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Fluid identities and transnational belonging in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

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ABSTRACT

Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner (2003) demonstrates how war, displacement, and exile shape transnational identities. The novel also highlights the deep pain experienced by migrants. As an Afghan-American, Hosseini shares his personal understanding of Afghanistan's political, social, and religious struggles, vividly portraying these realities in this novel. This study will explore how transnational identity is formed and the challenges of migration by focusing on the broken lives of Afghan migrants, who must navigate changing cultural, political, and emotional landscapes. It will reference theories of diaspora (Stuart Hall) and imaginary homelands (Salman Rushdie) to show how Hosseini depicts identity as both rooted in a shared history and constantly rebuilt through experiences of dislocation and diaspora. The result indicates that Hosseini has not shown migration simply as crossing a border but also as a psychological break that leads to nostalgia and the fight for a sense of belonging.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by rapid globalization, forced migration, and growing transnational mobility, questions of identity and belonging have become increasingly central to contemporary discourse. Within such contexts, transnationalism is closely tied to processes of migration and diaspora, emphasizing that identity is not a fixed or homogeneous construct but one that continually evolves as individuals interact with multiple cultural environments (Liwerant, 2013). Migrants often negotiate between the

values of their homeland and those of their host societies, creating ambivalent and hybrid identities shaped by displacement, cultural adaptation, and the emotional weight of nostalgia. Literature has long served as a space for expressing these tensions, and diasporic writers, in particular, have illuminated the psychological and cultural complexities of migration (Bradatan et al., 2010; Lähdesmäki et al., 2016). Among them, Khaled Hosseini stands out for his poignant depictions of dislocation and identity struggle, offering narratives that capture both the trauma of exile and the possibilities for reconstruction that arise in new cultural landscapes. *The Kite Runner* exemplifies these concerns, portraying characters whose identities are continually reshaped by political upheaval, migration, and memory.

To examine these dynamics, this study draws on Stuart Hall's conceptualization of cultural identity and Salman Rushdie's notion of imaginary homelands. Both theorists emphasize that identity formation in diasporic contexts is marked by fragmentation, historical rupture, and ongoing negotiation. Hall argues that cultural identities emerge from specific historical and cultural trajectories but remain subject to continual transformation rather than existing as static essences (Belford & Lahiri-Roy, 2019; Anthias, 2018). He suggests that displacement, colonization, and the legacies of historical oppression produce profound ruptures that fragment cultural memory and disrupt notions of cultural authenticity. In his view, identity should be understood as a "production" shaped through representation and ongoing cultural interaction rather than a fixed origin to which one can fully return. According to Hall, the past itself is reconstructed through shifting historical and cultural conditions, making identity a dynamic process of both "being" and "becoming."

Similarly, Rushdie conceptualizes displacement as both a physical and psychological separation from one's homeland, arguing that migrants cannot reclaim an unchanged version of the past. Instead, they reconstruct their origins through imagination, forming what he terms "imaginary homelands" mental landscapes filtered through memory, distance, and desire (Müller-Funk, 2020). He notes that the émigré's experience is inherently fragmented, shaped by incomplete memories that acquire symbolic meaning over time. For Rushdie, identity in exile is plural, partial, and constantly negotiated, as migrants inhabit multiple cultural worlds simultaneously. His metaphor of the migrant as a "translated person" underscores this condition: just as translation alters meaning, migration transforms individuals, allowing for both loss and new possibilities. Rushdie further describes diasporic individuals as possessing a "double perspective," functioning as insiders and outsiders at once, which produces a layered and shifting sense of self (Butcher, 2009).

Both Hall and Rushdie challenge traditional ideas of cultural purity and emphasize hybridity as an inevitable condition of diasporic identity. Hall notes that diasporic identities are shaped through interactions between diverse cultural presences, rejecting the notion that cultural life exists in a pristine or original state. Instead, he frames Caribbean and by extension diasporic cultures as contact zones shaped by migration, slavery, colonialism, and continuous exchange (Thiel & Friedman, 2016). Rushdie similarly argues that migrants live between cultures, negotiating linguistic, social, and emotional borders while blending elements of their inherited traditions with those of their adopted homes. These perspectives fundamentally inform this study's reading of *The Kite Runner*, illuminating how its characters navigate fragmented identities formed through historical rupture, memory, and cultural negotiation.

