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**An Exploration of Existentialism in Khalid
Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003)**

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Master Degree in Literature and Civilization*

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to my dear parents who have always given unconditional support.

To all my family and friends, thank you for your constant encouragement.

Last but not least, to my dearest aunt Sakina, you will always be remembered.

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner* (2003) is a universal portrayal of human life and the numerous mistakes of human choice, giving a picture of characters failing themselves in the labyrinth of life. This dissertation attempts to highlight the equation of responsibility and freedom dealing with the importance and essence of responsibility in the context of existential idea. The study, thus, aims at analyzing Hosseini's novel from an existentialist point of view through exploring the existential tenets that may characterize Amir as an existentialist hero, and the novel as whole as an existential literary work. Subsequently, the work attempts to evaluate the existence of existentialism in the play by casting light on the major characters and by addressing the concepts related to existentialism which is necessary to the next. The paper argues that, only by seeking authenticity and responsibility for his actions, can Amir realize the true self-redemption and finally be awarded of the value of existence. Finally, the dissertation concludes that the novel is an existential narrative due to the presence and manifestation of the major existential themes which, also characterize the protagonist as an Existentialist hero.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Dedication | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Abstract | iii |
| Contents..... | iv |
| General Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature | 3 |
| 1.1 Introduction | 4 |
| 1.2 Literature and Philosophy | 4 |
| 1.3 Definition of Existentialism | 5 |
| 1.3.1 Existentialism as a Philosophy | 6 |
| 1.3.2 Existentialism as a Literary Movement..... | 9 |
| 1.4 Existentialism Movement Variations | 11 |
| 1.4.1 Nihilism..... | 11 |
| 1.4.2 The Theatre of the Absurd..... | 12 |
| 1.5 Themes of Existentialist Literature | 14 |
| 1.5.1 Alienation | 14 |
| 1.5.2 Freedom and Choice..... | 16 |
| 1.5.3 Authenticity | 17 |
| 1.5.4 Bad Faith | 18 |
| 1.5.5 Meaninglessness..... | 19 |
| 1.5.6 Anxiety | 20 |
| 1.5.7 Death | 20 |
| 1.5.8 Guilt..... | 21 |
| 1.6 Essential Works of Existentialist Literature..... | 22 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.7 Conclusion..... | 26 |
| Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in <i>The Kite Runner</i> | 28 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 29 |
| 2.2 Hosseini’s <i>The Kite Runner</i> | 29 |
| 2.2.1 Biographical Sketch | 29 |
| 2.2.2 Plot Summary | 32 |
| 2.2.3 Characterization | 35 |
| 2.2.4 Setting..... | 38 |
| 2.2.4.1 Impact of Setting in <i>The Kite Runner</i> | 39 |
| 2.3 Existential Themes in <i>The Kite Runner</i> | 40 |
| 2.3.1 Alienation | 41 |
| 2.3.2 Anxiety | 42 |
| 2.3.3 Freedom of Choice and Responsibility | 43 |
| 2.3.4 Guilt..... | 44 |
| 2.3.5 Bad Faith | 44 |
| 2.4. Amir’s Individual Desires and Existential Choices..... | 45 |
| 2.5. Amir as an Existentialist Hero | 47 |
| 2.6 Conclusion..... | 49 |
| General Conclusion | 51 |
| Bibliography | 53 |

General Introduction

The twentieth century was considered to be the age of fear and discomfort due to the occurrence of the bloody events that the world has put up with. People perceived the world as an absurd place where they were miserable and unable to define the meaning of their existence.

Accordingly, with the establishment of existentialism, they defied the traditional systems and created a new stream of thought that facilitated their goal in attaining their individuality and authentic-self within the world. Existentialism focuses mainly on single human lives and tries to answer what it means to exist in the world so that the disposition of existence becomes less blurry to the individual and easier to comprehend and achieve.

The Kite Runner (2003) by Khaled Hosseini is a novel that showcases the characters' transcendent growth and their journey to redemption. The novel highpoints the reckoning of responsibility and choices, dealing with their importance and essence. Since the modern heroes in existentialist literature are often alienated, obsessed with past choices, and always trying to find meaning to their existence. Amir's feelings and his exertion to find his true self are the essential reasons for his existential renderings. Through the analysis of the experiences of Amir, one can identify the ways in which the novel can be explored from an existential perspective.

This paper tries to prove, on one hand, and to certain degree, that the protagonist Amir is an existentialist hero, and on the other hand, that *The Kite Runner* is an existential novel through exploring the existential themes in it. The objective of this study is an attempt to provide a satisfactory interpretation to *The Kite Runner* from the existentialist point of view which may expand the range of significances readers can find in Hosseini's work. This literary work also covers the crucial existential themes and encompasses existential understandings characterizing the novel as an existential literary work.

General Introduction

To prove that Amir's behaviors can be interpreted from an existentialist point of view and that the book as a whole can be identified within the existential literature. This dissertation will address several questions:

- How existentialism is displayed and how it manifests itself in the novel?
- Is *The Kite Runner* an existential literary work?
- How and why can the protagonist in *The Kite Runner* be considered an existentialist hero?

The present study stands essentially on existentialist and thematic analysis of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, based on the philosophies of the existentialist thinkers. It is divided into two chapters. The first one is an examination of the existential theories and existentialist works. The same chapter is devoted to give a thorough definition of existentialism and explain its major themes.

The second chapter is a literary analysis of the novel that seeks to analyze and explore the existential qualities in *The Kite Runner*. Then, it will work on the investigation of the themes in respect of existentialist perspective, casting light on the character of Amir and identifying him as an existentialist hero.

Chapter One:
Existentialism and
Literature

1.1. Introduction

Existentialism is a school of thought that has been explored in the fields of philosophy and literature, and has been incorporated into the world of literature through the major existentialists. In order to provide a satisfactory explanation for the conception, a thorough exploration of existentialism's segments will be inspected and examples of its theories and themes will also be studied all along in the first chapter.

1.2. Literature and philosophy

Both literature and philosophy have some aspects to share. Like philosophy, literature aims at the human being, exploring a variety of ideas that can resonate with different kinds of people. It is indisputably established that philosophy came into being way before the leaders and figures of literary productions introduced their pieces. Afterwards, literature performed its significant role in distinct cultures, providing varied series of understandings, accompanied by numerous messages that have always been inspired by philosophy, depicting the status of its surroundings.

In his review of A. Phillips Griffiths' book *Philosophy and Literature*, Suresh Raval covers R.W. Beardsmore's view that literary works "may no doubt involve problems and puzzles, but philosophy starts from them rather than culminates in them" (1987, p.152). Raval also stresses on Stein Haugom Olsen's argument that "it (literature) shares with philosophy certain fundamental thematic concepts, and like philosophy, it exercises the intellect without instructing in the sense in which philosophy provides instruction" (1987, p.152), this statement accentuates the idea that philosophy and literature are totally interconnected. It also elucidates the very fact that philosophy grants direction through plausible arguments, while literature helps providing this guidance but indirectly through the works fiction.

Subsequently, philosophy incorporates concepts that interpret the meaning of human existence and direct the individual through real experiences of everyday life. Literature, on the other hand, does not come up with such concepts. What literature does

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

is that incorporates these concepts, adding themes, motifs and symbols to it. In other words, literature implicates the message of philosophy, that of significant outsets that convey their thoughts. It does that in a clever consolidation of philosophical concepts, through the literary creations.

1.3. Definition of Existentialism

Existentialist thinkers over the last few centuries have produced some of the greatest works of philosophy and literature. Nonetheless, identifying what existentialism is proves quite challenging. First and foremost, it should be noted that existentialism embraces an extensive variety of concepts and as such, only a few of the main ones will be discussed.

Existentialism is one of those Doctrines that everyone has heard after, yet none of the great existentialist writings contain the word ‘existentialism’ in it. The term appears to have been coined towards the end World War II by the French thinker Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) as a label for the ideas of the likes of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969). It must be noticed that the term Existentialism was originally coined in 1925 and become used only in 1945. Philosophers who lived before coining the term or refused to be called as such are still considered as existentialists.

During the twentieth century, Europe witnessed two bloody wars in addition to the emergence of Fascism¹, Nazism², and Communism³. These past events caused the man to be helpless and voiceless; it affected him so deeply that his faith in humanity and religion was vanished. The oppressive political climate and the results of the wars made a huge impact on the people whose need for subversive resistance to the occupying

¹ A governmental system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly suppressing opposition and criticism regimenting an aggressive nationalism and often racism (Dictionary.com).

² The body of political and economic doctrines held by Nazi in Germany from 1933-1945 including the totalitarian principle of government, predominance of especially Germanic groups assumed to be racially superior, and supremacy of the führer (Merriam Webster).

³ A system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or state (Dictionary.com).

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

political force prompted a sense of personal responsibility and expounded the eventual upbringing for existentialism.

As Ira Mark Milne (2009) describes it, existentialism is a philosophy of existence. Its fundamental principle is that the universe does not give any clear, nor certain solutions, of how human race should live. It asserts the idea that the existence precedes essence. This school appeared as reaction to both rationalism and idealism.

Existential thinkers and philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) equally expressed their dissatisfaction with the religious establishments. They pushed to reevaluate the meaning of existence and aimed to reawaken man's consciousness of his unique individuality, urging him not to be satisfied with the current social and religious strictures. They issued a call for the rejection of the outdated conventions and traditional philosophies opting for the creation of a more personal and subjective religion, or philosophy of life. In time, this new philosophy came to be known as Existentialism. The movement is said to be initiated by the Denmark philosopher Soren Kierkegard. However, some earlier novelists, such as Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), who criticized the old-fashioned philosophies and disagreed with the earliest theories have been seen in retrospect as precursors of Existentialism.

1.3.1. Existentialism as a philosophy

From one standpoint, the existentialists are separated between scholars and philosophers. The philosophical existentialists split into the worldly and the religious. All subsequent existentialist philosophers, especially Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre, were indebted to the pioneering work of Kierkegaard who is commonly acknowledged to be the father of them all. His ideas were focused on in the attempts of scholars whilst trying to decipher the nature of 'Being'. Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche is a significant figure who cooperated significantly in the progressing line of agnostic existentialism. The skeptical existentialists include Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, who is an absolute atheist enticed by Being and nothingness. On the other hand, religious existentialists include Karl Jaspers, Gabriel gall, and Karl Rahner.

