



THE KITE RUNNER AS A BILDUNGSROMAN OF EMOTIONAL MATURATION WITH
THE INTEGRATION OF FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS

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A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE BACHELOR ARTS (HONS) ENGLISH LANGUAGE
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

MAR. 2011

Acknowledgements

I owe the completion of this research paper to many people. Without them, it would have been impossible for me to finish writing this paper. First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Mr. Luke Lim for guiding and offering sound advice to me.

I want to thank my loving parents as well for their endless support and faith in me. I especially want to thank them for the financial assistance that they have provided in helping me complete this research paper.

At the same time, I want to extend my appreciation to my cousins Goh Vern Ann and Goh Vern Jan as well as my room mate, Voon Wai Fun for encouraging me through the long process of finishing this research paper.

To everyone mentioned, thank you. I cannot find enough words to express my gratitude to all of you.

Approval Form

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “*The Kite Runner* as a *Bildungsroman* of Emotional Maturation with the Integration of Father-Son Relationships” prepared and submitted by Tan Renjie in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language, is hereby accepted.

Supervisor

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Date: _____

Abstract

“Rahim Khan had summoned me here to atone not just for my sins but for Baba’s too.”

Thus are the words by Amir, the protagonist in *The Kite Runner*. Written by Khaled Hosseini, an Afghani writer living in the United States, the novel is about a young boy, Amir and the life changing experiences he had living in Afghanistan in her days of peace and moving to the United States during the war. The purpose of this study is to look at how this novel fares as a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturation with psychological analysis to identify the father-son relationships that the author has weaved into it. This research is done in the qualitative method, using genre studies, character analysis and psychological criticisms to gather and analyze the novel. The results are drawn from examples in the novel, using the character’s words and experiences to back up the IDEAL, father wound and fatherhood evaluation theories that are illustrated in the literature review. This research paper is aimed to increase the appreciation and love of this beautifully written novel that talks about love, anger, forgiveness and ultimately, redemption.

Declaration

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The Kite Runner has enjoyed a phenomenal success ever since it was published in 2003 with 4 millions copies sold in America alone. Currently, it is published in 40 countries and has been translated into other languages like Farsi and Chinese. In 2007, it was adapted into a movie directed by Marc Froster, who is also the director of *Stranger than Fiction*, *Finding Neverland* and *Monster's Ball*.

The author, Khaled Hosseini, was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965. Moving to the United States at the age of 15 in 1980 to escape the Russian Coup, he now resides in California with his wife and two children. He is a doctor by profession. Never forgetting the beauty of his homeland before it was ravaged by war, and to remind the people of the world of the plight his fellow Afghans now face because of the war, he woke up at 4.00 every morning to write this book before starting his medical shift.

The story is told through the eyes of a young Afghani boy named Amir. Throughout the novel, readers travel with him as he spent his days as a child in Afghanistan when it still enjoyed peace, to settling down in America when the Russian armies took over and finally back to Afghanistan again to redeem himself of a childhood sin. He goes through a roller-coaster ride of emotions as he deals with guilt and redemption, anger and forgiveness, pain and salvation.

The relationship between the characters in the novel is bound to strike the hearts of readers. Hosseini has a knack of vividly depicting the characters and exploring their emotional struggles within themselves and with each other. One of the most prominent relationships in the novel is between the fathers and sons in the novel, notably between Amir

and his father, Baba, and between Amir and Rahim Khan, Baba's best friend. The relationships they share with each other ultimately determine the course of actions they take in their lives and the consequences that they have to face after doing so.

In this study, I will be looking at the emotional maturation of the main character, Amir, and the relationship he shares with his father in this beautifully written novel.

Statement of the problem

The Kite Runner is a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturation where the father-son relationships of the characters play an important role in building the emotional maturation of the characters.

The *Bildungsroman* is a novel of formation, whereby it portrays the main character's growth from childhood to maturity (Lynch, 2010). *The Kite Runner* is one such novel. It follows the life of the main character, Amir as he grows up from a young boy in Afghanistan to a successful writer in the States to a redeemed man when he goes back to Afghanistan.

Amir is introduced to the readers as a carefree young boy who spends his days with his best friend Hassan. As the readers continue reading, they realize that Amir is actually starving for affection and attention from his father. This urge causes him to betray Hassan in a desperate attempt to make his father proud of him. But as he grows older, the guilt of causing pain to Hassan continues to haunt him. When Amir and his father leave for America to escape the war, the guilt dims, but it still continues to gnaw at him. In America, Amir repairs his relationship with his father, falls in love, gets married and makes a life as a successful writer. One day, he gets a call from Rahim Khan, an old friend, who asks him to go back to

Afghanistan to rescue Hassan's son. To redeem himself of his past sin, Amir has to face his childhood mistake and matures emotionally to be the man that he really is.

Apart from his conflicted self, Amir shares a complex relationship with his father. On one hand, Amir looks up to his father and is proud to be his son. On the other, he feels that he is not able to live up to his father's expectations and hates him for it. In Amir's own words, he has said: "*Most days, I worship Baba with an intensity approaching the religious. But right then, I wished I could open my veins and drain his cursed blood from my body.*"

(Hosseini, 2003, p. 32). This love-hate relationship that Amir has with his father is one of the factors that cause Amir to have emotional turmoil with himself and his father.

There are a few psychological approaches that could be used to identify the relationship that Amir and Baba share. For example, evolving stages of a son's relationship with his father could be termed with the acronym IDEAL by Dr. Charles William. It stands for Idolizing, Discord, Evolving, Accepting and Legacy (William, 2010). In the novel, we can see that Amir shares these stages of relationship with his father as he grows up. Towards his adulthood, Amir comes to good terms with his father and is a filial son until his father's death. He even tries his best to make amendments for the sins of his father and himself by going back to Afghanistan to rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab.

Growing up is not an easy process. In fact, growing up involves having a close relationship with the grown-ups around you, especially your parents. Growing up is also more than just a physical state, but also an emotional one. For Amir, his emotional and mental maturation is very much influenced by the relationship he has with his father, and to a certain extent, Rahim Khan, Baba's best friend.

