

**Deictic Shifting through dreams, fantasies and nightmares,  
in Khaled Hosseini's**

***A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007):**

**A Study in Cognitive Stylistics**

Research Paper

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**Abstract**

Peter Stockwell's book *Cognitive Poetics* (2002) is an essential resource for understanding the value of cognitive stylistics and its impact on literary interpretation. As a new way of thinking about literature, this aspect of cognition involves the application of cognitive linguistics to literary texts, utilising a myriad of linguistic devices and frameworks such as the Deictic Shift Theory (2002). This research paper shows how deictic shifting through dreams, fantasies and nightmares in Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) serves to accentuate lead characters' desires, decisions and intricate relationships. The paper adopts cognitive poetics by drawing upon Peter Stockwell's Deictic Shift Theory (2002) to present how pushes and pops influence the reader's interpretation of thematic and aesthetic elements in the novel, such as the metamorphosis of complicated human relationships. The paper concludes that Hosseini has skillfully employed deictic shifting by means of pushes and pops through the dreams, nightmares and day-dreams of the three main female characters, to create a text world where these characters' lives fatefully intersect, creating complicated relationships that eventually transform. Pushing into those dreams foreshadowed the fateful turns of events and revealed plenty of significant changes in the novel, that wouldn't have had a more appropriate stage to disclose themselves.

**Key words:**

Deictic shift theory – cognitive poetics – pushes/pops – dreams – nightmares – metamorphosis

التحول الإشاري من خلال الأحلام والكوابيس والرؤى في رواية خالد حسيني  
ألف شمس ساطعة (٢٠٠٧)  
دراسة في الأسلوبيات الإدراكية  
ورقة بحثية

مستخلص

تعد الأسلوبيات الإدراكية، والمعروفة أيضا باللغويات الجمالية الإدراكية نقطة التقاء تجمع ما بين التحليل الأدبي المفصل للنصوص وتطبيق النظريات اللغوية الإدراكية التي من شأنها تفسير عملية تكوين النص اللغوي عند الكاتب، وكذا كيفية استقباله وفهمه، والتأثر به لدى القارئ. وتهدف الورقة البحثية إلى إثبات كيف أن التحول الإشاري من خلال الأحلام والكوابيس والرؤى في رواية الكاتب الأمريكي من أصل أفغاني خالد حسيني ألف شمس ساطعة (2007) يساهم في إبراز وتوضيح العلاقات المتشعبة والمعقدة بين أبطال الرواية، وذلك عن طريق توظيف الإشارات وتطبيق نظرية التحول الإشاري (٢٠٠٢)، كما تحاول سبر أغوار النص الأدبي من خلال توظيف الإطار العملي للنظرية والمتمثل في الدفع إلى العمق ثم الطفو إلى سطح النص لبيان العوامل النفسية الجمالية المتأصلة والمسيطر على أحداث العمل، مثل التحول التام في العلاقات بين البشر أبطال القصة. وقد خلص البحث إلى أن التحول الإشاري عن طريق الدفع إلى عمق أحلام ورؤى الشخصيات الثلاث النسائية المحورية قد أسهم جليا في التمهيد إلى التحول والتغيير الجذري في الأحداث والعلاقات بين تلك الشخصيات عن طريق التنبؤ والكشف المنامي، والذي بدوره ساعد في فهم القارئ وقدرته على تحليل ليس فقط لماذا تقاطعت تلك العلاقات بل أيضا لماذا هكذا تحولت.

#### الكلمات المفتاحية:

نظرية التحول الإشاري – الأسلوبيات الإدراكية – الدفع إلى العمق والطفو إلى سطح النص – الأحلام والكوابيس والرؤى – التحول التام

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## **1. Introduction**

To describe Stockwell's book *Cognitive Poetics* (2002), Freeman (2002) says:

A masterly presentation of the cognitive turn in literary reading and analysis, providing a radical re-evaluation of literary activity. ... an invaluable text and an important contribution to the emerging field of cognitive poetics as a literary science. (para.1)<sup>1</sup>

This developed theoretical framework is an essential resource for understanding the value of cognitive stylistics as well as the deictic shift theory and their impact on literary interpretation. It is a new way of thinking about literature, involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to literary texts, where readers and researchers are encouraged to re-evaluate the categories used to understand texts and interpret them. The key to understanding issues of literary value and meaning lies in being able to have a clear view of text and context, in addition to circumstances and beliefs. Cognitive poetics offers a kind of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper adopts the APA stylesheet, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2020)

systematic rather than impressionistic interpretation of literary texts. It also has a linguistic dimension, which means we can engage in detailed and precise textual analysis of style and literary craft.

