

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Ain Temouchent - Belhadj Bouchaib



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**Women's Voices between Silence and Resistance: A
Psychoanalytic Reading of *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

***A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation***

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Academic Year: 2025/2026

Dedications

I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to Almighty Allah, whose endless grace granted me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this work. In moments of doubt and difficulty, it was faith that sustained me and guided me forward. Without His blessings, this achievement would not have been possible.

To my wonderful parents, who brought me to this life, taught me all that I need, and gave me the opportunity to fulfill my ambitions.

To my beloved father,

Thank you for always being by my side and for supporting me without hesitation.

Thank you for your endless sacrifices and for being my constant source of strength and security. You were the one who walked me to school, then to middle school, then to high school, and today, I have reached university because of you. Your prayers, along with my mother's, have been the light that guided my path.

To my dearest mother,

Thank you for your unwavering support, for always encouraging me and reminding me of my goals. You made so many things easier for me and never once refused anything I needed. Thank you for your great sacrifices, your patience, and your wisdom. You are my shelter in every storm, the warmth in my coldest days, and the quiet strength behind every step I take. Your love is the prayer that never fades, your voice the comfort I carry within me, and your presence is the home I will always return to.

And finally, a special thanks to my beloved friends, family, and all people who occupy a great space in my heart.

Acknowledgments

I express my immense admiration and appreciation to my teacher and supervisor, Dr. Assia BENFODDA, who always guided and supported me through my writings and generously shared her insightful and enriching knowledge with me. In addition, I thank Dr. Samira LAOUFI, whose instructions and perseverance inspired me to pursue my passions and fulfill my potential.

My deepest appreciation goes to my jury members, Dr. Assia BENFODDA, Dr. Hasna KERSANI and Dr. Samira LAOUFI for dedicating their time and effort to reviewing and correcting my dissertation.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my teachers Ms. Fatima YAHIA, Mrs. Zahera HASSAINE, Mrs. Rayhane HOUARI, Mrs. Hasna KERSANI, Ms. Sarah BENSAPHLA TANI, Mrs. Dalal BELARBI, for their insightful lectures, which greatly contributed to my learning.

Abstract

The representation of women's voices in contemporary fiction has seen a major shift in terms of their depiction, particularly in contexts marked by war, patriarchy, and social oppression. Although there have been many studies on the topic of silence in literature as a means of marginalizing and subjugating people, and while more and more works have started analysing the use of silence as a form of resistance, little has been done regarding the analysis of the use of silence as a mode of resistance in light of the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva in the context of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Based on theories developed by Julia Kristeva regarding semiotics, symbolic, and repression, this research studies how silence and resistance affect the subjectivity of the female characters Mariam and Laila in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It investigates how silence becomes a semiotic space for the expression of repressed feelings in the case of Mariam and how the identity of Laila is constructed through education and awareness in addition to her resistance against the symbolic order. In spite of the differences between their identities, it becomes evident that repression is not a factor that limits the identity construction, but at the same time, it helps in forming identity. It is found that silence becomes more than a lack of voice; it is a type of resistance that creates female solidarity.

Keywords: Silence, Resistance, Female Subjectivity, Julia Kristeva, Repression, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

ملخص

شهد تمثيل أصوات النساء في الأدب المعاصر تحولاً جذرياً في طريقة تصويرها، لا سيما في سياقات الحرب والنظام الأبوي والقمع الاجتماعي. ورغم وجود دراسات عديدة تناولت الصمت في الأدب كوسيلة للدلالة على تهमيش الأفراد وإخضاعهم، كما تناولت مجموعة متزايدة من الدراسات الصمت بوصفه شكلاً من أشكال المقاومة، فإن اهتماماً محدوداً وُجّه إلى استكشاف الصمت بوصفه وسيلة فعّالة للمقاومة من خلال المنظور التحليل النفسي لجوليا كريستيفا، ولا سيما فيما يتعلق برواية *ألف شمس مشرقة* لخالد حسيني.

تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى تحليل كيفية تأثير الصمت والمقاومة على بناء الذات الأنثوية في رواية خالد حسيني والرمزية والكبت. ويستكشف هذا البحث كيف تتشكل هويتا مريم وليلى تحت تأثير الصدمات والإقصاءات والنظام الأبوي. كما سيتم تحليل مفهوم الصمت لدى مريم، كأثرٍ مترتبٍ على عدم شرعية نسبها ونبذها، باعتباره فضاءً سيميائياً تتشكل فيه المشاعر المكبوتة والصراعات. من جهة أخرى، تتشكل هوية ليلي من خلال عمليات التعليم والوعي وتجربة الحروب، مما يُمكنها من التفاعل مع النظام الرمزي ومقاومته. ورغم وجود اختلافات واضحة بين البطلتين، فقد أثبتنا أن القمع لا يقمع الهوية فحسب، بل يُساهم في تشكيلها أيضاً. تشير النتائج إلى أن الصمت في العمل الأدبي ليس مجرد غياب للصوت، بل على العكس، فإن تجربة القمع والمقاومة التي عاشتها البطلتان تُفضي في نهاية المطاف إلى تنمية التضامن النسائي الجماعي. بالإضافة إلى تحليل رواية *ألف شمس مشرقة*، فإن هذا البحث سوف يكون مساهماً في المناقشات الأدبية الأوسع المتعلقة بالصمت الاجتماعي من خلال التوضيح لكيفية قدرة الصمت على أن يكون، في الوقت ذاته، مساحة للصدمة، والمقاومة، والذاتية. وأخيراً، من خلال استكشاف إشكالية فاعلية المرأة عبر نظرية كريستيفا التحليلية النفسية، تُضيف هذه الدراسة إلى النقاش الأدبي العام حول قضايا النوع الاجتماعي والصوت والقمع في الأدب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصمت، المقاومة، جوليا كريستيفا، القمع، النظام الأبوي، *ألف شمس مشرقة*

Résumé

La représentation des voix féminines dans la fiction contemporaine a connu une évolution majeure, notamment dans les contextes marqués par la guerre, le patriarcat et l'oppression sociale. Bien que plusieurs études aient porté sur le silence en littérature comme marqueur de marginalisation et d'assujettissement, et qu'un nombre croissant de travaux aient examiné le silence comme une forme de résistance, peu d'études se sont intéressées à son exploration en tant que mode efficace de résistance à travers la perspective psychanalytique de Julia Kristeva, en particulier dans le cadre du roman *A Thousand Splendid Suns* de Khaled Hosseini. Cette thèse analyse comment le silence et la résistance influencent la construction de la subjectivité féminine dans le roman de Khaled Hosseini, « *A Thousand Splendid Suns* » (2007). S'appuyant sur les théories de Julia Kristeva relatives à la sémiotique, au symbolique et au refoulement, cet article étudie comment le silence et la résistance influencent la subjectivité des personnages féminins de Mariam et Laila dans *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Il examine comment le silence devient un espace sémiotique d'expression des sentiments refoulés chez Mariam et comment l'identité de Laila se construit à travers l'éducation, la prise de conscience et sa résistance à l'ordre symbolique. Malgré leurs identités différentes, il apparaît clairement que le refoulement n'est pas un obstacle à la construction identitaire, mais qu'il y contribue au contraire. Le silence se révèle ainsi plus qu'une simple absence de parole : il constitue une forme de résistance qui forge la solidarité féminine.

Mots-clés : Silence, Résistance, Julia Kristeva, Répression, Patriarcat, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

For long, literature has been used to great effect in dealing with such issues as suffering, identity, oppression, and resistance as far as human beings are concerned. There have been many instances where the lives of women have been depicted in the writings of literature through the themes of silence, marginality, and resistance within patriarchal societies. However, the silence in women's literature should not necessarily be taken as an indication of weakness and lack of voice. Rather, it is at times a form of emotional expression and survival for the women in such cases. For example, there have been some laws passed recently by the Taliban in Afghanistan which permit men to beat their wives and children only as long as there are no broken bones and visible wounds on their bodies. Also, it has been reported recently that the Afghan government has arrested a young Afghan woman who had disguised herself as a man.

Up to now, these incidents are watched in the process of their evolution, where stricter and harsher restrictions are being imposed on women and girls in Afghanistan. The access of these categories to education, jobs, freedom of movement, and participation in life has become limited considerably. This situation has led to the institutionalisation of gender discrimination and weakening of legal protections, especially in cases of domestic violence. Besides, in recent years, there has been an aggravation of political and social restrictions on women regarding education, job, movement, and participation in life. These events, especially from 2021, led to the institutionalisation of gender discrimination and the weakening of legal protection, especially in cases of domestic violence.

These situations may seem to be modern, but they were happening against the background of a specific historical situation which was characterised by war and ideological

transformations for decades. Starting from the 1960s until the Soviet occupation, civil war, and the Taliban regime, the lives of Afghan women were characterised by the alternation of reforms and restrictions. However, the 1960s and 1970s are characterised by social progress in the life of women in Afghanistan.

However, the Soviet invasion in 1979, along with years of civil war, destroyed the entire social structure of Afghanistan and made the female section of the society prone to violence, insecurity, and displacement. The rule of the Taliban in the mid-1990s is considered one of the gloomiest periods in Afghan history regarding the status of women. During this period, the females were banned from studying, employment and even walking freely without the accompaniment of any male person. The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* unfolds against this backdrop. Women have frequently found themselves trapped in the dilemma of silence and resistance.

The silence of the woman has always been imposed upon her by systems that seek to confine her freedom before it blossoms. Just like the smell of a flower that gets suffocated before it blooms or like the wings of a bird that are chopped off before it can stretch its wings and fly towards the horizon of liberty, womanhood has always been reduced to silence within the systems of patriarchy.

However, silence is more than the absence of sound and speech. It is often a very complicated and layered state of being. That is what the current research tries to analyse through the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva. According to her, there is the separation between the semiotic – the element that denotes the pre-language impulses and emotions as well as the maternal element of the subjective – and the symbolic, which denotes the language itself and the culture. Repression is the mediator of the two elements, as repression entails the pushing of some of the impulses and emotions out of the conscious mind. The

above-mentioned theory is important for the current research, as the silence is not just the absence of language but the element of oppression, resistance, and female subjectivity. Hence, the history of oppression and resistance became very important in the literary sphere and in society as well, as it gives much insight into the way individual and collective identities are formed in terms of gender and patriarchy.

Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is one of the literary works that strongly reflects these themes through the experiences of its female characters. The story is set against the backdrop of a war-ravaged Afghanistan and revolves around the lives of two women, Mariam and Laila, who are victims of patriarchal domination, violence, social restrictions, and personal losses. Both characters find unique ways to resist the oppression they face. These stories have brought to light many significant questions related to the connection between silence, oppression, resistance, and female identity formation.

The topic of this research is women's voices between silence and resistance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Various researchers have analysed *A Thousand Splendid Suns* using various critical approaches. In his analysis, Choudury highlights the issue of female oppression and resilience in patriarchal Afghan society. On the other hand, Shameem analyses the relationship between gender discrimination and women's resistance in the novel. Similarly, Tanzeel discusses the psychological and social aspects of female pain in patriarchal society. While these studies have provided some valuable insights regarding oppression and empowerment of women, very little research work has been done on the topic of silence as resistance using psychoanalytic approach by Julia Kristeva. The current research study will try to fill that gap.

This study highlights the significance of the silence that not only signifies suffering in the lives of the characters but is also seen as a form of resistance and female agency. Another

aspect that will be considered is the role of patriarchal oppression and trauma in constructing the identities of the female characters. In order to analyse the connection between silence, resistance, and female subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the study will apply the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva that includes the concepts of the semiotic, the symbolic, and repression. The semiotic is defined by Kristeva as the dimension of subjectivity prior to language that encompasses emotions, drives, and unconscious experiences of individuals.