Purpose

The goal of this study is to understand the process of emotional maturation through the growing up of Amir, the protagonist in the novel. His life consists of a number of dramatic events that help shape him to be who he is. He goes through a variety of emotions like love, guilt, sadness, anger and finally forgiveness and redemption as these events unfold through the course of his life.

In the novel, Amir shares a turbulent relationship with his father. By studying their relationship and using psychological approaches to study them, it is easier to understand why Amir and Baba behaved in the way they did, saying the things they said and the actions they took. Addressing the issue of fatherhood further increases the appreciation of the realism that Hosseini puts into the characters of his novel.

Apart from exploring the relationship of the characters, another purpose of doing a study on this novel is purely out of my appreciation and interest in this novel. In my opinion, *The Kite Runner* is one of the best books I have ever read. I love the way Hosseini addresses the universal issues of love, hurt and redemption through the eyes of the main character, Amir. Hosseini weaves in this story in an Afghanistan that not many of us know— Afghanistan in her days of peace. It reminds us that Afghanistan was not always a place torn by the sorrows and pains of war.

Significance of study

The significance of doing this study is to improve the appreciation of this novel for future references by other readers. As the popularity of this book grows, many literary discussions have been held to enrich its reading. This study aims to look at *The Kite Runner* as a

Bildungsroman of emotional maturation with the portrayal the father-son relationships explained by psychological approaches. Further literary discussions on *Bildungsroman* and father-son relationships may be held in the future on other books based on this study.

As a *Bildungsroman*, *The Kite Runner* explores the emotional maturation of Amir, the main character. He grows up from a young, innocent boy filled with guilt to a responsible adult who finally manages to overcome his childhood sins. Readers may be able to identify with the emotional turmoil that goes through Amir as each of us has done something that we have regretted before. The healing process is included in our growing up and getting over the hurt. It is important to remember that getting over a wrong does not take a short while, but years and years.

This study is also significant because it looks at the father-son relationships of the character and links them with psychological approaches. Studying the novel from this aspect would further increase the understanding of the psychology of men and their sons. As mentioned above, father and sons share a complex relationship. This study aims to shed some light about the relationship they share. With a better understanding of their psychology, we could find ways to improve the relationships between fathers and sons.

Research questions

In this study, the research questions that I would like to look into are as follows:

1. How is *The Kite Runner* an emotional *Bildungsroman*?
2. How does the psychology of father-son relationship help the novel grow as an emotional *Bildungsroman*?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter, I would be looking at some important points of this research. Firstly, we will identify what the *Bildungsroman* is as it is a key aspect in this research. Apart from that, we will also be looking at some psychological approaches for father-son relationships as well. These approaches will help readers to further understand the significance of the father-son relationships in exploring the novel as an emotional *Bildungsroman*.

Bildungsroman

The term “*Bildungsroman*” is of a German origin. “*Bildung*” means formation while “*roman*” means novel (*Bildungsroman*, 2009). In contemporary terms, *Bildungsroman* is also known as an education novel, a formation novel or a coming of age novel (Wiehardt, 2010). But depending on the interpretations and understanding of other scholars, the term has developed other variations of meaning and evolved into a rich genre of a novel.

Lombardi (2010) defines *Bildungsroman* as a novel of development, also known as a coming of age story. In his opinion, the development may be through sexual or social encounters of the protagonist with the other characters in the novel. On the other hand, Abrams (1928) has written that the *Bildungsroman* is more about the “development of the protagonist’s mind and character” as he grows from childhood into adulthood. These developments are usually encountered through a spiritual crisis, and help the protagonist grow in maturity and “recognition of his identity and role in the world” (Abrams, 1981, p. 121).

Another writer, Svensson (2009), in his Degree Essay for English Literature, commented that the *Bildungsroman* “is a novelistic genre that arose during the German Enlightenment in the eighteenth century” that came after the crumbling of the feudal system and expansion of democratic ideas. Therefore, the genre focused on the modern ideas about the psychology, moral and social shaping of the individuality of a protagonist in relation to the society. He suggests that terms like the novel of youth, the novel of education, of apprentice, of adolescence or of initiation cannot accurately describe the *Bildungsroman* because the genre is about “the process of maturation rather than the state of being” (Svensson, 2009). He takes into consideration of both the mental and physical state of the protagonist as he grows up.

Svensson (2009) also states that *Bildungsroman* is any novel containing a young hero, usually a male, who goes through an extensive range of experiences and later discovers the sense of the definitive practical value of these experiences in later life. He adds that a classical *Bildungsroman* usually follows the protagonist’s growth from child to adult. With Buckley as his source, Svensson (2009) elaborates that the child must be of some sensibility and likely to grow up in the country or town with a reason to embark on his journey, usually because of a loss or discontent. This discontent could come from an intellectual or social constraint placed upon the protagonist by the society around him. The maturation process is “extensive, hard and gradual”, involving repeated conflicts between the protagonist’s needs and desires with the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order. The process may be portrayed through the protagonist leaving the repressive atmosphere of his home and making his way into the city. The novel ends with the protagonist’s evaluation of himself in a

new position in society and generally manifested with a social norm, the most common being marriage since marriage is “regarded as a kind of physical and psychical bond between man and society” (Svensson, 2009, p. 3).

To sum up Svensson’s essay, the definition of *Bildung* refers to a combination of “innate genetic potential of the protagonist beneath the manipulation of his geographical and cultural setting” (Svensson, 2009, p. 5). It is the impression that people mature through interaction with the elements around him or her and the desire to have freedom away from the clutches of their initial condition. By learning from interaction with society and experience, one is able to improve both physically, mentally and emotionally.

Among significant novels that are considered *Bildungsroman* is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhem Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-96; Wilhem Meister’s Apprenticeship) and K.P Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* (1795-1796). These two novels were the pioneering novels of *Bildungsroman* (Abrams, 1928). Along the years, more *Bildungsroman* has emerged in literature, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and the *Ann of the Green Gables* series by L. M. Montgomery. The storyline of a young man or woman finding his or her way in the world after trials and tribulations is evergreen with readers. It creates a sense of hope that as we grow up, things would get better.

Apart from looking at the *Bildungsroman* from the aspect of the different definitions of term, the *Bildungsroman* can also be compared in terms of its differences between an Arabic *Bildungsroman* and a typical Western *Bildungsroman*. This is with the regard to *The Kite Runner* being a book written by an Afghani writer where most of the settings of the book are

in Afghanistan which has Middle Eastern culture and religion, making it fairly easy to relate to the Arabic culture and religion.

