twenty-six years ago, young Amir chose to escape; Twenty-six years later, middle-aged Amir chose to face his fault bravely, the young boy has developed into a strong and brave man. In the last part of the novel, Amir mastered reel, Hassan's son, Sohrab pulled the line in an American park, and the kite flied higher and higher. Amir said to Sohrab: "For you, a thousand times over."^{[8](P401)} Just like what Hassan said to him. As a matter of fact, that was Amir's oath to Sohrab, and the salvation of his soul.

C. The redemption

The hero of *The Kite Runner* Amir's spiritual growth process from childhood to youth to middle age could be said to be the process of redemption. Facing his playmate's selfless, Amir just felt fearful and had a feeling of humiliation, he could only choose passive escaping, and in the end he let his friend leave by lying to father. And with the passage of time, when he was in middle-aged, long-time torture of soul let him undertake the sins and take action to make up the sins to seek spiritual salvation. In the novel, Amir's soul redemption process was doomed to be very difficult. And just because of the difficulty, which made his spiritual redemption more touching finally.

a. Passive avoidance

When he won back his father's love and got more and more attention, he witnessed Assef's atrocities to Hassan, he saw Hassan in order to live up to his promise, Amir hesitated. The kite that hang in the house was in exchanged for Hassan's sacrifice was just like a great shame made Amir so timid. He not only did not have the courage to stand up, but also escape like a coward. To cover up his own weakness, he used low-level means to let Hassan and his father leave his home. Passive avoidance made Amir was in endless remorse for the rest of his life, and the poor boy Hassan didn't meet Amir again. In twenty-six years, Amir owed Hassan an explanation, the avoidance could only return the everlasting regret.

Homi·Baba described "the sadness of leaving home" as a "the model of post colonialism situation". The stray meant to cross the border, it made rangers lose the sense of belonging, and made them like a kite that had broken line. This was also the image "*Kite*" in the title of this novel. For Amir, he wanted to escape from the guilt and seek the spiritual peace by living America. Before leaving home, Amir believed that as long as he tried to get rid of the burden in soul, and could completely separate with the past. However, the time and the living environment did not remove the pain in his heart. Though in his opinion: "America was different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me someplace far. Someplace with no ghosts, no memories, and no sins."^{[9](P148)} However, when hearing the Hassan's name, "My neck seems to be grabbed by a pair of iron hands."^{[10](P169)}

b. Active making up

In the twenty-year's immigration in the United States, Amir not only give up his right to get his father's love, but also to achieve the dream of being a writer, Amir has grown up. But guilt tortured him when Hassan was mentioned, "Those thorny old barbs of guilt bore into me once more, as if speaking his name had broken a spell, set them free to torment me anew."^{[11](P218)} After knowing Hassan was his half brother, the uncomfortable feeling was heavier and heavier, and he wanted to make up the sin. Meanwhile, he did practical behaviors and returned to his hometown to rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab. After a cruel struggle with Assef, Amir rescued Sohrab in the end. Amir thought he completed his own salvation, but the fate seemed to play a joke with him. Sohrab was so sad that he wanted end his own life, Amir's soul was tortured once again. He was afraid that he couldn't complete the salvation of his soul, and he would get the punishments from the God, so he made his salvation for Sohrab. He said: "What was so funny was that, for the first time since the winter of 1975, I felt at peace. I laughed because I saw that, in some hidden nook in a corner of my mind, I'd even been looking forward to this..... But I did now. My body was broken, just how badly I wouldn't find out until later, but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed."^{[12](P312)} Amir eventually grew from a coward boy to a brave man who could face his own mistakes by himself, and he became an real man.

IV. Conclusion

The Kite Runner is a peaceful, quiet and beautiful story in a cruel world. Hosseini used delicate strokes to draw a picture of a full of tragic color in the history of Afghanistan. We can find our meeting point from Amir, everyone will experience from ignorance to maturity, and everyone will make mistakes. Amir completed redemption for himself and his father, he was lucky. Amir grew from a selfish young boy to a mature man who can shoulder responsibility. The outline of the good and evil of human nature, sin and punishment, love in the struggle of salvation, not only to attract the world's attention to Afghanistan, but also to arouse people's reflection on the return of humanity. Amir was mature after many years, although he lost much, he got his soul finally. In real life, each person must experience the process from youth to maturity and everyone will make mistakes. Last but not least, the key to solve these problems is "having the courage to correct mistakes", "There is a way to be good again."^{[15](P2)} This is what we called salvation.

Notes

¹From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Khaled·Hosseini. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaled_Hosseini#cite_note-2)

²Khaled·Hosseini. " *The Kite Runner* " P1.

³穆诗雅. 《英语专业毕业论文写作》. 外语教学与研究出版社, 2002,10: 1 P126

⁴穆诗雅. 《英语专业毕业论文写作》. 外语教学与研究出版社, 2002,10: 1 P129

⁵Khaled·Hosseini. *The Kite Runner* P1.

⁶ibidP58.

⁷ibidP85.

⁸ibidP401.

⁹ibidP148.

¹⁰ibidP169.

¹¹ibidP218.

¹²ibidP312.

¹³ibidP37.

¹⁴ibidP37.

¹⁵ibidP2.

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