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

It can be argued that all existentialist philosophy can be traced back to René Descartes and his conviction that the only thing he could be certain of was his own existence as presented in his statement ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Descartes, 1998). Taking this certainty as ‘truth’ the theorists that followed used it as an initial point to study the human nature and the existence.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language (2019) defines existentialism as: “A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one’s acts.”, the term holds that man has complete freedom to determine his own fate. The actions he chooses essentially determine his existence.

Existentialists also believe that a particular individual is not the way he is because God made him that way, or because he is part of a great human community with common characteristics. He is the way he is because, that is how he simply is. He is a unique and independent individual. His destiny is his own, and so are the choices he makes. It is this particular independence, in fact, that allows him to exist.

Correspondingly, Sartre defines Existentialism as: “a doctrine that makes human life possible and also affirms the every truth and every action that implies an environment and a human subjectivity” (1987, p.24). Therefore, Existentialism, as a philosophical approach, discards the very thought of the universe compromising any evidences about how humanity should live. A basic grasp of this thought system can yet again be found in Sartre’s statement, “Existence precedes essence.”, purporting that the identity of any person, their essence, cannot be attained by inspecting what other people are like, but mainly in what that individual has done. This idea of Sartre implies that humans primarily exist, then, by their deeds they build their essence. In other words, they try to make something meaningful via their actions and without abusing the freedom they are lucky of having.

It is declared that existentialism focuses mainly on single human lives and the piercing unavailability of languishing and decision over every distinct, as stated:

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

“Existentialism postulates no scheme, no method and no formula. It approaches human life as one continuous flow of consciousness, struggling, suffering, despairing and tending towards death.” (Sinari, 1966). Accordingly, it represents a philosophy of man who is involved in life and its problems, and as Kierkegaard, affirms, existentialism is related much with human’s freedom. In his terms, to exist means to realize oneself through the freedom of choice and self-devotion. Moreover, the concept can also be translated as man’s effort to create the identity of his own and control his place in his society. Existentialism is, hence, the effort of the man to relate himself to his own life of others around him (Stafford, 1966).

As said by John Wild, “This philosophy is best understood as a rebellion against the abstract objectivism or essentialism of modern thought, with an intensive emphasis on the concrete subjective existence which it has consistently ignored.” (1959, p.28). Thus, existentialism perceives man as a being forsaken in an alien world, and proposed that the appropriate philosophy for man in this ‘phase of angst’ had to be an independent one that would permit him to live a life that was authentic to his inner self. The ‘existentialist hero’ of this phase would be the one who lived his life completely free from the boundaries restricted by the traditions and was dedicated to the demands of authentic living.

Further understanding can be found by brief inspection not only of what the existentialists thought, but what they were against: “Existentialism is generally opposed to rationalist and empiricist doctrines that assume that the universe is a determined, ordered system intelligible to the contemplative observer who can discover the natural laws that govern all beings and the role of reason as the power guiding human activity.” (Sartre, 1950, p.43)

In general, this philosophy represents a revolt against conventional ideas and establishments that restrain man from using his freedom and choice. One of the most important definitions of existentialism is that it is a movement of philosophy in literature which explicates the man as, “an individual as a conscious being” that is more concerned with “how one lives one’s life rather than a system” (Cline, 2019, p.58), and as the word

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

indicates, it mainly deals with the human existence or an individual's existence. It also proposes that man is full of anxiety and anguish, with no meaning in his life, unless he makes a significant choice about his own future.

1.3.2. Existentialism as a Literary Movement

Existentialism in literary works is an expansion of the philosophy that focuses mainly on the individual's existence, freedom and choice. Though Existentialism was never a fixed development, the views and beliefs of this school of thought have affected numerous writers who incorporated existential components in their writings.

In that sense, various existential thinkers have insinuated that literature is particularly well positioned to convey the messages of their reasoning. An existential novelist absorbs the ideas, then imitates them inside written works. In the same way, it is difficult to fit existentialism flawlessly into a container. There are different varieties from one author to the following, and it is maybe more productive to talk over the work of numerous unique writers than to attempt a clearing outline of the entire development.

The existential label is one which implicitly allows for such a breadth of ideas, and this became a convenient label with which to apply to philosophers, writers and artists who did not fit easily into other ideological and artistic categories:

Existentialism was never an organized movement, but was a loose grouping of like-thinking people who found that analyses given by the writers discussed (Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre) were appropriate to the historical circumstances in which they found themselves. In one sense there have been as many existentialisms as existentialists. (Wiener, 1973, p.189)

Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard all have certain existentialist elements in their works, as do Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers and Camus. The fact that writers with such varied philosophical directions have grown to be identified with existentialism is a significant suggestion that existentialism has many forms and that among existentialists; there are probably more differences than similarities (Stumpt, 1993). Authors like William Faulkner (1897-1962), Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), Samuel Beckett

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

(1906-1989), and Albert Camus (1913-1960) were all equally known for exposing existential elements in their works.

In literature, existentialism is a form of literary criticism which analyses the struggles of characters in literary works to define meaning and identity in the face of alienation and isolation. According to Rickman, more than any other recent philosophical movement, the existentialists have communicated their ideas through plays, novels and short stories. He goes on to give two reasons as to how existentialism and literature are interrelated. Firstly, the philosophy is about human life and its problems and secondly, existentialism insists on the uniqueness of individuals (Rickman, 2013).

Successively, Existential literature portrays the struggle by describing the anguish and pain that the individual suffers as he struggles with alienation. Professor of philosophy William Barrett explains:

The themes that obsess both modern art and existential philosophy are the alienation and strangeness of man in his world; the contradictoriness, the feebleness and the contingency of human existence; the central and overwhelming reality of tie for man who has lost his anchorage in the eternal. (1958, p.56)

In other words, man is lost in the existential novel. He is not familiar with the real world as he should. He is withdrawn and isolated from everything and everyone around him. He stands alone in a world which is indifferent to his existence, and in which he cannot feel at home. This disorientation leads him to feel a yearning for a connection. This feeling, based upon new insights into the uniqueness of human existence, runs through the whole of existentialist literature⁴.

Hence, so is the journey of the existential heroes, searching for meaning and connection in an absurd universe and attempting desperately to relate to it.

⁴ David E. Cooper states: “All existentialist writers express disquiet about the subject-object picture [of the world] the sense than an alien world can afford no “reliability”, or “home”. This sense, in turn, derives from a picture of ourselves separated from the world as subjects from” (1990)

1.4. Existentialism Movement Variations

In the field of literature, diverse artistic works can be encountered by readers. They are conducted to read different pieces of literature that can be classified into different categories. The literature of Existentialism can be hard to identify given that its themes correlate with other themes in other kinds of literature. Each and every existentialist was in some way the follower and believer of other philosophies. Since there are other branches of philosophy which bring to mind the philosophy of existentialism, it can be discerned that the boundary between existentialism and other branches of philosophy is not clear at all.

1.4.1. Nihilism

The word Nihilism is derived from a Latin word *Nihil* meaning ‘nothing’. This philosophy asserts that existence is meaningless and that traditional beliefs and values are unfounded. It also contends that life has no factual purpose or value in life. The term first emerged in the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862), where the young Bazarov, a representative of Western materialism and radical skeptical thinking, is described as a nihilist. The concept is similar to the philosophy of the ancient Greek skeptics who discarded the idea of philosophical certainty. In other words, this theory proclaims that man is thrown into this world without a specific purpose and is constrained to invent meaning in his life. Comparably to Existentialism, the individual is responsible of his choices and has the freedom to take his own decisions, no matter the outcome.

Nihilism was said to receive critiques of religious and moral views, the term was intended both to defame and seclude. Back then, to consider something or someone "nihilist" was to deem it evil. In fact, "Nihilism" and "Atheism" share a common history in this regard, as terms of mockery and objects of abuse. In his book *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (1969), Stanley Rosen confronts what he takes to be nihilism in its existing philosophic representations: “Nihilism is fundamentally an attempt to overcome or to repudiate the past on behalf of an unknown and unknowable yet hoped-for future” (1969,p.14) He adds “This is the classical origin of nihilism, or the view that

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

things as a whole are worthless”(1969, p.14), and also: “Taken as autonomous psychic motions, one desire contradicts another, and the result is chaos or nihilism” (1969, p.15) , in addition: “Nihilism again presents itself as the disjunction between speech and desire. Nihilism is an expression of the impossibility of human perfection” (1969, p.15).

During the first half of the twentieth century, nihilism was very much related with the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw it as a force of ruin. In his book *The Will to Power*, published in 1901, Nietzsche envisages nihilism would ultimately lead to society’s downfall. When Existentialism became popular in the 1950s and 1960s, Sartre’s ideas on life as nothingness were perceived as a nihilistic reflection. The philosophy became nearly identical with nihilism, leading to a common misrepresentation of existentialists as gloomy, hollow individuals.

Existentialists, however, thought of themselves as fighting nihilism by giving life meaning in spite of its inexistence. For example, Camus, a leading existentialist, believes that the goal of existentialism is to escape nihilism. He said, “In the darkest depths of our nihilism. I have sought only for the means to transcend nihilism” (1995, p.3). He also declared that the ones who live an authentic existence are the ones who rebel against absurdity and build meaning. The other atheist existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre, Simon de Boeuvre, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche were at one time or the other nihilists in their life.

1.4.2. The Theatre of the Absurd

Existentialists believed the rejection of reason as the source of meaning and addressed the feelings of anxiety, awareness of death, and freedom of choice. This freedom to choose leads to the notion of nothingness which also leads to feelings of alienation and death. These themes are evident in the Theatre of the Absurd. A close reading of the Absurdist plays would reveal how the existentialist themes have influenced much of the Theatre of the Absurd as the movement derives from many philosophical terms used in existentialism.

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

Essentially, it was only after existentialism gained international attention in the 1950s, familiarizing the concept of “meaninglessness” amongst scholars, that a school of drama based in absurdity was established. *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, published in 1953; *The Bald Soprano*, by Eugene Ionesco, which was performed in 1956; and Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story* played on Broadway, in 1959, are the most significant and representative works in Absurdism.

