

Noun Independent, Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness and Self-Redemption

—Interpretation of a Thousand Splendid Sun

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How to cite this paper: Lu, W. J. (2019). Noun Independent, Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness and Self-Redemption—Interpretation of a Thousand Splendid Sun. *Advances in Literary Study*, 7, 15-20. <https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2019.71002>

Received: December 6, 2018

Accepted: January 8, 2019

Published: January 11, 2019

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Abstract

A Thousand Splendid Sun, the novel created by Hossein, presented the complicated experiences of depression, despair, self-redemption of the two heroines in front of the reader. The most moving point of the novel lies in the awakening and rising up and redemption of the two heroines when the world around them totally collapsed. The novel is still very meaningful to those who are seeking happiness and independent.

Keywords

Noun Independent, Resistance and Redemption, Oppression and Awakening, Female Self-Consciousness, A Thousand Splendid Sun

1. Introduction

A Thousand Splendid Sun, the novel was finished by Khaled Hosseini in 2007 who was born in Kabul in 1965 and then moved to America with his family (Hosseini, 2007). This novel caught much attention since publication and many critics thought it as a great work. This novel focused on the women of Afghanistan who got out of the shackles and looked for themselves from the state of enduring oppression and the transition from victims to redeemer. The novel shows that one can change his/her state and get redemption by the awakening and resistance no matter what oppression and trauma of the heart he/she is suffering. The novel has been interpreted from different angles. Some researchers (Yang, 2016) (Netto, 2009) thought the novel revealed mainly the course of trauma and identity and redemption of the women in Afghanistan during the wartime. Some researchers analyzed the novel from the angle of the awakening of the female subject consciousness (Zhang, 2017) (Wang, 2017). They thought the controlling

and the oppression of patriarchy and manhood are the reasons of the plight of survival of the women in Afghanistan. The awakening of the female subject consciousness can play an important role in the women's growth and themselves redemption from trauma. Yang Yan-fang thought that the "sister friendship" played the most important role in the awakening process of female consciousness and seeking for freedom and survival from the multiple oppressions and war (Yang, 2015). Zhang Ling and Cao Hui analyzed the novel from the viewpoint of new historicists (Zhang, 2010) (Cao, 2017). These interpretations emphasize the effects of the specific cultural, social and historical elements on the writing of novel as well as the interpretations. The awakening and development of the women's self-consciousness was analyzed in the context of history.

In the viewpoint of above, the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been interpreted from several perspectives. However, few interpretations are in terms of initiation story. As a novel with great literary significance, *A Thousand Splendid Sun* still exposes the huge room for interpretation because of not only its religious value, but also the values of culture, politics etc. This paper tries to analyze the process of the two heroines in the novel from innocence—oppression and setback—awakening and maturity in the novel.

In this paper, the effects of the society's environments, especially the family environments, on the growth of the two roles will be discussed first. Then the growth of the female subject consciousness will be analyzed. Next the discussion will focus on the redemption and liberation. By the analysis, it is revealed that the fate of a man/women is determined by the combined action of environments and personal factors. The later factors are more important and initiative. The awakening of self-consciousness and hard work is very importance for modern females to gain happy life.

2. Effects of Social Environment on the Growth of the Two Heroines

The growth of anyone in the world must be affected greatly by the environments surrounding him/her, such as the family conditions and relations, education, social system and religion.

Patriarchy and extreme religious doctrine cause the discrimination of Afghan women. Few women in Afghanistan can break out of the control of men in their life, like their fathers and husbands, to receive education and work. That means, they are noun dependent and have to attach them to men. The title of *A Thousand Splendid Sun* expresses the theme of the novel: only a thousand splendid sun can break up the haziness of miserable fate surrounding every women, but still have a thousand splendid sun shine every women to give them persistence and hope.

In the novel, the signs of domination over women from male can be found almost everywhere. The two heroines in this novel with two different backgrounds made the intersection of life and had the same tragic fate though they

suffered from different trajectories, which reflects the universality of this kind of tragedy in modern Afghan women. It reveals that how difficult to shake off the shackles of the surrounding environments.

Mariam, One of the heroines in this novel, lived a life oppressed heavily by men. Even before her birth, she was already thought as a useless people since she was the product of a wealthy men playing with her mother, and the wealthy men refused to take the responsibility. Therefore, she was doomed to live a miserable life. She lived isolated and lonely before her marriage as a bastard. After the unfortunate marriage arranged by her father and step-mothers, her life was totally ruined by discrimination and oppression of her husband. To put an end of this, she killed him at the cost of her own life for the sake of her beloved ones (Wang, 2017).

Laila, the other heroin in the novel, was a neighbor of Rasheed at Kabul. She was born in a small intellectual family and received good education. She had a happy childhood and girlhood. During those days, she met her lifelong lover Talik.

Laila was 19 years younger than Mariam. In other words, they originally belonged to different generations and so had different childhood in terms of family and education background. However, the war and unbalanced gender differences brought them onto the same stage. Laila's miserable life governed by man started from her adolescence.

April Afghanistan's sovereignty eventually changed to successive battles last more than a decade. Laila was just born in those days. She witnessed the death of people around her. The war took away everything of her. She lost her two brothers and parents one after another. She could not get used to the brute reality that Giti, one of her good friends, was not alive any more. At last, she was dispossessed and cheated by Rasheed and had to marry with him.