The most prominent difference of the Western and the Arabic *Bildungsroman* is the variation or slight dissimilarity of the central themes in their novels. In the Arabic *Bildungsroman*, Al- Mousa (1993) wrote that the themes usually involve cross-cultural conflicts of the East and West. The Arabic *Bildungsroman* tends to dramatize the cross-cultural conflicts to “sharpen the tension between East and West” (Al-Mousa, 1993, p. 224). Another prominent theme is the spiritual predicament that the character faces in the Arabic *Bildungsroman* (Al-Mousa, 1993, p. 226). The main character, who is in a Western country, feels his spirituality faltering as he is away from his native country, where his spiritual growth is more grounded. Lastly, the aspect of the protagonist adopting Western culture in a distinct fashion could also be one of the themes in an Arabic *Bildungsroman*.

When trying to categorize *The Kite Runner* into the Arabic *Bildungsroman*, one notices that the novel does not fully compel to the themes of an Arabic *Bildungsroman*. The novel contains certain themes that are relevant, but are opposing to others. I will further elaborate on the relevance of *The Kite Runner* as an Arabic *Bildungsroman* in Chapter 4. In the next part of the literature review, we will take a look at some psychological approaches of a father-son relationship that would help in the data analysis in Chapter 4.

Psychological Analysis of Father-Son Relationships

Do you have a son? If you do not, families with boys can tell that occasionally, relationships between fathers and sons can get complicated, resulting into hostile treatment

towards each other and creating family feuds. Not resolved properly, this condition more often than not dampens the environment of the whole family system and affects the rest of the family members. Psychological approaches and theories can be used to explore and enlighten readers of this complex relationship that father and sons share. The relationship that a father shares with his son influences the son's emotions through out his growing up years.

Before looking into the psychological analysis of fathers and sons, let us first look at the roles that they play in their relationship. Understanding their roles would give us a better picture of where fathers and sons stand in their relationship.

Roles of the father and son.

Father and sons both play different roles in their relationships. For generations, in many cultures, men have always wanted sons instead of daughters. They feel that they are able to bond better with sons, and more importantly, have their sons carry their family name and heritage. But a father-son relationship is much more than that. A father plays an important role in his son's life, teaching him, guiding him and nurturing him into a responsible man in the future. In fact, the father's influence is so big in the sons' life that Diamond (2009) has claimed that:

Through the boy's relationship with his father (or a father surrogate), whom he admires and who interacts with and mentors him in caring way, in part through bearing such projections the boy is able to internalize a paternal imago in which the active and penetrating and the receptive and caretaking qualities of the father's parenting become a foundation for healthy and fluid masculine gender

identity.

For a male, finding his masculine gender identity depends very much on the guidance of the father.

On the other hand, the son has a responsibility to hold his father up to a high standard, look towards his father for lessons and examples and protect the family when the father is not around to do so (Comer, 2009). As a son, he is subjected to the authority of his father. The father has a right to discipline him when he behaves in an inappropriate way. At the same time, the son has the right to the father's attentions and love as well. Together, they need to strike a balance of these two characteristics of their relationship and complement each other.

IDEAL stages.

The relationship between a father and son is not a linear relationship. But rather, it is a relationship that changes and alters as the child grows older and matures in thinking and emotion. Dr. William (2010) claims that father-son relationship move in stages. He has used the acronym *IDEAL* to link these evolving stages. The first stage in a father-son relationship is *Idolize*. In this stage, the son idolizes the father and thinks that their father is capable of everything. The son wants to imitate the image of his father, from the way he walks, talks or even dress. At this stage, the son is much occupied with trying to please his father.

Next, the son would move into the *Discord* stage, the stage where conflict sets in. The father and son may encounter differences in their expectations, values and directions with each other. This stage may carry well into the son's early twenties where sons start to have a hint of a rebellious streak in them that comes with that age.

After the *Discord* stage, the relationship moves into the *Evolving* stage. In this stage, the son makes a conscious effort to be different from the father. The effort may be so strong that it may seem like a competition. But competition can be viewed as one of the highest forms of flattery that a son can pay to his father.

As the son matures, the relationship is upped to another level—*Acceptance*. This is the level where the sons have begun to “forgive, recognize their father’s strengths and admire their qualities” (Williams, 2010, para.5). They begin to accept each other’s differences at this point and often become friends, with common experiences and opinions.

Lastly, in the age of their 50s, sons become a *Legacy* of their father’s influence, either for better, or for worse. The admiration and respect of sons for their fathers remind the sons of what a difficult job being a father must have been. The *IDEAL* stages are actually a cycle of how a father-son relationship is. As sons grow up to be fathers, their own sons would go through these stages with them.

Establishing masculine identity.

The psychological strain of a father and son relationship comes from not only the evolving stages as the father and son both grow older, but is also comes from the different expectations that the father and son have on themselves. One of the responsibilities of the father is to help his son establish a masculine identity. Freud (1921, p. 34) first observed that the father plays an important role in the establishment of his son’s gender identity. Pease (2000, pg. 56) has claimed that there is a connection between the father’s physical and emotional deficiency in the life of their sons with his personal and social behavior. Other experts, like Steve Biddulph, who is a best-selling author and child psychologist, is also

convinced that sons need fathers to be their role models. In his words, he has noted that “to become a good man, you have to know good men” (Jardine, 2010). Therefore, both the gender identity and the personality of the son are compromised if the father is not a good role model.

In being a role model to his son, a father who is not well equipped to bring up his son may cause other emotional turmoil to him. In his book *Recreating Men*, Pease (2000) addresses a few issues in the relationship of father and son that may influence the son in his identity shaping during his growing up years. Among them, include patriarchal expectations of father-son relationships, violence and fear in father-son relationships and oppression in father-son relationships (Pease, 2000). When the son experiences any of the above mentioned conditions in his relationship with his father, their relationship has a high tendency of being very strained. In the bid to make his son a better man, the father actually creates negative emotions like fear, anger and maybe even resentment to the son. This further affects the morality of the son and his search for his identity as a man.

