

**GEOPATHIC DISORDERS IN TONY KUSHNER'S
HOMEBODY/KABUL AND KHALID HOSSEINI'S
*A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS***

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Abstract:

Tony Kushner's *Homebody / Kabul* and Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are two works of art taking place in Afghanistan during the conflicting years of soviet colonialism, the civil war and the rise of the Taliban. The present paper examines the various geocritical portrayals of Kabul by the two prominent literary figures as experienced by those characters suffering from geopathology. It illustrates how their delineations of Afghanistan as a crisis place reflect the authors' dissimilar inclinations and affiliations; however, some other time it sheds light on their unintentional resemblance. The two authors' sympathetic attitude towards Kabul and its citizens is intensively underscored. Their rejection of all forms of despotism and autocracy destroying the land and its inhabitants can be regarded as a significant evidence in the ideological evaluation of the two works of art. Kushner employs abundant dramatic and aesthetic traditions to reach his overall goal; whereas, Hosseini introduces various narrative techniques to deliver his message thoroughly.

Key words

Geocriticism, geopathology, Afghanistan, Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Tony Kushner, *Homebody / Kabul*.

العلات الجيوباثولوجيه في مسرحية توني كوشنر هومبادي / كابل ورواية خالد حسيني ألف شمس مشرقة

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المستخلص

تعتبر مسرحية توني كوشنر هومبادي / كابل ورواية خالد حسيني ألف شمس مشرقة من الأعمال الأدبية المرموقة التي تدور أحداثها في أفغانستان أثناء الاحتلال السوفيتي، الحرب الأهلية، وظهور حركة طالبان. يناقش البحث براعة التصوير الفني لمدينة كابل من خلال النقد الجغرافي وبالتحديد من خلال التجارب الوجدانية التي تمر بها الشخصيات والتي تعبر عن معاناتهم الجيوباثولوجية التي أبرزها الكاتبان المعروفان في عمليهما. يوضح البحث مدى تباعد الكاتبين في تصوير أفغانستان كمكان متأزم بسبب اختلاف نزعاتهما وانتماءاتهما، وبالرغم من ذلك فإن البحث قد يلقي الضوء على تشابههما غير المقصود في بعض الأمور. يؤكد البحث بشكل ملحوظ على تعاطف الكاتبين مع مدينة كابل وسكانها. ومن أهم العوامل الأيدولوجية المشتركة بين الكاتبين هي رفض كل أشكال الاستبداد والطغيان التي دمرت البلاد والسكان. بينما يوظف كوشنر التقاليد الفنية والأنماط المسرحية المتنوعة للوصول إلى غايته، يستخدم حسيني نماذج روائية مختلفة لتوضيح رسالته.

الكلمات المفتاحية

النقد الجغرافي، الجيوباثولوجيا، أفغانستان، خالد حسيني، ألف شمس مشرقة، توني كوشنر، هومبادي / كابل.

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1- INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented development of geocritical studies from the beginning of twentieth centuries to the present could be attributed to the drastic territorial change caused by WWI and WWII, postmodernist provincial tenets, the evolution of poststructuralism and postcolonialism, and the abolition of boundaries caused by recent technological inventions. Above all, the growing globalization narrowed the distances between several places paving the way for a comprehensive mode of thought. It was commonly believed that the recent era is space-oriented. Una Chaudhuri accentuated the place as a problem frequently tackled in postmodern dramatic discourse, finding it thought-provoking and demanding. The unremitting struggle with the problematic issue of place is described as geopathic disorders. That is, the conflict in which the postmodern writer is involved to explore the suffering caused by the craving to remain in one's land or to depart to an exile. Twentieth-century theatrical productions were characterized by multicultural aspects in which one could find summaries of the heterotopic relationship between men and locations (*Staging Places* 15). Geopathology was a term, therefore, derived from geocriticism in which the writer registered the social settings of his own world and its impact on his/her identity, henceforth the literary critic paid considerable attention to the spatial conventions inherent in a literary text. In addition, there were various associations between the environmental factors and one's social traditions. Consequently, geocriticism could be considered as the realization of geographical and territorial criteria governing the relation between man and earth as represented in a work of art.

2- AIM OF THE PAPER

In an interview with Robert Tally, he gave an explication of his engagement with the concept of geocriticism as "I have been interested in maps and in the way we make maps, including mental maps, as means of navigating the spaces we occupy and move through" (Darici 28). Both Kushner and Hosseini's works exhibited geopathic disorders experienced by some characters as a result of suffering from remaining in one's site or reluctantly moving to another place. Their works portrayed the agonized experiences through which some characters went due to forced dislocation and unintentional displacement. The present paper intends to investigate the several geopathic disorders encountered by the various characters within the two works of art.

3- GEOPATHOLOGY AND MOTHERHOOD

In fact, dislocation was set in contrast with stability and coziness, which one expected in one's nation. In Tony Kushner's *Homebody/ Kabul*, the idea of motherhood was associated with the concept of one's native land. From the onset of the play, Homebody gave an extensive monologue divided into two parts: in the first part, she shed light on her desolate life and the turning point occurring when she met an Afghan hat-seller; the other was very appalling since she elaborated on the issue of deteriorating conditions when she departed to Afghanistan. Homebody was the incarnate of the loss of maternity in the play; moreover, she was the central figure around which all other characters revolved. She first appeared in London, and then she was aimlessly pursued by her husband and daughter in Afghanistan. It seemed that Tony Kushner's fondness of his mother and his agony over her demise were the underlying stimulus for writing such a play. He frequently expressed his yearning for seeing her or even her ghost after her death (Stevenson 764). Sometimes Homebody stood for one's mother tongue and even one's ability to articulate. However, the tone here was sarcastic since by the end of the play, Mahala, the Afghan woman, was located in London, particularly in the salon of a

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noiseless British house. She behaved in lieu of Homebody and outwardly substituted her altogether, but paradoxically she could not speak or conduct like her, nor could Homebody speak in Afghan language as she was disappeared forever. It seemed that all characters were inevitably dispossessed: "no one is 'at home' in the play" (Lavey xi).