On the other hand, the symbolic is the system of structures of language, social regulations, culture, and patriarchy within which people construct their identities. Repression is the psychological mechanism of pushing away unwanted thoughts, feelings, and experiences of people from consciousness; however, such repressed elements of the psyche continue influencing the subject. These concepts are helpful for analysing how the role of silence in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is determined not only by oppression but also by the emergence of suppressed emotions and resistance.

The primary motivation behind selecting this topic is based on my personal fascination regarding the psychological experiences of women in literature and the different ways female characters express resistance in oppressive contexts. Moreover, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* provides an interesting and compelling portrayal of women in Afghan society.

The choice of this research topic is therefore not only based on academic interest but also on a personal reflection on the meaning of silence and its connection to human emotions and identity. Silence, especially when viewed within the context of women's experiences, is open to multiple interpretations, such as oppression, marginalization, power, and inner dialogue. This diversity of meanings led me to reflect on the role of silence in shaping an individual's

sense of self and their surrounding environment. It is within this personal and academic context that my interest in writing about women's voices in literature arose.

My mother and a friend once told me that most of my feelings, whether intense anger or joy, I expressed in silence. And I was sometimes like that, but not always. My friend said she did not really understand this aspect of me, but she was one of the few who noticed it. I think I was drawn to silence because I wanted to see the experiences, feelings, and discoveries that are lived in silence, like Newton's discovery of gravity. However, the idea of silence, especially the silence of women, often conjures up images of a silent mermaid, a silent Greek princess weaving her tale, Victorian women locked in Gothic towers, or even a quiet housewife serving dinner. These examples do not portray silence in a positive light, but I have always been fascinated by these stories because they depict voiceless women facing horrific situations or simply surviving. I think I should have taken these stories as a warning, but I found in them a message that said, "As a woman, I can survive anything; I make my voice heard, and some days, that will be enough." In the stories of the voiceless, I somehow found my own voice.

But as time passed, I not only began to see through the distortion inherent in Disney's portrayal of these stories, but I also realised that these characters are defined by their silencing. I began to wonder how a woman's silence, and then silence in general, is defined. Because it is often viewed in the context of power, or rather its absence, a woman's silence is often equated with being silenced. That is, silence is interpreted only as something imposed or required, either due to an inability to speak or be heard or as a reaction to this inability. Forced silence, whether through mutilation, confinement, or societal and familial expectations, signifies the oppression of women.

When telling people *A Thousand Splendid Suns* changed how I see the world, they often assume I mean it taught me about Afghanistan or oppression or war. That is true, but not quite right. What this book really did was shatter my assumptions about what strength looks like, where we find family, and how much the human spirit can endure before it breaks or refuses to break. Khaled Hosseini takes us into the lives of Mariam and Laila, two Afghan women from different generations whose paths should not cross. Mariam grows up in shame and isolation, taught from birth that she is worth less than nothing. Additionally, whenever I hear *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, my brain does not remember the setting, the politics, or even the broader plot. It remembers Mariam, just Mariam. She is not a character to me; she is an emotion. A wound that never really heals, but one that you do not want to heal either. Behind every story of endurance, there is a story of pain.

This dissertation aims to explore the relationship between silence and resistance in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* through a psychoanalytic perspective, specifically the theoretical model of Julia Kristeva. It seeks to examine how the female characters experience silence, oppression, violence, and social restrictions and how these experiences contribute to shaping the formation of female subjectivity and agency. This study will also highlight the role of silence as both a manifestation of emotional pain and a means of expressing resistance and inner power within oppressive social conditions.

The present study uses a qualitative methodology grounded primarily in psychoanalysis by Julia Kristeva. More specifically, such theoretical constructs as “the semiotic” and “the symbolic”, repression, subjectivity, and female agency will be employed for examining the psychological and emotional processes underlying the characters. Textual analysis is the methodology that will be used in studying the selected texts and character experiences.

Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does Hosseini portray silence as a psychological mechanism of survival for women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

2. How does Khaled Hosseini represent silence and resistance in shaping the experiences of Mariam and Laila in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

3. How can Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory explain the relationship between silence, resistance, and the formation of female subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

After further readings, the following hypotheses are proposed to lead the investigation for the questions above.

- Consequently, the study suggests that silence is used as a strategic practice that allows the female characters to cope with trauma, conflict, and psychological safety within patriarchal and oppressive family and societal systems.

- Silence and resistance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are not contradictory notions but rather are interconnected experiences that affect Mariam's and Laila's lives. The novel suggests that silence can be not only an outcome of oppression but also a tool for internal resistance, through which the female characters gradually develop awareness, strength, and agency within a patriarchal society.

- Finally, through Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories, silence in the novel can be interpreted not merely as passivity but as a psychological and emotional space through which female subjectivity and agency gradually emerge in oppressive conditions.

The current dissertation has three chapters. The first chapter (Silence and Resistance in Women's Literature: A Theoretical Exploration) lays the theoretical base for the research. It analyses silence and resistance in women's literature. By using literature along with historical realities, the chapter lays the base to comprehend the complexities of the issue of female voice within such environments.

The second chapter (Exploring Mariam and Laila's Experiences of Silence and Resistance) is a textual analysis of the narrative paths of Mariam's and Laila's stories. The chapter discusses Mariam's voice of silence, which is a result of illegitimacy, delegitimisation, and domestic oppression, and Laila's search for voice through resilience, education, and emotional strength. The chapter reveals how the voices of both women converge into a collective narrative of solidarity, where silence turns into moral strength.

In the third chapter (A Kristevan Psychoanalytic Reading of Silence, Resistance, and the Formation of Female Subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*), the theoretical tools that will be employed are discussed, based on the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva. The chapter utilises Kristeva's theories to analyse repression, trauma, and female subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The chapter will further discuss how these psychological elements play a role in the fragmentation and reconstitution of identity through the interplay of silence and resistance.

To conclude, the methodology used for the analysis of the chosen subject in the dissertation is based on a qualitative approach, and the tools used for the analysis are based on textual analysis and the support of psychoanalytic theories. The primary source for this analysis is Hosseini's novel, while the secondary sources include studies on women's literature and psychoanalytic theories, particularly the works of Kristeva. All sources are cited according to the MLA Handbook, Seventh Edition, to ensure academic integrity through proper referencing and the inclusion of a comprehensive Works Cited page under the supervision of academic scholars.

Chapter One:

Silence and Resistance in Women's Literature: A Theoretical Exploration.

1. Chapter One: Silence and Resistance in Women's Literature: A Theoretical Exploration

1.1. Introduction

This chapter develops the theoretical basis of the study in analysing the interrelated concepts of silence and resistance in women's literature. Women's voices have always been silenced, oppressed, and even manipulated in patriarchal society. Therefore, silence should not be viewed simply as an act of non-speaking. In this case, silence is an outcome of several psychological, social, and cultural aspects. In addition, the same applies to resistance. Resistance also takes different forms, hence subverting the whole system of dominance. In analysing various psychoanalytic theories, this chapter will form the basis of analysis of female characters in the chosen novel. Moreover, the study of silence and resistance in women's literature is significant in analysing the representation of society in literary texts.

Psychoanalytic theory has been adopted in interpreting the concept of silence, especially in relation to the theory proposed by Julia Kristeva. With the aid of psychoanalytic theory, some of the underlying psychological issues in literary texts can be analysed.

Psychoanalytic theory will help in identifying the ways in which the voices of women have been restricted in society.

1.2. Silence in Women's Literature

Silence has been examined as a multi-faceted topic which cannot be interpreted as a mere lack of speech. Rather, it has been understood as a medium through which various social, cultural, and psychological factors converge. The voices and utterances of women have historically been restricted through patriarchal constructs that define what is acceptable and what is not. In such contexts, silence has emerged as a form of submission as well as a strategy through which women are able to negotiate these restrictions while maintaining their individuality.

The concept of silence has thus become a very important theme in women's literature, as it has emerged as a metaphor for the suppression, survival, and resistance of women characters against patriarchal constructs. Among the aspects of the term that deserve mentioning in relation to the notion of silence, it becomes apparent that the latter does not appear to be a neutral phenomenon within the framework of literature but is commonly viewed as an outcome of repression brought about by the coerced observance of restrictions and rules of conduct that may relate to different social classes, castes, households, or sexual spheres.

Women, figures, writers, and scholars alike have transformed this silence into various symbols of strength, perseverance, or activism in cases of defiant restraint, refusal to speak, protests by covering the mouth, or other public manifestations. These examples are powerful and important, but their focus remains on the problem of oppressive power relations. In discussing silence, Cheryl Glenn (2001) argues that "throughout Western social history, all persons classified as female (or weaker) have been systematically, if not completely, silenced". Silence has been the ornament of the female sex." The ornament of femininity, the embodiment of vulnerability—this is how silence is often interpreted in feminist

criticism and literary studies. This project began by questioning the emphasis placed on silence in relation to power. This emphasis leads to binary interpretations of women's silence as either submission or resistance and limits the exploration of what women's silence might mean and how we might interpret it. Then scholars began to question what silence might mean for women and their writing beyond submission or resistance. Consider, for example, the colour-coordinated outfits worn by congresswomen during the State of the Union Address. This has recently become a common practice in Congress to express silent solidarity or protest on political issues. In 2019, for instance, congresswomen wore white, a symbol of the women's suffrage movement, in solidarity with women across the country and to highlight the underrepresentation of women in Congress.

Within numerous literary pieces of work, characters of women that remain silent, quiet, or "subaltern" are commonly used to illustrate their social marginality and lack of opportunities to voice their opinions and thoughts. In accordance with the principles of muted group theory, females do not receive equal opportunities to use language to express themselves, which leads to nonverbal methods of communication, including gestures, feelings, and silence. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that silence is not a mere manifestation of subordination since it may also represent resistance and power.

This complexity is evident in several important works of women's literature, particularly *The Bluest Eye* written by Toni Morrison in 1970 and *That Long Silence* written by Shashi Deshpande in 1989. In *The Bluest Eye* by Morrison, silence is portrayed as a product of the oppression, exclusion and standards of beauty of the society. The fact that Pecola cannot express her pain is due to the mental impact of the oppressive social system from which she feels rejected. But then, silence is not an indication of powerlessness because it points at the violence in cultural narratives.

In the same way, in *That Long Silence* by Deshpande, Jaya is subjected to patriarchal expectations that restrict women from expressing themselves in the society and even in marriage. But in this case, Jaya manages to turn silence into self-expression through self-reflection and narration. It means that in women's literature, silence is presented as the place where oppression and agency meet. This makes silence and resistance an important issue in the study of Khaled Hosseini's work, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Additionally, one cannot reduce the role of silence in women's literature to the state of being silent, which presupposes passiveness and lack of voice. Silence can be regarded as an active and strategic site of meaning creation in women's fiction. This is due to the fact that it is a site of contradiction since oppression and agency coincide there, enabling women characters to move around the system of oppression aimed at controlling their bodies and speech.

Speaking from a feminist and psychoanalytic point of view, silence can be seen as a kind of "speaking otherwise" when the meaning is not lost or destroyed but displaced, fragmented, and produced in other terms such as metaphoric speech, inner monologue, and symbolic actions. Thus, it is possible to say that silence is a narrative device that resists the discourse and oppressive language by rejecting direct speech while producing new ways of speaking. Moreover, silence is a representation of the internal drama of women characters who have to negotiate between what society expects from them and their repressed sexuality.

1.3. Resistance in women's literature

Throughout the years, women's literature has become one of the most effective arenas where such experiences that have been marginalised or excluded by mainstream culture can be expressed. By employing various storytelling techniques, women authors are able to deal

with issues like identity, oppression, and self-expression. In discussing these topics, resistance appears to be an important issue, both as an outward act of rebellion against the system of patriarchy and as an inward process.