The father absence and the father wound

On the other hand, what happens if the father is totally absent or rarely around in the son’s life? We have already seen the importance of the appearance of a father in the life of a young male. Being physically around the child is not enough. A father must be present emotionally and psychologically as well. An absent father is not constructive for a child, whether male or female. But for a male child, it creates a condition termed the *Father absence and the father wound* (Levant, 1996).

Levant (1996) believes that young sons need to identify with their fathers psychologically and also physically. It is stressful to boys when fathers are absent, or emotionally unavailable. To make matters worse, when a father is present from long absences, he often is very demanding on the performance of his son, putting pressure on him. This difficult relationship is referred to as the “father wound” in the studies of men’s literature. As Levant (1996) has put it, “Many men are burdened with feeling that they have never knew their fathers, nor how their fathers felt as men, nor if their fathers even liked them, nor if their fathers ever really approved of them.” It can be manifested in subtle or obvious ways of how boys seek to fill in the gap of this “father contact.” Some may look for a father surrogate; others harbor anger towards the negligence the father. In more extreme cases, sons may seek other ways to vent their frustrations like turning to drugs and alcohol abuse.

Levant is not the only expert in support of this opinion. Pease (2000, p. 57) shares this field of thinking as well. In his writings, he also highlighted the severity of the father “wound” or father “hunger.” The father “wound” or “hunger” is the hurt that fathers cause to their sons when they ignore their sons or when they are absent in their son’s life. To deal with it, Pease writes that forgiveness is one way to handle the hurt. Forgiving a remote and absent father is the first step to acceptance and repair in the relationship. On the other hand, he also argues that forgiveness may not necessarily be the best way to deal with destructive fathers. It very much depends on what kind of situation the father and son are treading on. The son has to be wise enough to weight the circumstance that they are in.

There are other conditions that boys face when there is an absence of father figure in their life. For Steve Biddulph, a child psychologist from Australia, ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) in boys is actually DDD (Dad Deficiency Disorder) (Jardine, 2010). Dave Daubenmire, the founder and President of Pass the Salt Ministries, agrees somewhat with Biddulph. He terms ADD not as Attention Deficit Disorder, but rather as Absent Dad Disorder. As fathers fail to carry out their responsibility as male role models at home, boys suffer from its consequences. Young males need someone they can turn to for attention or guidance when they are growing up. When the father is not around to provide them with this attention, boys turn to someone, or something else. “Boys are confused,” as Daubenmire (2006) puts it. “Some turn to gangs, some to drugs, some turn to homosexuality” Daubenmire (2006). This is how bad a situation it can be for boys who seek attention from the wrong people or wrong things in life.

Evaluating fatherhood

Lastly, when we look at father and son relationships, how well can we tell if a man has been a good father to his son? My friend’s mother once told me that children are the report cards of their parents – If the children behave well, people can see how good of a parent the adults have been. But Fox and Bruce (2001), in their research paper about fatherhood, have come up with fathering concepts that is able to help a father evaluate how well he has performed.

The first component in this concept is *Responsivity* which “assesses the father’s use of a warm, nurturant and supportive parenting style” in bringing up his child. The next

component, *Harshness* evaluates “the father’s use of a harsh, punitive and inconsistent approach to parenting.” The third concept is *Behavioral Engagement* where it measures the “degree to which a father engages his child in particular activities.” Lastly, *Affective Involvement* “assesses the degree to which the child was and is wanted and loved by the father.”

All these concepts are evaluated by Cronbach’s alpha of .88, which is a measurement of internal consistency. I will not discuss the results of their findings or the measurements that they used in their research, but rather, focus more on the four aspects of the fathering concepts. In Chapter 4, I would be using the concepts and their definitions in my data analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter of my research has covered what the *Bildungsroman* is and the psychological analysis that can be applied to a father-son relationship. Observing these two parts of the research, we can tell that there is a connection between the growing up or coming of age of a male figure with the attention and relationship that he has with his father. The father figure is an important presence in the formative years of a young man. As he grows up, his emotions and mental health is influenced by his father. The treatment of a father towards his son could spark off either negative or positive emotions. As such, analyzing *The Kite Runner* as a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturation is a fascinating experience as the relationship the characters have in the novel is realistically weaved and help in the understanding of their emotional growth.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I will be discussing the methods that I am using to complete this research paper. The methods I plan to use would be successful in gathering and analyzing my data.

Generally, the main research method that I used is the qualitative method. The qualitative research method is used when the information and data cannot be obtained satisfyingly with quantitative methods (Stevens, 2003). It is generally used to study human behavior and behavior changes, making it the optimum research type to study literature or written works (Stevens, 2003). In literature, qualitative research comprises of criticisms on literary theories. These different types of criticisms reflect the diversity there is in the world of literature.

As it is richer in describing people, communities and cultures, applying the qualitative research method to my research paper will help me greatly in gathering and analyzing the data from the book *The Kite Runner*.

Genre Studies

One of the methods used in this research was genre studies. Genre studies are a “structuralist approach to literary criticism, film criticism and other cultural criticism”. It observes the structural elements that combine in the enlightening of a story and discover patterns in collections of stories (WordIQ, 2010). In simple terms, a genre study analyzes the genre of book or film and how well it is portrayed.

In this research paper, the main genre that will be looking into was the German literary term *Bildungsroman*. I will explore the variations of the meaning of the term and how well it successfully describes the novel *The Kite Runner*. By looking and drawing examples and excerpts from the novel, we can see how as a *Bildungsroman*, the characters in the novel deal with growing up and finding out themselves. Applying this methodology required me to scrutinize the novel's plot and character development to make the necessary associations of how a *Bildungsroman* should be.

Character Analysis

Another method that will be used in this research paper is character analysis. Character analysis involves describing a character's personality as well as defining the character's role in the story (Fleming, 2011). In this research, there will be a major focus on the main character, Amir. I will be observing Amir's character in his interaction with the other characters and how his character changes throughout the novel. His character develops not only in body, but also in mind and emotion. This development makes Amir an interesting character to analyze in terms of his changes and relationships with other characters.

Psychological Criticisms

In terms of literary criticisms, one of the approaches that literary scholars have employed is psychological criticisms. Basically, this criticism can be broken down into three main different features. The first feature "investigates the creative process of the arts" (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007, p. 722). The second feature observes the "psychological study of a

particular artist” (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007, p. 722). The last feature involves the analysis of fictional characters from literature (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007, p. 722).