Rasheed demanded Mariam to obey various rules like the rockets raining down on Kabul. For example, she should not go out alone and she must wear a burqa whenever she met others.

The oppression Laila suffered from Rasheed was brutal also. For example, later in 1994, Laila planed for a long time to escape from the home with Mariam and Aziza to Pakistan. But after all they were grabbed back to Rasheed's home and suffered Rasheed's savage beatings and afflictions.

There is a sentence in the book of Zhouyi: "Any circumstance hitting a limit will begin to change. Change in turn leads to an unimpeded state, and then lead to continuity". It is just the same severe oppressed environment made the two heroines to awakening and growing though they came from different families and had different educations.

3. Effects of Family on the Growth of the Two Heroines

Mariam did housework, including cleaning, washing, cooking etc. after she married to Rasheed. By contrast, she was immature and even could not distinguish

Jalil and his wives' conspiracy when she lived with Jalil. She could not have her baby due to several times of miscarriages. Laila was a young and beautiful girl and able to bear babies. Meantime, she was very independent but knew nothing about chores. Mariam and Laila were the representatives of unlucky females relative to the independent professional females in Kabul.

Home is not only a space for living, but also for developing family affection breeds and people's souls. Mariam's mother, Nana, was kicked out by her father, which gave Mariam an inglorious identity of "harami" since her birth. A "harami" means something people try to avoid, as well as one will live without enjoy, love, kinsfolk, family and so on. Nana was harsh to people and vented her anger by cursing. Mariam just grew up in such an environment. She wanted to stay with her father for more time. When her mother died, her father compelled her to marry with Rasheed. At this time, Mariam was self-abased and weak (Yang, 2015). Mariam's father shared his social and life experiences with her, from which she felt generosity and wonderful life. Enlightened by religious knowledge, Mariam developed a quality of determination and kindness.

Laila had a complete and happy family. Not only she learned valuable knowledge at school, but also she had acquainted with some partners: Hasina, Giti, and Wajma. She developed romantic feelings about Tariq, which made her awakening of independent consciousness earlier.

They had different childhoods, so they had different characters and cognitions. These determined they would make different responses when they ran into the same event. However, they were both kind and oppressed by their husband after marriage, so they could have deep friendship and affection.

4. Awakening of Female Subject Consciousness and Self-Redemption

Where there are oppositions, there are rebellions. Otherwise there is only destroying without resistance. Mariam and Laila are the two heroines of the novel resisting the cruel society with autarchy and patriarchy. They could not bear their husband's autarchy and savage, so they joined up to kill him to gain the relief of heart and liberation of body at last.

Good growth environment and education led Laila to have many new ideas and independent consciousness to seek for love and aspiration for beautiful life. Since she married to Rasheed, she never stopped rebelling and hope and unceasingly seeking road for new life. Laila's resistance rekindled the aspiration for self-library and freedom. The two fellow-suffers became friends and comrade in arms. They together became the maker of hope to break through the cage of themselves destiny facing man's despotism and violence.

Father, an important ethical role in a family, not only is in charge for managing, nurturing and protecting his family members, but also causes adversarial relationship with his children during he uses such power. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, however, Mariam's father was described like this: "Mariam would see

Jalil's upturned face below her, his wide, crooked smile, his widow's peak, his cleft chin a perfect pocket for the tip of her pinkie his teeth, the whitest in a town of rotting molars. She liked his trimmed mustache, and she liked that no matter the weather he always wore a suit on his visits dark brown, his favorite color, with the white triangle of a handkerchief in the breast pocket and cuff links too, and a tie, usually red, which he left loosened" (Hosseini, 2007). There is no adversarial relationship between them. That's why Mariam always wanted to meet her father.

The father of Laila's child was still alive. One day he found her and met with her. Rasheed accidentally knew it and wanted to choke her to death angrily. At that time, Mariam killed Rasheed by a shovel. Why could such a kindness and self-abased women kill her husband? I think the main reasons lie in the awakening of her self-consciousness which led her to rebel and the understanding of the meaning of a child to a mother for the suicide of her mother. For the child of Laila, she must kill Rasheed. Since then, she became an independent woman having her own thoughts, and she became a brave woman from a coward girl (Zhang, 2010).

The harsh social environments and the husband's savage forced them to understand that if they wanted to complete the self-redemption and liberation they must awake and rebel. They rebelled and even to kill their husband to defend their independence even though they were taught to obey the men in their life, like their father and husband.

The awakening of thousands of women in Afghan pursuit of liberation and freedom and equality can bring hope for their future. And it will converge into thousands of suns to illuminate the fate and future of the women in Afghan.

5. Conclusion

This paper discusses the traumatic experience caused by war and other incidents and development of women's self-consciousness in Afghanistan in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* written by Khaled Hosseini. In the meantime, this paper analyzes the transformation process of two Afghanistan women from oppression to awakening, resisting and self-redemption step by step. It reveals that Afghanistan women can liberate themselves and gain self-identity from the oppressed state only when they achieve their awakening and development of female self-consciousness and resist bravely to the bad social environment. The growing experiences of the heroines in this novel are still very meaningful to the modern women. The gaining of self-consciousness and the spirit of hard struggle are the most important factors to remain independent and freedom in life.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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