Although *The Kite Runner* has been widely analyzed for its exploration of trauma, political conflict, and cultural tension, existing scholarship has primarily examined the novel from historical, thematic, linguistic, or gendered perspectives. Kanosh (2022) emphasizes the novel's portrayal of Afghanistan's turbulent political history and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. Malik et al., (2014) use Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal how Hosseini constructs ideological relationships grounded in power and dominance. Imran & Ismail (2022) focus on women's oppression within patriarchal structures, drawing on feminist and postcolonial theory, while Matta (2019) highlights the influence of Afghanistan's political upheavals on personal and collective experiences. Despite these valuable contributions, few studies have examined Hosseini's narrative through the combined theoretical lenses of Hall's cultural identity theory and Rushdie's concept of imaginary homelands.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining how *The Kite Runner* critiques the political and historical forces driving migration while illuminating the formation of hybrid identities shaped by displacement, memory, and cultural negotiation. By employing the complementary frameworks of Hall and Rushdie, this research positions Hosseini's novel as a significant site for understanding how identity is reconstructed across borders and through lived experiences of exile. Ultimately, the study contributes to broader discussions on transnational identity by demonstrating how *The Kite Runner* reflects the fluidity of belonging and the ongoing negotiation of selfhood within diasporic and transnational spaces.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design, using close reading and thematic analysis to examine how Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) represents the formation of transnational identities shaped by

displacement, memory, and cultural negotiation. In line with the theoretical grounding established in the Introduction, the analysis approaches the novel as the primary text. It explores how its central characters and pivotal narrative moments illustrate the psychological and cultural challenges faced by individuals navigating fragmented and hybrid identities in diasporic contexts. Particular attention is given to themes such as exile, belonging, identity reconstruction, and hybridity, as well as to literary techniques including narrative voice, symbolism, imagery, and characterization that reveal how Hosseini constructs the emotional and sociocultural dimensions of the diasporic experience.

The study is informed by Stuart Hall's conception of cultural identity as a fluid and continually evolving process shaped by history, power, and representation, alongside Salman Rushdie's idea of "imaginary homelands," which emphasizes the role of memory and imagination in reconstructing a sense of origin after displacement. These theoretical perspectives guide the interpretation of how the novel's characters negotiate their sense of self through ruptures, nostalgia, and intercultural encounters. Secondary sources such as scholarly articles, critical essays, and theoretical writings on diaspora, migration, and transnational identity are used to contextualize the textual analysis and situate the discussion within broader academic conversations.

The overarching objective of this study is to explore how *The Kite Runner* portrays the complexities of identity formation among displaced individuals. Specifically, the analysis aims to (1) examine how displacement influences the reconstruction of identity, (2) explore the fluid and evolving nature of selfhood within transnational experiences, (3) analyze the role of memory in linking past experiences with present identity, and (4) investigate how hybridity and cultural negotiation shape the characters' emerging sense of belonging. These aims align with the theoretical claims of Hall and Rushdie, both of whom view identity as a dynamic, historically shaped process rather than a fixed cultural essence.

To achieve these objectives, thematic content analysis was conducted through multiple close readings of the novel. This method is particularly suited to literary research as it enables the identification of recurring motifs and underlying cultural meanings. During the reading process, salient themes such as alienation, identity fragmentation, power dynamics, displacement, and the metaphor of "home" were systematically noted and grouped to trace their development across characters and narrative episodes. In parallel, literary elements such as narrative perspective, symbolic objects, and spatial settings were examined to understand how they reinforce diasporic anxieties and identity negotiation. For instance, the recurring image of kite flying and the shifting physical landscapes were analyzed for their

symbolic relationship to cultural memory and the reconstruction of self in exile. At the same time, variations in narrative voice were used to illustrate the fractured, hybrid perspectives that characterize transnational identity. Through this combined thematic and literary analysis, the method allows the study to investigate how *The Kite Runner* articulates the interplay of political upheaval, personal displacement, and cultural adaptation in the ongoing production of transnational identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identity formation in transnational contexts

Scholars from various fields within the humanities have explored identity from multiple angles, including language, ideology, psychoanalysis, sociology, and history. The idea of identity in the high-context world of Transnationalism becomes highly complex and ambiguous. As the world becomes more interconnected and less constrained by borders, the evolving concepts of nation and identity are changing as well. In the postcolonial and globalized era, traditional categories like race, color, or language are no longer sufficient to define a person's national identity. He has discussed the development of transnational identities. Both Stuart Hall and Salman Rushdie believe that transnational identity arises from colonialism, displacement, and immigration. In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini carefully examines the factors that drive displacement. The novel highlights the political turmoil and instability in Afghanistan, illustrating how these conditions deeply impact individual lives. Regarding the Soviet invasion in 1979, which resulted in political chaos and widespread violence in Afghanistan, Amir states:

> December 1979, when Russian tanks would roll into the very same streets where Hassan and I played, bringing the death of the Afghanistan I knew and marking the start of a still ongoing era of bloodletting (Hosseini, 2003, p.36).