On the other hand, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the idea of motherhood was highlighted by three contradictory characters, Nana, Mariam and Laila. While Nana was an illegitimate mother whose behavior showed deep hysterical affection towards her only daughter, Mariam, she frequently appeared troubled and aggressive. Discarded from her land because of adultery, she lived in the margin of the country—neglected and forsaken. The place where she and her daughter lived was called the *Kolba*, yet it was so disagreeable that it could be described as a "prison" or "rat hole" (Hosseini 7). Yet, her relationship with her daughter seemed unstable and ill-at-ease. Because of the intolerable oppression she had been exposed to during her life, she constantly warned her daughter of men and the surrounding society, which would condemn them forever. For her, the land was repulsive and they were outcast. In opposition to Homebody who stood for one's native land with its immeasurable abilities, Nana represented the exile with its unconquerable powerlessness.

4- THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF ONE'S LAND

Mariam, on the other hand, was Nana's unlawful daughter whose life was fraught with frustration and plights, and unfortunately ended in calamity. She was usually described as *harami*—a description which extensively hurt her. Moreover, she was regularly looked down and persecuted by her family and the neighborhood. Although her childhood might epitomize Afghanistan's blooming years, she subsequently deteriorated to feebleness during her older age in which she was agonized by her husband's cruelty and her futile life as an impotent woman—

similar to Afghanistan's sterility after the civil war. She hoped to have grown normally as a legitimate child, cherished wife, tender mother, but all her dreams went in vain. Among all subjugated women in the novel, she seemed the most wronged. Despite being the only amiable daughter of Nana, she was the source of disgrace for her mother and the main cause of her final suicide. Resorting to her father for a thriving life and sustained protection, she was inappropriately let down and sent for a tough husband who despised, humiliated and even tortured her. However, irrespective of all those miserable conditions which she underwent, she had some gleaming moments in her childhood when she enjoyed the beauty of Afghanistan:

Mariam stood by an oval-shaped pool in the center of a big park where pebble paths crisscrossed. With wonder, she ran her fingers over the beautiful marble horses that stood along the edge of the pool and gazed down at the water with opaque eyes. She spied on a cluster of boys who were setting sail to paper ships. Mariam saw flowers everywhere, tulips, lilies, petunias, their petals awash in sunlight. People walked along the paths, sat on benches and sipped tea. (Hosseini 19)

Mariam's serene engagement with the gorgeousness of Afghanistan's landscape and the tranquility of its people immediately before the war was set in contrast with Homebody's conflicting attitude. Homebody's description of Afghanistan emphasized the remoteness of the place and the tremendous changes occurring there within recent years. In opposition to Mariam whose description was tangible and amiable, Homebody's description emanating from her reading an old-fashioned guidebook on Kabul heightened the magical spirit in Kabul and its glamorous citizens who were mystical by nature. She attributed her fascination with such a book to her fanciful inclination triggering her to pursue the lives and beauty of other eccentric places, especially in the East. It was then claimed that the inescapable charm of the place was inevitably spoiled by the numerous assaults from the commencement of history. She read from the guidebook that

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Alexander the Great conquered Kabul many years ago after that there were many other invasions (Kushner 13).

5- POLITICALLY-GEOPATHIC CHARACTERS

Minwalla maintained that Homebody's curiosity could be associated with an intimate longing for uncommon speech and unconventional documents; besides, in Homebody's monologues two histories were interacted: "one confessional, private, intimate (the life of the Homebody and her encounter with an Afghani storekeeper), the other violent, sociopolitical, public (a short history of Afghanistan)" (29-30). To Kushner, the personal and the public were frequently fused and inseparable. By introducing Homebody, it seemed that Kushner was interested in the dialectical characters whose involvement with their places was questionable. Homebody, for example, suffered from homelessness at home, yet when she decided to elope to Afghanistan, she was accused of transgression. Kushner's characters were politically geopathic. Like Brecht, he believed that theater was essentially political and didactic. Kushner declared that American drama was essentially dialectical: "The three greatest American plays, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and *Death of a Salesman*, are absolutely political plays" (Taft-Kaufman 43). Like Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was mainly concerned with the political affairs taking place in Afghanistan during the civil war and the calamities erupted by the rise of the Taliban. Like Kushner, Hosseini devoted the whole novel to the portrayal of the agonies inflicted on the Afghan citizens, especially women, and their land by prolonged colonization and devastating war. Compared with other women in the world who had similar predicaments, Afghan women were more oppressed by the fiercely fluctuating political atmosphere in which they lived and because of the tyrannical patriarchal society to which they belonged. Actually, Hosseini's women were subjugated not only because of their poverty and male dominance, but also they were tormented because of their

insufficiency in meeting the indispensable social requirements. Mariam, for example, was immeasurably aggrieved due to her first abortion which was unwillingly repeated afterwards. Informed with her pregnancy, she was overjoyed by her husband's unpredictable celebration. Even the long hazardous journey to Kabul for consulting the specialized physician seemed, to her, something gratifying: the trip among Kabul mountainy roads was simultaneously adventurous and amusing. The same journey became intolerable after miscarriage. "It was piling in heaps on sidewalks, on roofs, gathering in patches on the bark of straggly trees" (Hosseini 51). These piles of ice Mariam observed during her trip reminded her of Nana's speech about the snows as representing women's anguish and their unceasing mourning. Not only did the topography of the place reflect one's mood and situation but also the ecological elements revealed some human experiences.

