



Kites and String as Metaphors for Control and Freedom in *The Kite Runner*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to identify kites and strings as metaphors in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) to the effect of characterising how the concepts of control and freedom operate in the characters' lives. The kite signifies hopes, triumphs and freedom, dreams, and the string signifying the cords of relationship, power dynamics, and ethics of responsibility. Through the analysis of the main scenes of the novel such as kite-fighting tournaments and redemption journey of Amir this paper explores how the mentioned metaphors reflect the characters' pursuit for the independence, guilt, and forgiveness. Despite accepting the limitations inherent in employing metaphors, Hosseini used these effectively in the textual moments identified here to destabilise power relations and both burden and elucidate the nature of choice, as well as expose the fragility of freedom. Thus, the study shows that kites and strings serve as multi-significant objects that symbolically express the problematic of the characters' escape and confinement on the way to salvation.

Introduction

History of art always abounded with the symbols and metaphors that meant something more than just the allegorical sense in the context of a particular story. The use of kites and string, which are the focus of this paper, is illustrated in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) to explicate this notion. These metaphors, which are cardinal to the plot, give explanations of interpersonal, socio-political and intrapersonal themes present in the novel such as betrayal by and of the self as depicted by Amir and Hassan.

Kite flying has a huge tradition in Afghan culture, it is sign of happiness, resistance, and togetherness (Sims 2015). On the other hand, kites in *The Kite Runner* are symbolic in both ways. On the first hand, they are associated with freedom and desire, though in Amir's case, it means attempting to win his father's approval. On the hand, the kite string symbolizes control which binds the characters to their responsibilities, cultural norms, and Call lists, and the gloomy memories of tragedies. Such conflict between the principles of liberty and restraint epitomizes the general socio-political history of Afghanistan, a country located in an ongoing oscillation between regimes of liberation and dominance.

But perhaps even more importantly, kites as symbol go far beyond the characters' micro level personal trajectories. The kite-flying competition, also a victorious day for Amir, is a remarkable spectacle where treachery takes its evidence to mark the direction of the story. Such duality of light and dark represents the main struggle of the novel, emphasizing the frailty of connections and effects of the choices made in the past. Such concepts as the kite and the string are revealing the themes which define people as the members of Afghan society, their chance for redemption, their loyalty and their urge to be free in their person despite all the odds which are available to them according to the view of the American cognitive scientists Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

This paper seeks to examine the concept of kites and string as part of the novel's motifs, as well as the role of these symbols in explicating the novel's themes. In this context, this research enhances our understanding of Hosseini's stylistic decisions and the cultural and psychological concerns that various approaches to storytelling raises.

Problem Statement

In literature, use of metaphors is essential in order to convey and describe complex emotions by the use of them. The paper therefore, sought to evaluate the use of metaphors and to determine the significance of the same in Simches book of 'The pillars of the ECOSOC'. The themes of the narrative, explore the use of kites and string throughout the novel written by Khaled Hosseini namely the *Kite Runner*. Critic and scholars widely appreciate this book and analyze it, however few papers discussed these metaphors in terms of emotional and thematic evaluation of the novel. This gap therefore calls for a deeper analysis of how kites represent desire and liberty and how the strings represent restraints, relationship, and social strings. Tackling this problem will enrich our knowledge of how the symbols of *The Kite Runner* (2003) work to analyze personal experience and the socio-political themes that have been integrated into the work.

Research Questions

- 1) How do two metaphors – kites and string in *The Kite Runner* represent two opposing processes: control and freedom for the main characters?
- 2) To what extent are these metaphors relevant to the social, political, and cultural conditions of Afghanistan described in the novel?

Literature Review

In their analysis it is suggested that metaphors are inevitable in the processes of making meaning out of texts and that they provide the tools for mastering various issues through the symbolism of literary texts. Thus, in *The Kite Runner* the author effectively utilizes kites and string as symbols expressing such ideas as control, freedom, and, guilt and redemption. Both are poignant symbols which are at once, psychological/morphological and socio-political, the result of Said's metamorphosis and the war in Afghanistan.

The Role of Metaphors in Literature

Cognitive and literary devices that are used to map a given area of knowledge onto another different area of experience. As with symbols of freedom and control, Hosseini connects readers with triggers that are easier to reflect on; kites and string for some members of the audience. Freeman (2002) emphasizes that understanding of the intimate psychological and cultural essence of the literary work can be expanded when the literal reflection of its themes is interpreted as the metaphorical frame.