"Resistance" in women's literature refers to the various ways in which the female characters have managed to cope with, oppose, or subvert patriarchal, social, and cultural constraints. While the use of silence can be a form of control, the act of resisting can be both open and subtle, ranging from the use of words to symbolise, to cope with, or to subvert the constraints; to the use of history to subvert the constraints of the time; to the use of culture to subvert the constraints of the time; and to other forms of resisting the constraints of the time. Resistances, therefore, offer the women in literature a platform to speak out, to break the silences, to oppose the taboos of the time, to use history to speak out as women, and to position the women as heroes of courage, among other things.

Apart from direct defiance, other forms of resistance in literature written by women may also manifest themselves in ways that are less obvious and more internalized. Women characters might not necessarily rebel against male-dominated structures head-on; rather, they can rebel in silence, in perseverance, in compliant behaviours, or by slowly transforming themselves within oppressive conditions. While these appear to be submissive actions on their part, they should not be seen as signs of weakness. On the contrary, these behaviours represent intricate negotiations with authority in order to enable women to endure their situations and even regain control over their lives. In this way, resistance takes a dual form that is manifested both externally in defiance and internally in self-awareness, setting the stage for future theoretical analyses using psychoanalytic theories such as that of Julia Kristeva.

There is a strong relationship between silence and resistance. Silence could be a tool of control, but it could also be used strategically to resist the situation or circumstances that have been imposed upon the women. This is where the female characters manage to resist the situation from both the outside and the inside, showing that silence is a tool of strength rather than of submission or control.

Resistance in women's literature cannot be regarded as a simple and uniform act. Instead, it represents a complex process that is closely related to the development of women's subjectivity. From the feminist and psychoanalytic point of view, it is important to realise that resistance emerges in response to the oppressive mechanisms imposed upon women and attempts at regulating their body, speech, and emotions. Women characters in literary works resist and, at the same time, reconstruct their subjectivity through the fragmentation of narrative, emotional speech, and symbolic actions that undermine the existing dominant discourses. This makes it possible to identify the fact that the state of passivity and silence represented in literary texts can be viewed in a new light as a complex inner struggle that results in the reconstruction of one's subjectivity.

Thus, in its essence, resistance is a phenomenon that exists both in language and psychology; not speaking can be equally important as speaking. It is within the ambiguous character of resistance that the field of women's literature makes it possible for repressed voices to speak without breaking up dominant discourse directly.

1.3.1. Forms of Resistance in Women's Literature

Resistance in the literature of women is quite a multifaceted idea that works within various types of expression and symbolic and structural forms. This resistance is reflective of the varied methods that women use in negotiating their struggle against patriarchal and

cultural forces of oppression. In view of the foregoing, one may define resistance in several different ways. Verbal resistance occurs when the woman character challenges the status quo or patriarchy through her speech or voice in the narrative form or conversation, thereby making language a weapon for fighting the patriarchal system. For example, in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia uses the voice of her narrative to resist the prevailing cultural order and to make evident the silencing of Pecola.

Alongside this, nonverbal and symbolic resistance emerges through acts of everyday life, bodily expression, emotional endurance, and even silence as a means of conveying meaning beyond verbal communication. In the novel *That Long Silence*, written by Shashi Deshpande, for instance, the hero's silence and her private space emerge as a form of subtle resistance to male domination. Narrative and form can serve as means of resistance as well, as many books written by women challenge conventions associated with storytelling techniques and break free of linear plot lines to reflect the experience of a traumatic past. This is the case of Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*, whose narrative form is unique and innovative due to its departure from conventionality in storytelling.

In addition, resistance is inherent to cultural, historical, and political context when women resist oppressive structures both individually and collectively. For example, in the book *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, resistance occurs through the medium of visual storytelling as an act of rebellion against political and patriarchal dominance. Thus, various forms of resistance, such as speech, silence, narrative form, culture, etc., show the complexity of women's resistance to oppression.

1.4. The Relationship between Silence and Resistance

However, the relationship between silence and resistance in the literary works of women writers is intricate and interconnected in that silence is not always perceived as the lack of speech, while resistance does not necessarily imply active rebellion against certain conditions. Silence is often used as a means to conceal and generate meanings, thus enabling female characters to engage in negotiations about power relations that intend to suppress women's voices and freedom. Although the imposition of silence as an indicator of marginalization occurs frequently in literary texts, women are able to subvert this oppression by appropriating silence as a tool for resisting domination.

When analyzing the link between silence and resistance from a feminist standpoint, it becomes evident how the identity of female subjects emerges under circumstances of suppression. Women characters do not necessarily choose to speak within a dominant language framework that might silence them and instead find alternative ways to express themselves, including symbolically, fragmentarily, or emotionally.

These forms of expression subvert the power of the patriarchal discourse without explicitly voicing it and yet convey a message in a more profound manner. Thus, from this perspective, silence emerges as a mode of struggle that is continuously performed in the act of introspection and self-definition.

In light of this, it must be recognised that silence and resistance are intricately linked to each other and cannot exist independently of one another. Silence is not synonymous with resistance, nor is resistance devoid of silence; both these elements interact within a fluid continuum where silence may convey a meaning equal to that conveyed by speech. In this way, silence offers a different perspective on the nature of female autonomy and allows the

reader to explore new possibilities beyond those traditionally associated with women in literature. The relationship indicates that neither silence nor resistance exists as static binaries but is rather produced in the power relations and discourses through which the female subject is articulated in literary texts.

1.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Female Resistance: Julia Kristeva's Psychoanalytic Approach

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the psychoanalytic theory advanced by Julia Kristeva concerning the issue of subject formation and the roles of language, identity, and subconsciousness. The psychoanalytic theoretical framework helps in understanding how the resistance of females in literature texts is not defined by direct physical or verbal actions but by psychological conflicts expressed in terms of repression, desire, and symbolism.

1.5.1. The Semiotic and the Symbolic: Silence and Expression in Female Resistance

In terms of psychoanalytic theories, the works of Julia Kristeva provide one with a sophisticated analysis of subjectivity, language, and identity formation. It means that her theoretical model goes beyond traditional theoretical approaches and implies the existence of continuous interaction between the semiotic and symbolic dimensions.

1.5.1.1.Kristeva's Semiotic Theory

The word "semiotic" was introduced into linguistics by Julia Kristeva, referring to the part of human communication that is beyond the scope of language and is related to feelings and emotions. While language has its system, the semiotic is a pre-systemic and instinctive part of experience. It is connected with the rhythm, emotions, bodily instincts, and subconscious impulses that are located under the structure of the language. Contrary to the symbolic part of experience, which aims at order, the semiotic brings fluidity and instability. As Kristeva (1984) claims, the semiotic destabilises the symbolic order through its rhythm, fragmentation, and emotional strength, creating other kinds of meanings.

The key point about the semiotic is that it is not apart from the language, but it occurs within it when language lacks the means to communicate something. This interaction reveals how subjectivity is dynamic and continuously evolving as a result of the interaction between structure and disturbance. The importance of the semiotic in the context of feminism is due to the possibility of using semiotics to challenge the symbolic order. As patriarchy controls meaning through the use of pre-existing language and social conventions of how women should conduct themselves, discourses that transcend the system could be considered an act of undermining dominant discourses.

In this regard, silence, emotional discourse, bodily discourse, and fragmentary discourse can be considered to be acts of semiotic subversion in the sense that they offer knowledge that cannot be fully captured by the patriarchal language system. Thus, it can be argued that the silence is not just the absence of discourse but a space where repressed emotions and identities surface.

Communication operates through emotions and feelings, which are difficult to articulate through language. Thus, the semiotic provides the fluidity that would make it possible for repressed emotions and feelings to be communicated without having to be articulated through words. In feminist literary theory, semiotics becomes important because it helps one appreciate the importance of silence and non-verbal communication as acts of resisting oppression.

1.5.1.2. Kristeva's Symbolic Theory

Symbolic order can be understood as the ordered world of language, reason, and social law that regulates communication via its system of grammar and meanings and is always connected with hierarchies of power. The symbolic, according to Kristeva (1984), provides coherence and stability in order to allow people to act in society; however, at the same time, it tends to reproduce existing power relations, especially in patriarchal societies, where women's functions and voices are limited by normative frameworks.

1.5.2. Repression and the Formation of Female Subjectivity

Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory plays an important role in understanding the connection between the processes of repression and the development of female subjectivity. The process of repression is crucial in the construction of identity since one has to suppress some emotions and desires in order to comply with social norms and patriarchy. Female subjectivity, in this case, is not a permanent thing, but rather a constant process of construction of identity in a fight between inner feelings and outer systems. This

theory will be helpful in the analysis of psychological experiences of females in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

1.5.3. Silence, Resistance, and the Formation of Female Agency

Silence, resistance, and female agency have become significant concepts for literary research that is focused on feminist problems through the psychoanalytic paradigm. In patriarchal society, it is common to interpret silence as something powerless, passive, and voiceless. Nonetheless, within the psychoanalytical concept of literature, especially that of Julia Kristeva, it can be considered an expression of powerful emotionality and resistance. Coming out of repression, pain, and marginalization, the silence slowly turns into women's agency, and it is not expressed through language alone but also through action, emotionality, symbolic expression, and refusal to be dominated by the patriarchy. In such a manner, silence is no longer a symbol of passivity but the powerful instrument of self-assertion and reclaiming one's subjectivity.

1.5.3.1.1. Silence as resistance

In feminist literary analysis, silence should not be perceived only as powerlessness. Psychologically, there are many different reasons why an individual chooses to keep silent, including using this tactic as an emotional response as well as a form of resistance. In cases when social conditions become oppressive, women resort to keeping silent as an act of survival.

1.5.3.1.2. From Subjectivity to Agency

Subjectivity and agency are key aspects in exploring the concept of women's resistance. Subjectivity involves the process of identity formation under the influence of sociological and psychological factors, while agency is concerned with the capacity of people to exercise free will and take action despite existing restrictions. In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, female agency develops slowly through suffering, consciousness, and endurance.

Several scholars have already analysed the phenomenon of silence in women's literature under different feminist, cultural, and psychological angles. Scholars have studied the issue of silence in the context of oppression, marginality, trauma, and resistance. As for Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, previous research has analysed issues of women's suffering, patriarchal domination, gender inequalities, and women's strength in the context of Afghan society. All these works have enriched knowledge about the social and political aspects of women's experiences in the novel. Still, little attention has been paid to the phenomenon of silence as resistance through the prism of psychoanalysis by Julia Kristeva.

Contrary to the historical, cultural, or feminist analysis of oppression of women, the present study is focused on the psychological mechanism by which silence plays its role in the process of shaping female identity and agency. Through the use of Kristevan concepts of semiotics, symbolic, and repression, the current research attempts to prove that silence may play a dual role in the lives of women.

Conclusion

In summary, it can be stated that Chapter One primarily lays the theoretical and contextual foundation for the entire research by critically evaluating the dual concepts of silence and resistance in the context of women's literature. The chapter has examined the representation

of silence in women's literature and how it serves as an important tool of subjugation yet at the same time contains space for meaning. In addition to this, Chapter One discusses different ways in which resistance can take place in literary and global settings, where female subjectivities express themselves by engaging in verbal resistance, structural resistance, symbolic resistance, or collective resistance.

The theoretical background in this chapter is centred around the psychoanalytic approach of Julia Kristeva and the concepts she uses to talk about silence being more than an absence and an act of resistance from within.

This analysis serves as the bridge for the methodology of the subsequent chapter. The focus of the subsequent chapter is on the main female characters of the novel, Mariam and Laila, and their experiences, which are the epitome of the application of the theories of silence and resistance. Through the analysis of the personal experiences and ways of coping with the challenges of life of the main female characters, the subsequent chapter will show the application of the theories of silence and resistance, which have been discussed in the current chapter.