I will be using the last feature of the psychological criticisms in this research. I will observe the development and growth of the characters in the novel and analyze them through psychological approaches that will be relevant to them. Among the psychological terms and approaches that I will use to dissect the characters in the novel include the IDEAL stages of a father-son relationship and what is the “father wound” in the child. My reading material includes books and journals that are about male psychology and character formation in regard to the paternal attention received as a child.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

In the data analysis, I would be analyzing the data that has been collected in reference to the novel. Here, I would look into how the information from the Literature Review relate to the aspects of *The Kite Runner* being an emotional *Bildungsroman* and how the psychological approaches of the father-son relationships are integrated in the emotional maturation of the characters.

***The Kite Runner* a *Bildungsroman* of Emotional Maturity**

In general, *The Kite Runner* is a *Bildungsroman* as the story centers around Amir, the main character, and his growth from a child into a man. The novel starts off by introducing Amir, a successful writer living in the United States who gets a call from his old friend, Rahim Khan. He is brought back to his memories of being a young boy of 12, living in Afghanistan. The novel follows Amir in his childhood, as he grows up with his servant and playmate, Hassan and the things they did together as children. As the story goes on, it is soon revealed that he betrayed Hassan and is filled with guilt because of it. When the Russians invade Afghanistan, Amir and his father move to the States. He grows up there and carves out a life for himself. But his past catches up with Rahim Khan's call and he chooses to travel back to his homeland to rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab.

Svensson's interpretation of the term *Bildungsroman* fits appropriately with the *Kite Runner*. In his opinion, the "psychology," "moral," and "social shaping" of the protagonist in relation to the society is vital in a *Bildungsroman*. Looking at these terms one by one, we can see how the characters in *The Kite Runner* relate to these terms in their actions and words.

Firstly, let us look at how Amir grows up psychologically. The most obvious psychological change in Amir could probably be identified in the change of his characters role from being a son into being a father. In the beginning of the novel, Amir is a son, needy of the attention and the protection of his father. He is constantly trying to find ways to impress and be noticed by his father. He is also convinced that his father would protect from harm. When cornered by Assef, the village psychopath, there is nothing that Amir wants to see more than to “look up and see Baba coming up the hill” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 40). But on his return from Afghanistan, he changes from being a son to Baba to being a father to Sohrab. He is now the one giving his attention and protection to Hassan’s son, looking after him and comforting him after the horrible events that Sohrab has been through.

As we look at how Amir changes morally, the most prominent characteristic of his to alter is his change from a betrayer to a savior. When he was a child, he betrayed Hassan when he chose not to do anything when he saw Assef raping him. But when he grows up, he rescues Sohrab from being sexually abused by Assef. He leaves the States and risks his life by going back to Afghanistan. In doing so, he gains the respect of his fellow Afghans, a driver by the name of Farid and his brother, Wahid. Although Farid initially does not like Amir, he soon warms up to him when he finds out the purpose of Amir’s return to Afghanistan. Farid and Wahid complement Amir by telling him: “You are an honorable man, Amir agha. A true Afghan” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 238).

Moving on, we come to see how Amir evolves in his social shaping among his society as he grows up. In the beginning of the novel, Amir and Hassan are not only introduced as good friends, but also master and servant. Amir is of the Pashtun tribe while Hassan is of the

Hazara. Apart from that, Amir is a Sunni Muslim while Hassan is a Shi'a Muslim.

Traditionally, the Pashtun have oppressed the Hazaras for years, taking their lands and women and making them their servants. It has been instilled into Amir that the Hazaras are a lower ranking tribe compared to the Pashtuns. Baba grew up with Ali, Hassan's father, in the same way as Amir and Hassan. Amir tells the readers of how Baba and Ali used to tell them about the mischief they caused when they were young, but "in none of his stories did Baba ever refer to Ali and his friend" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 25).

In the same way, even though Amir shares a close relationship with Hassan, he too admits that "I have never thought of Hassan and me as friends either" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 25). In his opinion, "I was a Pashtun and he was Hazara, I was a Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 25). In his younger days, Amir struggles with himself in regard to this double standard of his and Hassan's. Although he likes Hassan very much, he still feels challenged when Hassan seems to be overstepping him. When he writes a story and Hassan questions the plot of the story, Amir gets agitated and thinks to himself- "*What does he know, the illiterate Hazara?*" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 34). He also reveals that when Baba's friends came with their children, he excludes Hassan from their play. Amir's thoughts about Hassan being a Hazara servant also slips into his mind when he sees Hassan being raped for refusing to give up the kite to Assef. In his mind, Hassan is the sacrifice he has to make to please Baba, thinking: "He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 41).

His view about the differentiation of being Pashtun and Hazara changes when he finds out Hassan is his half brother. The trip down to Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab broke down the

barrier of being different as a Pashtun and Hazara. When Amir brings Sohrab back to America, his father-in-law, General Taheri looks down somewhat on Sohrab by saying: “They will want to know why there is a Hazara boy living with our daughter.” Amir tells him the truth about Sohrab’s identity and tells him: “And one more thing, General Sahib, you will never again refer to him as “Hazara boy” in my presence. He has a name and it’s Sohrab” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 360-361). The fact that Amir defies his father-in-law in this way shows that Amir is serious about not having anymore of the Pashtun-Hazara difference under his roof. He does not view Sohrab as a Hazara servant, but as his son, a member of his family.

Next, let us compare and contrast *The Kite Runner* to the characteristics of an Arabic *Bildungsroman*. As mentioned above, there are a few main characteristics, or rather, a few main themes to an Arabic *Bildungsroman*. One of the main themes is the cross-cultural conflict between the East and the West. This theme is not so prominent in the novel. Amir and his father do not face any major cross-cultural conflict when they move to the States. In fact, Amir settles in quite well in America because he is able to start afresh from his nightmare in Afghanistan.