The cognitive poetic framework, or the “Deictic Shift Model”, as stated by Duchan et al (1995) dates back to the work of Hamburger (1973), Kuroda (1973) and Banfield (1982). According to the three linguists, the deictic field is constituted on a different basis in fictional narrative than it is in conversation and other language situations. It has interdisciplinary influences on the study of narrative comprehension in linguistics, communicative disorders, psychology, artificial intelligence as well as literary theory (p. 32).

According to that model, the deictic field in narrative is formed at the level of the story world, not in the act of utterance or the moment of communication between author or narrator and reader (Galbraith, 1995, p. 23). Stockwell (2002) has taken that model further into study, developing the Deictic Shift Theory –DST- into the model of analysis that this research intends to utilize. Through the theory, Stockwell models the formation of a text world, deictic centers, reader involvement and active deictic elements into a dynamic cognitive “hermeneutic” process.

## **2. Objectives**

This study adopts the cognitive poetic approach in an attempt to investigate and analyse how deictic shifting through dreams, fantasies and nightmares in Khaled Hosseini’s novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) serves to accentuate lead characters’ desires, decisions and intricate relationships. The paper shows how deictic shifts through pushes and pops do influence the reader’s interpretation of thematic and aesthetic elements in the novel, such as the metamorphosis of complicated human relationships.

The paper achieves this by exploring the pushes and pops of the literary text, in relation to dreams and nightmares, and the effect of their positioning in the text, which serves to foreground intricate relationships between the characters.

### 3. Research Questions

1. How is Deictic Shift Theory employed by the author to create the text world(s)?
2. How do deictic shifts (pops and pushes) function to identify deictic centers and involve the reader in a cognitive understanding of the text and its components?
3. How functional is the entire framework as a tool to trace main thematic and aesthetic components in the text?

### 4. Methodology

This study applies the Deictic Shift Theory to show how it informs a cognitive poetic interpretation of a literary text. The corpus of analysis is Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). The story of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* revolves around the lives of two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila. Though they were born 20 years apart, their lives are intertwined through the stormy events of the book. Together they fight against all odds, after having faced them courageously. Hosseini's book thoroughly depicts the helplessness, hardships, and suppression women face in a patriarchal society. The novel is divided into four parts. Part 1 tells the story of Mariam, a young girl born in Afghanistan in the 1950s. Part 2 describes the early life of Laila, who was born in Kabul in the late 1970's. The lives of the two women intersect in Part 3. Part 4 is from Laila's perspective. Throughout the story, global and regional power struggles bring chaos and destruction to both women's lives, and to the country of Afghanistan.

The analysis tackles deictic shifts through pushes and pops exemplified in the dreams, nightmares and day dreams of three generation women in the book. Dreams are a recurring theme in the novel; Hosseini positions them in a way that reveals the characters' innermost thoughts, feelings, fears about the future, and deep wishes. Dreams and nightmares in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* particularly foreshadow significant future events as well. The deictic shifts created by dreams position readers in a pushed deictic center that enables them to interpret noteworthy themes, such as the intricacies of complicated human relationships.