6- HOME AND GEOPATHIC DISORDERS

Chaudhuri declared that writers in the second half of the twentieth century were immersed in recording changes concerning the dramatic discourse of their patriotic places, homes or other lodgings. Their unsettled connotations of such domestic habitations could be attributed mainly to the fragmented spirit and rising globalization of the era. It was believed that the representation of home was connected to "homogeneity" in Western middle-class mode of thought; however, it constituted a problem whose clarification lay within it: "the problem of home was understood as a problem of location, with solutions that grouped themselves around certain mechanisms of literal placement" (*Staging Place* 91). For example, the struggle with one's place appeared in the discussion between Laila and Babi concerning the idea of departing Afghanistan. When they stood for a while, looking down the Bamiyan Valley, her father insisted that despite his emotional attachment to the country, he thought of quitting earnestly.

"As much as I love this land, some days I think about leaving it," Babi said.

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"Whereto?"

"Any place where it's easy to forget. Pakistan first, I suppose. For a year, maybe two. Wait for our paperwork to get processed."

"And then?"

"And then, well, it is a big world. Maybe America. Somewhere near the sea. Like California." (Hosseini 83-84)

Irrespective of the inconsistency in Homebody's seemingly disrupted speech in which she abruptly wavered between her personal preoccupations in London and the rough conditions in Afghanistan, the temporal-spatial incoherence of her monologue made it intentionally dialectical and Brechtian. It was apparently true that Homebody's reference to the luxurious atmosphere in which the West proliferated should be viewed against the wretchedness, destruction and extremism in the East, particularly Afghanistan. However, her irregular statements in which she was in constant mobility from Afghanistan during the past invading decades to her home in London suggested her ambition for leaving her boring Western house to a more prosperous audacious place in the East. Moreover, this technique of rapid transition in time and place suggested Brechtian traditions (Stevens 56-57). The incentive moment occurred when Homebody noticed the mutilated hand of the Afghan merchant. She decided to conquer his contradictory thoughts concerning war and the ruin it caused by means of her rhetorical speech and exploring journey. However, unfortunately the time when she traveled there, tourism was forbidden because the Taliban usurped the authority. Accordingly, Act II began with stories about her disfigured body reminding the audience of the maimed hand of the hat seller which in turn signified the distorted nature of Kabul land, especially after the Taliban appropriation. Both places for her were tantalizing: in London her speech was disconnected whereas in Kabul her body was shattered.

7- GEOPATHOLOGY AND COLONIALISM

It was by virtue of Foucault that spatiality had gained its new importance in literary criticism at the expense of time: "Space still tends to be treated as fixed, dead, undialectical; time as richness, life, dialectic, the revealing context for critical social theorization" (Soja 11). Afghanistan passed through numerous historical and political events which transformed its nature and traditions. Hosseini's novel depicted the changes taking place during the three opposing, successive phases within the same place—Afghanistan. These changes were caused by colonization and unsettled political conflicts. Khala Rangmaal, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was a female teacher at Laila's school who was intensely Communist. She was very proud that she was the daughter of a poor farmer. Believing in the socialist doctrine, she rejected to put on cosmetics or to wear Hijab, defending that men and women were equal and should have complete freedom without any imposed restriction. Neither of them should be veiled, nor attempt to beautify themselves by using deceitful make-up. Owing to her progressive ideas and patriotic spirit, she thought that both the Soviet Union and Afghanistan were the most praiseworthy lands in the world. Comparing the Soviet Union with the United States, she found the Soviet Union more prosperous and promising. Furthermore, she thought that the Soviet comrades come to help their neighboring Afghan citizens. For that reason, Afghan citizens should support them by reporting any attempt to overcome them. Khala Rangmaal raised the children at school by absorbing the idea that loving one's land is more important than loving one's relatives: "Because none of them loves you as much as your country does" (Hosseini 62). The affectionate ties with one's land seemed inescapable in determining one's life and behavior.

Unlike the Afghan Khala Rangmaal who approved the Soviet ideology, Homebody reconfigured the Western's imperial image of the other in an ironic way by introducing the hat seller's response to her question on his deformed hand. His answer was confusing but telling: "I was with the Mujahideen, and the Russian did this. I was with the Mujahideen, and the enemy faction of Mujahideen did this.

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I was with the Russians, [...]" (Kushner 23). For the Afghan merchant, both Mujahideen and Russian colonialism were on equal terms, mischievous, causing traumatic injustice to the land and its people. Like *Homebody / Kabul*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* discussed the idea of rootlessness of Afghan citizens but from different perspectives. The idea of rootlessness was realized by *Homebody's* contemplating the hats and the perseverance undertaken in their manufacturing. She thought that the ornamented hats were the output of poor old craftsmen or victimized villagers who patiently overcame the outrageous colonial attack. Similarly, their ornamented artifacts proved their ability to survive despite their unavoidably territorial challenges. However, these hats were dragged to London as an act of dislocation which usually took place in colonial regions by force (Kushner 18). The hats therefore personified the sophisticated as well as the melancholic nature of Afghanistan whose land, despite its peacefulness, suffered from the external exploitation and internal terrorist assaults.

8- VICTIMAGE OF LOCATION

Sten Pultz Moslund postulated that examining space in a work of art could be fulfilled by frequent approaches: location "as mapped by discourses and power; place as a transplatial contact zone; place as a dynamic process or event; place as emotional, imagined, remembered, or experienced by the senses" (30). Chaudhuri emphasized that modern literature introduced the place as a problem and underlined the struggle of the characters within their spaces. The two main principles governing the relationship between the protagonist and his/her setting were "*a victimage of location and a heroism of departure*" ("Preface" xii). Mariam, as a child, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* strove to depart her restricted dwelling, which was called the *Kolba* because of its primitive nature and isolation. She yearned for living in an auspicious town, crowded with people and teemed with activities, instead of the marginal, forsaken countryside. However, when she was married to Rasheed

and moved to Kabul, she was haunted by her inescapable nostalgic feelings. Her anxiety about Rasheed's tough appearance and old age made her despise even the road leading to his house. While she marched with him to reach her new habitat, her suspiciousness of her impending life propelled her to notice the murky water, which filled the channels separating the walkway from the main road, and the infested waste spoiling the street everywhere. Comparing Rasheed's house with the *kolba*, the former looked like a palace with its two stories, detailed architectures and various utensils. However, in the *Kolba* she enjoyed the immature pleasure of the innocent touching everything without restraint or hesitation, a feeling usually associated with comfort and peace of mind. Her affiliation to the *Kolba* seemed more powerful: she "could lie in her cot and tell the time of day by the angle of sunlight pouring through the window"(Hosseini 34).