Kites as Symbols of Freedom and Aspiration

Kites in *The Kite Runner* (2003) also symbolize freedom, as well as the ambition of the wind, and brief happiness. Both of them symbolise the youth and friendship between Amir and Hassan, and Amir's determination to gain his father's love. Sims further notes that the kite flying competition symbolizes success and failure the novel over in the novel. It is the same with kites for the duration of the book, which demonstrates a duality of happiness and the down side of happiness which include neglect, abandonment, and deceit, a swing of independence and domination.

The String as a Metaphor for Control and Connection

Kites are freedom while the string is the chain that binds a person to his/her circumstances. The string is a symbol of how outside force, such as social cultures, families and history hold power over individuals. According to Sunderland, (2004), metaphors connected to strings are seen to be rooted in interpersonal relationship and power relations. In the novel this string also represents friendship between Amir and Hassan, it is a friendship tainted by sin and personal betrayal but important for Amir's character to learn to be redeemed.

The Socio-Political Context of the Metaphors

As such we now turn our attention to exposing the relationship between the socio-political context of the metaphors. Kites symbolize individuals and strings their relationships defying the limits of personal relationships and reflecting Afghan socio-political conflict. Hosseini provides the readers with the context of political instability; freedom is a temporary truce as a number of external forces try to take over. In the same year, Mirza positing that a perception of symbols touching on such ideologies is that they depict historical reality whereby the reader has an insight to historical and political sequences and contexts via the portrayed chronicles. The kite unmakes Afghanistan's little freedoms, and the strings are what have bound it – conflict, migration, and loss.

Significance of the Metaphors in Character Development

Kites flying and strings are two of the best figures of speaking which connect with the overall personality of Amir profoundly. The kite flying competition is his illusory egg; his desire to fly a kite is his initial sin driving him to the path of repentance. According to Sunderland (2004), objects are vital in achieving the rationale of exceptional characters and growth. Freedom and control can be a cycle in Amir's life because the theme of redemption justifies the need to balance the acts of freedom and control in life.

Kites and string, two attributes used profusely in *The Kite Runner* are certainly definable as deep archetypes that perfectly capture the very essence of the novel. Besides endowing the novel with cultural depth, these symbols can also be used a tool for analyzing the social and political situation in Afghanistan, as well as such human emotions as guilt and hope. Analyzing these metaphors, scholars will be able to better comprehend the nature of other discuss literary devices that Hosseini

employs in his attempts to tell the story that could be comprehensible for culturally and emotionally diverse readers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative research method in understanding the text, with focus on the analysis of metaphors of string and kites in Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner* (2003). Such work makes it possible to look analytically at the chosen devices, which, in turn, can help better understand how metaphors work in the context of a particular narrative, and how they help introduce themes of subjugation and liberation, as well as salvation to the story.

Data Collection

The population for this study is the textual data from *The Kite Runner* (2003) which includes all references to kites and string in the text. Such excerpts will be singled out and categorized with an aim of studying them on the backdrop of character evolvment, plot construction and themes.

Data Analysis

The collected excerpts will be deplored employing critical discourse analysis (CDA) approaches. An important application of CDA is to understand how language and symbolism bear culture, power relations, politics, etc. The analysis will focus on:

Thematic Representation: How the objects of kites and string are responsible in creating liberty and power over things.

Character Dynamics: How these metaphors depict the relationships between the characters especially Amir and Hassan.

Socio-Political Implications: What is more, the interest is in how the metaphors map onto Afghani history and culture.

Research Setting

The work that is the focus of analysis in this paper is the novel by Khaled Hosseini entitled *The Kite Runner* published in 2003. The study is based on the framework of the literary and cultural analysis, analyzing symbolic elements of a narrative.

Sampling Technique

This paper will employ purposive sampling in order to identify specific scenes that entail kite and string imagery either directly or metaphorically. This makes the analysis to be more centered on the research questions that have been asked more often.

Theoretical Framework

Both theoretical frameworks adopted in the study are Symbolic Interactionism, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism originally developed in the works of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), acts on the assumption that people interact with symbols and consider meanings assigned to them in social encounters. In relation to this novel, kites and string represent other emotional, relational

and even societal structures. This framework will inform the study of how these symbols transform in concept and function over the plot and of how free will interfaces with determinism.

Critically Discourse Analysis

Socio-political aspects of the presented metaphors will be analyzed using Fairclough's (2015) framework of CDA. CDA discusses the distributive functions which speak about power and how it is constructed, language ideologies and social realities. From within this framework, the research will analyze how these two metaphors reflect political disorder, society and culture, and how these shape personal experiences in Afghanistan.