### 5. Review of Literature

#### Theoretical framework

In his book, *Cognitive Poetics*, Stockwell (2002) explains that when people talk about the experience of reading literature, they describe the feeling of being taken deep into the text world, relating to characters and

ideas in a way that probably does not occur in non-literary reading (p. 41). It is as if readers could project their minds into that other world, find their way around there, and figure out the links lying in between the words of the text on the basis of real-life experience and knowledge. Stockwell (2002) states that this projection enables the reader to understand the close ties between lexis and context. 'I am here now' said by the author is nothing like the same phrase spoken by the writer of those lines, for instance. "'I' would mean you, not me; 'here' would be where you are, not where I am; and 'now' means your present, which is some point in my future." The power of the language to "anchor" meaning to a context in such method is called **deixis**: (meaning 'pointing'), and deictic elements can be traced and analysed in context, in a text. Deixis, without a doubt is a key cognitive component of understanding, and as such, yields solutions to salient perception questions. (p. 41)

Stockwell (2002) confirms that it is impossible to discuss deixis without considering cognition and that one fully worked out approach to cognitive deixis is deictic shift theory (DST). McIntyre (2006) states that the theory was developed by researchers working in various disciplines, including artificial intelligence, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, communicative disorder, education, English and Geography (92). The theory was developed by Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt (1995). The parameters of the theory were set out by Segal (1995); pops and pushes in literary texts were discussed by Galbraith (1995); edgework in narrative fiction by Segal (1995), (as cited in Stockwell, 2002, p. 57). Both Segal (1995) and Stockwell (2002) refer to edgework in relation to deictic fields. To them it is more of a process that readers actively engage in (McIntyre, 2006, p. 105). As Segal (1995) puts it, through DST the reader often takes a cognitive stance within the world of a narrative and interprets the text from that perspective and this happens as a result of deictic shifts within the narrative that change the deictic center from which the sentences of the text are interpreted. These shifts or changes will consequently result in changes in the point of view that readers are exposed to (as cited in McIntyre, 2006, p. 92).

Stockwell (2002), in a thorough outline of DST, explains that the theory focuses on the points in a text at which the deictic center has to be moved within the readerly projection. At these points there is edgework -process of identification- to be done by the reader in order to keep track of the

shift in deictic center (Semino and Culpepper, 2002, p. 79). A deictic center is held in place by various anti-shift devices, until a new deictic center is introduced, along each of the deictic field dimensions. The movement into and out of the deictic fields are seen as pushes and pops out from one deictic center to the other. The reader has to keep track of these voices and relations between them, both along the deictic field dimensions and into the different levels and this is the architecture of texture (p. 79-81).

Readers can see things virtually from the perspective of the character or narrator inside the text-world, and construct a rich context by resolving deictic expressions from that viewpoint. The notion of the shifted deictic center is a major concept that accounts for the perception and creation of coherence across a literary text. The key areas of investigation for DST are how the deictic center is created in a text, how it is cognitively identified by the reader, and how it is dynamically shifted as part of the reading process.

The world of a literary text consists of one or more deictic fields, which are composed of a whole range of deictic expressions that can be perceptual, spatial, temporal, relational, textual or compositional in nature. The set of expressions which point to the same deictic center can be said to compose a deictic field. When a deictic shift occurs, it can be either up or down the virtual planes of deictic fields; for example, the deictic field centered on a narrator might shift down to a point earlier in the narrator's life (temporal shifting), or to a different spatial location, or perhaps to the deictic center of another character in the novel. When this type of shift occurs, it is called a push (Stockwell, 2002, p. 47).

Moving from being a real reader to perceiving yourself in a textual role as implied reader or narratee, or tracking the perception of a narrator or character, all involve a deictic shift that is a push into a lower deictic field. Entering flashbacks, dreams, plays within plays, stories told by characters, reproduced letters or diary entries inside a novel, or considering unrealized possibilities inside the minds of characters are all examples of pushing into a deictic field (Stockwell, 2002, p. 47).

By contrast, moving up a level is a pop. A reader can pop out of a deictic field by putting a book down and shifting the deictic center back to real life. Within a text, however, a pop up can happen if the narrator appears again at the end to wrap up the narrative, or if the narrator interjects

opinion or external comment at any point within the narrative. Pops involve shifts from the character that is the current focus of attention outwardly and up to the deictic center of the narrator. Equally, popping out from the narrative level to ascribe features of the deictic center to the extrafictional voice is what enables readers to identify and locate irony. The characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* for example, are unaware of their ironic position. However, an ironic motivation is usually ascribed to Jane Austen (p. 47-48).