Chapter Two:

Exploring Mariam and Laila's
Experiences of Silence and
Resistance.

2. Chapter Two: Exploring Mariam and Laila's Experiences of Silence and Resistance

2.1.1.1. Introduction

Based on the theoretical background that was provided in the first chapter, the second chapter will be dedicated to the practice of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. If in the previous chapter, the researcher considered the concepts of silence and resistance as complicated notions of the literary world and society, now it is time to focus on how they are presented in the lives of the main female characters in the analyzed novel. In the context of the long period of war, political transformations, and patriarchy in Afghanistan, the author managed to create the unique image of the oppressed woman's life. Not reducing the female characters of the novel to the role of the victims that have suffered enough already, the writer depicts the depth of their souls, their ability to suffer, overcome all difficulties, and realize themselves in some way. Furthermore, it should be noted that silence is revealed not just as an imposition from the outside but also as the condition full of fear, resistance, and strength.

2.1.2. Mariam's Voice Against Silence

While *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tells many stories, including those of historical and political significance, the most significant aspect of this novel is that of Mariam. Mariam's character focuses on issues such as suffering, strength, and sacrifice. This makes her more than a character in the story, because the author uses her to show that every story behind survival has a personal component that involves suffering.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini narrates Mariam's story from an unloved and rejected child to a woman whose strength comes from her silence and struggles. Through her experiences with shame, loneliness, and betrayal, Mariam learns to be strong, which defines her identity as a woman in Afghanistan. Hosseini uses characterization, setting, and symbolism to illustrate how Mariam's pain in childhood shapes her to cope with the cruel world that denies her love and belonging.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, Mariam is portrayed as the embodiment of the silent women in a patriarchal, male-dominated society. However, Mariam's silence evolves as the novel progresses, becoming stronger and more assertive in her inner voice. Mariam's illegitimate birth also plays a significant role in shaping her character. As it defines her as a Harami in Afghan society. She learns to see herself through society's judgment.

The shame associated with Mariam's birth, combined with her mother Nana's constant chastisements, "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini 7). This creates the impression that silence is essential for Mariam's character, showing that women are often blamed for everything. Therefore, Mariam learns to be silent at a very young age. Nana was forbidden from speaking about

Jalil since doing so would be viewed as sinful, especially given the Taliban's government. As a result of being overwhelmed with silence and her daughter being able to be independent on her own, she becomes emotionally stressed, so she commits suicide. The choice of words that Hosseini employs in this excerpt is important since the effect is created not only due to the event that occurs but also to the way in which it is described.

In particular, the constant use of words related to suffering and rejection serves as a means of showing the psychological load that the character carries while the scarcity of direct speech shows how little power the character has in the patriarchal world to speak up. It can be said that the silence that envelops the voice of the character thus serves as an instrument of showing the trauma the character has experienced.

"Mariam had never dreamed of a life beyond the Kolba" (Hosseini 20). The Kolba is a small, isolated house where Mariam grows; this symbolizes how she is kept apart from society and in confinement. This also shows the limited options available to Mariam from childhood, turning silence and submission into internal survival strategies. Mariam's silence becomes her protection, and her identity grows out of both her weakness and her quiet strength. According to Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity, abjection and repression play pivotal roles in Mariam's subjectivity or self-definition, with silence becoming impossible for her to express herself in society.

Mariam's relationship with her father, Jalil, also adds another dimension to Mariam's subjectivity, as she desires to be recognised by her father but is constantly met with rejection, leading to emotional suffering for Mariam and causing her psychological distress. However, Mariam does not confront her father or society for rejecting her, which aligns with Kristeva's idea of withholding the symbolic self from society as a protective mechanism for Mariam's personality. Mariam's childhood, characterized by loneliness, longing, and desire, also

represents society's patriarchal assumption of silencing women, conditioning Mariam's mind to endure humiliation as a way of survival. However, the marriage arrangement with Rasheed further isolates her and only adds to her confinement.

Though she is initially hopeful, she is soon confronted with the forceful expression of patriarchal values through domestic violence, miscarriages, and psychological degradation. The scene in which Rasheed forces Mariam to chew pebbles. "Now you know what your rice tastes like" (Hosseini 104). This can be seen as a symbol of humiliation and as a form of strategic silence as a coping mechanism. Mariam's silence in the face of the situation is a classic example of the dual nature of silence, where outwardly the external silence embraces the internal space in which survival strategies begin to develop. "Mariam understood that her life was a prison, but she had learned to endure it quietly" (Hosseini 152). This illustrates how trauma and abuse can evolve into strategic silence.

Yet another psychological aspect is introduced through the arrival of Laila in the house. Though Mariam at first takes her as a symbol of patriarchal oppression and the force behind the rivalry between women, her subsequent experiences with Laila transform the situation into one wherein she is able to externalize her empathy and develop a sense of collective self. In this sense, silence acquires a communicative function, allowing Mariam to convey her strength and strategies of resistance.

Literary theorists have argued that "female solidarity in conditions of systemic oppression is a language in itself, often expressed without words but with profound psychological resonance" (Hospital, 2019). as the literary theorist Janette Turner Hospital explains. This argument is in line with Kristeva's argument that subject formation takes place at the point of conjunction of repression and the semiotic, where silence holds the key to the expression of the inexpressible. "Mariam watched Laila with a mix of suspicion and curiosity, yet felt

a growing bond” (Hosseini 220). This highlights how solidarity between Mariam and Laila develops gradually under oppression.

The psychological impact is witnessed in the violent assault carried out by Rasheed on Laila. Mariam’s act of terminating Rasheed with a shovel symbolizes the culmination of internalized suffering and moral strength. If the act is understood through the lens provided by Kristeva, it is evident that there has been a transformation from abjection to agency in the act carried out by Mariam. The suppressed subjectivity and agency in the act are a powerful expression of the power inherent in the act carried out by Mariam. Furthermore, Mariam’s submission must be understood within the context provided by Kristeva. Mariam symbolizes the concept of moral and psychological resolve. Her silence now symbolizes dignity and sacrificial empowerment.

Furthermore, Mariam’s action should be understood within the context of the interplay between individual trauma and the trauma inflicted by the oppressor. The psychological processes explained by Kristeva in the context of the repression of the semiotic into the symbolic also need to be understood in the context provided by the act carried out by Mariam. It is evident that Mariam’s act of silence has clearly empowered the act of justice, allowing the latent power within her action to be activated. It is also clear that Mariam’s life facilitated the transition from internal trauma to an act of collective emancipation.

The path of Mariam from the disgrace she suffers due to her illicit origin to the psychological splitting caused by Jalil’s abandonment and then the overpowering, violent marriage to her husband Rasheed and the internalization of trauma in order to survive becomes a miniature reflection of the complex connection between silence, repressions, and the formation of moral agency.

The application of Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory reveals that the subjectivity of Mariam is formed on the borders of humiliation and repression, where long-lasting sufferings and repressions end up with conscious and brave actions. Eventually, when Rasheed is about to kill Laila because she invites Tariq, Mariam kills Rasheed. Yes, Mariam committed a crime; however, this happened due to her silence and inability to say anything about it.

The resistance displayed by Mariam in saving Laila and later murdering Rasheed shows that the repression and silence of years can act as catalysts for the emergence of acts of heroism and sacrifice, making Mariam's journey progress from victimhood into the state of moral agency. Thus, the multifaceted transformation described above becomes the important point of view on the problem of female resilience in Afghan society, giving at the same time an occasion to consider another journey—that of Laila. Laila's journey makes it possible to realize how education and agency can help a woman to survive in a patriarchal society and to get back one's voice to resolutely shape one's future.

Within a Kristevan perspective on Mariam's silence, this is not the complete absence of expression and emotion but the space in which repressed experiences and emotions continue to live. The inability of Mariam to express her suffering proves the domination of the symbolic order established according to the patriarchal laws. However, the power of the emotions lying underneath her silence represents semiotic subversion because the experiences that cannot be named in the dominant discourse keep on struggling against the system of control.

Overall, the childhood of Mariam involves rejection, suffering, and silence. However, it is during all these moments that she finds strength within herself. In general, through the stories of the bitterness of her mother, the betrayal of her father, and her solitude, Mariam understands that even pain can become her strength. Thus, the use of Mariam's childhood by Hosseini proves that strength may arise even under the circumstances of silence. The strength that is found within Mariam as a result of her childhood becomes her form of resistance.

Although both of the stories are related to the subjection of women within a patriarchal society, there are some differences between their experiences in terms of interaction with silence and resistance. The silence of Mariam is mostly related to her rejection, illegitimate birth, and marginalization; thus, silence is directly connected to her pain and endurance. On the other hand, Laila grows up in a completely different atmosphere, where the importance of education and socio-political consciousness exists. Resistance of Laila seems to be related to finding her voice and involvement in the life of the community.

In conclusion, the childhood of Mariam is filled with rejection, loss, and silence, but from within all this, she draws strength. In all the bitterness of her mother, the betrayal of her father, and the loneliness, Mariam finds strength through suffering. In essence, the use of the story of Mariam shows that even in silence, strength can be developed. The strength of Mariam developed during her childhood days becomes her response to the world that wants to silence her.

Even though both Mariam and Laila suffer the subjugation under patriarchy in their stories, their relationship to silence and resistance differs due to different personal histories and socio-historical contexts of their lives. The silence of Mariam results from her rejection, illegitimacy, and marginality, meaning that her silence has much to do with trauma and

endurance. On the other hand, Laila grows up in totally different surroundings, where education and socio-political awareness matter. While resistance of Mariam comes out of silence, resistance of Laila seems to have more to do with voice and participation.

Finding voice through resistance

The character of Laila in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* serves as an example of another kind of resistance in the framework of the society in which she exists.

2.2. Laila: Finding Voice through Resistance

The character of Laila in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* serves as an example of another type of resistance in the framework of the society in which she exists. The character of Mariam is also connected with the motifs of silence and resistance. Nevertheless, in comparison with the character of Mariam, it is possible to trace the development of the voice of the heroine within the society in which she exists. Through the character of Laila, Hosseini presents information on the impact that education and awareness have on the voice of the woman. The protagonist is different from Mariam's character in that she lives in an environment that is supportive. The protagonist lives in Kabul with her parents, who are very devoted to her education and her future. The protagonist's father, Hakim, always tries to motivate her to seek knowledge and be aware of the significance of education in society.

In one instance in the novel, he says that "a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated" (Hosseini 103). In this context, it is possible to argue that the protagonist's awareness of education is not limited to knowledge and affects her confidence and resistance in the society in which she lives.

According to psychoanalytical theory and in accordance with Julia Kristeva's ideas, it is possible to argue that the education of the protagonist helps her develop her identity in the context of society and the symbolic. Nonetheless, there is a huge change in the life of Laila as a result of the Afghan civil war. She is left behind in Rasheed's house, where there are patriarchal values. According to Hosseini, "Laila had always thought of Rasheed as a strict man, but she never imagined how controlling he could be" (Hosseini 157). This shows how Laila faces challenges from external forces, but it is also through this realization of the challenges that she begins to find a way of coping with them. Therefore, despite all these challenges, the thoughts of Laila show that she is determined and that there is a struggle between repression and desire, and this is another important idea in Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory.

One of the important events in the life of Laila is her association and relationship with Mariam. Initially, these two women are not close, especially because of the patriarchal values that are common in Rasheed's house. However, as time progresses, the hardships that they go through make them closer. According to Hosseini, "Mariam and Laila became partners, not by choice, but by circumstance, sharing the same oppression and learning the language of unspoken solidarity" (Hosseini 250). This shows how Laila resists through her association and relationship with Mariam, and this is another important idea in Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of semiotics, where it is possible to communicate without the use of words. In contrast to Mariam's resistance, Laila's resistance grows out of a more intimate engagement with the symbolic system. The education and awareness Laila has given her have the means to challenge the patriarchal system.