According to Martin Esslin, “absurd” means illogical, unreasonable, and ridiculous. Eugène Ionesco also defines it as: “devoid of purpose....Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.” (1957, p.5). Accordingly, the theatre of the absurd covers the belief that there is no meaning to be uncovered in the world beyond what meaning we provide to it. The idea of the absurd is an exceptionally regular theme in many existentialist works, predominantly in that of Albert Camus.

In fact, absurdity is the notion of dissimilarity between two things. Just as Camus explains it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: “The absurd is born out of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world... born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (1965, p.32). Thus, the irrationality of a world without inherent meaning collides against the human need for a meaningful life, producing the struggle termed the absurd, much like “three characters in the drama” of humanity: the need for meaning, the lack of meaning, and the collision of these two within absurdity (Camus, 1965).

So, the absurd accentuates the disparity between the individuals in pursuing inherent meaning in this universe, and the desperation that comes with finding it. This meaninglessness in life underlines the quest of man for having a purpose, as it is presumed that everything has a purpose or a motive for being.

The Theatre critic Martin Esslin remarked how absurdist dramas evaded constructing testimonials about the human condition by portraying it in its authentic form, regularly leading to perplexing situations within the normal view of reality but which were well suited for the stage. In Esslin’s own words: “The Theatre of the Absurd

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin, 1961, p.6).

Besides, Absurdist plays ridiculed the traditional forms of life by presenting the unexpected and challenging any stabs to read meaning into the occurrences on theatre, undermining ordinary expectations of continuity and rationality. The plots usually made no particular sense and had the tendency to infringe principles. Additionally, unlike existentialism, which focused on the inner fight for beliefs, the absurd does not exhibit internal thoughts to the audience; it focuses mainly on the odd and unusual unpredictability of the external world which can foster a rise in consciousness for the audience.

1.5. Themes of Existentialist Literature

As already stated, existentialism was not a lucid philosophical system. It was a movement, which was inspired not only by philosophers and their writings, but also by artists, novelists and playwrights who have also prompted its expansion. Existentialist ideas were spread through art and literature as well. That being said, these existentialists; in all their forms; had different backgrounds and different viewpoints, however, they deliberated the same common themes in their writings, which have come to form and shape what is known as existentialism.

1.5.1. Alienation

The concept of alienation is a common theme explored in existential literature. According to Henry Winthrop’s article “Alienation and Existentialism In Relation To Literature and Youth”, alienation is a concept that “refers to any psychological feeling of separation from persons, groups, institutions, ideas and ideals, places and things. It is characterized by an inability to experience a feeling of organic relatedness to any of these entities” He also adds: “the novels of existential writers like Sartre and Camus are powerful testimonials to the sufferings of men and women as a result of alienation in their lives”. (Winthrop, 1967)

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

Essentially, in existentialist literature, alienation is defined by a person's feeling of discomfort and isolation, of not belonging, and of prevailing alone. The individual finds himself in the situation of being troubled by the obscurities of alienation from the people near him, he feels isolated.

In fact, the term “existential hero” came to be used to define characters in books and movies who performed and stood alone, and who followed the tenets of behavior set forth by their own perception of the world. Albert Camus’s *The Stranger* is one of the novels that projected the idea of alienation the most. As its title suggests, the protagonist is outside the social order, alienated and isolated even from the closest people to him. Richard Schmitt gives a detailed explanation of the existential concept of alienation in his book *Alienation and Freedom*, he states:

Alienation arises when relations falter, when distrust separates persons who had earlier understood and trusted each other. Conversations become guarded and formal; feelings are concealed instead of being shared. One transfers one's trust to other persons and perhaps even begins to malign those whom one had earlier defended warmly. Alienation, then, often refers to a growing estrangement between individual persons, to cooling affections, and to a loss of trust. (2003, p.3)

Largely, the continuing feeling of alienation from society signifies one's discontent with being what one is not. Alienation will always exist in existential literature. Once man realizes the fact that he is an outcast in his own society, estranged from the norms of his culture, he starts to search for an absolute meaning and existence. The existentialist experiences this disconnection as he distances himself from people he finds uncaring. Despite his determinations, he is incapable of connecting with others in a real and sincere way and thus feel like an outsider. This very existential feeling of isolation invades the lives of individuals as they struggle to discover meaning and significance in their lives.

1.5.2. Freedom and Choice

Freedom and choice are both significant themes that are present and prominent among existential works. First of all, existentialists assert that freedom is a genuinely prevailing and valuable feature of human condition. The elementary feature of human personality is his freedom that is unbound.

Actually, existentialism descends from the principle that human conduct is founded on nothing except free choice. It rejects theories that claim that aspects like social or psychological systems control behavior and exist in order to explicate what people do. Even though these views are recognized, existential writers do not accept them as reasons or justifications for behavior. To them, the human is principally free, in Sartre's own words: "Man is condemned to be free." (1950, p.2).

So, Existentialism lays emphasis on the freedom of the individual. In spite of the individual being controlled by the world and the society, he has freedom to choose his goal and make himself out of his selected resolutions. However, with freedom comes great responsibility. When the individual is free, it means that he has a choice, and vice versa. The two concepts of freedom and choice for the individual lies at the core of Sartre's philosophy in particular. Sartre asserts that people always have a choice and consequently are always free, and based on Sartre's argument that human nature doesn't control human action, humans are considered to have essential freedom. This means that people have the absolute power to choose how they will act in any given situation and in their lives as a whole.

In *The Revolt of the Masses* José Ortega y Gasset reveals: "To live is to feel ourselves fatally obliged to exercise our liberty to decide what we are going to be in the world. Not for a single moment is our activity of decision allowed to rest" (1929, p.28). So according to him, the human being was predestined to be free. That freedom was implemented above all in making choices. In fact, it is exactly because of this radical freedom that people are entirely responsible for the choices they make and for the outcome of their decisions. Since nobody and nothing besides them force them to act in

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

any specific way, people are completely responsible for the consequences of their actions

It should be also mentioned that a crucial part of existentialism purpose is to give people and enlighten them with a way to comprehend and operate with respect for their own freedom.

1.5.3. Authenticity

Authenticity is another noteworthy concept of existential philosophy. Authenticity stand for genuineness and certitude. The concept can also be seen as the degree to which one is true to his own self, regardless of external burdens. It involves an individual defying actuality and coming up against the hard truth that, although he is a free individual, he may never quite acquire accordance with himself. Such conception has been given an existential attitude as a moral redemption which is suggested to authenticate life and give it a sense.

To live a life of authenticity is to live in a way that is truthful to the individual, representing who he truly is in the world. The person's realization of choice, freedom and charge is an essential part of fostering an authentic life. Absence of authenticity is considered bad faith in existential philosophy.

For Sartre, the trouble of emptiness leads the human to generate his own meaning retreating from "bad faith". So, the human has to make up his own comprehensive projects and try to complete them. Sartre believes that the authentic existence is man's task, he clarifies that:

To take a more individual matter, if I want to marry, to have children; even this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or passion or wish, I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of Man my one choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man. (Gordon, 2004, p.116)

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

Correspondingly, existentialism is one of the few philosophies that put emphasis on the human existence and the qualities which are typically human. In order to give significance and meaning to life, existential philosophers introduced the notion of authenticity which depends on one's duty and awareness. Henceforth existentialism holds that an individual can truly change the way he regards life by believing differently and by emphasizing his will rather than just letting himself to be carried along by surroundings.

1.5.4. Bad Faith

Bad faith is a widely used concept in Existentialism and it means self-deception. The term is considered to be the most significant aspect in existentialism as this philosophy is closely related to freedom.

In his article *Exploring Sartre's Existentialist Themes on Bad Faith and Fallenness* (2019) Austin Cline states: "Bad faith is an attempt to avoid the angst which accompanies the realization that our existence has no coherence except for what we ourselves create. Thus, bad faith comes from within us and is itself a choice, a way that a person uses their freedom to avoid dealing with the consequences of that freedom because of the radical responsibility that those consequences entail."(para.3). So, in the absence of a Creator, the person feels neglected and anguish towards the universe. These feelings lead to a tendency to embrace bad faith.

Existentialism asserts freedom of choice for the individual, the latter has a tendency of not accepting and taking responsibility for his actions. He tries to put blame on something or someone else in order to escape the responsibility of his moral choices. In *Existentialism and Humanism* (1987), Sartre puts emphasis on the man's actions, and how actions conclusive of who the person is. Sartre argued that we all act to shape our destiny and as such, we need to accept and deal with the huge responsibility this imposes upon us. So, all in all, bad faith can be seen as inauthenticity, all what it is not genuine and real.

1.5.5. Meaninglessness

Meaning is a typical existential topic. All existential issues lead to and are linked with meaning. An essential assumption of the existential theorists is that they are constantly seeking the meaning of life. Mainly because with meaning, the human existence can be bearable. In opposition, the lack of meaning is one of the most supreme existential fears. In Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, he explains: "Man cannot endure his own littleness unless he can translate it into meaningfulness on the largest possible level" (1973, p.32).

Meaninglessness is as a specific philosophical existential thought that has brought a great insight to human existence and freedom. To existentialists, life is meaningless and has no particular importance. Thus, the individual has to attach the meaning to life through his choices and actions. In other words, through one's actions an individual has to take responsibility of the possible results of those actions in life. He is also ought to give meaning to a meaningless life by using the being's power of fortitude or freedom. This is one of the arguments where famous existentialists like Sartre and Camus disagreed. For Sartre, existence preceding essence meant freedom and responsibility hence why this freedom was worrying. As for Camus, this freedom was liberating and redemptive.

In the words of the existential psychotherapist Irvin D. Yalom: "As to the feeling of meaninglessness, per se, it is an existential despair and a spiritual distress rather than an emotional disease or a mental illness" (1977, p.141). This meaninglessness creates an existential anxiety and illness in the mind of the human. He also states in a different source: "One who possesses a sense of meaning, experiences life as having some purpose or function to be fulfilled, some overriding goal or goals to which to apply oneself" (1980, p.423). Thus, the individual is continuously searching meaning to find a sense of coherence and purpose in his life,

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Becket is a significant example of this concept. The theme of the purposelessness and meaninglessness of human life are heavily implied in the play. The play follows a meaningless cyclic pattern as past, present, and future mean

nothing. Furthermore, the characters do different types of odd things to pass their time which are also totally meaningless.