One of the themes that *The Kite Runner* holds true with the Arabic *Bildungsroman* is the spiritual predicament that the character faces. Amir and Baba are not religious people. In fact, Baba is an atheist. But facing dire problems or circumstances, Amir turns back to God. One of the occasions where Amir comes back to God is when Sohrab is hospitalized after slitting his wrists to kill himself. Amir does not know if he could survive the damage done to his body. He is desperate and he finally kneels down in prayer, even though he remembers that “I haven’t prayed for fifteen years” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 345) and he has “long forgotten

the words” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 346). When Sohrab wakes up, Amir makes promises that he would commit to his religion more faithfully. True to his word, towards the end of the book, he could recite the prayers verses effortlessly, without consultation to any prayer pamphlets. Amir grows to be more convicted to his religion, not only in deeds, but also in faith.

In my opinion, *The Kite Runner* is not just a normal *Bildungsroman*, but a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturity. Amir matures in his emotions as much as he matures physically and mentally in the novel. The maturation process does not happen overnight, but over a span of many years, from his childhood to his adulthood. His emotions evolve through his growing up and the course of events that he faces.

One of the prominent changes observed in Amir is his transformation from a boy filled with guilt to a man blessed by redemption. In his childhood, Amir betrays Hassan by letting him get raped by Assef. He is riddled with guilt by what he has done, turning into an insomniac and always hoping that someone would know of what he did, but never being brave enough to tell anyone. During one of his family trips with Baba after the incident, Amir lies awake and mumbles to himself: “I watched Hassan get raped” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 86). He was hoping that “someone would wake up and hear, so I wouldn’t have to live with this lie anymore. But no one woke up and in the silence that followed, I understood the nature of my new curse: I was going to get away with it” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 86). He has another chance of confessing his sins when he is with Rahim Khan, but once again, his courage betrayed him. “For a moment, I almost did tell him. Almost told him everything, but then what would he think of me? He’d hate me, and rightfully” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 99). So Amir keeps his guilt to

himself without telling anyone, not even his wife. As time passes, he manages to bury his guilt, but he never considers himself forgiven.

His redemption comes with a phone call from Rahim Khan, asking him to go back to Afghanistan to rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab. Initially, Amir is very reluctant to do so. He has buried his guilt and is spending a good life in America with a wife and a stable career. But when Rahim Khan tells him that Hassan is actually his half brother, Amir realizes that he has to set things right. At first, he is angry when he finds out that Baba and Rahim Khan had lied to them all these years about their relationship, but after some thinking, Amir is mature enough to do the right thing. He knows the only way to achieve redemption is to save his nephew. In his words, he said:

I wished Rahim Khan hadn't called me. I wished he had let me live on in my oblivion. But he had called me. And what Rahim Khan revealed to me changed things. Made me see how my entire life, long before the winter of 1975, dating back to when the singing Hazara woman was still nursing me, had been a cycle of lies, betrayals, and secret.

There is a way to be good again, he'd said.

A way to end the cycle.

With a little boy. An orphan. Hassan's son. Somewhere in Kabul.

(Hosseini, 2003, p. 226-227)

True to his words, Amir does go back to Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab. He is set on fulfilling what he promised Rahim Khan as he realizes "I would not leave Afghanistan without finding Sohrab" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 255). He finally brings Sohrab back to the States. But the little

boy, still very much traumatized by what he had gone through in Afghanistan, clams up and does not talk nor show any emotion to them. Amir and Soraya take care of him while making efforts to reach out to him. Finally, as Amir brings Sohrab kite running one day, he sees a small smile on Sohrab's face. "It was only a smile, nothing more. It didn't make everything all right. It didn't make *anything* right" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 371). But to Amir, it is enough. It is enough to make up for what he had done to Hassan, Ali and Sohrab. For Amir,

But I'll take it (the smile). With open arms. Because when spring comes, it melts the snowflakes one at a time, and maybe I just witnessed the first flake melting.

I ran. A grown man running with a swarm of screaming children. But I didn't care. I ran with the wind blowing in my face, and a smile as wide of the Valley of Panjsher on my lips. (Hosseini, 2003, p. 371)

This passage signifies the hope that Amir has gained in Sohrab's smile; and when there is hope, there is redemption.

At the same time, Amir grows in acceptance and forgiveness. Knowing the truth about what Baba had done to Hassan and himself made him very angry. When Rahim Khan tells him that Hassan is actually his half brother, Amir is furious with him and stormed out of Rahim Khan's apartment saying: "What can you possibly say to me? I'm thirty-eight years old and I've just found out my whole life is one big fucking lie! What can you possibly say to make things better? Nothing. Not a goddamn thing!" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 371). He is also angry because what Baba did contrasts with what he had taught him before.

How could he have lied to me all those years? To Hassan? He had sat me

on his lap when I as little, looked me straight in the eye, and said, *There is only one sin. And that is theft . . . When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth.* Hadn't he said those words to me? And now, fifteen years after I had buried him, I was learning that Baba had been a thief. And a thief of the worst kind, because the things he'd stolen had been sacred: from me the right to know I had a brother, from Hassan his identity, and from Ali his honor. (Hosseini, 2003, p. 225)

He feels betrayed by Baba and is rightfully angry towards his father for what he had done.

His anger finally fades when he understands how Baba must have felt, haunted by his sins for all those years, not being able to tell Amir the truth, not being able to claim Hassan as his own. Keeping secrets of betrayal himself, he realizes "Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known. We had both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 226). With the knowledge, he knows Rahim Khan had called him back to Afghanistan to atone for both their sins. Only with atonement and acceptance can forgiveness come. He discovers that he has forgiven Baba after he rescues Sohrab from Afghanistan and brings him back to America. At night, after tucking Sohrab into bed, Amir thinks: "I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded, not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with the pain gathering its things, packing up, and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 359). With forgiveness in his heart, he could finally let go of what he and Baba had done Ali and Hassan.

When observed closely, most of Amir's emotional predicaments and his coming to terms with them are closely related to the relationship that he has with his father. He shares a

fluctuating relationship with Baba. At certain points of time in Amir's life, the relationship that they share is solid and steady, at others, rocky and uneven. This causes a major emotional trauma to Amir as he struggles to keep up with the emotions that rise within him. Some of the conditions in Amir's relationship with Baba are identifiable with psychological approaches.

One of the most prominent psychological approaches that Amir shares with his father is the IDEAL stages. Their relationship evolves around the stages of *Idolize*, *Discord*, *Evolving*, *Acceptance*, and *Legacy* clearly shows the dynamics of how Amir and Baba's relationship flows. As their relationship evolve, so do Amir's feelings and emotions towards his father.