By using the Kristevan approach, Laila's story shows how female subjectivity arises from the struggle between the social constraints and the will for expression. This voice is not

simply an act of breaking away from silence; it comes as a result of understanding the meaning behind the symbolic structure.

This determination of hers is most evident when she tries to find a way to envision a future for herself and her children. She is constantly looking for ways to free herself from the clutches of Rasheed. This, in turn, reveals that she has a tremendous sense of duty and courage. Her resistance, though subtle, is an important part of her. This can be seen in her plans and determination that she does not accept her situation. According to Kristeva, it is in such moments that the semiotics of desire, hope, and fear are translated into action. One of the most important aspects that can be derived from the contrast that exists in the characters of Mariam and Laila is that, according to Hosseini, there are various ways for a woman to resist patriarchy.

2.2.1. Two Voices, Two Struggles

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the stories of Mariam and Laila come together and reveal two different forms of female resistance in a patriarchal society. Mariam's voice is developed through the power of silence and suffering. In contrast, Laila's voice is developed through education and awareness. Mariam's silence is the outcome of her early life, which was filled with rejection, illegitimacy, and social marginalization. However, this silence eventually gives way to inner strength. Mariam does not openly challenge the system at the onset; her challenge is more gradual and is through her patience. Laila, on the other hand, has been brought up in an environment that encourages the value of learning. This gives her inner strength and awareness of the injustices around her. As her father tells her, "A society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated" (Hosseini 103). This enables her to look at the oppression around her not just emotionally but also intellectually.

Though both women are subjected to the same oppressive circumstances under the same roof, they are brought together through their shared suffering at the hands of Rasheed. This is where their two types of resistance are brought together. Mariam is still the quiet type, whereas Laila is more actively involved in the challenge against their oppressor. However, their relationship eventually shows that their relationship ultimately reveals that resistance cannot take place in only one way. As Mariam carries within herself the attributes of silence and endurance, Laila embodies those of action and consciousness. By being united, both women prove that such two aspects of resistance can complement each other instead of remaining opposite to each other and independent of each other. Such unification makes it possible for the women to withstand oppressive circumstances and create a sense of unity.

As they get closer and deeper into their relationship, both Mariam and Laila undergo certain transformations. The latter helps Mariam break away from the silent mode of living, and the former assists the latter in staying mentally strong despite the surrounding oppression. Thus, their connection serves to strengthen the power of resistance in the context of women's lives.

In conclusion, it can be argued that Mariam and Laila's connected stories clearly show that resistance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is not one-dimensional in nature. Hosseini shows that the process of female resistance cannot be seen simply in terms of silence and voice, endurance and action. Instead, it becomes clear that resistance is shown through the relationship between the two characters as something more profound and revolutionary in nature.

Through their experiences of being oppressed, the relationship becomes a way to redefine oppression itself. It should be noted that while Laila survives, she also continues to resist. This means that, despite being alive, Laila does not stop resisting patriarchal

oppression, which is another example of how resistance is shown to be dynamic in nature. Therefore, it seems that the two female characters together represent the idea of the power of a collective resistance, making their "two voices" become one powerful struggle.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has successfully shown that female resistance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is not monolithic and singular, but rather multidimensional and shaped by various factors. The comparative analysis conducted on the examples of Laila and Mariam showed that female resistance takes the form of both internal and external means of protest, such as enduring pain or resisting in silence on one hand and being aware of the wrongness of the actions against oneself and consciously protesting against them on the other.

At the same time, it is possible to see that solidarity is an important component of resistance because Laila and Mariam find mutual support through shared suffering and pain. This proves that resistance is not only an individual phenomenon but is also shaped by relations and experiences, which allow the development of the capacity for resistance. As a result, this chapter once again proved that silence and resistance are inseparable processes within which women negotiate their identities. The theoretical basis laid above forms the ground for moving to the next chapter, where the analysis would focus on the subject of discussion within the theoretical framework provided by Julia Kristeva's psychoanalysis.

Chapter Three:

A Kristevan Psychoanalytic
Reading of Silence,
Resistance, and the Formation
of Female Subjectivity in *A
Thousand Splendid Suns*.

3. Chapter Three: A Kristevan Psychoanalytic Reading of Silence, Resistance, and the Formation of Female Subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

3.1. Introduction

Chapter three presents the theoretical background needed for an analysis of female resistance in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. The theoretical basis of this research is based on the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva, including such important terms as the semiotic and the symbolic, as well as the notions of repression, subjectivity, and identity formation. All these terms can serve as effective instruments for exploring the problem of silence, voice, and kinds of struggle of female characters within the framework of patriarchy.

The theory of Julia Kristeva is highly relevant for this study since it studies the connection between language, identity, and unconsciousness. Therefore, the theoretical background provided by the scholar will help to understand how silence is able not only to act as a mechanism of constraint but also as a sphere of internal meaning and possible action. This theoretical background will be especially helpful for the exploration of such characters as Mariam and Laila, who experience oppression differently from a psychological perspective.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the main theoretical concepts, which will serve as the background for further analysis.

3.2. The Semiotic and the Symbolic: Silence and Expression in Female Resistance

The psychoanalytic theory presented by Julia Kristeva provides us with an ideal way to understand the relationship between silence, language, and women's resistance in the context of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Through the dialectics of the semiotic and the symbolic, Kristeva contends that identity and meaning are always affected through the tension existing between one's emotional and instinctual life and institutions of society. In the story, both Mariam and Laila are victimized by patriarchy in their own ways; nevertheless, the two women demonstrate their unique forms of resistance in the form of silence, endurance, and language. This shows that silence is more than a lack of voice but rather a psychological space where suffering, repression, and resistance exist.

3.2.1. Applying Kristeva's Semiotic and Symbolic Theories to the Novel

According to Kristeva, the semiotic can be equated to emotions, bodily instincts, rhythm, and unconscious forces that lie under the language structure. In the book, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the semiotic feature emerges through silences, pain, and mental disintegration felt by the women. Specifically, Mariam experiences most of her agony in silences rather than through spoken expressions.

As a child, Mariam develops an attitude towards herself due to her mother frequently reminding her that she is a "harami." Mariam's grandmother says, "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always" (Hosseini 7). Similarly, Mariam's mother warns her: "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like

a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini 7). Through these phrases, one perceives the mentality of patriarchy surrounding the life of Mariam.

Through the use of the simile "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman," Hosseini illustrates how entrenched patriarchy can be in terms of its influence on women's perceptions and lives. The fact that a man's accusing finger "always" finds a woman means that pointing fingers at women and judging them is second nature, just like a compass always pointing north. By using an image of an "accusing finger," Hosseini underscores women's vulnerability to judgment and oppression at the hands of men.

This quotation is important not only because it shows how entrenched patriarchy is in Mariam's community but also because it shows how oppressed women perpetuate their own oppression through the passing down of such beliefs to younger generations. Nana's words are all the more powerful and poignant since she, having had to endure similar treatment, knows what she is talking about and wants to prepare her daughter for her own fate.

In the work of Kristeva, the symbolic order is associated with the concepts of language, law, structure, and patriarchy. People become members of the symbolic order through the pressure of social expectations and structures that dictate how individuals should behave. In the case of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the symbolic order finds expression in patriarchy, gender roles, and the social limitations placed on women.

Rasheed can be seen as a very vivid example of patriarchy in this novel. He continually tries to exercise control over both Laila and Mariam using the tools of fear, silencing, and physical punishment. "A woman's face is her husband's business only" (Hosseini 62). This illustrates the symbolic order in which women become objectified by men.

The oppression by the patriarchal system portrayed in the novel by Rasheed involves the use of fear, violence, and coercion on both Mariam and Laila. This is evident in the quote “A woman’s face is her husband’s business only,” which shows that women were regarded like objects. The statement shows that women were considered possessions by men since they were forced to give up their freedom and identities. It also portrays a view by the patriarchal society that the husband has full control over the wife. It was expected that women should be under the husband’s will at all times.

It should be noted that the quotation also reflects the oppressive treatment of women in Afghan society. For example, he insists that women dress in the burqa. Such oppression results from the belief that women belong to their husbands. Therefore, the quotation depicts how patriarchy oppresses women. Furthermore, the author criticizes societies where the masculine gender involves coercion and denial of freedom to women.

3.2.2. Silence as a Semiotic Resistance: Mariam

In accordance with the theoretical aspects of semiotics, symbolism, and repression, in this section, the main terms presented by Julia Kristeva will be applied to the analysis of silence functioning as an example of female agency in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Hence, in contrast to the traditional interpretation, silence is regarded as a deeply meaningful phenomenon that involves continuous negotiating of meanings, feelings, and resistance to oppression.

Silence becomes a major aspect of the lives of Mariam and Laila in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In case of the latter character, it is related to her past experiences of rejection, illegitimacy, and lack of care; however, this notion, according to Kristeva, does not represent passivity and submission, as silence can become a semiotic space where repressed feelings and internal struggles take place.

Thus, the woman's silence becomes the source of power helping her resist and act.

The silence of Laila, on the other hand, is quite another matter, as her ability to speak up and be vocal is continuously hindered by the impact of the patriarchal aspect of the environment she exists in. In this case, silence becomes the way of survival rather than a natural feature of her personality, which, however, doesn't mean that the power of the silence in protest against the conflict of one's wishes and the outside world doesn't exist at all. Laila acquires an active strategy of resisting through silence, implying consciousness and wilfulness.

Mariam's and Laila's relationships become yet another example of the application of nonverbal means of communication within the framework of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic. Such communication doesn't imply only the usage of verbal language but also understanding and recognition communicated through nonverbal means. The process of silent communication occurs because of the emotional intensity of the interaction.

In the novel, the motif of silence is used throughout the book as the act of both surviving and resisting. The reason for Mariam's silence is many years of suffering, humiliation, and oppression caused by patriarchy. However, there is a hidden power behind Mariam's silence. Instead of rebelling against Rasheed right from the beginning, she silently endures. As Kristeva suggests, "silence itself is the space of repression in the semiotic."

Mariam's silence has been created in her childhood days because of rejection and humiliation. As Hosseini mentions, "You are a clumsy little harami. This is my reward for everything I've endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami." (Hosseini 4). Thus, one can see how the motive of silence is imbedded in the unconsciousness. However, under the veil of silence, emotional trauma becomes stronger. Mariam's silence has its origins in

her childhood in verbal trauma. Not only does the fact that she is called "harami" make her humiliated, but this act denies her identity.

3.2.3. Depicting the Symbolic Order through Laila's Behavior

On the contrary, Laila's subjective development is more connected with the symbolic order because through language, education, and knowledge, she acquires an ability to perceive reality differently. According to Kristeva, such people are located in the realm of the symbolic since their identities are constructed using symbolic language and various social norms. Therefore, while Mariam is a character who belongs to the world of the semiotic, the symbolic is much closer to Laila. It helps her to understand her experiences and to develop an opinion on the surrounding realities.

It should be noted that Laila does not completely submit herself to the symbolic order as she tries to use her knowledge and education for her liberation from patriarchal restrictions. Thus, her education gives her the opportunity to think critically about the existing social norms and laws. Consequently, while the symbolic order allows controlling and restricting individuals, it also creates an opportunity to express one's dissatisfaction with the situation. Laila's subjectivity is always challenged by traumatic experiences connected with war and loss. These disturbances bring back aspects of the semiotic realm, namely passion, bereavement, and instinctive reactions, into an otherwise structured language-based identity. This is why she becomes a hybridized subject whose identity goes from being structured to becoming emotionally charged.