Both *Homebody / Kabul* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* could be viewed as types of geographical literature. In differentiating between geography and literature, Sharp assumed that although many geographers drew plentiful examples from literary texts, literary language was characterized by its rhetorical figures and lack of stable truth (329). Like Mariam, Laila was mutually connected to the city which ultimately embraced her, Kabul. However, the dread caused by civil war diminished any affectionate association with the place. In 1992, there was fierce combat between Pashtun forces and the Hazaras of the union group. News of the atrocities of Mujahedeen roamed the city and turned it into an outrageous fretfulness. No one liked to remain; therefore, departure was the only solution. When Babi attempted to persuade Mammy of the importance of leaving Kabul, she insisted on staying, believing that it was by virtue of Mujahedeen that they were released from Soviet bondage. She thought that Mujahedeen would liberate Kabul, therefore Mammy was one of the fewest characters who liked to remain in their impeding accommodation, irrespective of the adjacent terrorism. Additionally, she thought that leaving Kabul at that particular time was an act of betrayal. Babi's comment

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suggested his similar patriotic spirit, but with a different nationalistic core: "We aren't the ones doing the betraying, Fariba" (Hosseini 99).

9- HEROISM OF DEPARTURE

Unlike Mariam and Laila, Homebody was obsessed with the idea of departure. Although she used to live in the civilized city of London and well-acquainted with the disastrous atmosphere in Kabul, she decided to move to Kabul for discovering the other and expiating for Western sins. She was totally immersed in her remorsefully adventurous journey to Kabul, when she griped the tortured hand of the seller as an act of compensation. It seemed that *Homebody / Kabul* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* were parts of war literature. Catharine Savage Brosman advanced that the main function of war literature was to alleviate the disappointing experience of war, which was terribly persistent and engrossing. The kind of mitigation introduced in war literature was usually realized by means of catharsis (90). Homebody accompanied by the merchant visited a historical place called Bemaru where there was a grave for Bibi Mahru. The allusion to Bibi Mahru was evocative and had a purifying effect. Mahru was a beautiful historical woman who vanished because of her distress for her fiancé who was a soldier whom she mistakenly thought was murdered in the battle. Yet, she had such a faulty belief because her beloved had only lost one of his hands at war, like the hat merchant. Mahru's grave afterwards became a place glorified by Kabul mothers with sick children. Those injured children multiplied during the last decades of the twentieth century because of political conflicts, which caused them not only diseases, but also misery and want. Homebody's sense of guilt towards the hat seller and his country drove her to a cathartic act of compensation in which she slept with him beneath Chinar tree. The definiteness of the place related the story to the Moghul civilization and its savageness. However, while Homebody was overwhelmed by a sense of guilt and a desire for expiation, the vendor was possessed by a sense of revenge. "We kiss, his breath is very bitter,

he places his hand inside me, it seems to me his whole hand inside me, and it seems to me a whole hand" (Kushner 26).

10- KABUL AS A PLACE OF VIOLENCE

Like Kushner's Kabul, Kabul in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was depicted as a spot of violence and revenging factions. When Mariam stood next to her husband by the window for hearing the military planes rocketing, heading North and East, she was hurt by the deafening screeches. The unquestionable event was an announcement of the victorious attempt of Air Force Colonel Abdul Qader against Daoud's loyalist forces, and the seizure of all Kabul vital domains by his military powers. Afterwards, the Communists initiated the immediate massacres of all those associated with Daoud Khan's administration. The executions were committed very blatantly and violently. However, Mariam was not only terrified by the upsetting political affairs, nor by the thundering voice of military planes which deafened her ears, but also by Rasheed's perverse attitude towards her. He used to rebuke her, offend her, and make fun of her despite her various attempts to satisfy him. She regularly tried to keep the house tidy and clean, prepare for him his favorite dishes, keep calm and pretty in his presence, but in vain. When Rasheed started eating the rice, she was terribly afraid since he spat it, declaring its appalling taste. When she tried to recollect the food splashed on the ground, she heard Rasheed opened the door, and came suddenly back to the living room. He ordered her to get up. He forced her to put a handful of gravels into her mouth, and then chew them. All her pleas to escape such a disgusting experience failed. Rasheed forced her to do so, then told her that this was the outcome of their marriage—disagreeable food, and no children. "Then he was gone, leaving Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the fragments of two broken molars" (Hosseini 59).