1.5.6. Anxiety

The feeling of anxiety is a common theme to many existentialists who have highlighted the notion as a state of mind. Anxiety is this feeling of dread and unease the person gets when he starts realizing that life is absurd. The anxiety is said to be triggered by man's demand to make ethical choice. In making choice, he should be responsible for the moral consequence he had made. It does not only influence him, but also the society. The responsibility of moral choice often brings about such moral anxiety within man's life.

For religious existentialists, the feeling of anxiety may prompt the individual toward the life of faith by stirring the need for redemption. Nonetheless, for irreligious existentialists, anxiety ends with despair and misery due to the individual's awareness of his unlimited freedom and responsibility. In other words, our freedom makes us uneasy because there is nothing other than our freedom that can halt us from performing dangerous or disgraceful acts.

Heidegger describes anguish in his book *Basic Writings* (1993) as: "a particular mood that would disclose something essential about man's existence as a whole" (p.90) He also adds: "...anxiety, a malaise at once less identifiable and more oppressive" (p.90). While, according to Soren Kierkegaard, freedom leaves the human being in constant fear and dread about its consequences or the outcome, and failing his responsibilities in his/her life, and more specifically fear of the concrete responsibilities towards the Almighty or God.

1.5.7. Death

Death is a concerning challenge for existentialists as it is considered a central part of the existence. It is said that "Death is the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all." (Macquarrie, 1972, p.307). It is, hence, the knowledge which is present

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

with every person that whatever subsists in this life, is going to eventually wind-up one day.

It is believed that “Living in full acknowledgement of our finitude is the key to being authentic or rather the key to authentic being”. (Gorman, 2005, para.11) So, the notion of death is as absurd as the existence of the human being. Every person exists in the face of his end, knowing that his existence is indeterminate and may disappear, at any time, into nothingness.

In "*Being and Time*" (1962), Heidegger writes about death. He declares: “as soon as human being is born, he is old enough to die right away” (p.289). In other words, Heidegger accentuates the idea that death could happen at any moment in our life and not necessarily in the far future, thus, it should be a concern of thought for us. Hence, the concept of death is so important for existentialists because it determines the meaning of each second of our existence, and before death actually happens, the individual has the choice and option to change his fate and existence.

1.5.8. Guilt

As previously mentioned, existentialism emerged after the unforgettable horrors of the wars, people had lost belief in traditional forms such as humanity and religion. Consequently, actions became an important part of existential thought and they served as standards of judging and assessing a life. In essence, we are free, but that freedom comes with a price, that of taking responsibility for our deeds.

In fact, one of the essential concerns of existential thought is the individual must be responsible for his own actions, and since none of us are innocents, we all carry guilt for something we've done.

Existential guilt has been explored in many works as existentialist writers tend to present characters that are victims of fate. Most memorably, in Sartre's play *Dirty Hands* (1948) where the protagonist is shown admitting guilt for killing a noticeably risky adversary during wartime.

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

Overall, guilt is a sentiment an individual feels that is associated with his knowledge and realization of having contravened a moral code. So, knowing he has violated a value or standard, the individual bears and try to stomach the large responsibility for that violation.

1.6. Essential works of Existentialist Literature

Since the time it came, in the early twentieth century, existentialism was a phenomenon that invaded all corners of Europe. A great number of literary works have been identified as examples of existential literature and numerous writers tended to incorporate diverse existential themes in their works. These pieces of literature are presented in different varieties containing the essential concepts and demonstrating the major representative ideas of existential thoughts in a certain narrative. In this regard, there were several figures whose writings have been connected with the existential literature.

Jean Paul Sartre was undoubtedly one of the twentieth century's most remarkable existential scholars. Oddly, Sartre was the only person to turn down the Nobel Prize in Literature award. He renowned himself as a writer when he published his striking novel *Nausea* (La Nausée) which was introduced to Europe in 1938. *Nausea* stimulated the passions of some literary critics and philosophers when it was first published, while others found it to be too ambiguous and pompous.

In the book, Sartre narrates the story of a scholar who starts being mindful of the enthralling distinctiveness of his own existence. The title of the book demonstrates seamlessly the feelings of the hero when faced with his own essential existence. The main character, Antoine Roquentin, struggles to uncover any sense or meaningfulness of the world he's in, he is alone and lonely, he hates where he lives and doesn't care about his past. In his efforts to give meaning to his life, he starts to make some research regarding the idea of existence to write a novel about it, by which he wants to make sense of the world.

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

In spite of the efforts he makes to give his own precise insinuations onto individuals and things, they end up completely outside of his happenstance and the affair goes in reverse. Ultimately, he realizes that existence is contingent and that there is no necessary reason for anything to exist. He finds only nothingness, an empty void that ironically makes up existence. Through him, Sartre reflects the absurdity of existence. The novel contains Sartre's concepts of existential angst that man feels when searching for the meaning of existence in an indifferent world.

Another significant work of Sartre is *Being and Nothingness* which is one of most profound philosophical work ever seen. Essentially, the book is a study of the consciousness of being. It brought up countless questions and detained a chain of dense arguments. The novel explores the real meaning of individual's existence and investigates into the ways individual beings relate to one another.

It argues that human beings can become aware themselves only when confronted with the gaze others. In other words, we identify ourselves the same way we are being identified, and come to objectify ourselves in the same way we are being objectified. Thus, it's only after we become aware of being watched that we become aware of our own presence/existence. It analyses and interprets how one should live in the world. As a result, Sartre advances the theory that the individual's behavior and role in society changes and expresses itself fully, simply when the individual bears responsibility for his actions by himself.

Although he rejected the label, the French philosopher Albert Camus is for the most part viewed as an existentialist and his works are regarded as an important source of existential literature. *The Stranger* is Camus' probably most known work. The book shows the uselessness of life from the viewpoint of the novel's protagonist, Meursault, in which he acknowledges the absurdity of life and the absence of goal, by stomaching even the most atrocious individuals as companions, and not even getting emotional when his mother dies or showing a hint of remorse when he murders somebody. The protagonist basically appears to lack profound human emotions.

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

Bloom (2000) claims that in Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (1942) “we find the theory of the novel of absurdity” (p.261). Indeed, Camus presented his own philosophic ideas and applied them to the novel. The principal focuses of the novel are alienation, isolation, and the feeling of being unimportant. His novel typically embodies characters trapped in circumstances and schemes beyond their ability to control, and the methods in which they handle them with such outward senselessness.

Successively, few have been well appreciated in the world of literature as Fyodor Dostoyevsky. One must take into consideration the contribution he made to existentialism. His books introduced such a large number of existential characteristics, and at the same time, his works were always uniquely and unquestionably Russian. The characters within his books exceed collective restrictions and connect with the concerns and difficulties of all people existing in modern times.

Fyodor was known for his philosophical and psychological works where he visualized his characters under the cases of sorrows and alienation. His two acclaimed novels *Notes from Underground* (1864) and *Crime Punishment* (1866) tackle specific dilemmas which can exceed cultural boundaries and speak to the shared problems of all humans living in modern times. Additionally, Dostoyevsky presents the value that humans give to freedom over everything, even happiness. This is why Dostoyevsky is considered as an originator of the existentialist movement.

Dostoyevsky's existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility were touched with precise grace in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, published in 1880, a work that brings the ideas of existentialism into life. It is the story of Fyodor Karamazov and his sons Alyosha, Dmitry, and Ivan. It is also a story which introduces a love-hate struggle with deep psychological implications. The existential themes in *The Brothers Karamazov* is explored primarily through Ivan Karamazov.

All through the novel, he is plagued by his perturbing, questioning mind that refuses to let him rest content in an idea, this anguish accompanies him when he realizes the weight of his decisions. He staggers in his uncertainty, and the distress that follows ultimately leads to his mental and physical breakdown. He is the unfortunate result of

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

existential anguish. Thus, Dostoevsky hold to the view that only through certain existential struggles the human agent can attain a full-blooded experience of redemption.

Another noticeable existentialist whose writings have long been connected with existentialism is Franz Kafka. Kafka's best known works include *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*. His works are the personification of existential conceptions such as absurdity, nothingness, and alienation. In his work *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (1956), Walter Kaufmann states: “Kafka stands between Nietzsche and the existentialists: he pictures the world into which Heidegger's man, in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), is 'thrown,' the godless world of Sartre, the 'absurd' world of Camus” (p.122). Although critics have pointed out that by interpreting from the original language, German, to English, a large part of the intelligence of Kafka's writing is lost, the necessary subjects that Kafka wished to convey are still satisfactory.

The Trial was published after Kafka's death in 1924, it concerns Joseph K., a government administrator who awakes in his bed one day and is escorted to jail. Although he is released not long after, he is told to come back to court for his case. Throughout the whole occurrence, no one enlightens Joseph on what crime he is reproached of doing. This absurd situation is an embodiment of the nature of society and that of the individual, displaying how the political classification can isolate people from the crucial truths that they often overlook. Kafka saw the individual as a being caught up in systems beyond his understanding. He presents the scenarios with black humor and approaches the terrors of being with sharpness.

Likewise, Irish playwright Samuel Beckett merges topics and ideas related to existentialism. His works are generally labelled as unusual, strange, and absurd. Characters don't know where they are or what their purpose is. At times, Beckett can be difficult to understand and grasp what he is writing, yet one could assert that his works contain deeper meaning than what a passing reader might think.

Performed in Paris in 1953, *Waiting for Godot* is considered a pillar of modern theater. The play displays a very controversial realm to existentialism. It repeatedly leaves readers flabbergasted in their quest to find meaning in it. Its absurdist plot features

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

two character, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait for the arrival of someone named “Godot” who never arrives, and while waiting they engage in a variety of discussions and encounter three other characters (Itzkoff, 2013). The fact that nothing significant happens during the play supports the existential idea of the play, that of the lack of meaning when life is not vigorously lived.

Even though the dialogue in the play appears to make no sense, Beckett’s way with words makes it pleasant for readers and viewers to experience the play without becoming uninterested. In fact, they become engrossed through an everlasting series of misunderstandings along the story’s characters.