According to Stockwell, we usually expect pops and pushes to be balanced: flashbacks usually return us eventually to the current time; plays within plays do not take over the entire narrative; However, when some literary texts break this norm noticeably such as Percy Shelley (1818) *Ozymandias*, which begins with a push to a narrating 'I', but the deictic center pushes immediately down to the traveller who recounts a past experience in a distant land (the deictic center shifts perceptually (movement between perceptual viewpoints introduced with personal pronouns), spatially (shifting place) and temporally (a shift in time of past, present or future)).

Though there is a further push, into the words of *Ozymandias*, we pop out of this. However, we never pop back to the narrative level. The poem ends deictically stranded at a distance from our own readerly deictic center, and it is tempting to equate this feature with the ruins of the king, stranded alone in the desert, or the poem as artifice, cut off from its creator and left as isolated remains (Stockwell, 2002, p. 48).

By the same token, shifting through dreams, nightmares and day dreams is an apparent perceptual push into a deeper deictic center of both the text and the characters, utilized to inform a deeper interpretation of a particular dilemma or a particular thematic claim. This is apparent in Khaled Hossieni's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007).

It can fairly be said that narration, through the process outlined by deictic shift theory, redirects the attention of the reader from their reality to the perceived reality created by the work being read, witnessed, absorbed, and realized by the audience. Deixis being the point of reference in narrative and discourse, grounds the narrator and audience in the story-world. They become fixed by the dimension of the narrative universe and they perceive that universe to be their reality. To understand deixis, is to



understand the subjective features of language. These features differentiate the here and now from the then and there. The phenomenon of deixis attracts the narrator and listener around a view, helping them to understand the perspective of the narrator in relation to themselves. It is the very first deictic shift that the readers attempt when they let go of their own normal deictic existence in reality and begin the cognitive activity of being in the text world that marks the beginning to all the following processes. Pushes, pops and moving dynamically from one deictic field to the other will result in the ultimate goal of a particular kind of assimilation and interpretation of a literary work.

## 6. Cognitive Poetic Analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*:

Parts I and II of “A Thousand Splendid Suns” set the scene for the characters’ childhood and early adult life. The novel begins in the 1970s, when Mariam is a teenager living with her mother, Nana. They live in a small hut outside of Herat and are poor. Nana’s husband Jalil, who is also Mariam’s biological father, has abandoned them. Mariam is influenced by two people in her life whom she loves and looks up to dearly: Mullah Faizullah, who taught her to recite the Koran, and Jalil, who comes to visit her every week bringing gifts and treats. Nana tries to convince Mariam that Jalil wants nothing to do with her as she is illegitimate, and as hard as Nana tries to instil hate inside Mariam towards Jalil, Mariam resists.

One day, Nana is found dead after having committed suicide. Mariam is consequently sent to her father’s house and is married off to Rasheed who is thirty years her senior. It is at this instance that Mariam realizes that her mother was right about Jalil, who could not wait to dispose of her through an unjust arranged marriage.

In Kabul, Mariam is amazed by the city’s cosmopolitan atmosphere. Rasheed makes her wear a burqa and mainly stay at home. His true disposition is revealed after she faces several miscarriages, and he shows himself to be a hostile, controlling and extremely abusive man. The story shifts to Laila, who is growing up in Kabul not far from Rasheed and Mariam’s house. She gets an education because of her father. Laila, whose life is very soon destined to get entwined with that of Mariam’s, has more happy memories than Mariam. She also engages in a romance with Tariq—a boy whose leg was amputated when he stepped on a land mine when he was five years old— Laila and Tariq’s affair results in a

pregnancy, and young pregnant Laila is taken in by Mariam and Rasheed when her house is hit by a Soviet rocket and her whole family dies.