Not only did violence characterize Kabul as a fragmented place of war, but also shortage of food and medical supplies. Scene 2 in *Homebody/Kabul* opened at a hotel in Kabul, in which Milton Ceiling, Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni, Doctor Qari Shah, Mullah

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Durranni and Quango Twistleton gathered together in a single room, discussing what happened to Homebody in Kabul. Priscilla Ceiling was seated behind them, but veiled by the bedclothes draped through one corner of the room. Doctor Qari Shah gave a detailed description of the severe injuries and bone fractures inflicted on Homebody since her visit to Kabul. The autopsy revealed that she was ruthlessly tortured but “not dishonored” (Kushner 32). Later Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni exposed that Homebody was captured and humiliated because of her inappropriate dress which contradicted Islamic principles, besides her bringing her discman and the headphones which were regarded as sources of immorality. Above all, the recent American bombardment of people in Khost made the matter worse. Doctor Qari Shah added that when she was transferred to Ibn Sena hospital, like all Afghan hospitals, there were no essential medications for rescuing her. Unfortunately, the corpse of the lady disappeared at Ibn Sena’s hospital on the same day of the father and daughter’s arrival. Likewise, there were still questions hanging in the air about the real reason behind Homebody’s visit to Afghanistan. Some people thought she was an American spy. Terry Teachout thought that *Homebody / Kabul* depicted the constant violence in which the unaffectedly inciting debate about the Eastern terrorists and their erupting dissatisfaction were wrapped in a mixture of “melodrama and arch drawing-room comedy” (83).

The portrayal of the terrible conditions in Afghanistan under the Taliban was similarly depicted by Hosseini. Like Kushner, Hosseini was enormously concerned with the declining affairs of women in Afghanistan. “Afghan women endure to suffer low social, economic, and political status. Women of Afghan are still not allowed to travel without an accompanying male relative and without wearing *burqas*” (Karthic & Immanuel 375). The matter became worse when women were in labor. This occurred to Laila when she was supposed to give birth to Zulmai. At Women Hospital, women declared that they ran short of clean water, medications, oxygen, and electricity. Above all, the medical place was turned into something distasteful because of women’s disturbing quarrels. Mariam supported Laila as

if being her mother and tried to find a caring nurse for her. For Hosseini, Kabul during that particular time was portrayed as an unsympathetic place, devoid of vitality (Hosseini 149). Likewise, in *Homebody/ Kabul*, tracing her mother in Kabul, Priscilla was preoccupied with the sound of her running. She thought that her mother ran in an adjacent place. Unapproachable woman, Homebody did not like to be pursued or caught. However, the idea of chasing the mother and the inability to reach her, beside the implication that Homebody hurt the hand of her daughter drove Priscilla to think that she was transferred into a horrifying place: “All Afghan dusty, getting darker” (Kushner 91).

11- IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEEHOOD

Chaudhuri emphasized that in the second half of the twentieth century the literary trope of exile was associated with two important concepts—immigration and refugeehood. The second half of the twentieth century was characterized by a distorted relation between human being and place. The involvement of a human being in situations of dislocation and displacement was frequently personified in theatrical productions. Therefore, the idea of displacement was considerably reflected in the social disintegration of personal identity. The dissimilarity between old and new dramas consisted in the difference between stable identity and unstable identity resulted from immigration (174). Some characters chose to remain at home despite the surrounding difficulties, some other preferred to quit. For example, in *Homebody/ Kabul*, when Priscilla declared her fascination with the landscape of Kabul, despite the ruin observed there and despite the numerous pillars referring to slaughtered British soldiers, Khwaja told her that he was a poet and a socialist who fought with the Communists irrespective of his disagreement with some of their principles, especially those related to God and religion. He chose to remain, not to escape, in spite of his detention and long suffering (Kushner 57). On the other hand, In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Tariq maintained that he and his family should have migrated for saving their souls, especially for the sake of his fatiguing parents. Unexpectedly, when Laila asked him about

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his destination, he was indeterminate. That is, the purpose was to depart for any other habitable location. Laila's response was a blend of dread and dismay: she contemplated those who migrated since the beginning of war, and discovered that almost all her acquaintance deserted Afghanistan out of fear. "Hasina's family had fled in May, off to Tehran. Wajma and her clan had gone to Islamabad that same month. Giti's parents and her siblings left in June, shortly after Giti was killed" (101). Disturbed political and social circumstances in Kabul led to forced immigration and inevitable dislocation. Not only did immigrants experience dislocation and rootlessness, but also native people at their country. Rasheed, for instance, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* described Afghanistan as "*akenarab*, a shit hole" (113).

In *Homebody/ Kabul* Mahala, Homebody's alternative, associated the emergence of the Taliban with the CIA's planned armament for demolishing the increasing power of the Soviet Unions as well as Iran in Afghanistan. She mourned for the loss of Afghanistan's land and the citizens' disorientation; moreover, she predicted that those armed militias would one day attack those who planted them. In an anticipated ironical tone, Mahala declared that Khwaja offered to transfer the Taliban to New York as an evidence for admiration. Mahala was an educated Afghan woman who previously worked as a librarian. She informed Priscilla and Khwaja that USA and Britain collaborated in triggering the miserable conditions prevalent in Afghanistan: "Thirty thousand widows live in the city with three hundred thousand children to feed"(84). Likewise, when Rasheed thought of proposing to Laila despite the big difference in their ages, Mariam was vastly frustrated, thinking that she had grown old and insufficient. However, Rasheed interrupted her that the matter was not her business and it was his decision and Laila only. Above all, he reminded her that if she did not accept the matter, she would be thrown to the street where she would encounter starvation, missiles, war, harassment and murdering. When Mariam offered Laila his proposal, Laila immediately intended to refuse, yet she imagined her life in a refugee camp; "Laila pictured herself in a refugee camp, a

stark field with thousands of sheets of plastic strung to makeshift poles flapping in the cold, stinging wind" (115-116). On the other hand, Mahala, in *Homebody / Kabul*, after cursing Kabul, described the refugee camp with frequent women dying or committing suicide:

This one dies, that one starves, that one exploded, shot, rape, rape, die, die, die, die, die, whole family, whole family of she, all Daizangis of she, husband of she, children—*she throws herself off roof!* Taliban not to permit burial and I cannot go to see the body of my friend, my family afraid, no mahram will come and her body, what did he do? Her uncle? There are dogs in the street? Zaila body has been left in the street for dogs? In my dreams, always, she does not come to me; her body is in the street, as it fell. I miss... I miss (*She weeps*). (89).