Undeniably, Beckett created a work where readers become highly involved in the novel without knowing that they are involved. From the beginning to the end of the novel, Beckett uses the lack of meaning in the novel to show that the characters believe in finding meaning in the conversations and actions which are typically considered meaningful to humans. However, the lack of meaning also manipulates the existence of meaning in *Waiting for Godot* in that the lack of meaning suggests eagerness for more meaning. (Eng, 2014)

The particular feature about existentialism is the fact that all of the different existentialists had some aspects to share. Each of them had his own particular visions and understandings of the meaning of existence. These theorists possessed the trait of persuasion through their philosophical and literary words. They succeeded in voicing their existential thoughts as frankly as their portrayal of man's condition with regards to existential philosophy.

1.7. Conclusion

The chapter explored the basic features of existentialism as a philosophical and literary movement. In attempt to better understand existentialism, the chapter’s main focus was defining all what existentialism is concerned with, including the different variations of the movement and the assessments of the major existentialists throughout

Chapter One: Existentialism and Literature

history. It can be remarked that the existentialist philosophers and writers have no precise system but are in accord in their pursuit to answer questions related to the issues of existence, meaning, and freedom. The existentialist scholars and philosophers may have been different in their definitions and perceptions of what existentialism truly is, yet, they gave authentic accounts defining the nature of human beings. Furthermore, the chapter examined how existentialism portrays man in a world devoid of necessary attributes, and also how it looks at the human nature and the lives of individuals. Finally, to help make sense of this complex movement, the chapter highlighted the essential and innovative works of existential literature which are seen as an exemplification of the basis of existentialism.

Chapter Two:
Investigation of
Existentialism in *The*
Kite Runner

2.1. Introduction

The scope of this chapter is to decipher the problematic which has instigated the process of this work by analyzing *The Kite Runner* (2003) as an existentialist novel. In this regard, the central issue addressed in this chapter is to put forward the clues where existentialism manifests itself in the novel, as well as the ways Hosseini conjures an existential consciousness of life's unfortunate conditions. Subsequently, this chapter inspects the individual desires of the protagonist which revolve around freedom and the meaning of existence, in addition to the choices that lead to guilt and redemption and overall marking him as an existentialist hero.

2.2. Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner is a novel written by Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini in 2003. The novel deals with the cultural experience and the progress of a migrant individual. It also illustrates a variety of concerns and examines the struggles of the protagonist in finding forgiveness and redemption for the wrongdoings in his youth, after suffering from mental torment for many years. Beside existential evidences, themes like love, friendship, family, betrayal, and salvation exist in this complex.

2.2.1. Biographical Sketch

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-American novelist and physician, born on March 4, 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan. He is the eldest of five children to an upper middle-class family and grew up in the comfortable neighborhood of Wazir Akbar Khan in Kabul. His father, Nasser worked as a diplomat in the Afghan Foreign Ministry while his mother taught Persian and history at an all girls' high school in Kabul.

During his childhood, Khaled Hosseini had a passion for reading, specifically poetry such the Persian one. He was also a great fan of the writer Hafez whose collected poems *Divan-e Hafez* was his favorite book. He also mentions *White Fang* by Jack London as an important inspiration on his young imagination.

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

In 1970, Hosseini and his family moved to Iran where his father worked at the Embassy of Afghanistan. They went back to Kabul in 1973, but left again in 1976 when the Foreign Ministry transferred the Hosseini family to Paris, France. Five years later, on April, the Saur Revolution⁵ took place, and another year later, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan followed. Thus the family was incapable of returning to their home.

In 1980, they sought and were permitted a political refuge in the United States of America where they started a new life in San Jose, California. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and joined Santa Clara University where he obtained his bachelor's degree in biology, in 1988. He proceeded to study medicine at the University of California, San Diego, earning a medical degree in 1993. Four years after, he finalized his residency at Cedars-Sinai medical center in Los Angeles and continued working as a doctor in California.

In 2003, Hosseini released his first novel *The Kite Runner*, which was set in Afghanistan. The book was applauded for its commanding storytelling and also criticized for having too many melodramatic factors. Nevertheless, the novel soon gained wide popularity through readers and went on to unleash one of the biggest literary careers ever. The novel garnered Khaled Hosseini global fame, and was eventually available in more than 36 countries after spending 101 weeks on the *The New York Times* Best Seller list and becoming the number one best seller in America for 2005. A film adaptation of the book was released in December 2007.

There are many similarities between the life of Hassan, the protagonist of *The Kite Runner*, and that of Hosseini. Bloom affirms that “Hosseini has also related certain incidents from his life that inspired him to write his book. More specifically, he remembers a family cook he befriended when he was a young boy. Hosseini found out

⁵ Also called April Revolution, was a coup d'état which brought the leftist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power. (Clark, 2018)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

that the cook could not read or write, as prejudice against the Hazara left most uneducated, with no access to schooling” (2009, p.13).

After the major success he received from *The Kite Runner*, he retired from his prior job to become a full-time writer. In 2007, he published *A Thousand Splendid Suns* whose events were also set in Afghanistan and addressed the same issues as *The Kite Runner*. The book went on to become a *Times* Best Seller for 103 weeks and the next novel, *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) also made it near the top of the *Times* list and stayed on it for 33 weeks. His latest novel *Sea Prayer* (2018) draws on the well-known death of a three-year-old Syrian refugee who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015.

The attention that Hosseini brought to the Afghan refugee crisis, through his novels, set in motion the appointment of Hosseini as an ambassador for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in 2006. In 2008, Hosseini started *The Khaled Hosseini Foundation* which provides benevolent help and support to the people of Afghanistan.

Nowadays, Khaled Hosseini is one of the most recognized and bestselling authors in the world. His books have been distributed in many countries and sold more than 40 million copies globally. Furthermore, he has always brought in the traditions of Afghanistan and conveyed the conflicts and crises of his country through literature. He had also portrayed the war ridden society through his fictional and non-fictional works. He exhibited the ability to convey sadness and the tragic lives of the characters who are caught in the middle of a war. His books are packed with raw emotions making the reader feels like he/she is facing the agonizing lives of the characters. All in all, Hosseini has been praised many times for both the high quality of his writings style as well as for his skillfulness at holding the reader affianced with his stories.

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

2.2.2. Plot Summary

The Kite Runner is an unusual and significant novel that has received critical praise and has been categorized as one of a classic. It is a strikingly crafted novel that was written in 2003 by Khaled Hosseini. The narrative recounts the demolition of the protagonist's native land, Afghanistan, through two main wars in the seventies. It tells the remarkable and tragic story of the ambiguous friendship between a wealthy boy and the child of his father's servant. In addition, it represents a journey from innocence to maturity, and from betrayal to salvation, seen through the experiences of the protagonist.

According to many reviewers and critics, the novel was given positive remarks, like Sarah A. Smith who writes in THE GUARDIAN:

I don't know if there is an Afghan equivalent of the warning against over-egging the pudding, but it is advice that Hosseini would do well to heed. What starts as a fiercely moral but subtly told story becomes an unconvincing melodrama, more concerned with packing in the action than with fictional integrity. (2003, para.7)

Amelia Hill also wrote for the same newspaper: "The Kite Runner is about the price of peace, both personal and political, and what we knowingly destroy in our hope of achieving that, be it friends, democracy or ourselves." (2003, para.7)

The novel is about Amir is a young wealthy Pashtun⁶ boy, and Hassan, a Hazara⁷ and the son of Amir who is the family's servant. In Afghanistan, Hazaras are considered of lesser class to Pashtuns, but that did not hold Amir and Hassan from growing up as friends, even though their backgrounds caused a rift between them later on in the story. Amir's father, Baba, raised him alone, he loves both boys, but appears at times too critical of Amir and favoring Hassan over him. Amir always feared being blamed by his father for the death of his mother during his birth. He has always looked up to his father's

⁶ Pashtuns are Pashto-speaking people residing primarily in the region that lies between the Hindu Kush in northeastern Afghanistan and the northern stretch of the Indus River in Pakistan. They constitute the majority of the population of Afghanistan. (ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA)

⁷ The Hazaras are a people in central Afghanistan who may be the descendants of Ghengis Khan. Persecuted for their religious beliefs and ethnic features. (Study.com)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

father friend, Rahim Khan who seemed to comprehend Amir better and support him in his interests.

Assef, a particularly violent and cruel older boy with sadistic bents reproaches Amir for socializing with Hassan, who, according to him, is of an inferior race and should only stay in the *Hazarajat*⁸. He tries to harass Amir, but Hassan valiantly stands up to him. Assef eventually retreats but states he will be taking revenge.

Hassan is a victorious “kite runner” according to Amir because he seems to know impulsively where the kite will land. One day, Amir successfully wins the local contest and finally receives Baba's approval and praise. Hassan proceeds to retrieve the last cut kite, but unfortunately, runs into Assef and his two faithful followers. In order to teach him a lesson for refusing to hand over Amir's kite, and also to get his revenge, Assef ends up attacking and raping Hassan. All through the atrocious doing, Amir is an eye witness to what happens but is too scared to interfere.

Following that, Hassan and Amir keep a space from each other and Amir becomes indifferent due to his guilt and shame of his behavior. Already envious of Baba's affection for Hassan, he fears that his cowardice in Hassan's rape would destroy any hopes for Baba's regards. So, to push Hassan to go, Amir frames him as a thief by placing some money and a watch under his bed. Although Hassan submissively plead guilty and Baba pardons him; he eventually leaves anyways out of embarrassment, along with his father.

When the Soviets invade Afghanistan, Amir and Baba flee to Pakistan and later to California, USA, where Amir and Baba inhabit a humble apartment and Baba become a gas-station manager, while also selling used-goods on weekends with his son at flea market. Amir ultimately start to study at a local college in order to improve his writing abilities. He then meets Soraya, the daughter of an ex Afghan general, and soon ties the

⁸ Hazārajāt, the homeland of the Hazāras, lies in the central highlands of Afghanistan, among the Kuh-e Bābā Mountains and the western extremities of the Hindu Kush. (Encyclopaedia Iranica)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

knot with her. His father dies shortly after from a disease and Amir embarks on a successful career as a novelist. Amir and Soraya settle down in a happy marriage but for fifteen years, the couple fail at having children.