The turmoil of fast and turbulent events that happen in the first two parts of the novel paves the way for the characters' changes that we witness in part three. Shifting through dreams and nightmare does not occur until part three as the characters' lives intersect and they set off on a roller coaster of volatile relationships. Hence, the analysis mainly focuses on parts three and four, for their abundant deictic shifts.

### **Example 1 - Part III - Chapter 28:**

Laila wasn't listening anymore. She was remembering the day the man from Panjshir had come to deliver the news of Ahmad's and Noor's deaths. She remembered Babi, white-faced, slumping on the couch, and Mammy, her hand flying to her mouth when she heard. Laila had watched Mammy come undone that day and it had scared her, but she hadn't felt any true sorrow. She hadn't understood the awfulness of her mother's loss. Now another stranger bringing news of another death. Now she was the one sitting on the chair. Was this her penalty, then, her punishment for being aloof to her own mother's suffering?

She sat on the chair instead, hands limp in her lap, eyes staring at nothing, and let her mind fly on. She let it fly on until it found the place, the good and safe place, where the barley fields were green, where the water ran clear and the cottonwood seeds danced by the thousands in the air; where Babi was reading a book beneath an acacia and Tariq was napping with his hands laced across his chest, and where she could dip her feet in the stream and dream good dreams beneath the watchful gaze of gods of ancient, sun-bleached rock (p. 204).

A deictic shift occurs as the deictic center pushes into Laila's deep inner thoughts as she day dreams about her best friend and the love of her life, Tariq. A man named Abdul Sharif came knocking on Mariam and Rasheed's door one day asking to see Laila. He relays a long train of events where he reveals that he had shared the same hospital ward as Tariq. Tariq had been hit by a rocket during a raid in Pishawar and had had both his legs amputated. His condition gets worse one day and he

struggles through the night, only to lose his last breath and die. Laila is staggered by the news and finds refuge into immediately delving deep into her thoughts by means of a day dream, where she finds the happiest memory of her and Tariq in a beautiful landscape, lying on their backs happily and peacefully.

This push-shift brings to the front Laila's desperate attempt to find some sort of safe haven within herself after having lost all her loved ones to the bombings. Tariq and Laila's relationship was so complicated; it metamorphosed from her looking at him as a true brother who always had her back, to falling deeply in love with him and experiencing her first physical pleasure with him. The image in the day dream she had was like a melting pot of all those feelings she felt for Tariq. It was not easy accepting this loss. She knew it would mar her for life. Now, no one is left for her in the world, except her day dreaming and her neighbours Mariam and Rasheed who are taking good care of her.

**Example 2 – Chapter 30:**

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. Beneath one of these makeshift tents, she saw her baby, Tariq's baby, its temples wasted, its jaws slack, its skin mottled, bluish gray. She pictured its tiny body washed by strangers, wrapped in a tawny shroud, lowered into a hole dug in a patch of windswept land under the disappointed gaze of vultures (pp. 212 - 213).

Another push-shift occurs as Laila daydreams again. A few pages earlier we are surprised that Laila agrees to marry Rasheed, Mariam's husband, who is almost 50 years older than her! The deictic push reveals the reason. Laila daydreams and sees herself in a refugee camp, living in a tent, carrying Tariq's baby in the worst of circumstances. The vision reveals Laila's pregnancy, which she obviously would need to hide by marrying Rasheed and naming the baby after him. This deictic push also reveals a great deal about Laila's character. She is not weak or gullible. She can think and plan. Laila realized that she was showing pregnancy symptoms and had made up her mind internally. Her consent to the marriage offer did not require more than a few seconds.

The baby growing inside Laila was no bigger than a mulberry for now, but already Laila was metamorphosing into a mother rather than a bubbly young girl- a mother so adamant to make whatever sacrifices she needs to protect her baby. This child is the only thing she has left that connects her to her former life, before everyone she loved passed away. It binds her to the person she had been before all this happened.