This invasion shattered the country's peaceful state and transformed it into a battlefield of foreign powers and internal conflict. There comes a shift in power, the end of the monarchy, and the beginning of the communist regime in Afghanistan. Wardana (2011) notes that the Soviet-backed communist regime imposed strict controls that generated widespread fear and persecution, ultimately disrupting the social and economic stability of Afghan families. He explains that the conflicts profoundly altered the lives of the Afghan people, leading to family separation, poverty, psychological trauma, cultural disruption, and, for many, the necessity of fleeing the country. Recent analyses of the novel also emphasize how political upheaval in Afghanistan catalyzes identity fragmentation and forced migration, reinforcing Hosseini's portrayal of exile as both a physical and psychological rupture

(Ula & Anam, 2026).

Both Hall and Rushdie argue that displacement and immigration are central to the formation of transnational identity, a concept clearly reflected in the experiences of characters like Amir and Baba. They are the central characters of the novel and are forced to flee Afghanistan primarily because of the political turmoil and widespread violence gripping the country. Their departure is marked by deep anguish and shock, as they leave behind not only their homeland but also the life, status, and memories they once had. They step into an uncertain future far from the familiar comforts of Kabul, as Amir says, leaving his homeland:

> What was I doing on this road in the middle of the night? I should have been in bed, under my blanket, a book with dog-eared pages at my side. This had to be a dream. Had to be (Hosseini,2003, p.113).

This act of fleeing is not just about physical movement but also about psychological movement. As Rushdie says, physical separation from the homeland inevitably means that one cannot fully recover what was lost; instead, one can only construct fictions: imaginary cities, villages, and homeland. Amir also feels the same when he tries to remember anything from Kabul, his homeland.

> I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past. I've learned about how you can bury it (Hosseini, 2003, p.1).

Khaled Hosseini highlights the fluid nature of identity, challenging the conventional notion of a fixed or singular self. For him, identity is constantly evolving, shaped by circumstances and experiences, whether individuals welcome the change or not. Adhikary (2021) explains that globalization, with its large-scale movements and relocations of people, challenges the traditional notion of the nation-state by softening territorial boundaries and reshaping established ideas of national belonging. Hosseini's portrayal of identity mirrors the global reality where migration and displacement blur cultural and national boundaries, redefining what it means to belong.

Building on these perspectives, recent scholarship on The Kite Runner further emphasizes how Hosseini constructs hybrid subjectivities through sustained cultural blending and cross-border interactions. For example, the study Beyond Borders:

Hybrid Identity and Cultural Blending in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner argues that the novel depicts identity as a negotiated space where Afghan traditions and American values intersect, collide, and ultimately merge into new configurations of selfhood. This research highlights that characters such as Amir and Soraya embody hybrid identities not simply through cultural adaptation but through active reinterpretation of inherited norms within their diasporic lives. Their negotiation among collective memory, ethnic allegiance, and the demands of their host society illustrates how hybridity becomes a lived, ongoing process shaped by emotional, social, and historical pressures (Sam, 2024).

Similarly, scholarship on Indian diaspora literature—such as *Cultural Hybridity and Transnational Connections in Indian Diaspora Literature: The Cases of The Namesake and The Lowland*—provides a broader comparative lens for understanding Hosseini's narrative. This study demonstrates that diasporic identity formation often entails oscillation between continuity and change, where migrants retain cultural memory while simultaneously absorbing new social and ideological influences. As seen in Lahiri's works, the diasporic subject must constantly negotiate the "in-between" space created by migration. This phenomenon directly parallels the identity struggles portrayed in *The Kite Runner*. Both bodies of literature reveal how cultural hybridity emerges from the tension between belonging and estrangement, home and exile, memory and adaptation (Salve, 2025).