Then, one day, Amir receives a call from Rahim Khan, a long family friend who is dying from an illness. Rahim Khan asks Amir to come to Pakistan. Amir in due course flies there to meet with him and find out that both Ali and Hassan were killed, each for different reasons. Rahim Khan then discloses to him that Hassan was in reality Amir's half-brother, from Baba, he also tells him of the existence of Sohrab, Hassan's son, who is the main reason why Rahim called him.

The latter ask Amir to go Kabul to rescue Sohrab, from an orphanage. Amir accepts to search for Hassan's orphaned son and departs, with a guide, to Kabul which is now controlled by Taliban⁹. When he finally finds Sohrab, Amir learns that a Taliban official has captured the little boy from the orphanage. The official turns out to be none other than his childhood enemy Assef, the bully who had tormented both Amir and Hassan when they were kids. He also learns that Sohrab is being kept at a house where he is abused and treated as a sexual toy for Assef.

In order to save Sohrab, Amir agrees to Assef's deal of giving him back only if he gets to beat Amir in a physical fight. Amir is fortunately saved during the fight after Sohrab helps him by using his slingshot to wound Assef's eye.

Amir then promises Sohrab that he will never again be sent to an orphanage and that he will be taking him back to America and possibly adopt him. Sadly, the US authorities request accounts indicating Sohrab's orphan status and since he has no documented certificate of birth, Amir tells Sohrab that he forced to break his promise about sending him to the orphanage, explaining that the measure will only be temporary. Devastated from the news, Sohrab attempts suicide.

⁹ Extremist Muslim movement whose armed forces took control of much of Afghanistan from early 1995, and in 1996 took Kabul and set up an Islamic state (Vocabulary.Com)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Amir ultimately succeeds at taking him back to America without putting him in an orphanage. Even though Sohrab is emotionally broken and refuses to speak to Amir and his wife, both Amir and Soraya try to help him repair his spirit. The book ends with Amir showing off some of Hassan's tricks to Sohrab who begins to interact with Amir again and manages to form a smile which Amir takes with all his heart as a step in repairing Sohrab's spirit.

2.2.3. Characterization

Characters are one of the most significant and essential elements in any literary work. Readers understand and relate to the story through the character's struggles to pursue their goals. They also help to understand plots and themes through their narratives. *The Kite Runner* explores the characters' lives, actions, and feelings, and gives an insight into their courage in overcoming bumpy roads. Rachel Blumenthal states:

For Hosseini's characters, a complete turn to either space, whether geographical, ideological, or textual, amounts to a renunciation of personal history and identity. His diasporic subjects exist, ultimately, in multiple homelands and multiple histories, competing and cooperating to create a female Islamic diaspora. (2012, p.263)

Amir, the main character and narrator of the story, is who the novel orbits around. He tells how he grew up in Afghanistan and the wrongdoings he had committed against his friend and half-brother Hassan. He is said to be born in 1963, in Kabul. Amir is known as the only character who has some motives to solve his problem and get what he wants. The novel shows his journey to redemption and his suffering toward conflict and anxiety he experienced about. Besides that, the story details how he goes back to his homeland to compensate for the sin he has made by saving Hassan's son and adopting him.

Amir is depicted as an inferior person and most of that inferiority seems to be due to his belief that he is not manly enough and that Baba hates him. This can be grasped

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

when Baba feels ashamed of his son's passion towards poetry: "Of course, marrying a poet was one thing, but fathering a son who preferred burying his face in poetry books to hunting...well, that wasn't Baba had envisioned it, I suppose." (Hosseini, 2003, p.17)

Amir is also depicted as a coward person as he declares, in the novel, to himself: "In the end, I ran I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. (Hosseini, 2003, p.78). Likewise, he is depicted as a selfish person. This is proven in his decision to let Hassan get raped by Assef: "Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. ... He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (Hosseini, 2003, p.78). Amir is thus selfish because he wants the affection that is given to Hassan by Baba only to himself. Yet again, at times, Amir was more conflicted than selfish.

Nonetheless, Amir is also as caring and optimistic person, the latter appears when he believes in himself to win the kite tournament: "I was going to win, and I was going to run the last kite... Show him once and for all that his son was worthy." (Hosseini, 2003, p.56).

Amir is thought to be a character who develops and changes over the course of the book. He goes from insecure and jealous, to guilt-ridden and malicious, and then from remorseful to loyal and brave. All these variations of personality make a round character out of him.

Hassan is Amir's childhood friend and as Amir learns later on, he is also his half-brother. He is depicted as kind, respectful, and loyal. He was regularly treated badly and faced judgment and discrimination because of his belonging to the Hazara ethnic group. We see that Hassan is honest when Amir declares: "and that's the thing about people who mean everything they say. They think everyone else does too," (Hosseini, 2003, p.51).

Throughout the entire novel, Hassan never loses his temper, not even after he was raped or when he was betrayed by Amir. His sheer bravery and loyalty to Amir is endless, it is also the reason for most of his problems. His faithfulness to Amir and

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Baba's family was strong all through his short life until his unpleasant death where it lead him to get shot.

Baba is the father of both Amir and Hassan. He is said to be born in the year 1933. He is described as being big and strong. In Amir's mind, he is larger than life, as he was known to have fought a black bear. However, in truth, Baba was distressed by his secrets, just like Amir.

Baba was a successful business man and a caring person, he always tried to help others found businesses for themselves. He also built an orphanage. Moreover, it can be noticed, during the book, that he wishes his son, Amir, to be as much of a man as himself, and he is usually disappointed by his son's desire for writing and reading. After departing to America, he gets ill but manages to see his son married. He never returns to Afghanistan and ultimately dies at fifty-three in America.

Assef is the villain and protagonist of the story. He is a sadistic and sociopathic teenager from Amir's neighborhood in Kabul, and like Amir, is a Pashtun. He is the son of an Afghan father and a German mother. He admires Adolf Hitler¹⁰ and is known for never forgetting the slightest thing from anyone and continually scheming revenge. As a teenager, he bullies and torments both Amir and Hassan, and manages to actually attack and rape Hassan. Afterwards, when the Taliban takes control of Afghanistan, he turn into one of them persisting on using his power to torture and kill innocent people. He repetitively rapes Sohrab and plentiful other children of both sexes. He also kills Hassan when the latter refuses to give up Baba's home. He tries to kill Amir but fails thanks to Sohrab.

Ali is Baba's servant and father of Hassan. He was also Baba's loyal friend and a father figure to Amir. He was adopted by Baba's father when his parents were killed by a chauffeur. Similar to Hassan, his thought to be son, he was often humiliated and tormented by Pashtun children in town for his ethnicity and his injured leg. Nevertheless,

¹⁰ A German politician and leader of the Nazi Party

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

he never bent his resolve to them and continued being a good and kind person. He was killed by a land mine after Baba and Amir left to America.

Sohrab is Hassan's son and the child for whom Amir confronts the Taliban to liberate. When the Taliban murders Hassan and his wife, Farzana, Sohrab is cast to an orphanage in Kabul. There, a Talib official, Assef, takes him home and sexually abuses him. Sohrab is a brave child. He undergoes the loss of his parents, the lonesomeness and insecurity of the orphanage, and the constant abuse of a pedophile. He is later on saved by Amir who also brings him to the United States and adopts him. Amir's willingness to help Sohrab face life again saves them both.

2.2.4. Setting

Setting influences characters' personalities, impulses and feelings. Meyer classifies setting into three types. It includes place, time, and social environment that occur in the story (Meyer, 1990). Setting also emphasizes the character behavior and the attitude and lifestyle of the community.

The setting of *The Kite Runner* unrolls in three very different places, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States, from 1975 until the present day. The book begins in Kabul, Afghanistan in the 1960s, then shifts to Fremont, California, then switches back to Kabul in 2001.

When Amir was born in 1963, in Kabul his family was wealthy, which gave him a pretty rosy view of his homeland. To him, Kabul is an enchanted place. Amir's Kabul that we see in 1975 is also still a lively and joyful one. The Kabul we see here appears to have a positive culture. The streets are active, cars, horses, shops, and people are everywhere. There is a sense of luxury and safety, especially where Amir lives. Additionally, winter of the same year is the time that reveals Amir's betrayal towards, Hassan, who is raped: "Every winter, district in Kabul held a kite-fighting tournament." (Hosseini, 2003, p.62)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

In the late seventies, major events cast a dark over Afghanistan and living in Kabul becomes an insecure political and economic situation. In March 1981, Amir and Baba leave Afghanistan: “March 1981...My innards had been roiling since we’d left Kabul just after two in the morning.”(Hosseini, 2003, p.96). They eventually settle in Fremont, California in the United States where they face some difficulties adapting to the culture.

Amir returns to his native home after more than 20 years. However, the Afghanistan Amir returns to is under the repression of the Taliban. The country is torn apart by several years of war and civil conflict. The buildings are collapsing and the streets are all deserted aside from the orphans and stray dogs.

“We arrived home about seven month ago, on a warm day in August 2001.” (Hosseini, 2003, p.312). Finally, August 2001 is the time when Amir returns to San Francisco after a great effort of bringing Sohrab with him.

2.2.4.1. Impact of setting in *The Kite Runner*

In *The Kite Runner*, setting of the story has a task of affecting how the main characters interact with one another at different points in their lives. As the novel opens in the Afghan city of Kabul, it is noticeable that the friendship between Amir, a Pashtun, and Hassan, A Hazara, is essentially criticized by the people of Kabul. This discontentment is voiced particularly by Assef who torments Hassan. So, the novel being set in Kabul clearly changes how these characters treat one another.

When the Soviet forces swarm Afghanistan, and Baba and his son escape. The change of setting directly affects the main characters. Afghanistan, as Amir remembers it cease to exist, replaced by the new, demolished one. Amir states in the novel:

Rubble and beggars. Everywhere I looked, that was what I saw. Remembered beggars in the old days too-Baba always carried an extra handful of Afghani bills in his pocket just for them; I’d never seen him denya peddler. Now, though, they squatted at every street corner, dressed in shredded burlap rags, mud-caked hands held out for a coin”. (Hosseini, 2003, p.33).

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Moreover, Amir's Pashtun belonging seems to no longer matter as he becomes an outcast from his own country. Profoundly, this changes Amir's character for the rest of his life.