Thus, through her character, one can clearly see that while the symbolic order is essential to communication and social living, it is not completely inviolable. Instead, it is always vulnerable to semiotic interventions that can disrupt the structure of this order. This is how she makes language the means by which she can assert herself and be aware of her situation.

Unlike Mariam, the character of Laila shows a different relationship toward the symbolic order. She grows up in an environment that provides her with education, making her a literate person. Laila's father encourages her intellectual growth and nurtures her desire for knowledge despite the patriarchal society in which she lives. As Hakim tells her, "Marriage can wait, education cannot." (Hosseini 114). This quotation proves that Laila is motivated to be intellectually independent as opposed to being restricted to the conventional roles assigned to women. It demonstrates how Hakim motivates Laila to appreciate the significance of education and independent thinking instead of limiting herself to the traditional symbolic identity of wife and mother. Through language and education, Laila achieves greater self-awareness within the symbolic order compared to Mariam, who is deprived of both.

Hakim's advice to Laila, "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini 7), reveals his knowledge of the patriarchal symbolic order. In saying this, he enlightens Laila about how society places unfair blame on women and limits their identity to the constraints of the male symbolic order.

War takes away Laila's chance for a normal life; she ends up being dependent and vulnerable. Being deprived of her parents, Laila finds herself within the limits of the household headed by Rasheed, in which his patriarchal dominance makes her physically and mentally oppressed. However, unlike Mariam, Laila possesses more awareness about

language. The concept of symbolic order according to Kristeva applies to the regulations that seek to define Laila's identity as a woman, wife, and mother.

Rasheed's statement, "A woman's face is her husband's business only" (Hosseini 70), clearly depicts how the rigid patriarchal laws imposed on women in Afghan society are applied. Rasheed uses social and religious authority to control Laila and use her body and identity in any way he wishes, reducing her individuality and forcing her into submission. The symbolic order by Kristeva is evident from the male-dominated norms, which determine whether the woman should or should not do something. Rasheed's announcement that he will no longer permit Laila to see Tariq is an example of how he exercises his dominance by restricting her social activities. This shows the exercise of patriarchy within the symbolic order through the command and prohibition by male authority.

Yet, the attempts by Laila to overcome restrictions of the symbolic order are reflected in her intelligence and emotional power. Her escape from Rasheed and protection of her kids from him show her rebellion against patriarchal oppression. Moreover, the relation between Laila and Mariam forms a kind of solidarity that undermines the restrictions of the symbolic order defined by Rasheed. Both women convert their suffering into resistance. This resistance becomes clear at the end of the novel when Mariam realizes that "she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back." (Hosseini 329) This quotation refers to Mariam near the end of the novel, but it also reflects the transformative bond between Mariam and Laila. Their relationship creates an emotional space outside Rasheed's oppressive symbolic order. Together, they convert suffering into resistance, challenging patriarchal authority through mutual care, sacrifice, and protection.

This bond between Mariam and Laila is evident from the quote "Behind every trial and sorrow that He makes us shoulder; God has a reason" (Hosseini 38). The shared suffering of both women provides them with the emotional strength to resist the patriarchal oppression of Rasheed, challenging the symbolic order together.

3.3. Repression and the Formation of Female Subjectivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

According to Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory, repression is vital in shaping subjectivity. Repression involves suppressing one's emotions, passions, and impulses in an attempt to meet social norms and societal authorities. In patriarchal societies, females often have to silence their emotions and uniqueness as a way of survival. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the characters Mariam and Laila experience repression as they undergo various forms of violence, trauma, rejection, and loss. Nonetheless, the story shows that repression does not obliterate the concept of identity but rather helps develop feminine subjectivity.

3.3.1. Repression and Patriarchal Control in the Novel

In addition to the semiotic and symbolic, Julia Kristeva provides an important framework for understanding repression and subject formation. Her approach expands traditional psychoanalytic theories by emphasizing that identity is not stable but continuously shaped through internal and external processes.

By employing such a theory of subjectivity, one may develop a deeper comprehension of the literary work under discussion and the characters' actions. Thus, in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam's prolonged silence can be perceived as repression that, although

initially hampering her actions, ultimately leads to the development of courage and determination in protecting Laila and confronting Rasheed.

The repression in Laila's character is an example of how being educated and aware can result in repressed needs of freedom turning into active steps taken by the character and shows the positive impact that repression can have if it is done consciously. Therefore, we see that Kristeva's theory helps understand the psychology of both females: repression is not just something that inhibits one from doing certain actions; rather, it is what shapes one's personality and determines their decisions and ability to rebel.

The patriarchal control used throughout the novel works based on the use of fear, violence, and social constraints. Rasheed tries continuously to exert physical and mental domination on Mariam and Laila. He subjects them to oppression and makes them submissive women who live only by the will of males.

One instance that shows the patriarchal oppression is the scene where Rasheed forces Mariam to chew pebbles because she criticized him for the poor cooking. According to Hosseini, "He shoved two fingers into Mariam's mouth and pried it open... 'Now chew,' he said" (Hosseini 104). In this context, the act depicts humiliation, domination, and subjection of females. It portrays an aspect of oppression, which is done by patriarchal societies in an attempt to control women's bodies and lives.

Rasheed even uses patriarchal ideologies in justifying female subordination. In one of the conversations with Laila, he says, "A woman's face is her husband's business only" (Hosseini 70). As such, women are perceived as objects that need total domination from the males. Furthermore, when Rasheed talks about females publicly, he says, "God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into their hands" (Hosseini 246). This assertion highlights the

patriarchal mindset of Rasheed, who believes in male dominance. Through the depiction of women as incapable and dangerous, Rasheed reinforces the symbolic order that excludes women from power and confines them to submissive domestic roles. This quotation is also an example of how patriarchal discourse is employed for the oppression and silencing of women in the novel.

While repression experienced by Mariam and Laila goes beyond domestic violence, it entails social and political oppression imposed by the Taliban. Women are not allowed to work, study, or move around without male accompaniment. According to Hosseini: “Attention women: You will stay inside your homes at all times” (Hosseini 270). This public form of repression further strengthens the silence of females in society.

As explained by Kristeva, repression affects the process of subjectification as one internalizes social prohibitions and unconscious fears. Both Mariam and Laila have to repress their feelings of anger, fear, and emotional pain in order to cope in oppressive situations. Nevertheless, these feelings remain psychological, leading to acts of resistance in the future. Patriarchal repression under the Taliban is strengthened by laws against women's education and mobility. Females are deprived of freedom and made to be silent under conditions of political and social domination. The oppression and subjection portrayed in the story show how closely associated female identity is with repression.

3.3.2. The Impact of Social Exclusion on Mariam’s Subjectivity

Mariam's subjectivity is constructed mainly due to the factors of rejection and illegitimacy. The woman learns, since early childhood, that she cannot have any rights due

to her illegitimate birth. Nana constantly reminds her that she is not accepted by the society. Particularly when she tells her, "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman." (Hosseini 7) The quotation shows the nature of the patriarchal society that makes Mariam believe that she has to blame herself and feel inferior because she was an illegitimate child. Therefore, Mariam's subjectivity is affected by emotional repression, shame, and social isolation.

In addition, Mariam suffers emotionally due to her relationship with Jalil. Even though she is in need of love and affection from her father, he rejects her because of the fear of ruining his reputation. When Mariam tries to meet her father in the street, he does not even open his doors to her. Mariam's emotional trauma is also seen in the fact that Jalil refuses to acknowledge her publicly. While waiting outside his house, she realizes that he had lied to her. "Mariam experiences a profound sense of betrayal when she realizes that he had lied to her." (Hosseini 55) This scene symbolizes the collapse of Mariam's hopes for affection and acceptance from her father. Jalil's rejection deepens her feelings of abandonment and reinforces the fractured subjectivity described by Kristeva.

According to Kristeva, subjectivity is constructed on the basis of internal contradictions and emotional repression. Mariam suffers a lot; yet, she accepts it as a fate since her subjectivity was developed in the atmosphere of rejection and isolation. However, the experiences related to her relationships with Laila and Aziza contribute to the transformation of her subjectivity. She can redefine herself because of emotional and mutual suffering. Her death becomes her final attempt to reconstruct her personality.

The subjectivity of Mariam is built upon the experience of being consistently rejected since the early stages of life. As she is defined as an illegitimate daughter, she is placed at the borders of the community right from the start. This process of building one's identity

based on the denial of the existence of recognition forms Mariam's subjectivity. In fact, being excluded from the symbolic order affects the development of identity because she is deprived of a possibility to find the necessary conditions for its construction.

Thus, Mariam experiences rejection internally, which eventually becomes a structuring principle of her identity. She builds her identity through silence, lack of emotions, and a constant confrontation with feelings of worthlessness and invisibility. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to consider it a manifestation of psychological harm to her personality. It can be regarded as the adaptation technique to the context, where she experiences consistent denial of agency and legitimate identity.

However, gradually, this subjectivity becomes complicated, transforming itself from a mere feeling of being helpless to a much more intricate sense of consciousness. Although she continues to be socially excluded, this experience helps develop an inner resilience within her. This will become very important for comprehending her behaviour in the novel because, through the experiences that she has emotionally and psychologically undergone, she is able to channel them into moral determination.

Despite the fact that Mariam and Laila come from different eras and face various types of oppression, the psychology of both girls develops similarly. For example, the development of identity in Mariam's case happens through constant rejection and domestic oppression, while Laila faces war, education, and personal losses. The analysis of both cases allows one to see that despite the differences in the experience of both women, the experience of silence and resistance plays an important role in building the identity of a woman.

3.3.3. Laila's Subjectivity under War and Loss

In contrast to Mariam, Laila's subjectivity is shaped in the midst of historical violence, conflict, and loss, thus bringing about instability as an important factor for Laila's development as a character. Her loss of family members and the breakdown of her surroundings make it necessary to rebuild her sense of herself in conditions of instability rather than stability, continuity, and safety, thus making her identity construction a matter of survival and continuous reconstruction rather than gradual development.

Her education and her familiarity with the symbolic order enable her to enter into contact with it more intensively compared to Mariam. At the same time, her attempts are always interrupted by her traumatizing experiences, preventing any stabilization of her subjectivity by means of language and structure. In addition to her loss of people close to her, war and patriarchy make her life experience even more traumatic and lead to constant destabilization. Nevertheless, Laila is not resigned to her condition but rather begins to convert her repressed urges into acts.

This means that her subjectivity becomes a living and breathing one, created through knowledge as well as adaptability. She does not have an established identity but rather one that is always evolving based on the ever-changing situations she faces, giving her greater control over navigating her oppression.

Thus, Laila's subjectivity reveals how oppression and trauma do not just produce psychological fragmentation but can actually lead to adaptation. This means that her identity exists as a negotiation of vulnerability and resistance, where simply surviving becomes its own type of agency.

Laila's subjectivity is greatly influenced by the destruction caused by war and emotional loss. Her suffering can be seen in the following quotation: "She thought of Mammy lying on the couch, of Babi walking from room to room, clean-shaven and ghost-faced." (Hosseini 109) The above quotation illustrates the fact that war has destroyed Laila's family and emotional stability. The suffering of her parents influences Laila's subjectivity through grief, fear, and psychological loss, making her grow up fast in an environment full of violence.

Moreover, the psychological impact of war is illustrated by the change in people around Laila. According to the narration, "The war had hardened people, Laila thought, made them cruel, uncaring." (Hosseini 169) The above quotation is used to illustrate how war transforms individuals emotionally and psychologically. It shows that Laila's identity develops in a society deeply affected by violence, trauma, and instability.