As a young boy, Amir holds his father in high regard both physically and emotionally. This is the *Idolizing* stage of the relationship. He has described his father's physique as:

a towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard, a wayward crop of curly brown hair unruly as the man himself, hands that looked capable of uprooting a willow tree, and a black glare that would "drop the devil to his knees begging for mercy" as Rahim Khan used to say. (Hosseini,

2003, p. 13)

At the same time, he looks to his father for approval and wants to spend his time with his father.

Amir and Baba arrive at the *Discord* stage early in their relationship. In Amir's opinion, he has never lived up to his father's expectations. Baba wanted a son who would be like more like him in personality and interest, but Amir is not. When Baba tries to instill a

love for soccer in Amir, he “faked interest for as long as possible” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 20). Soon, Baba “sensed my lack if genuine interest and resigned himself to the bleak fact that his was never going either play or watch soccer” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 15). Amir also overhears Baba talking to Rahim Khan about him, saying: “If I hadn’t seen the doctor pulling him out of my wife with my own eyes, I’d never believe that he’s my son” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 23). Baba’s words causes Amir to feel bitter about himself for being the way he is, and towards Baba for how he views Amir.

As they progress into the *Evolving* stage, Amir discovers his love for writing and tells Baba that he wants to be a writer. Baba does not approve initially, saying to Amir: “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). But Amir refuses to change his mind, deciding that “I didn’t want to sacrifice for Baba anymore. The last time I had done that, I had damned myself” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 135). Amir has learnt how to stand up for himself against his father.

Later on, after Baba’s death and when Amir has found out about his betrayal, and tries to put things right, they move into the *Acceptance* stage. As mentioned above, Amir forgives his father of what he did to both Hassan and himself. In fact, he accepts that he is the “the entitled half, the society-approved, legitimate half, the unwitting embodiment of Baba’s guilt,” while Hassan is the “half who had inherited what had been pure and noble in Baba. The half that, maybe, in the most secret recesses of his heart, Baba had thought of as his true son” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 359). The fact that he is able to accept how his father felt shows that he has fully forgiven his father of what he had done.

Lastly, let us look at the *Legacy* stage. In the case of Amir, he has always cherished the legacy of his father, even from a young age. He knows how much of a man his father had been. At the funeral of Baba, Amir recalls how the people who came to pay their respects “filled the parking spots at the mosque in Hayward” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 173). He “realized how much of who I was, what I was, had been defined by Baba and the marks that he had left on people’s lives. My whole life, I had been “Baba’s son” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 174).

The difference between the ideal ages that the stages might happen and the ages that Amir and his father go through these stages is that Amir got through all the stages before he is 50, as suggested by Dr. Williams. Amir also goes through the five stages in a non-chronological order to his age.

Another big emotional change which Amir goes through is experiencing the emotions of a son to experiencing the emotions of a father. As a son, Amir is constantly dependant on his father, seeking his approval and pride, looking up to him as a protector, wanting to find comfort that he hopes Baba can give. His dependence on Baba bordered on an obsession, as he puts it himself “Most days, I worshipped Baba with an intensity approaching the religious” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 19). His emotions are still juvenile, needing someone to nurture and encourage him in his growing up. Unfortunately, in his early childhood, he does not receive the affection that he wants from his father. It scars his childhood emotions.

This scaring of childhood emotions can be identified through the father absence and the father wound. Pease (2000) has mentioned that fathers create a father “wound” or “hunger” when they are absent from their son’s life. In Amir’s case, he feels the “absence” of his father not only physically, but also emotionally. Baba does not take interest in Amir’s hobbies or

accomplishments. When Amir writes a short story, he is proud of it and longs very much for his father to read it. He waits for his father to offer to read it, standing for “under a minute, but, to this day, it was one of the longest minutes in my life” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 31), but Baba “went on staring me down, and didn’t offer to read” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 31). This situation shows how much Baba is distant emotionally to the needs of Amir. Amir blames himself for Baba’s aloofness to him. He believes that his father blames him for causing the death of his mother, thinking: “Because the truth of it all, I always felt like Baba hated me a little. And why not? After all, I *had* killed his beloved beautiful princess, hadn’t I?” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 19). For a young child, having this type of emotional distress is healthy to a well-being of a child.

What helped Amir get through the emotional distress of the lack of his father’s attention is the affection he had from Rahim Khan, Baba’s best friend. Amir’s close relationship with Rahim Khan has been hinted at the start of the novel, where Amir describes a photograph of himself, Baba and Rahim Khan. “I’m in his arms (Baba), but it’s Rahim Khan’s pinky my fingers is curled around” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 5).

Quietly but surely, Rahim Khan has been always the one who is consistently encouraging and giving words of wisdom to Amir. He sees the struggle and hurt that Amir is going through in seeking his father’s approval. While Baba does not want to read Amir’s short story, Rahim Khan offers to read it, showing genuine interest in the story. After reading it, he pays Amir an encouraging compliment in the form of a letter. It is also Rahim Khan who finally tells Amir the truth about his blood relationship with Hassan and the wrong Baba has done to them. This important truth is something that Baba himself should have told Amir.

His relationship with Rahim Khan suggests to us that for a child to have a wholesome emotional development, a father, or at least a father surrogate, has to be present in the child's life. Rahim Khan's presence in Amir's life is strong and Amir has a deep respect and love for the man. At a point of his childhood, Amir himself had wished that Rahim Khan had been his father. Rahim Khan has helped Amir make the right choice in confronting his guilt and anger, resulting in Amir finally being free from his emotional bondage.

As Amir moves on to be a father to Sohrab, his role reverses from being the protected to becoming the protector, from being the comforted to the comforting. He is fully aware of the delicate emotional state that Sohrab is in; losing his family, living in an orphanage and suffering sexual abuse from Assef. When he rescues Sohrab, he knows that he not only has to rescue him physically, but also mentally and emotionally. He picks up fatherly instinct and emotions when Sohrab is under his care, even when he does not have any experience in being a father.