After Amir moves to the US, he slowly starts to waste the personality bits that attach him to his home country. The change of setting positively allows Amir to start taking writing classes, something he had always wanted to pursue. At the time Amir is asked by Rahim to rescue Sohrab, Taliban has taken over Afghanistan and the country is no longer as the once peaceful Afghanistan that Amir has memory of. Consequently, this change demonstrates how melodramatically Afghan culture changed since Amir left.

The novel manages to portray different settings for different purposes. Connecting each character, or event, with specific settings delivers a strong disposition and mood. Hoseini's way of mixing up characters according to the settings they are in creates at times disorder and chaos in the mind of the reader. Nonetheless, the variation of settings is essential in forming and creating numerous themes throughout the novel.

2.3. Existential themes in Kite Runner

Following themes is a common method for all the existentialist writers and philosophers. Although their ways of handling the matter is dissimilar, their main objective is to depict the individual as someone confronted by an irrational universe. The characters have to devote their time in finding meaning in an originally meaningless life.

Existential literature portrays this struggle by describing the anguish and pain that man suffers as he struggles to do so. In his book *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, Barret William explains: "The themes that obsess both modern art and existential philosophy are the alienation and strangeness of man in his world; the contradictoriness, the feebleness and the contingency of human existence; the central and overwhelming reality of the fact for man who has lost his anchorage in the eternal" (1958, p.64).

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Principally, existentialism in Hosseini's *The kite Runner* is hard to refute as the novel has profound insights of existentialist themes. The impact of the violent events of startling rape by bullies, racial discrimination, war, loss of motherland, and rejection, prompted traumatic experiences for the characters. As a result, thoughts as that of freedom, choice, alienation, guilt, bad faith, anxiety, and responsibility are faced by them. Hosseini paints the existence and survival of the characters in a chaotic and irrational world. The characters strive to escape alienation, find meaning in the irrationality, get hope in despair and acknowledge their responsibility in making choices.

2.3.1. Alienation

In the novel, the sense of alienation is very consistent as it has been experienced and felt by various characters. Amir, for instance, having grown up with the feeling of responsibility for his mother's death, had always suffered from the feeling of alienation in relation to his father. He had always faced multiple difficulties connecting with his father who seemed to favor Hassan over him.

Several times in the novel, he subsists an alienation that causes him to search for alternative routes in order to feel accepted. This feeling is replicated in the declaration Amir makes in the book: "How could he just forgive Hassan? And if Baba could forgive him then why couldn't he forgive me for not being the son he'd always wanted?" (Hosseini, 2003, p.89). Thus, it is natural for him to feel rejected when he does not receive the attention he reckons appropriate.

The story also portrays the societal alienation which was faced by Ali, Hassan, and Sohrab. In Afghan culture, the people belonging to Hazara are treated as inferior. They are seen as the weakest and poorest race in Afghanistan, and so, they are frequently insulted and abused by the Pashtuns. In result, Ali and his family are conscious of their differences and feel isolated and estranged due to that. Moreover, in the novel, both

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Amir and Hassan are cognizant of their different backgrounds, which eventually prevents them from developing a true friendship.

When Amir and his father flee to the United States, they undergo some complications familiarizing with the foreign country. Cultural estrangement, in this case, comes into play as they are constrained to live in an unaccustomed environment. Through time, Amir familiarizes himself with the new place, he says: “America was a place to bury my memories and a place to mourn his” (Hosseini, 2003, p.112). His father, however, still feels alienated since America doesn’t feel like “home” to him.

Overall, the Kite Runner proves to be successful on various bases as it manages to efficiently depict the alienation faced by the various characters, be it Amir, Hassan, or Baba, its impact on them, and its aftermaths which affect the story.

2.3.2. Anxiety

Jean-Paul Sartre considers anxiety, or anguish, to describe the realization that we humans have total freedom of choice in terms of what we can do. In this, there are no real constraints on us except those we choose to impose. (Cline, 2019). In this sense, anxiety is a fundamental matter of Existential thought. It is argued that anxiety is caused by disturbing acts experienced by humans. These acts, tend to haunt individuals throughout their life, compelling them to go through mental conflicts.

Anxiety is experienced by Amir all through the novel. This anxiety is felt he deceives his friend Hassan. This betrayal makes Amir go through an internal struggle, which can be seen from the insomnia he develops. He says in the book: “I watched Hassan get raped,” I said to no one. ... A part of me was hoping someone would wake up and hear, so I wouldn’t have to live with this lie anymore... That was the night I became an insomniac.” (Hosseini, 2003, p.75). So, this anxiety leads him to experience feelings of shame and guilt over his wrongdoings.

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Baba is a character who is always haunted by a moral anxiety due to his own choices and actions in the past. He, as well, is always detained by his own sense of guilt. He feels nauseous for hiding the secret of his illegitimate child, Hassan. He wants to express his love for his son but cannot seem to do so due to the society's restrictions, he is therefore torn in wanting to do what is right and submitting to the social regulations. This can be seen when Rahim tells Amir: "But your father was a man torn between two halves, you and Hassan. He loved you both, but he could not love Hassan the way he longed to, openly, and as a father." (Hosseini, 2003, p.31). The quote is descriptive of the torment Baba feels in wanting to treat his sons equally and doing so, limitedly.

2.3.3. Freedom of Choice and Responsibility

Given freedom, individuals have supreme responsibility for their own acts. The person has to take the responsibility of his or her actions, and the imaginable or possible aftermaths of those actions in life. Since we are sanctioned to choose our own particular pathways, existentialists have reasoned that we should recognize the risk and responsibility of our choices wherever they head.

For instance, Baba's moral responsibility have failed him briefly when he fathered, Hassan. However, he made up for his recklessness by caring for the boy, although unnoticeably and at a distance. Successively, Amir is also responsible for framing Hassan as a thief. Hence, he is fully responsible and accountable for the exile of Hassan and Ali from Baba's home, he is also somewhat responsible for their lives afterward.

When Amir reaches adulthood, he is ultimately able to admit some of the moral responsibilities that he avoided admitting as a child. When Rahim Khan tells him to come, implying that "there is a way to be good again" (Hosseini, 2003, p.192), Amir gathers the courage to undertake the unsafe voyage back into Taliban, to find and save Sohrab. Troubled with guilt and compunction, Amir could only make up for his past choices by altering them, in order to ease his culpability for his iniquities against Hassan and offer a safe refuge for his nephew.

2.3.4. Guilt

One of the most persistent themes of *The Kite Runner*, is how the past perseveres in the lives of the characters. It is a token that our actions do not go unpaid or unpunished.

Amir's betrayal against Hassan torments and haunts him for the rest of his life, creating an inner conflict in him. By beholding the wrongdoing and not preventing it, or not informing anyone about it, he produces feelings of shame and remorse within himself. "I wished he'd give me the punishment I craved, so maybe I'd finally sleep at night" (Hosseini, 2003, p.78). This was said later on, after Amir takes Hassan to a hill and attacks him. In order to get rid of the feeling of guilt he has, he instigates Hassan to attack him back, and to Amir's displeasure, Hassan declines.

Likewise, guilt is shown through the relationship of Baba and Ali by screening the disloyalty of a close friend. One way to reveal the guilt in Baba and Ali's relationship is through the power that guilt has to make one feel the need to redeem oneself. This is presented through Baba who betrays Ali. Moreover, Baba feels guilty for treating Amir as a son when he cannot do the same to his secretive one, Hassan. Thus, Baba attempts to compensate for his sins by building an orphanage and paying for Hassan's cleft lip surgery. These actions are ways in which Baba tries to redeem himself and cover up his guilt.

2.3.5. Bad Faith

Sartre argues in his work *In Emotions: Outline of a Theory* (1939) that: "Will resolve the conflict and eliminate the tension" (1939, p.31), when one is unable to handle issues in the world, he flees into renunciation of the very existence of them by trying to reject them from his consciousness. Sartre accentuates the idea that what we want to be as individuals is an individual choice. At times, we end up having a bad faith towards life, and that is a kind of self-deception that gives the person a brief peace.

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

In this respect, *The Kite Runner* unveils Amir's bad faith and *mauvaise foi*. Amir's act of betrayal toward Hassan was an act of bad faith, mainly because the incident left Amir a choice to act upon and intervene. Amir, however, stays back and doesn't do anything because he is a coward. He is afraid of the consequences, "I was afraid of getting hurt. That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe." (Hosseini, 2003, p.82). He makes up excuses in his mind justifying his actions and the choices he made, knowing very well he had the freedom to act differently. Here, Amir evidently lost an opportunity to be authentic by failing to interfere even though he had the ability to.

Another case of bad faith is when Amir befriends Hassan. Amir belongs to Pashtun group while Hassan belongs to Hazara group. The latter is despised and considered lesser by Pashtuns. Amir is always aware of the insincere friendship, from his part, between him and his loyal friend, Hassan. However, to serve his intent, he continues being friend with him. As Sartre explains in *Being and Nothingness*, "There must be an original intention and a project of bad faith; this project implies a comprehension of bad faith as such and a pre-reflective apprehension (of) consciousness as affecting itself with bad faith" (1943, p.208). This symbolizes bad faith in Amir's part as he is intentionally aware that he is not genuine or authentic, unlike Hassan.

2.4. Amir's individual desires and Existential choices

Existentialism is a practicing concept. As Walter Kauffmann reveals: "Existentialism should be lived to be really sincere. To live as an existentialist means to be ready to pay for this view and not to lay it down in books" (Kauffmann, 2004, p.47). The viewpoint of existentialism upholds the idea that every truth and deed suggests both an atmosphere and a human partiality, therefore "it is senseless to think of complaining since nothing alien has decided what we feel, what we live or what we are" (Palmer, 2010).

Existentialists are concerned with ascertaining the truest and most filling way of life imaginable for beings. The linking strand here is that existentialism stresses on an

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

individual's free will. Thus, it can be said that in *The Kite Runner*, Amir's individual desires incite wrong choices of existence and stir an existential torment in his life.

Human beings have a typically constant inclination to trivialize themselves with desires which are closest to contentment. Nevertheless, desire is always a deficiency that seeks for abundance and turns into denial. Amir's individual desires in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* revolve about the essence of life rather than the existence of being, the series of beliefs that steer to this deduction originates from man's desire. Sartre states: "Fundamentally, man is a desire to be" (Palmer, 2010, p.12). His aspiration is "to achieve a state of being in which the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi* are synthesized" (Kauffmann, 2004, p.47). Desire is thus a dangerous craving within individuals.