Together, these recent studies reinforce the argument that transnational narratives like *The Kite Runner* foreground identity as a fluid, hybrid, and continually reconstructed process, one that cannot be understood through essentialist or monolithic frameworks. The convergence of Afghan diaspora experiences with broader patterns documented in South Asian diaspora literature underscores the universality of cultural negotiation among migrant communities, further validating Hall's and Rushdie's theories of identity as fragmented, partial, and constantly "in production."

Displacement and reconstruction of identity in The Kite Runner

Both Hall and Rushdie suggest that discontinuities and ruptures characterize diasporic or transnational identity. Rather than existing as a unified or stable entity, identity is constantly reconstructed through the interplay of cultural elements from both the homeland and the host society. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir and his father, Baba move to America to begin their lives anew, as Afghanistan has become a forsaken homeland for them. Their migration reflects what Hall and Rushdie describe as the fragmented nature of diasporic or transnational identity, one marked by discontinuities and ruptures. Displacement compels them to continuously reconstruct their sense of self, negotiating between Afghan traditions and American

cultural values, ultimately embodying an identity that is fluid rather than fixed, as Adhikary (2021, p.179) notes,

> America is a destination place for immigrants from many countries. Many immigrants stay in the U.S. for different reasons such as studying, working, or running away from economic or political crises, religious conflict, and warfare in their homeland."

Similarly, Amir and Baba's relocation signifies both an escape from turmoil and a search for renewal in a new cultural landscape. They are shown trying to adapt to the culture of their host land, often at the cost of leaving behind their identities from home. For example, Baba, once a highly respected and influential figure in Kabul, symbolizes the stability and privilege of a rooted identity before displacement. Despite public doubt, his success as a businessman— "So Baba proved them all wrong by not only running his own business but becoming one of the richest men in Kabul" (Hosseini, 2003, p.13)—establishes him as a man of power and pride within Afghan society. His possession of the "black Ford Mustang," the most expensive car in Kabul (Hosseini, 2003, p.13), serves as a material marker of his social status and masculine authority. However, this identity, grounded in wealth and respect, is later destabilized by migration, revealing how transnational displacement dismantles the familiar structures that once defined one's sense of self. Due to the Soviet invasion and the political turmoil in Afghanistan, Baba and Amir were forced to leave their homeland with heavy hearts and empty hands.

Their escape from Afghanistan marks a powerful moment of loss and displacement. Trapped inside a dark, overcrowded truck, "heads banged against metal" (Hosseini, 2003, p.122), symbolizing the physical and emotional violence of exile. For Baba, this journey signifies not just a change of place but the collapse of everything that once defined his identity. The man who had built a life of pride and success in Kabul now carries his entire past in "two suitcases," as Amir reflects with sorrow: "After everything he'd built, planned, fought for, fretted over, dreamed of, this was the summation of his life: one disappointing son and two suitcases" (Hosseini, 2003, p.124). The image of the suitcases captures the shrinking of Baba's once-grand identity into fragments of memory, showing how exile strips individuals of social recognition and forces them to rebuild their sense of self in unfamiliar terrain. Both Baba and Amir experience displacement from their homeland and struggle to reconstruct their identities in a completely new and unfamiliar land, America. After settling in Fremont, California, Baba and Amir face the challenges of rebuilding their lives as immigrants, but the struggle weighs far more heavily on Baba.

Coming from an older generation, he finds it difficult to adapt to a culture so different from his own. His greatest barrier is language. Though Amir encourages him to take ESL classes, Baba dismisses the idea: "I tried to get Baba to enroll in ESL classes to improve his English. But he scoffed at the idea" (Hosseini, 2003, p.126). This refusal reflects his quiet resistance to a world that no longer recognizes the authority he once held. Once a symbol of pride and prestige in Kabul, Baba now works at a gas station, his hands marked by labor and exhaustion, as Amir says:

> I glanced at him across the table, his nails chipped and black with engine oil, his knuckles scraped, the smells of the gas station dust, sweat and gasoline on his clothes" (Hosseini, 2003, p.126).

This transformation illustrates the dislocation of identity that accompanies migration, as a man once defined by power and respect now must forge meaning through endurance. Yet, despite the humiliation and hardship, Baba's persistence in adapting to this new reality, eventually managing the gas station, reveals his resilience and quiet dignity. His struggle in America becomes a testament to the painful but determined reconstruction of self that defines the immigrant experience.