Ultimately, Laila's subjectivity is determined mainly by war, loss, and trauma. While growing up, Laila enjoys parental affection, education, and intellectual stimulation. However, war destroys everything, including her peaceful life. Loss of parents plays an important role in Laila's psychological development. Having been left alone and unprotected, she feels emotionally and socially exposed in the world full of violence. Forced marriage to Rasheed adds more repression and suffering to her life.

According to Kristeva, traumatic experiences may cause disintegration and construction of identity. In spite of the repressive reality, Laila manages to find ways of sustaining hope and identity. Her emotional dependence on Tariq and dedication to her offspring become essential factors of emotional health. While being afraid and suffering, Laila refuses to submit herself to oppression. Trying to run away from Rasheed and provide a good future for her children, she gradually develops her agency and consciousness.

3.4. Silence, Resistance, and the Formation of Female Agency in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Silence and resistance appear to be interrelated concepts in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. According to Julia Kristeva, who provides an interesting psychoanalytical approach to literature, one should consider the concept of silence not as passivity but as the emotional and psychological dimension through which oppressed and suffering individuals shape their identities. In the novel under discussion, both Mariam and Laila are subjected to various kinds of oppression in patriarchal society, and yet they manage to build their own sense of agency as a result of endurance, resistance, and emotional strength.

3.4.1. Silence as Resistance

Based on the theoretical considerations of semiotics, symbolism, and repression, in this part, the key concepts introduced by Julia Kristeva will be used to analyze the way silence works as an example of female agency in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Thus, contrary to the conventional understanding, silence is seen as a highly meaningful experience associated with constant negotiation of meanings, emotions, and resistance to domination.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, silence serves as a significant feature of Mariam's and Laila's lived realities. While for the former, it is linked to her past experiences connected to rejection, illegitimacy, and deprivation of care, this particular concept, from the Kristevan perspective, does not mean passivity and submissiveness, as it implies a semiotic space where repressed emotions and internal conflicts develop over time, thus shaping a person's inner power and dignity. Consequently, the girl's silence turns out to be a source of strength that helps her resist and take action.

Laila's silence, however, is a different case, as her ability to speak out and be verbally articulate is constantly suppressed due to the influence of the patriarchal nature of the environment that surrounds her. Here, silence serves as a means for survival rather than a natural trait, which does not, nevertheless, deny the existence of the implicit power of silent protest arising from the struggle between personal desires and outer conditions. Laila develops an active approach to resistance in silence, involving consciousness and determination.

The relationship between Mariam and Laila represents another example of the use of nonverbal means of communication in terms of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic. It involves not just communication using language but understanding and recognition expressed in a nonverbal way. The process of silent communication takes place, based on the emotional intensity of the interaction, making the concept of silence even more profound and meaningful.

Throughout the entire novel, the motif of silence is used repeatedly as both an act of survival and resistance. The silence of Mariam has been brought about by many years of emotional pain, humiliation, and oppression at the hands of patriarchy. In Mariam's silence lies a secret strength as well. Instead of directly challenging Rasheed from the very beginning, she endures silently. According to Kristeva, silence can be a space of repression within the semiotic.

Mariam's silence is born in her childhood years due to feelings of rejection and humiliation. As Hosseini says: "You are a clumsy little harami. This is my reward for everything I've endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami," (Hosseini 4). This example shows how silence is deeply imbedded in the psyche. However, under the cover of silence, emotional pain only grows stronger. The silence of Mariam has its roots during her

early years of life in verbal abuse. It is not only the act of calling Mariam "harami" which serves as an insult for her, but is also an act of defining her identity through negation. It is the repeated use of the same term to define Mariam as an outcast, which turns this verbal abuse into self-rejection throughout her lifetime. From a Kristevan point of view, Mariam's silence is an expression of how the semiotic functions, in that there are certain emotions that do not fit into the patriarchal symbolic order and thus continue to remain in place through repression.

Likewise, Laila frequently maintains her silence in an attempt to keep herself and her children safe. In the presence of Rasheed's violent behaviour, silence seems like a necessity. Nevertheless, silence does not mean submission. Instead, it helps women maintain their emotional identity and dignity. Hosseini says, "Yet her heart was comforting her. With the citizen's duty done, Mariam could think now about Laila's child, Aziza... She was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back (Hosseini 329). Such a statement reflects Laila's silent emotional fortitude. One of the most notable examples of resistance can be found in Mariam killing Rasheed in an attempt to rescue Laila. Such an action indicates that years of silence and oppression resulted in emotional strength, rather than submission.

As explained by Kristeva, the process of formation of identity is a result of the constant struggle between repression and expression. Mariam's last act comes to signify the point at which the years of repression have come to be replaced by concrete acts of symbolization.

Mariam contemplates her life before making the sacrifice and feels peaceful. Hosseini says, "For the first time since she had been a child, Mariam felt happy" (Hosseini 224). The above quote signifies the rebuilding of Mariam's identity through defiance and self-sacrifice.

The expression "for the first time" draws attention to the rarity of emotional satisfaction that Mariam experiences in her life, and the recurrence of "childhood" brings about a circularity in the narrative in relation to her final moment of defiance against the loss of her childhood innocence.

The other instance occurs when Laila decides not to forsake Mariam emotionally, even despite the impending dangers surrounding them. Their silent solidarity transforms into a dynamic resistance against Rasheed's dominance. While Mariam was taught early in life that "behind every trial and sorrow... God has a reason" (Hosseini 38), her bond with Laila recontextualizes this suffering. Beneath the trials brought upon them by domestic tyranny, their connection metamorphoses from silent endurance into active solidarity, forging a deep sisterhood that resists male authority.

3.4.2. From Subjectivity to Agency

The transformation from subjectivity to agency marks an important stage in the process of defining women's identity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The term 'subjectivity' is used here in the meaning of the process whereby the person is constituted in terms of social, psychological, and cultural determinations, whereas agency is described as the power of acting in terms of those structures and making a difference. In other words, agency cannot be taken for absolute freedom from oppression but should rather be regarded as a negotiation of action and meaning within oppressive circumstances.

In accordance with Kristeva's theory, this shift can be regarded as that moment when the subject starts to engage with the oppressive symbolic order critically and resistively. Both Mariam and Laila experience the development of agency as a long-lasting result of the repression, silencing, traumatization, and surviving they had gone through. This does not

mean that they cease experiencing their own subjectivity as something oppressive; on the contrary, the more they experience oppression, the more acute and powerful it becomes.

In Mariam's case, while her subjectivity has been shaped first by rejection and then by marginalization, she eventually comes to develop agency in a manner that goes far beyond a mere response to oppression agency characterized by sacrifice and moral action. While her silence, her endurance, and her inner pain have turned into an ethical decision on her part, her position changes from that of a passive victim to that of someone who actively resists.

Laila's agency, on the other hand, is achieved by her ability to transform her own pain into purposeful actions designed to secure her survival and protect those around her. Education has made her aware of oppression and injustice; however, only personal experience can make her see this oppression and injustice in the right light and act upon her understanding. Hence, agency in both cases grows out of subjectivity.

The development from subjectivity to agency is a journey that Mariam and Laila make in the course of the story. In the beginning of the novel, both female characters have their lives determined by various oppressive structures that hinder their autonomy and individuality. Through experiencing pain and emotional struggles, the two gradually become aware of themselves and learn to resist and act.

As suggested by Kristeva, subjectivity cannot be considered static, as it continuously changes through psychological struggles and social interactions. In the case of Mariam, the initial self-perception is influenced by the stigma that is placed on her by society. The derogatory term "harami" is often weaponized against Mariam, leading her to internalize structural shame as an "heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami" (Hosseini 4). This represents how patriarchal oppression and systemic exclusion cause the fragmentation of

Mariam's identity and emotions. However, through her relationship with Laila, she begins to see herself differently—transforming into an agent who actively loves, protects, and sacrifices. As Hosseini notes, this profound bond allows her to reclaim her sense of self, until “for the first time since she had been a child, Mariam felt happy” (Hosseini 224). This is not just an instance of emotional transition but one of the emergences of Mariam's womanly subjectivity. According to Kristeva, happiness can be seen as an expression of her liberation from years of patriarchal oppression and of her redefining herself through love, freedom of choice, and sacrifice.

Agency is attained through education, awareness, and motherhood. Laila's father's statement "Marriage can wait; education cannot" (Hosseini 114) has a great impact on her consciousness and aspirations towards freedom. In contrast to Mariam, who was raised with the notion that one could do nothing but obey men and follow orders, Laila sees knowledge and independence as valuable. She never loses hope and keeps imagining a better future despite all the horrors of war and violence. After the loss of her beloved family members and enduring severe domestic abuse, Laila manages to keep hope alive and demonstrate immense emotional strength. Though she is deeply afraid, she refuses to give up (Hosseini 320). Thus, she experiences a gradual transition from mental suffering to active resistance and personal agency.

This scene is also an example of Laila's participation in the symbolic order through which education enables her to acquire language, knowledge, and meaning so that she can bargain with patriarchal power instead of accepting it as given. Yet the repeated traumatizing experiences of war keep disrupting this symbolic order, proving the continuous interaction between the symbolic and the semiotic explained by Kristeva.

It is apparent from Mariam's and Laila's transformations that the process of developing agency may be rather lengthy and may include suffering and repression. The ultimate action of killing her husband by Mariam becomes the manifestation of long-term emotional suffering and suppression. Right before sacrificing herself for the sake of her friend, Mariam realized that "she had loved and been loved back" (Hosseini 329). In accordance with Kristeva's interpretation, this scene shows how agency can emerge out of emotional liberation.

3.4.3. Collective Female Resistance

The relationship between Mariam and Laila represents one of the strongest illustrations of collective women's resistance. From the beginning, the two are characterized by fear and jealousy. The two women develop a sense of mutual understanding and solidarity as they undergo shared pains. Thus, Mariam's relationship with Laila is an example of how women can bond together despite being oppressed.

In such a manner, their relationship creates a challenge to the oppressive structure symbolized by Rasheed, who tries to separate them and keep them under his control. As mentioned earlier, they resist patriarchy by creating bonds of mutual sympathy and practical support. The connection between Mariam and Laila grows even stronger owing to the shared hardships they experience at home (Hosseini 250). Rather than remaining adversaries, they forge a deep and inseparable friendship rooted in their mutual survival.

This profound bond helps both women regain emotional and psychological stability within their oppressive environment. As psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva notes, identity is

formed not only through inner psychological struggle but also through human relationships and the exchange of emotions. Driven by this solidarity, Mariam and Laila begin redefining themselves, ultimately moving away from the rigid constraints of patriarchal norms. The quotation illustrates the growing emotional relationship between Mariam and Laila. From the standpoint of Kristeva, the process of bonding is a form of reconstruction of subjectivity through relational experience.

An especially important event is when the two ladies make an attempt to run away from Rasheed's house. This unsuccessful attempt serves as a demonstration of their unwillingness to be passive and obedient victims of the patriarchal system. Before making an attempt, the two women work out all the details in silence; they demonstrate great understanding and determination. The willingness to escape symbolizes the appearance of collective agency to oppose oppression.

The most prominent manifestation of their solidarity is represented by the sacrifice made by Mariam in order to save Laila and her children from patriarchal brutality. When confronted, Mariam decides to kill Rasheed. In this case, Mariam evolves from a passive victim to an active agent of resistance. In her final moments before death, she remembers, "I had loved and been loved back" (Hosseini 329). The above quote clearly highlights the emotional satisfaction of Mariam and her psychological liberation through solidarity and sacrifice. In terms of Kristeva, Mariam manages to piece together her fragmented identity through emotionality, motherhood, and resistance.