12- KABIL AS A PLACE OF LOVE

Although Kabul seemed to be an abysmal city of suicide, it was also the location of tender emotion and admirable scenery. In *Homebody / Kabul* Quango declared openly that he loved Afghanistan despite all the calamities taking place there (51). Likewise, when Priscilla contemplated the landscape of Afghanistan, she threw away her *burqa* and screamed out of the beauty of the nature there (55). She frequently confessed that she was moved by the beauty of Kabul scenery (112). In an attempt to cultivate the mentalities of Tarek and Laila partially because of the absence of disciplined education and partially because of some nationalistic reasons, Babi, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, accompanied them in an intellectual trip, irrespective of his lack of finance and wretched conditions. Their journey covered many aspects of Afghanistan's topography and history, from the agrarian cottages, nomadic lives to the current Soviet's smashed weapons. The image of ruined munitions was remarkable of the real nature of Afghan villages where the traces of war were visible, far away from Kabul where there was still a sort of peace and serenity. As they

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climbed the statue of Buddha, Babi informed them of the history of Bamiyan as a significant Buddhist location. On reaching the top, they sighted wonderful scenery of the Bamiyan Valley. "The Bamiyan Valley below was carpeted by lush farming fields. Babi said they were green winter wheat and alfalfa, potatoes too" (82). Likewise, in Homebody's trip to Kabul, she witnessed charming sites. Her admiration of such scenes inspired her to shout out of fascination. Some critics thought that the portrayal of East as a place of love, unusual characters, obsessing recollections, fascinating locales and thriving skills was inherently Orientalist (Neumann 121).

Minawella, on the other hand, maintained that *Homebody/ Kabul* introduced the vendor as an incarnation of Afghanistan; his sliced hand as a figurative reference to all forms of colonial insufficiency and distortion. His description of the disfiguration of Kabul and the profound difficulties in living there, despite his nationalistic inclinations, reflected his post-colonial refusal of the West because of its devastation of his home country besides its ruinous consequences. According to the agonized merchant, all those political and social circumstances accompanying the existing despotic regime led citizens to involuntary relocation. "The reason such immigration occurs has everything to do with coercive economic and political policies, from within and without, that recolonize the already devastated infrastructures of poor nations" (36-37). When Laila knew that Tarek intended to migrate the next day like all her acquaintances and relations, she was deeply disheartened. She wept in front of him, but when he tried to rub her face with his hand, she rejected his hand fiercely. She hit him and he tried to appease her until they had an abrupt sexual intercourse. They wanted to farewell each other; however, they were astonished by their courage and delight. In this catastrophic city in the midst of the atrocities of war, Tarek made love with Laila and offered her marriage and departure to another peaceful place. Despite her deep affection towards him, she refused because of her realization that she was the only hope remaining for her parents, especially her tormented father. Absorbed in her indispensable regret resulting

from what she did with him, she sharply finished her meeting with Tarek by closing the door harshly. However, he promised her to return to Kabul again for her. Standing next to the door, “she listened to his uneven footsteps until they faded, until all was quiet, save for the gunfire cracking in the hills and her own heart thudding in her belly, her eyes, her bones” (Hosseini 103).

Kushner’s *Homebody / Kabul* and Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* could be recognized as types of political literature predominant in recent decades. Kushner associated the type of literature preferred by some citizens with the type of education they received. Actually, Kushner initiated his speech by underlining that the system of education in the United States allowed the immigrants to ascend in social rank essentially by means of capitalism and racialization. Both factors were morally convicted. Furthermore, this system categorized the field of studying humanities as valueless, therefore it was, for Kushner, insignificant and misrepresentative (Taft- Kaufman 42). Despite the democratic and industrialized atmosphere of the United States, almost all Kushner works attacked the dominant regime because of its inadequacy and partiality, especially against marginalized sects. Some critics drew a comparison between Shaw and Kushner in their condemning the prevalent political setting and their hostile attitude. Kushner introduced the problem of gay in *Angels in America* as he believed that it was at best political. Some of their common themes were capitalism in opposition to socialism, the dialectics of war, the ecological distress, social and economic injustice, rootlessness, race, religion and ethnicity, etc. “The seven major human characters in *Angels in America*—five gay men and two heterosexual women—represent various sexual-political attitudes and collectively present a portrait of late twentieth-century America” (Foster 175-76).

13- ICONOCLASM AND GEOPATHOLOGY

Hosseini, on the other hand, was a similar iconoclast like Kushner; however, Hosseini did not pay much attention to the United States’ internal or external policies. He determined to attack the pervasive

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fading traditions and the internal conflict accelerating in Afghanistan. While Kushner was mainly concerned with homosexual individuals and the rights of the marginalized in the United States, Hosseini was more concerned with brutalities and destruction in Afghanistan. Rasheed, for example, symbolized the Taliban regime and its deformation for his harshness and vulgarity. When he knew that Laila met Tarek secretly without wearing the *burqa*, he started beating her until she was bleeding from all her pores. Moreover, he tried to suffocate her until Mariam came to rescue her by hitting him to death. In other words, Hosseini was interested in depicting the patriarchal discrimination in Afghanistan, especially against women. "Women always exist as the others under the clutches of this evil system and belief them worthless" (Yeasmin 385). While Hosseini was mainly interested in oppressive characters, Kushner was more preoccupied with the misjudgments of the American administration in Eastern causes which led to 9 /11 terrorist attack. "At the time of its inaugural performance, *Homebody / Kabul* contrasted with the patriotic sentiments that dominated the mainstream American media and the arts in the immediate wake of the terrorist attacks" (Stevens 68).