On the other hand, Amir, as part of the younger generation, sees America as a land of opportunity. While he carries his Afghan cultural heritage with him, he adapts more easily to the new environment than Baba. He graduates from high school at the age of twenty, yet his journey in America is not without challenges. The boy who once enjoyed every privilege in Kabul now faces uncertainty, unsure if he will be able to continue his studies due to financial hardship, as he reflects, "...I wanted to get a job. Help out, save some money, maybe go to college the following year" (Hosseini, 2003, p.126). For Amir, the past lingers like a haunted ghost. Still, America represents opportunities and new beginnings, a place he sees as "different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past" (Hosseini, 2003, p.136). After Baba's death, Amir faces a series of challenges. Without his father's support, he must take full responsibility for building a life for himself and his wife, Soraya. To continue his studies and support their household, he works as a security guard, a demanding job with long hours and little prestige. Despite these hardships, Amir perseveres, balancing his academic pursuits with financial struggles. Ultimately, his determination pays off, and he becomes an established writer, as Amir says- "A month later, Martin called and informed me I was going to be a published novelist" (Hosseini, 2003, p.183). Both Amir and Baba transform their identities as they adapt to life in America. Baba, once wealthy and respected, takes humble jobs to provide for his son, while Amir balances his Afghan heritage with the opportunities of the new land, eventually

becoming a writer. Their experiences reflect Stuart Hall's thought that cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' (Hall, 1989, p.225). Through their migration and adaptation, they reconstruct their identities by negotiating between their past in Afghanistan and their present in America, demonstrating that identity is fluid, constantly evolving through lived experiences and cultural interaction.

Negotiating hybrid identity in a transnational space

The formation of transnational identity is a multifaceted and dynamic process. In a transnational context, identity is never fixed; it continuously shifts in response to place, social interaction, and cultural exchange. This constant negotiation produces a hybridized self, in which elements of both the homeland and host cultures merge to create an evolving identity that is neither purely Afghan nor purely American. In *The Kite Runner*, this process manifests through the blending of Afghan and American traditions and the frequent code-switching between English and Afghan languages, as Subedi (2023) observes that *The Kite Runner* reveals an internal dynamic shaped by the interdependence between Afghan and Western cultural influences.

Initially, Baba appears to embrace the promise of life in America, envisioning it as a place where Amir can build a future free from Afghanistan's political unrest. As Amir recalls, "Baba loved the idea of America" (Hosseini, 2003, p.125). Yet, his attachment to his Afghan roots quickly becomes evident. Baba's attachment to Afghanistan exemplifies the emotional and cultural dislocation that Hall identifies as central to diasporic experience, as Amir says about Baba.

> Baba was like the widower who remarries but can't let go of his dead wife. He missed the sugarcane field of Jalalabad and the gardens of Paghman. He missed people milling in and out of his house.... whose pasts intertwined with his, who shared ancestors with him and his father... (Hosseini, 2003, p.129).

Baba's struggle to reconcile Afghan honor with American social norms embodies

Hall's notion that diasporic identity is "produced" through the interaction of multiple cultural codes, rather than rooted in a singular, authentic essence (Hall, 1989, p.230). This shows how deeply Baba is tied to his homeland, like so many immigrants who carry the weight of what they've left behind. His longing for familiar places and faces reveals how displacement can shake a person's sense of self, forcing him to balance the memories of his past with the challenges of building a new life in America.

Despite these internal conflicts, Baba actively seeks to participate in American life and nurture his relationship with Amir. He engages in everyday activities with his son, mirroring the routines of American fathers, as illustrated by Amir:

> I remember the two of us walking through Lake Elizabeth Park in Fremont, a few streets down from our apartment, and watching boys at batting practice, little girls giggling on the swings in the playground. Baba would enlighten me with his politics during those walks with long-winded dissertations (Hosseini, 2003, p.125).

Baba navigates a dual existence, embodying the hybrid, in-between space Hall describes. This dual role highlights the complexity of transnational identity: Baba is neither fully assimilated into American culture nor completely rooted in his homeland; instead, he lives a hybrid life, trying to maintain his cultural heritage while finding a sense of belonging in a foreign land.