Application of the Frameworks

Symbolic Interactionism will assist in explaining the meaning that both kites and string hold both for the character individually and for the relationships between the characters where they will also serve as symbols for liberty and repression.

There is an understanding that CDA will allow for the discourse analysis of how these metaphors are not simply abstract personal experiences but are actually informed by war, social norms, and culturally assigned roles.

This way the study will strive to establish how through the use of kite and string, the newly established frameworks will enable one to gain understand and appreciate American culture and society from the two dimensions of the story as earlier argued by Hosseini in *The Kite Runner* (2003).

To compare the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery models and analyse other related metrics, data is collected and then analysed.

Data Analysis

The analysis of *The Kite Runner* (2003) focuses on the metaphors of kites and string to explore their symbolic representation of control and freedom. The selected textual samples show how these metaphors supplement the principal issues, such as guilt, redemption, and the Afghan background of the novel.

The Kite as a Symbol of Freedom and Aspiration

"For you, a thousand times over!" Hassan's declaration before running the blue kite underscores the emotional and symbolic weight of the kite.

The kite apart from being a toy is a beautiful icon in the context of the novel, the blue kite that Amir wins in the kite fighter is reminiscent of a brief period of success or perhaps liberty or even the goal or dream. I believe it symbolizes Amir's longing for his father's affection and is actually used as a means of gaining it. But this freedom is not completed for long, and together with it comes betrayal. The kite represents freedom and the will of reaching out to the heights, nevertheless, the kite flies in the sky relying on the string, which shows people's limitations and restrains. Such ambivalence is based on the patterns of Amir's inner development — victory in the competition is followed by guilt and moral dirt.

The String as a Symbol of Control and Connection

"The string cuts into my hands, but I keep pulling. This is my key to Baba's heart."

The string which control the kite symbolizes the restrain and pressure the life of Amir puts him through. Kite depicts freedom, and the string represents constraints exerted by society, family, and self-doubt. The tension with the string during the competition represents a conflict of the hero's personality. However, it keeps him in a connection with the kite, and, thus, lets him feel that he controls something, but shows him what that control cost him: betrayal of Hassan and the experienced guilt.

The Kite-Flying Competition as a Metaphor for Power Dynamics

“In the end, the world always wins. That’s just the way of things.”

In general, the competition in the film is the representation of Afghan society and their relationships in political sphere. Submissions can be viewed aligning with the structures of competition where the weak is defeated by the strong and each party goes through sacrifice. The act of cutting another kite's string shows the battle for power and control is both reminiscent of relationships between people and in the great social and political battle. Amir takes the winning trophy at the end of the competition but it is bought with the price of Hassan's sexual assaults.

Redemption Through Kites

“It was only a smile, nothing more. It didn’t make everything all right. It didn’t make anything all right. Only a smile. A tiny thing... But I’ll take it.”

It is in the closing pages of the novel when Macon and Sohrab learn kite running that the act of kite running is healing. Therefore, with Hassan's son, Amir aims at making things right, when he flying the kite with the young boy. The kite becomes the symbol of reconciliation where a victorious kite signifies the overcoming of a crisis. There is no competitive string in this scene which underline the change from power and possession to liberation. This moment reveals the themes of: guilt, redemption and the attempts of a protagonist, Amir, to reconcile with the past and make up for the wrongs he committed.

Kites as a Reflection of Afghanistan's Political Reality

“They’re hunting kites. Hunting kites? Yes. The Taliban banned kite flying.”

The enforcement of the ban on flying kites by the Taliban captures the essence of limited or no freedom and enjoyment in the politics of Afghanistan. The means of play and maintaining ethnic pride are no longer feasible as the kite transforms into a prohibited item; similarly to freedom under tyrant rule. Such a shift can be explained in terms of the vulnerability of liberty, the influence of external control on identity that inheres in individuals and collectives alike.

Discussion

In *The Kite Runner* (2003), kites and string symbolize the ambiguous relationship between power and liberty as well as the relationship of the individual to society in general and to the political regime in particular. Kites are dreams and happiness in lives and strings remind of reality that are tied to these dreams. These metaphors also act as the textual interpretation of the main themes, power, redemption, and resilience that give people an idea of the human state through Hosseini's storytelling.

As the paper has proved, kites and string represent the main themes of the novel regarding control and freedom and the nature of the human beings. All these symbols are multi-layered signifying personal and shared dreams, human bonds and political theme of Afghanistan. This paper explores

the ambivalent patterns of these metaphors and shows how they resonate with the major issues of the novel and the concerns that are central to human existence.