When asked about his fascination with Afghanistan despite his American citizenship, Kushner began his answer by clarifying that he principally believed in Marxism and social justice. However, he did not entirely reject Capitalism since it energized the world, inciting tremendous economic and political changes recently occurred. He added that Marxism, despite its idealistic vision, prompted autocratic regimes like Fascism and Stalinism. Kushner explained that his interest in Afghanistan began by reading Russian literature of which he was fond. The Russian army occupied Afghanistan in the eighties, and this drove Kushner to hate Reagan whose policies and capitalist administration were behind the war scene in Kabul. He thought that Reagan caused much damage to the world by accelerating weapon industry. One of Kushner's characters, Milton in *Homebody / Kabul*, echoed his voice by ironically shouting that: "Reagan was right about them [Afghan

citizens], they are... the bravest people on earth. Have you noticed their remarkable jade-colored eyes?" (101). Paradoxically, Kushner sympathized with Mujahedeen and finally admired them since they expelled the Russians within a very brief period, irrespective of the immense powerful military forces they encountered. Yet, all these contradictions led to the eruption of the Taliban who spurred the country to severely armed disorder. For Kushner, however, his enthusiasm for reading about Afghanistan, like Homebody, was motivated by his longing for discovering the other. Kabul, for him, was described as the most captivating country in the world due to its central geographical location. This made any enormous incident in human history had a close relation with it. "It's literally at the center of the world. So, I became really obsessed with the history of the place. I'm Jewish. Also, I'm a gay man. So I thought the Taliban were going to be difficult to confront" (Taft-Kaufman 46).

14- TRANSGRESSION AND TRANSGRESSIVITY

The opposing forces in Afghanistan urged citizens to transgression or what Westphal called transgressivity-a recurrent action of transgression. In other words, most characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* usually aimed to move to another pacifying place in the world as an adequate accommodation. For Westphal, although the Roman meaning of transgression entailed crossing boundaries, in French transgression meant the violation of morality, "rather than a physical limit" (Geocriticism 42). Mariam, after committing the crime of murdering her husband, tried to convince Laila that she had to move with Tarek and the children immediately to another shelter. Yet, Laila insisted that she could never dispense with her. The violence of Rasheed provoked Mariam, despite her fragility, to violate the law by indulging into the guilt of killing him. Moreover, she urged Laila to cross the boundaries of her city, describing the city as exhausting and the country as desperate. Both suffered from the act of transgression, which radically disturbed their lives. Mariam stayed her remaining days in Women's Prison, obsessed with the memories of her father and the beauty of Afghanistan during her childhood until the death sentence was

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undertaken. Laila, on the other hand, departed with Tarek to Muree, where she sought for happiness and stability. Despite Mariam refusal of joining Laila and Tarek in their journey to Pakistan, she was absorbed in daydreaming of a tranquil accommodation. She imagined the cottage in which they would live their untroubled life among trees and plants, distanced from the violating setting. The symbol of lake which previously referred to death in which Rasheed's son drowned and caused his mother sorrow and death became later the symbol of life and rejuvenation.

Maybe there would be a path to take, a path that led to a grass field where the children could play, or maybe a graveled road that would take them to a clear blue lake where trout swam and reeds poked through the surface. They would raise sheep and chickens, and they would make bread together and teach the children to read. They would make new lives for themselves –peaceful, solitary lives- and there the weight of all that they'd endured would lift from them, and they would be deserving of all the happiness and simple prosperity they would find (Hosseini 185).

Trangressivity in *Homebody / Kabul* took different forms and resulted in various geopathic expressions. When Homebody crossed the boundaries of England for settling in Kabul, she was hopeless that she could find comfort at home, and then she went astray forever. It was said that she was married to a Muslim Afghan and converted to Islam— another moral transgression. The laws and moral codes of a certain space were typically observed by those living within its zone. However, within this group, some individual resolved to overlook those norms or infringe them as an act of contravention. Therefore, “there can be no transgression without the contravention of a code or rite. Transgression existed only in the presence of two figures: one who contravened and one who attested to the contravention” (Westphal 43). Homebody was the character who decided to break the norms, and many other

characters witnessed and were inflicted by her violation. It was Priscilla who would be the most disturbed character by her infringement. In London Priscilla fell in love with a dishonest boy and got pregnant then exposed to miscarriage because of the sleeping pills she addicted. Milton, her father, also seemed a drug addict. Their behavior harmed Homebody enormously and incited her to depart for a subtle asylum. Priscilla and her father seemed less in harmony with Homebody, which propelled her to commit the act of transgression. Milton confessed that when he began to love his wife, he discovered her desertion and demise. Milton accused Priscilla of causing Homebody insanity, and then came to this terrible city for chasing her (Kushner 92-93). The transgression then was not only committed by Homebody, but also by Priscilla and Milton. However, instead of finding settlement and comfort in their new accommodation, they encountered terror, diseases, loss and death. Quango cries, "I don't mean to be vicious but everyone dies here, fatal place really, sort of house special, death is. Here have a drink of water: typhus, dysentery, malaria, diarrhea, ready-for-it rimshot: Death!" (Kushner 107)

Similar to the moral transgressivity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, there were various forms of depravity in *Homebody / Kabul* committed by citizens who were at odds with their nation. Priscilla's transgression caused her father a nervous breakdown: he was agonized by the corruption of his daughter and the abandonment of his wife. He felt alienated and confused: "I am unmarried! I'm ... alone! What'll I do? What'll I do now when I'm home?" (Kushner 102) Another distinct example of moral transgression was the case of Quango who attempted to harass Priscilla. Priscilla discovered Quango opening her suitcase doing disgusting things with her private pieces of clothes. She snatched her items out of his hands and returned them back to her suitcase, ordering him to exit immediately. In addition, Quango tried to seduce her before leaving. Reminding her that she attempted to commit suicide before, he offered to make love with her instead of killing herself (Kushner 108). In spite of all the aberrations found in Kabul, it was previously known as a place for hospitality,

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especially for vagrant visitors. When Priscilla apologized to Khawja for bringing wretchedness to Kabul, he retorted: “You have to take home with you nothing but the spectacle of our suffering” (Kushner 114-115). Dispossession and dislocation experienced by those characters within their nation and outside created an internal conflict within each one of them: “the conflict between the humanist yearning for a stable container for identity—a home for the self, a room of one’s own—and the desire to deterritorialize the self” (Chaudhuri 59).