Immigrants inevitably encounter cultural conflicts in a new land, prompting them to resist, assimilate, or negotiate their identity. Baba's reluctance to enroll in English classes reflects cultural resistance, signaling his hesitation to fully assimilate into American society. At the same time, his code-switching between English and the Afghan languages helps him maintain a connection to his heritage. This duality is evident on Amir's high school graduation day, when Baba expresses his pride in his native tongue: "I am moftakhir," affirming both his love for Amir and his cultural roots (Hosseini, 2003, p.131). Despite his resistance to fully adopting the host culture, Baba is influenced by American values, particularly the emphasis on material success and financial stability. This is evident in his questions to Amir about how he will earn a living and provide for a future family, reflecting his concern with survival and dignity in a society that values economic achievement.

> And what will you do while you wait to get good and get discovered? How will you earn money? If you marry, how will you support your Khanum? (Hosseini, 2003, p.134)

This reflects Baba's concern with survival and dignity in a foreign culture. He navigates a complex terrain of adaptation and resistance, balancing his Afghan heritage with the demands of his new environment. Although slow to adjust, his perseverance enables him to achieve a measure of material success, ultimately becoming the manager of a gas station. This duality exemplifies both Hall's and Rushdie's insights into the constructed and constantly negotiated nature of diasporic

identities, where adaptation coexists with the persistence of cultural roots. Through Baba, *The Kite Runner* illustrates the intricate negotiation inherent in transnational identity, showing how cultural hybridity emerges from the continuous interplay between past traditions and present realities.

On the other hand, Amir adapts to the host culture more smoothly. He pursues higher studies in America and becomes increasingly open to embracing American norms and values. Having studied creative writing, he writes his stories in English, reflecting his engagement with American literary culture. His code-switching between English and Afghan languages embodies Hall's view that transnational identities are shaped by the interplay of multiple cultural "presences" (Hall, 1989, p.230). Yet, despite his adaptations, Amir cannot completely sever his ties with Afghan traditions. Part of this ongoing connection is evident in his code-switching between English and the Afghan languages during conversations, which highlights how he negotiates his identity between the two cultures (Sandu, 2013; Anthias, 2010). Amir tries to balance Afghan and American cultures in his personal life. For instance, in Afghan tradition, it is considered improper for a young man and woman to meet before a *Shirini-khori* ceremony. When Amir decides to marry Soraya, they respect this custom and choose not to meet each other before the ceremony, as he explains-

> Soraya and I never went out alone together while preparations for the wedding proceeded-since we were not married yet, hadn't even a Shirini-khori, it was considered improper (Hosseini, 2003, p. 169).

He chooses to wear a green suit at his wedding, symbolizing his connection to Afghan heritage. At the same time, he buys a wedding ring for Soraya, an act rooted in Western custom rather than Afghan tradition. Amir says about his wedding-

> Baba paid for the Chilas, our matching wedding bonds, and for the diamond ring I picked out. He bought my tuxedo, and my traditional green suit for the nika-the swearing ceremony (Hosseini, 2003, p. 169-70).

This dual adherence to Afghan and American traditions clarifies Amir's experience, emphasizing that migrant identity is "at once plural and partial" (Rushdie, 1991, p.15). Amir also remains open to embracing aspects of Western culture. For example, when celebrating the publication of his first book, Amir, Soraya, and her in-laws hold a gathering. After her parents leave, Amir and Soraya share a drink of wine. This gesture reflects American customs rather than traditional Afghan practices, "After General Taheri and his wife left, Soraya and I celebrated with an

expensive bottle of Merlot I had bought on the way home..." (Hosseini, 2003, p. 183). This moment highlights how Amir negotiates his identity by blending elements of both Afghan and American cultures in his personal life. Amir is again shown embracing Western values in a conversation with his father-in-law, General Taheri, about adopting a child, since Amir and Soraya are unable to have children due to medical reasons (Erkmen, 2015; Walker, 2011). General Taheri strongly opposes the idea of adoption, reflecting traditional Afghan beliefs about family and lineage, and tells Amir.

> Now, if you were American, it wouldn't matter. People here marry for love, family name and ancestry never come into the equation. They adopt that way too, as long as the baby is healthy, everyone is happy. But we are Afghans, bachem (Hosseini, 2003, p. 188).

However, Amir never abandons the idea of adoption, and he eventually adopts Sohrab, Hassan's son. As Amir tells Sohrab, "But I can take you with me... You have a visa to go to America, to live with me and my wife" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 355). These choices show how Amir blends Afghan and American cultures, illustrating that transnational identity is fluid, hybrid, and constantly negotiated, as both Hall and Rushdie suggest.