### **Example 3 – Chapter 32:**

But thinking of Tariq was treacherous because, before she could stop, she saw him lying on a bed, far from home, tubes piercing his burned body. Like the bile that kept burning her throat these days, a deep, paralyzing grief would come rising up Laila's chest. Her legs would turn to water. She would have to hold on to something. Laila passed that winter of 1992 sweeping the house, scrubbing the pumpkin-colored walls of the bedroom she shared with Rasheed, washing clothes outside in a big copper lagoon. Sometimes she saw herself as if hovering above her own body, saw herself squatting over the rim of the lagoon, sleeves rolled up to the elbows, pink hands wringing soapy water from one of Rasheed's undershirts. She felt lost then, casting about, like a shipwreck survivor, no shore in sight, only miles and miles of water (pp. 224 - 225).

The deictic center shifts from the Laila and Rasheed's bedroom and pushes into another day-dream where she sees herself in some sort of an out of body experience, where she hovers above her body and sees herself squatting over the laundry, wringing Rasheed's drenched undershirts. This day-dream made her feel lost like a shipwreck survivor who doesn't see land, but miles and miles of water all around. It's this push that reveals to us how Laila really feels about her life in this marriage and in Rasheed and Mariam's house. The push-shift is very significant because somehow it propels towards some sort of a dreaded future outcome.

### **Example 4 – Chapter 35:**

Mariam did not sleep that night. She sat in bed, watched the snow falling soundlessly. Seasons had come and gone; presidents in Kabul had been inaugurated and murdered; an empire had been defeated; old wars had ended and new ones had broken out. But

Mariam had hardly noticed, hardly cared. She had passed these years in a distant corner of her mind A dry, barren field, out beyond wish and lament, beyond dream and disillusionment- There, the future did not matter. And the past held only this wisdom: that love was a damaging mistake, and its accomplice, hope, a treacherous illusion. And whenever those twin poisonous flowers began to sprout in the parched land of that field, Mariam uprooted them. She uprooted them and ditched them before they took hold.

But somehow, over these last months, Laila and Aziza-aharami like herself, as it turned out-had become extensions of her, and now, without them, the life Mariam had tolerated for so long suddenly seemed intolerable (p. 249).

It's Mariam that has a day-dream. It is a push-shift from her bedroom in Rasheed's house to seeing herself in her old house that she shared with her mother, with Mullah Faizuallah sitting next to her. He is holding his "tasbeeh" beads and telling her that God has planted two flowers in her life and it is his will that she tends to them. The two flowers are of course Laila and baby Aziza. The push by day-dreaming serves to accentuate the metamorphosis in the relationship between Mariam and Laila. From silent animosity and spite to warmth, closeness and companionship. Mariam is dreaming about a better future ahead that she can share with Laila and Aziza, the three of them taking care of each other like a warm family. Laila had informed Mariam of her plans to escape from Rasheed's house with Aziza and asked Mariam to join them, to set herself free from this prison.

### Example 5 – Chapter 36:

Laila fell asleep at some point, her body baking in the heat. She had a dream that she and Aziza had run into Tariq. He was across a crowded street from them, beneath the awning of a tailor's shop. He was sitting on his haunches and sampling from a crate of figs. That's your father, Laila said. That man there, you see him? He's your real baba. She called his name, but the street noise drowned her voice, and Tariq didn't hear (p. 264).

Laila has a dream, another deictic push. Locked in her room with her daughter, no food, water or air she dreams that she and Aziza have come across Tariq on a crowded street. Tariq is eating figs. She tells Aziza that

this is her real dad. She calls Tariq's name but he doesn't seem to hear her or see her.

One thing about this dream is that figs in dreams are a symbol of righteous people and a peaceful, blessed life awaiting the dreamer (Ibn Sirin, 1995).

Laila wakes up to Rasheed finally realizing her from the prison of her room and threatening to kill her, Aziza and Mariam if they ever try to escape or leave the house again.

### **Example 6 – Chapter 40:**

In Laila's dream, she and Mariam are out behind the tool shed digging again. But, this time, it's Aziza they're lowering into the ground. Aziza's breath fogs the sheet of plastic in which they have wrapped her. Laila sees her panicked eyes, the whiteness of her palms as they slap and push against the sheet. Aziza pleads. Laila can't hear her screams. Only for a while, she calls down, it's only for a while. It's the raids, don't you know, my love? When the raids are over, Mammy and Khala Mariam will dig you out. I promise, my love. Then we can play. We can play all you want. She fills the shovel. Laila woke up, out of breath, with a taste of soil in her mouth, when the first granular lumps of dirt hit the plastic (pp. 293 – 294).