15- INTEGRATION AND DISINTEGRATION

It seemed that both Kushner and Hosseini believed in the equality of all people, either belonging to the East or the West, and this entailed the acceptance of the other’s mind and rights. Milton in *Homebody / Kabul* told Mahala that he, as a computer programmer, saw things in duality: the thing and its opposite completed one another, not contradict one another. The unification between Milton and Mahala, Priscilla and Khawja Aziz, Homebody and Mahala’s earlier husband was introduced as an evidence of this possibility. Perplexed by his daughter’s misty disappearance, Milton muttered nonsensical words about the binary system of the computer and the necessity of the dichotomy. What astonished him was that Mahala understood him thoroughly because she worked as a librarian, thus she was acquainted with Dewey Decimal System. In her dialogue with Milton, Mahala told him that Afghanistan was a cross-sectional place, like his network (Kushner 127). In this cross-sectional world, everyone could meet his/her opposite and made a unity— a compromise instead of quarrel. Therefore, the play ended with Mahala replacing Homebody in her Kitchen, declaring that her English would grow better. In her final conversation with Pricilla, they unexpectedly seemed in agreement with each other. Priscilla remembered her mother and how she used to desert her, until she completely withdrew from her life by eloping to Kabul. Priscilla then repented and decided to leave

again. Unlike the apocalyptic end of *Angels in America*, Kushner seemed optimistic and dreaming of a new prosperous life to the conflicting parties in *Homebody / Kabul*. Priscilla stated that her mother would come back again even though she was dead: “One sharp goad from a terrible grief and ... the soul is waking up” (Kushner 139).

Like the final optimistic tone of *Homebody / Kabul*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* ended with a blend of vividness and melancholy. Although Laila found in Muree peace and gratification, as she dwelled in a comfortable place with a loving husband and her two tender boy and girl whom he treated equally in a fatherly way, she was eager to return to Kabul. Her nostalgic feeling did not only stem from her reminiscences, but also from what she heard about the rebuilding of Afghanistan after the repulsion of the Taliban by Northern Alliance. When she opened the topic of returning to Kabul with Tarek, he was suspicious that she might be unhappy with him in Pakistan. However, she asserted that she was undeniably satisfied but she wanted to contribute to the erection of Afghanistan after its destruction, as it was her native country (Hosseini 202). Above all, Laila decided to visit Herat for remembering Mariam who rescued her life and restored her happiness first before going to Kabul. To Laila, Mariam symbolized Afghanistan owing to all her accumulated grief and boundless sacrifice. Arriving in Herat, she interrogated about the place where Mariam inhabited until she found Hamza, the son of Mullah Faizullah—Mariam’s childhood tutor. Laila was absorbed in her fantasies and reminiscences when reaching the *Kolba* where Mariam used to live. Despite the dreadful appearance of the place and its unpleasant erosion, the place was very similar to Mariam’s characters. Laila was, therefore, reminded of Mariam’s solidity and her perseverance.

Laila watches Mariam glue strands of yam onto her doll’s head. In a few years, this little girl will be a woman who will make small demands on life, who will never burden others, who will never let on that she too has had sorrows, disappointments, dreams that have

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been ridiculed. A woman who will be like a rock in a riverbed, enduring without complaint, her grace not sullied but *shaped* by the turbulence that washes over her. Already Laila sees something behind this young girl's eyes, something deep in her core, that neither Rasheed nor the Taliban will be able to break. Something as hard and unyielding as a block of limestone. Something that, in the end, will be her undoing and Laila's salvation. (Hosseini 210)

CONCLUSION

Although Kushner and Hosseini were American authors, who belonged to different ethnicities, their delineations of Kabul and its citizens frequently diverged and converged. Both viewed Kabul as a flourishing place which was obviously ruined by disastrous political and social conditions, such as imperialism and civil war. While Kushner considered Afghan citizens as the Other because of his Jewish affiliation, Hosseini whose roots came of Afghanistan depicted Afghanistan not outwardly, but inwardly. Both authors glorified the location, considering it one of the most significant settings in the world. Both of them portrayed poverty, loss, draught, starvation leading to immigration and dispossession in Kabul—each in his inimitable way. However, the dislocation encountered by most characters in the two literary works was the only workable solution because of the geopathic disorders suffered by most of them. The characters in the play and the novel constantly went through numerous struggles as a result of remaining in one's place or evacuating from it. Unlike Hosseini's characters who were almost homogenous, indigenous Afghans, Kushner's selected characters were heterogeneous group, Afghan and English ones. The conflict in Hosseini's novel was based on the opposing cultures within Afghanistan, whereas the conflict in Kushner's drama revolved around the clash between native dwellers and foreigners. Kushner pictured the western vision of Afghan land and people; on the other hand, Hosseini introduced

the patriotic feelings of different sects of the Afghan towards their land and the other sects. Despite the melancholic nature of the play and novel, they both ended optimistically. Unlike *A Thousand Splendid Suns* which terminated in Kabul while Laila and Tarek attempted to rebuild what have been damaged by the Taliban, *Homebody / Kabul* ended with Mahla, an Afghan woman replacing Homebody, trying to replant the garden—as a sign of searching for a new peaceful, hopeful life. Both authors believed in the danger of terrorism and the need to open discussion between contradictory forces. While both authors seemed pacifist calling for peace and the necessity of diplomatic settlements for the different parties of the crisis, each one of them had his distinctive technique for reporting this message.

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