Motherhood and protection can also be considered important themes in the development of the emotional solidarity among the women in the story. The author describes how Mariam develops a fierce maternal bond toward Aziza and a protective loyalty toward Laila, finding newfound meaning and self-respect through her sacrifices for them. Ultimately, a deep

friendship blossoms between the two women as a direct result of their shared suffering; their mutual trauma binds them together, transforming their domestic oppression into a space of emotional union.

In conclusion, solidarity and emotional union through motherhood and mutual suffering become central for the female resistance depicted in Hosseini's story. Through the relationship between Mariam and Laila, Khaled Hosseini demonstrates the powerful influence of female solidarity in resisting patriarchy and reclaiming their agency.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been analyzed in depth using the psychoanalytic perspective of Julia Kristeva. In particular, by discussing such concepts as the semiotic, the symbolic, repression, and the subject formation process, it became possible to prove that identity in the novel is constantly created and reshaped through the tension that occurs due to the influence of various factors. In discussing the semiotic and symbolic, it has been revealed that language is not an independent and self-sufficient entity. Instead, it should be regarded as a system in which various elements can intersect, including emotional drives and social structures, which leads to interesting consequences. In this case, silence appears not as an emptiness but as a place where something happens and where hidden emotions become apparent.

As regards the topic of repression and subject formation, it becomes clear that this process implies an interplay between inner and outer elements that are constantly shaping the individual and creating a certain tension. Two examples from the novel that demonstrate how it works are presented in the figure of Laila and her experience and in Mariam's character and her constant silence.

Ultimately, the chapter illustrated that the agency of women in the novel is not only limited to rebellious activities but also should include psychological processes as well as silent resistance. By analyzing the notion of silence from the psychoanalytical perspective offered by Kristeva, one concludes that the act of remaining silent becomes the point of transformation where repression, emotions, and identity interact, resulting in the reconstruction of female identity under patriarchal oppression.

In conclusion, the above discussion has shown that resistance is multilayered, dynamic, and psychological in its nature, laying the foundation for the following chapter that will elaborate on female experiences.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

This dissertation explores the role of silence and resistance in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and through the lens of the role of silence and resistance, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been explored in relation to psychoanalysis, using ideas suggested by Julia Kristeva. The object of the investigation was the issue of constructing feminine subjectivity in the conditions of warfare, patriarchy and oppression, and the purpose was to see the role of silence not only as an absence of voice but also as something more than that.

This research studied the issue of the construction of feminine subjectivity in the conditions of oppression associated with patriarchal society, war and repressive actions. The research aimed at investigating the role of silence in the life of Mariam and Laila and proving that it is necessary to see not only the absence of voice but also some other aspects of it. It becomes clear from the results of the study that in the case of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, silence appears to be the tool of psychological survival in an oppressive environment for women.

The main characters use silence as a way of coping with pain, threats, violence, abuse, and emotional problems. It means that the first hypothesis proposed in this research may be regarded as proved, since silence turns out to be not only the result of oppression but also the way of resisting oppression and achieving the psychological balance in patriarchal society. Besides, it is worth mentioning that there is a close connection between silence and resistance in the novel.

Resistance is represented not only in rebellion but also in emotional endurance, sacrifice, solidarity and strong character. In this way Mariam's silent pain turns into moral courage and agency, and Laila's resistance occurs as the result of her knowledge and determination. It means that the second hypothesis is proved to be true because there is a close connection

between silence and resistance. Based on the psychoanalytical theory offered by Julia Kristeva and involving such concepts as semiotic and symbolic order, repression, and the formation of the subject, the present dissertation proves that female identity is always formed in the struggle between inner emotional experience and outer patriarchal structures.

While the symbolic order represents the system of laws, language, and structures of patriarchy, the semiotic one includes emotions, desires, unconscious impulses, and other forms of expression. Thus, silence becomes an important element of the inner life of the woman in which she creates her agency.

Furthermore, the relation between Mariam and Laila proves the collective nature of female resistance since the emotional relation between them enables them to use silence as a tool for creating unity and collective resistance. Hence, in this way, the novel proves that women can resist oppression together and use such methods as empathy, sacrifice, motherhood, and emotional bonds.

To conclude this discussion, it can be stated that the silence in the novel is not simply the representation of weakness and passivity. On the contrary, it represents the psychological and emotional space where women have an opportunity to negotiate their trauma and create identity and the strategy of resistance in relation to oppression. Within the framework of the psychoanalytical approach by Julia Kristeva, repression, emotional trauma, and silence represent important elements that contribute to women's subjectivity and agency.

Apart from analysing silence and resistance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, this paper provides some contribution to the discussion of feminist and postcolonial literary criticism in the context of defining silence not as a symbol of oppression but as a complicated way of expressing oneself. Using the psychoanalytic perspective by Julia Kristeva, it becomes

possible to demonstrate that silence represents the space where the repressed emotions and trauma are negotiated. Thus, this paper expands Kristeva's theory through the interrelation of the semiotic and symbolic. Moreover, this study adds value to the postcolonial women's literature because of uncovering the notion that female agency does not have to develop through confrontation. Instead, agency can come with the experience of being oppressed, undergoing emotional changes, receiving help, and relying on nonverbal forms of communication. This analysis of Hosseini's novel offers a different approach to the formation of agency in marginalised women characters.

This research can be extended in the future by comparing the novel under consideration with other literary works about women's experiences during wartime, displacement, and patriarchal oppression. For example, comparative studies including *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and other novels, such as Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, can focus on the notions of silence, survival, and fighting for freedom in different cultures.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Biography of Khaled Hosseini

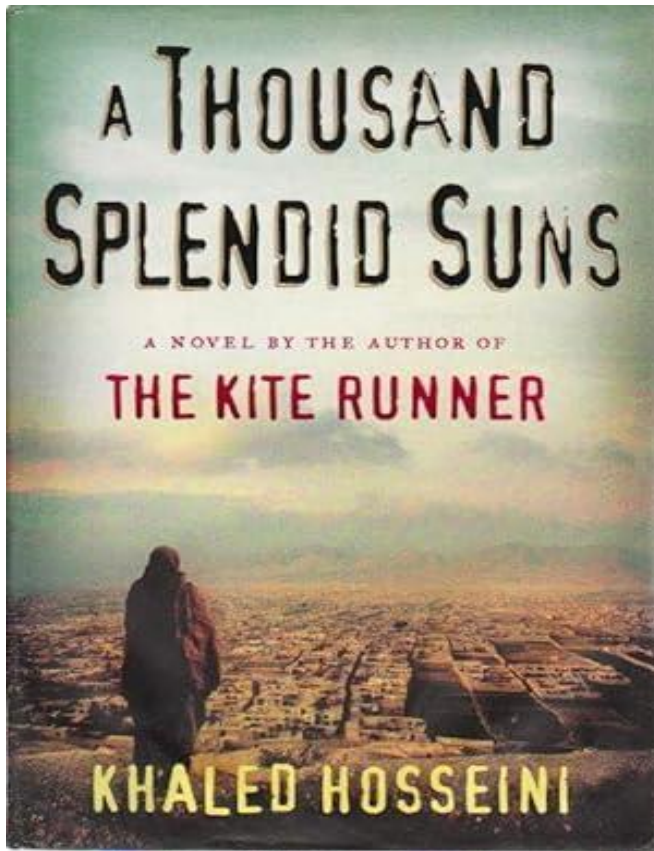


Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. His father served in the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan as a diplomat, and his mother was a teacher of Farsi and history at a school in Kabul. In 1976, the foreign ministry sent the family of Hosseini to live in Paris. While preparing for moving back home in 1980, they discovered that there had been a blood-spattered communist coup and an attack by the army of the Soviet Union in their native land. Thus, the family of Hosseini obtained permission for seeking political asylum and moved to San Jose, California, in 1980. He finished school in 1984 and enrolled in Santa Clara University, graduating in 1988 with a bachelor's degree in biology. The next year he got accepted into the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine, graduating in 1993. After his internship at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, he worked as an internist until 2004.

March of 2001 found Hosseini writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, published by Riverhead Books in 2003. It became the start of one of the most outstanding literary careers. Now Khaled Hosseini is considered to be one of the best-known authors. These three works of literature, titled *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *The Mountains Echoed*, have received publication in more than seventy nations and achieved sales of more than 40 million copies worldwide. In 2006, the author was nominated to serve as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Khaled created the charity organization "The Khaled Hosseini Foundation," which offers aid to the citizens of Afghanistan. The idea for the establishment of this organization was sparked after a trip to Afghanistan that he had undertaken with UNHCR. Khaled Hosseini lives in Northern California with his wife and two children.

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Appendix 2: The Synopsis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*



A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini is a captivating work exploring the destinies of two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila, in a period of several decades of Afghan political instability, civil war, and social upheaval. At the beginning of the novel, readers meet Mariam, an illegitimate daughter of an unhappy woman brought up in isolation and suffering.

In her adulthood, Mariam suffers another tragedy when being forced to marry the older man named Rasheed from Kabul. Thus, Mariam's life turns into a chain of suffering, suppression, and oppression. Much later, a new character emerges, Laila. She is a well-brought-up young lady raised in a more educated and loving environment who finds herself under the threat of becoming a widow due to the outbreak of the civil war. Finally, she ends up marrying Rasheed as his second wife.

Despite all the differences and rivalry between them, Mariam and Laila are brought closer together by common suffering. The two women form a strong emotional alliance based on the principles of support, friendship, and unity. This way, the author emphasizes female strength under pressure. Throughout the novel, Mariam and Laila encounter different kinds of resistance, which depend on the background and psychological profile of each protagonist.

Mariam's passive endurance turns into moral bravery, while Laila is more active and conscious about her form of resistance. The experiences of both Mariam and Laila bring out the intricacies associated with survival, sacrifice, and resilience.

In summary, this novel is a depiction of the hardships that women undergo in an oppressive society and the need for them to identify themselves and embrace hope and love. It shows how, even under the most difficult circumstances, human bonding and inner strength could result in change and empowerment.

Source: Cover illustration. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. By Khaled Hosseini. New York: Riverhead Books, 2007. Print.

Source: "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*: Full Book Summary." *SparkNotes*, SparkNotes LLC, n.d. Web. 20 Apr. 2026



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كلية الآداب واللغات والعلوم الاجتماعية

التصريح الشرفي

الخاص بالالتزام بقواعد النزاهة العلمية لانجاز بحث علمي
(القرار رقم 1082 المؤرخ في 27 ديسمبر 2020 الذي يحدد القواعد المتعلقة بالوقاية من السرقة العلمية ومكافحتها)
أنا الممضي أسفله،

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دائرة :
والمسجل بكلية الآداب و اللغات و العلوم الاجتماعية
قسم :
شعبة :
والمكلف بإنجاز مذكرة تخرج لنيل شهادة ماستر أكاديمي، الموسومة بعنوان :

Women's Voices between Silence and Resistance : A
psychoanalytic reading of A Thousand Splendid Suns

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الترخيص بإيداع مذكرة الماستر

أنا الأستاذ(ة) المشرف(ة):

بها فحمة كاسيا

على مذكرة التخرج في الماستر والموسومة بـ:

Women's Voices between Silence and Resistance: A Psycho-
analytic Reading of A Thousand Splendid Suns

من انجاز الطالب (بين):

1. بينا عيسى نورالدين

2.

ميدان: الآداب واللغات الأجنبية

شعبة: اللغة الإنجليزية

تخصص: ماجستير

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وبإمكانه(ها) إيداع النسخة الالكترونية المصححة على مستوى المستودع الرقمي لجامعة عين تموشنت.

امضاء رئيس اللجنة

الاسم واللقب

Kerrou, Hocine

عين تموشنت في: 28/06/2026

امضاء المشرف

الاسم واللقب

د. بن فاضل كاسيا

بن غالم بوعلام
رئيس قسم الآداب
واللغة الإنجليزية