Laila has a nightmare, she dreams that Aziza is wrapped in suffocating plastic and Laila and Mariam are lowering her into a hole in the sand. They are burying her alive. In the dream, Laila tells Aziza that it is just for a little bit, until the Taliban men leave. She didn't want him to see her so as not to take her away. The nightmare mirrors a deep fear inside Laila for her daughter Aziza. Rasheed wants to give Aziza over to an orphanage or to a mosque, and Laila fears that he's going to turn her into a street beggar. It has been established in so many ways that Rasheed knows Aziza is not his daughter and doesn't want her in the house.

One thing about this dream is that it reminds us of a sacrifice Laila did six years ago to protect Aziza when she was no bigger than a mulberry in her womb. Laila would do anything to protect her children. She is loving, caring and an extremely protective kind of mother. Strong as she is, we suspect that Laila would never let that fear that translated itself into the nightmare come true. She would do whatever she had to do to stop it from happening.

**Example 7 – Chapter 41:**

As Mariam listened to the scratchy ringing, her mind wandered. It wandered to the last time she'd seen Jalil, thirteen years earlier, back in the spring of 1987. He'd stood on the street outside her house, leaning on a cane, beside the blue Benz with the Herat license plates and the white stripe bisecting the roof, the hood, and trunk. He'd stood there for hours, waiting for her, now and then calling her name, just as she had once called his name outside his house. Mariam had parted the curtain once, just a bit, and caught a glimpse of him. Only a glimpse, but long enough to see that his hair had turned fluffy white, and that he'd started to stoop. He wore glasses, a red tie, as always, and the usual white handkerchief triangle in his breast pocket. Most striking, he was thinner, much thinner, than she remembered, the coat of his dark brown suit drooping over his shoulders, the trousers pooling at his ankles.

Jalil had seen her too, if only for a moment. Their eyes had met briefly through a part in the curtains, as they had met many years earlier through a part in another pair of curtains. But then Mariam had quickly closed the curtains. She had sat on the bed, waited for him to leave. She thought now of the letter Jalil had finally left at her door. She had kept it for days, beneath her pillow, picking it up now and then, turning it over in her hands. In the end, she had shredded it unopened. And now here she was, after all these years, calling him (p. 301).

A push-shift into Mariam's day-dream. Mariam had been angry at her dad for years. Ever since he abandoned her and gave her away to Rasheed in marriage when she was 15 years old. As Mariam learns of his death she feels stricken by deep sadness. She disconnects from her surroundings and pushes into a day-dream where she sees Jalil waving at her, skipping from stone to stone as he crosses a stream, with pockets swollen with gifts that plans to shower her with. She day-dreamed of herself as a child, in her mother's house, holding her breath in anticipation for his arrival to their house, praying that God would grant her more time to spend with him. Jalil was Mariam's first love. As a child she thought of him as a hero, bigger than life. He was a symbol of life's beautiful possibilities that Mariam thought she could have one day.

This push-shift brings to the surface another relationship metamorphosis that the book is laden with. This time, it is the love-hate-love relationship that Mariam had for her father. After years of anger, resentment and seeming hate. The old love now came back, with a great deal of sadness and sense of loss, which this day-dream only helps to further accentuate.

**Example 8 – Chapter 47:**

Mariam had disjointed dreams that last night. She dreamed of pebbles, eleven of them, arranged vertically. Jalil, young again, all winning smiles and dimpled chins and sweat patches, coat flung over his shoulder, come at last to take his daughter away for a ride in his shiny black Buick Roadmaster. Mullah Faizullah twirling his rosary beads, walking with her along the stream, their twin shadows gliding on the water and on the grassy banks sprinkled with a blue-lavender wild iris that, in this dream, smelled like cloves. She dreamed of Nana in the doorway of the kolba, her voice dim and distant, calling her to dinner, as Mariam played in cool, tangled grass where ants crawled and beetles scurried and grasshoppers skipped amid all the different shades of green. The squeak of a wheelbarrow labouring up a dusty path. Cowbells clanging. Sheep baaing on a hill (p. 358).