In truth, *The Kite Runner* is an exploration of Amir's strive to acquire redemption and forgiveness for his past wrongdoings. The story draws on an ideal portrait of lives agonized by existential choices. Amir's desire to be his father's perfect son induces him in making choices which strengthen his damaging attitude with himself. When Amir is faced with the first choice and major decision of his life, saving Hassan, he says: "I had one last I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan--the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past--and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran. (Hosseini, 2003, p.78). Amir chooses wrong and plumps for bad-faith to accomplish the aim of realizing his needs and desires.

Noticeably, Amir feels guilt and shame because of his deeds. He tries to appease himself with the thought that Hassan is not an important person. "He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (Hosseini, 2003, p.78). He repeatedly tries hard to create a deceitful happiness by reminding himself that he had no other choice. But, this dishonesty comes to be impossible as his self-deception lingers in the range of his transparent consciousness as the realization that he tries to hide from himself.

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

Amir becomes terrified of the immensity of his freedom. When he and his father escape to America, Amir is happy to start a new life and bury his past. He says: “For me America was a place to bury my memories” (Hosseini, 2003, p.112). America permits him blankness, a forgetfulness that would be unmanageable in Afghanistan. What Amir does not grasp is that the past has nothing to do with his present torment. His choices are responsible for the existential despair he is enduring. The past that he desires to conceal cannot be elapsed, nor forgotten. Furthermore, Amir’s wrong choices and bad-faith guide him to a distress that transforms his adult life into an irony of deceptions.

Most of the characters that appear in Hosseini’s story experience anguish and bad faith. The choices made by Amir, Baba, Hassan, and other characters are indicators of their individual identity. Their choices are accountable for most of the prevalent sentiments in their lives. Amir, personally, adheres to his individual desires by making an eternal choice, leading him to the feelings of anguish and guilt. However, positively, wrong choices, if properly acknowledged can lead a human being to his freedom, which is the main goal of existential living. Amir eventually attains his redemption and his freedom only once he identifies and picks the right choice.

2.5. Amir as an Existentialist Hero

Although human beings have an enormous craving for contentment, very few are able to find it. The positive route to happiness is the notion of existence, which is, giving meaning to your existence and creating your own essence, in spite of the path you take. The essential attitude of all existentialist is their mutual yearning to produce meaning to life. This attitude, which is vital to the existential movement, is dominant in Khaled Hosseini’s character, Amir.

Amir’s actions, ideas and thoughts define existentialism in the novel. He is detached from the reality and lives in a bad faith as he has yet to accept the truth and weighting outcome of his actions. In Sartre’s view, an existentialist hero is “nothing else but that

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

which he makes of himself” (1948, p.28). Accordingly, Amir lives up to the standards expected of an existentialist hero. The fact that he lives in a despair is an exemplification of him failing to create meaning, to create significance or moral principles and live in consensus with them.

In essence, it is held that existentialist failures are those who reject creating their own meaning and instead blame others for their choices. When one does not embrace responsibility of his own choices, and accept the circumstances he is in, he ultimately destroys himself and fails at defining his existence. Thus, his purpose in life is lost.

Amir’s life as shown in the novel replicates literary existentialism as he struggles to create an identity for himself. He exercises questionable choices by not prevailing Hassan’s rape which results in a damage to his consciousness. The latter tears him apart and sends him to a stance of existential bad faith. His pursuit in seeking identity and love places him in a constant emotional challenge and confusion.

As stated in the previous chapter, it must be reiterated that every existential person has to come to think of the purpose of his existence. If the individual is honest with himself, he will have faith in his potentials and then have faith in himself to achieve his potentials. Amir manages to face meaninglessness, accepts it, and create meaning and virtue where there is none. The progress in which he goes from an inauthentic to authentic existence leads him to be an existentialist hero.

The change begins when he realizes he is in a bad faith and starts to take responsibility of his actions. Because of his estranged behavior, his guilty feelings, and his bad faith, he is regarded as an existentialist hero. Similarly, what distinguishes him is that, though he has executed appalling choices, he has still engaged in his quest for redemption and revitalization. This denotes the very point that he wants to give meaning to his existence, which is the sole concept of existentialism.

Subsequently, F. H. Heinemann remarks in *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (1958) that the existentialists truly reveal the predicament of man at a time when the moral law has lost its Divine Sanction and when the individual, unable to fall

Chapter Two: Investigation of Existentialism in *The Kite Runner*

back on any accepted standard of values, has to make his own solitary decisions. Consequently, the conception of man making his own decisions, and in turn acknowledging their results, brands him as an existentialist hero. Although Amir deceived himself in the past, once he goes back to his homeland, he makes a clear goal to redeem himself.

As an existential hero, he comprehends the absurd pointlessness of his task and chooses to accept it. In this case, Amir defeats his anguish by embracing his wrongdoings, while also improving his mindset toward life. Since he realizes that he cannot dismiss the feelings of guilt and anxiety he feels, he sets off to admit that his choices were inappropriate and eventually uses his free will to commence his redemption journey.

The fact that Amir has a choice, offered to him in the beginning of the novel is where we can recognize the display of existentialism in the novel. Besides, Amir wind up exhibiting his identity through his choices. It is these choices and their results that complete ratifying an effective role in Amir's sense of identity. This happens to be an essential element of existentialism since it puts significance on the entity for identifying one's own identity. In this circumstance, Amir turn out to be an existentialist hero character that can be perceived in existentialism in marking his own identity.

The value of relating Amir's wrongdoings to existential theory is that it provides a contextual to comprehend and decipher Amir's behaviors. Once one becomes attentive to the overshadowing concepts of guilt, alienation, and bad faith in Amir's deeds, which are applicable and established existential themes, it is valid to label and depict his actions from an existential viewpoint, a viewpoint which covers the philosophical understandings of Sartre, Kierkegaard, Camus, and many others. Accordingly, justifying Amir's behavior within the framework of existential theory fortifies his identification as an existentialist hero who wants to give meaning to his life.

2.6. Conclusion

The chapter's aim was to shed light on and analyze literary existentialism in Hosseini's work. It explored how, in the interchange of the individual self and world, the characters evoke an existential awareness of life's tragic quality. Moreover, the themes were analyzed from the perspective of existentialism, and the existential themes were well documented in the corpus. Through the analysis of such kind of themes we proved our hypotheses in this study, arguing that the ideals of existentialism are displayed through the protagonist and characters of *The Kite Runner*.

General Conclusion

The existential tenets, although different in their classifications, gave a justification to specify the nature of human beings. The matter of treatment of the question and their main purpose is to uncover the very fact that the individual is confronted into the universe by irrational and absurd outlets. In order to get rid of the anguish and anxiety that he undergoes, he has to spend his life finding meaning to his existence.

Amir, as an example, has managed to find meaning to his existence by seeking authenticity and taking control of his actions. After suffering from mental torment and being condemned by his conscience, he has managed to pull through, and realized his true self-redemption, and in turn, bestowed his worth of existence.

As we conducted this research, we fixed, correspondingly, specific objectives that we were going to attain. We set to analyze Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* through the lens of Existentialism. We also included the existential themes within the novel, seeing that the ultimate aim of this paper was to assert their manifestation in the book.

As per the first and second question, we have come to the deduction that existentialism manifest itself in a great amount of times in the novel. The novel is in fact an existential narrative due to the presence and manifestation of the major existential themes which, typically characterize the literature of Existentialism.

Successively, this paper arrived at the deduction that these themes are proof that the protagonist is an existentialist hero. All of his efforts to fulfill his own existence were substantiated by his own choices. Likewise, he strived to escape the feelings of guilt, estrangement, and anxiety, and ultimately, found salvation by confronting and mending his scarred past actions. Hence, the way in which Amir defended his existence, and perceived different aspects of life is undeniably broadly related to the existentialism thought, marking him as an existentialist hero.

General Conclusion

More importantly, the way in which Hosseini puts forward the defense mechanisms and coping strategies of the characters, in an absurd world, is an exemplification of the principles of existentialism.

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Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner* (2003) is a universal portrayal of human life and the numerous mistakes of human choice, giving a picture of characters failing themselves in the labyrinth of life. This dissertation attempts to highlight the equation of responsibility and freedom dealing with their importance in the context of existential idea. Subsequently, the work analyzes Hosseini's novel from an existentialist point of view through exploring the existential tenets that may characterize Amir as an existentialist hero, and the novel as whole as an existential literary work. It also attempts to evaluate the existence of existentialism in the novel by casting light on the major characters and by addressing the concepts related to existentialism.

Le roman de Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003) est une représentation universelle de la vie humaine et des nombreuses erreurs de choix humain, donnant une image de personnages qui échouent dans le labyrinthe de la vie. Cette thèse tente de mettre en évidence l'équation de la responsabilité et de la liberté en ce qui concerne leur importance dans le contexte de l'idée existentielle. Subséquemment, l'ouvrage analyse le roman de Hosseini d'un point de vue existentialiste en explorant les principes existentiels qui pourraient caractériser Amir en tant que héros existentialiste et le roman dans son ensemble en tant qu'œuvre littéraire existentielle. Il tente également d'évaluer l'existence de l'existentialisme dans le roman en mettant en lumière les personnages principaux et en abordant les concepts liés à l'existentialisme.

رواية خالد حسيني، عداء الطائرة الورقية (2003) تمثل عام للحياة الإنسانية والاختفاء العديدة لاختيار البشري، وتعطي صورة للشخصيات التي تفشل في متاهة الحياة. تحاول هذه الرسالة أن تسلط الضوء على معادلة المسؤولية والحرية فيما يتعلق بأهميتها في سياق الفكرة الوجودية. من ثم، يحلل العمل رواية حسيني من وجهة نظر وجودية من خلال المبادئ التي قد تميز أمير كبطل وجودي، والرواية ككل كعمل أدبي وجودي. كما يحاول العمل تقييم وجود الوجودية في الرواية من خلال إلقاء الضوء على الشخصيات الرئيسية ومعالجة المفاهيم المتعلقة بالوجودية.