The father-son relationship between Amir and Sohrab is a unique one. Amir does not know of Sohrab's existence until the boy is 11 years old. This gap in the relationship is a cause of awkwardness in the beginning as they both do not know each other very well. But because of Amir's efforts, they manage to breach the gap a little. But just as their relationship seems to be getting a little better, Sohrab tries to kill himself, making his emotional status more unstable than usual. He suffers from depression and refuses to talk to anyone. But Amir does not give up on him, and tries his best to get Sohrab to overcome his condition.

By using the four fathering concepts discussed in Chapter 2, we can roughly evaluate how Amir performs as a father. Not all the concepts are applicable, given to the nature of

Amir and Sohrab's relationship. We will look at how Amir applies the concepts of *Responsivity* and *Behavioral Engagement* in being a father to Sohrab.

The concept of *Responsivity* looks at how much Amir, as father, tries to provide a warm, nurturing environment to Sohrab. When Amir first starts to talk to Sohrab, he is very gentle with him, not pushing the boy too much when he is reluctant to talk. He also respects Sohrab's fear of physical contact, and pulls back when he sees Sohrab flinching at his touch. He only hugs Sohrab when the boy is more comfortable with him. Together with Soraya, his wife, they prepare their home to welcome Sohrab when he arrives in the States. Unfortunately, Sohrab is still very caught up with his own feelings and does not react well to the kindness to Amir and Soraya. They are patient with him, even though his silence hurts them. The environment they keep in their home was a peaceful one, waiting for Sohrab to open up in his own accord.

The second concept, *Behavioral Engagement* looks at how much a father engages his child in a particular activity. Although Sohrab is emotionally distant towards Amir, Amir does not give up on him. He still brings him along to family outings to let him get some fresh air and to have a little social contact. It is during one of these trips that Amir finally has a chance to use kite flying to perk Sohrab's interest to his surroundings. As Amir flies the kite with Sohrab standing and watching beside him, Amir talks to Sohrab, telling him about Hassan's kite tricks. When Amir successfully attacks and falls another kite, he is very happy to see Sohrab smiling, even if it is just a small smile.

With these two concepts in view, we can see that Amir is trying hard to be a good father. He is willing to stand up to his responsibilities and put in effort to take care of the little

boy. He no longer runs away from his problems or tries to wriggle his way out of them, but rather, faces them straight on and makes the best out of it. This change proves to be an emotional leap for Amir from being a boy lacking in courage to a man willing to take his responsibilities.

It should be noted that there are three different father-son relationships in this analysis. The first relationship is between Amir and Baba, the second between Amir and Rahim Khan and the third between Amir and Sohrab. Amir experiences different emotions in these relationships with the different males in his life and whether consciously or unconsciously, with each of them, he learns more about himself. These males have made Amir from whom he was then, to whom he is now, bringing his emotional maturation to a peak in his life.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, we can conclude that *The Kite Runner* can be aptly categorized as an emotional *Bildungsroman* where the father-son relationships help to play a part in shaping the protagonists' emotional formation. There are many examples that can be found in the character development of the protagonist that helps classify this novel as an emotional *Bildungsroman*. With these analyses, it is hoped that it would further enhance the reading and understanding of this novel.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This research paper has explored the possibility of *The Kite Runner* being a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturity. At the same time, the research also looks at the father-son relationship of the characters in the novel. The purpose of the study, which is to find out if *The Kite Runner* is a *Bildungsroman* of emotional maturation and to use psychological approaches to identify the father-son relationship, is achieved. Completing this study has also fulfilled another purpose—to study this novel out of my appreciation and love for this novel. At the same time, I hope the significance of this study, which is to increase appreciation of this novel for future reference, is achieved as well.

Based on my findings, I have been able to find enough information to answer my research questions regarding *The Kite Runner* as an emotional *Bildungsroman* and how the psychology of father-son relationships is integrated into it. By going back to examples in the novel, I am able to find instances where the main character in the novel, Amir matures emotionally as he grows up. His emotional maturation is aided by the relationship he shares with his father. These relationships were identified with psychological approaches like the IDEAL stages and the Father Wound.

In doing this study, I have spent a lot of time reading and rereading *The Kite Runner*. It is truly a very well-written book, with vividly painted characters and landscapes and full of different themes and emotions. It is a brilliant first time effort from its author, Khaled Hosseini. As such, there is so much more to explore and comment on the novel than just identifying it as an emotional *Bildungsroman* and looking at the father-son relationships between the characters.

One prominent observation of the novel is the emphasis on male characters and lack of the focus on female characters. The women in Afghanistan have always been held as an enigma to the outside world. The novel does not give much focus on them, preferring to dwell in the relationships between the men. Because of this, the second novel by Khaled Hosseini gives much more prominence to the women of his homeland. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is about the life of two women of different generations in Afghanistan, whose lives are brought together by war and suffering. They eventually forge a strong mother-daughter relationship although they both do not have any blood ties at all.

Based on the observation above, future approaches to the novel could be done by comparing the two novels. They are both set in Afghanistan, but the focus on the portrayal of the characters is very different. Reading both the novels reveals the double standard that Afghans have for men and women and how the women are treated behind closed doors. This revelation of the how the different sexes are treated sets the mood of both novels differently from each other. Comparing *The Kite Runner* with *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a good way to do further research on the novel.

At that same time, adapting this research to other novels is possible as well. In fact, the concept of the *Bildungsroman* is not only limited to books. Movies or cartoons could also incorporate elements of an emotional *Bildungsroman*. One example would be the well loved Disney cartoon, *The Lion King*. This animation follows the life of a young lion cub, Simba, and his journey into becoming king of his pride. As with Amir in *The Kite Runner*, Simba, struggles with guilt and fear as a cub and but gains redemption and courage as a full grown

lion. He is able to confront his emotional turmoil, turning his negative emotions into positive ones.

In the meantime, using psychological approaches to explain other family relationships like mother-daughter, grandparents-grandchildren or sibling relationships could be feasible as well. There are many books out there which have family as their core characters. One good example of such a book would be *Catch Us If You Can*, by Catherine McPhail. It is the literary text for Form Five students in Malaysian government schools. The novel is about the adventures of a young boy, Rory and his grandfather as they seek to escape the people of the law that are trying to separate them. Another example is the aforementioned *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. These two books, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *Catch Us If You Can*, would make great research material in exploring more about family relations.

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