Kites and Freedom

Kites in *The Kite Runner* (2003) represent childhood and free spirit, freedom or personal dreams and aspirations. They fly symbolizing freedom; freedom from the bondage of personal or social or political chains. Flying kites and the desire of Amir to win the competition signifies the same as the story of his father shows mere yearning to escape the file of disappointment. That freedom, however, is short lived – again, a clear indication of how ephemeral human endeavour is.

In a more socio-political level, the kite is symbolic of Afghanistan of lost happiness and freedom. The prohibition of the flying of kites we see is the oppression of Taliban on traditions and the freedom of people is this is a symbolism of the oppressive rule of foreign powers over the country. It is therefore evident that the weight of the kite can be replaced from personal freedom and thus relating the fiction with realities of a nation's suppression.

Strings and Control

The string in this imagery is a symbol of authority and the fiction of the world in which we live in. It shows the antagonism between the temptation to become free and the factors that interfere with it. Of the boy, the string represents his flaws or shortcomings, his sin, his sexual misconduct and the pressure that society puts to him. While it does tie the kite to the string it also delivers messages regarding the price which is to be paid in avid pursuit of a goal and the character also indirectly talks about betrayal that is also a cost to be paid while striving for the goal.

In the context of relationships, the string represents relations of power and dependence. Thus, Hassan, a loyal hero, who for such a mere thing as running kites for Amir, who is a friend, a close friend with whom one would trust their life, reveals an ordinary power relationship. It is, therefore, control, based on socio-economic and ethnic differences that puts the social relations of people into perspective.

Conversion of metaphors and their redemption

The change of the plot regarding kites and strings displayed at the novel's ending can be considered as the illustration of the main character's finding of true redemption. When running the kite for Sohrab, Amir again inverts the dynamic that he had forged with Hassan. The act can therefore be said to symbolize a surrender and a move to a state of obedience and hence from guilt to repentance. The lack of strings that came with the fighting is a sure indicator that what is experienced here is a true unadulterated happiness devoid of the strains of rivalry, power or greed.

This transformation also captures the spirit of human relations and the potentialities of new relations. The kite that they considered a symbol of betrayal transforms into symbol of hope at the end proving the author's main notion of redemption.

Socio-Political Commentary

The ideas of kites and string go a long way past the personal experiences and are commentaries in the socio-political context of Afghanistan. The kite flying competition, social order and hierarchies so characteristic to Afghanistan are shown in the film while the Taliban's action of banning kites portrays the loss of their unique culture and freedom. The above stated metaphors sum up the issues of authority and freedom, which correlate with the historical background of the country and its people tenacity.

Implications of Findings

Kite and string is symbolic in *The Kite Runner* (2003) so often they represent the two sides of life and especially human experience where certain freedoms come only at the price of losing control. The research focuses on literary symbolism as the means to convey complex motifs and highlights K. Hosseini's ability to create a story on two levels – individual and socio-political. The study also shows that with regard to the individual as well as collective experiences, metaphor can bring two discordant worlds closer.

Conclusion

Through symbols of kite and string, story of *The Kite Runner* (2003) holds a deeper meaning as the narrative tools that enable the author to describe the nature of relations, personal conflicts, and socio-political phenomena. With these stands of motifs, the author Khaled Hosseini helps to derive such themes as aspiration, power struggle, guilt, and redemption to human readers in order to understand the characters' transformations. This myth shows kites meaning happiness, liberation and aim; however, in order to fly they need the control represented by a string, duties and realistic world. This feature reflects binary opposition of freedom, which represents the characters' longing for the freedom, but at the same time, they are chained by social and individual responsibilities. The dynamic relationship of such symbols reflects internal conflict of the protagonist named Amir, relations of power in the novel and the Afghan context of the colonial/post-colonial struggle for individual and collective identity.

In addition, the core specimens of these metaphors' transposition in the final part of the story illustrate the possibility of renewal and salving. Representing the change from rival flying and backstabbing to innocence and sacrifice, the act where Amir becomes a kite runner for Sohrab is redemption. This paper therefore posits that through association of the individual suffering of its characters to the socio-political conflicts in Afghanistan, the author has provided a story that is international. Thus, the use of kits and strings is not only a growth to the storyline of the novel but is also so encompassing that everyone who reads this book can extrapolate it to understand their own existence in terms of string and kites.

This study confirms the continuous relevance of literary symbolism as interpretative tools for human experiences and establishes *The Kite Runner* (2003) as a formally rich book with considerable thematic substance. The future work might expand on usage of such metaphors to define differences among cultures in order to establish if such themes are presented cross culturally.

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