The analysis across these sections demonstrates that *The Kite Runner* offers a compelling portrayal of identity as a fluid, dynamic, and continually negotiated process shaped by displacement, memory, and cultural hybridity. Through the experiences of characters such as Amir and Baba, the novel illustrates what Hall describes as identity in a constant state of "becoming," contingent upon historical ruptures and cultural encounters rather than anchored in a singular, immutable origin. Their movement from Afghanistan to the United States reflects the fragmentation and reconstruction of self that both Hall and Rushdie associate with transnational identities. The psychological rupture caused by exile—seen in Amir's nostalgia and Baba's struggle to adapt—echoes Rushdie's notion that migrants inhabit "imaginary homelands," where the past can only be reconstructed through memory and imagination rather than reclaimed in its original form.

Throughout the novel, displacement serves as both a catalyst for identity transformation and a source of profound emotional conflict. Baba's trajectory reveals how migration dismantles previously stable identities rooted in class, reputation, and social belonging, while Amir's journey demonstrates how younger migrants may navigate hybridity with greater fluidity, adopting elements of the host culture while maintaining ties to ancestral traditions. Their parallel yet distinct experiences affirm

that transnational identities are not monolithic; rather, they vary by generation, social position, and personal history. The novel also shows that the reconstruction of identity in a new cultural landscape is neither linear nor uniform. Instead, it unfolds through continual negotiation, as characters balance the pull of cultural memory with the demands of adaptation in unfamiliar environments.

Moreover, the blending of Afghan and American values, linguistic codes, and social practices reflects the hybrid cultural space that Hall identifies as the site of diasporic identity production. Through its portrayal of code-switching, ritual observances, shifting social norms, and everyday interactions, *The Kite Runner* underscores the recursive nature of identity formation, where elements of "here" and "there" coexist within the same subject. Rushdie's observation that migrants see the world with a "double perspective" is equally evident: characters navigate life as both insiders and outsiders, oscillating between belonging and estrangement in each cultural setting they inhabit.

Together, these findings reveal how Hosseini's narrative captures the emotional complexities and cultural negotiations intrinsic to transnational life. The novel affirms that identity is never a fixed essence but a mosaic shaped by displacement, nostalgia, adaptation, and the interplay of multiple cultural presences. Through its nuanced depiction of characters who continually redefine themselves across borders, *The Kite Runner* becomes a rich site for examining the lived realities of diasporic individuals and the evolving shape of belonging in an increasingly interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* represents the psychological, emotional, and cultural struggles that arise from displacement and transnational identity. Through the lens of Salman Rushdie's notion of "imaginary homelands" and Stuart Hall's theories on cultural identity and diaspora, it becomes evident that Hosseini highlights the fragmented and hybrid nature of selfhood that arises in contexts of migration. The research demonstrates that identity is never singular or fixed but is instead a fluid process shaped by constant negotiation between past and present, homeland and host land, memory and reality.

The novel reveals how displacement fractures a sense of belonging, leaving individuals like Baba and Amir caught between cultural traditions and new expectations. Baba's struggles reflect the pain of losing social status and authority, while Amir's journey highlights the challenge of reconciling his privileged past with his search for acceptance in America. Both characters embody the ambivalence of transnational existence, where identity is shaped not only by cultural heritage but also by adaptation to new surroundings. This duality often results in emotional conflict,

yet it also creates possibilities for renewal, transformation, and hybridity.

By portraying the complexity of these identities, Hosseini not only critiques the political and historical forces that drive people into exile but also illuminates how migrants forge new selves in unfamiliar landscapes. The novel insists that home is not a fixed geographic location but a reconstructed idea, shaped by memory, imagination, and cultural negotiation. *The Kite Runner* demonstrates that transnational identity is less about resolving contradictions than about learning to live with them.

Ultimately, the novel presents identity as a transnational construct shaped by displacement, nostalgia, and cultural negotiation. Through Baba and Amir's journeys, Hosseini illustrates that belonging is not tied to a fixed geography but is continually redefined through memory, adaptation, and the reconciliation of hybrid selves. In doing so, the novel reinforces the notion that transnational identity is an ongoing, dynamic process, highlighting the emotional, cultural, and psychological dimensions of migration and the continuous reshaping of selfhood in a transnational world.

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