A push-shift to dreams Mariam has in her last night on earth. She is in a prison cell, waiting to be executed the next morning for murdering her husband in self-defense. Mariam dreams of her childhood in the Kolba. Sees her mother, her father, Mullah Faizullah, exactly as she remembers them from childhood. In her dreams are eleven vertically aligned pebbles, and herself playing peacefully in the grass, without a care in the world. Everything is peaceful and unusually beautiful.

The push-shift is very significant, as it signifies Mariam's last metamorphosis. It's the metamorphosis of how she views herself. All her life she had viewed herself as an unworthy creature, a "harami" or a bastard as her mother had reminded her every single day of her childhood. Her father's abandonment of her into Rashed's arms did everything to instill that thought even deeper inside her. All her life Mariam did nothing to change that. She had done what they told her. She lives a life of unworthiness thinking she deserved nothing. She had been a faithful woman to a brutal husband. She took care of Laila and the



children. This last dream of Mariam reveals a metamorphosed vision of herself having ended her life nobly, and saved the life of a woman and her two children and allowed them a new chance of a peaceful life. Now she sees herself as a woman who had loved and been loved back. Who had the chance to be a true companion, a mother, a guardian, a person of consequence at last.

Finally, Mariam felt what it means to respect oneself. She loved that feeling, she was proud to be exiting this way. She did not mind death by execution at all.

**Example 9 - Part 4 - Chapter 48:**

Aziza has nightmares from which she wakes up shrieking. Laila has to lie beside her on the cot, dry her cheeks with her sleeve, soothe her back to sleep. Laila has her own dreams. In them, she's always back at the house in Kabul, walking the hall, climbing the stairs. She is alone, but behind the doors she hears the rhythmic hiss of an iron, bedsheets snapped, then folded. Sometimes she hears a woman's low-pitched humming of an old Herati song. But when she walks in, the room is empty. There is no one there. The dreams leave Laila shaken. She wakes from them coated in sweat, her eyes prickling with tears. It is devastating. Every time, it is devastating (p. 370).

Laila finally finds happiness. She marries Tariq and the children are between them. They live in Murree, Pakistan now. Yet, Laila and Aziza both have nightmares!

A shift-push happens when we are told about Laila's dream one night. Laila has dreams about Rasheed's house in Kabul. She dreams that she is back at the house, hearing the sounds of singing coming from the other rooms and someone doing house chores. She goes down the stairs and finds no one.

Laila wakes up from these recurring dreams sweaty and devastated. The singing is that of Mariam. But Mariam is not there. Laila is grateful that Mariam saved her and freed her, but is very sad for Mariam's death. Somehow, she feels that Mariam's death was because of Laila herself, even though she did not want things to be this way.

Those dreams of Mariam and Laila's sadness and devastation over them bring to light a complex, metamorphosed relationship. Instead of Laila being Mariam's "Durra" (second wife to the same husband) and what that would normally entail, this relationship has greatly metamorphosed into a

mother-daughter relationship. Laila considers Mariam her mother and is shaken to the core over Mariam's death, even more shaken and more devastated than she was over the death of her real mother.

**Example 10 – Chapter 50:**

“One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs  
Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls” (p. 381).

A push-shift by the last day-dream. Laila leaves Pakistan and goes back to Kabul because she feels that she has a duty to fulfil towards her home town. The town that her father described as

**Example 11 – Chapter 50:**

In a few years, this lute 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 sorrows, disappointments, dreams that have 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 (p. 389).

Laila will renovate the orphanage and create a small school inside it to teach the children. She will do that with Mariam's inheritance which her father left with Mullah Faizullah's son. But before any of that can happen, Laila pays a visit to Mariam's old house, the Kolba. It is empty, with broken windows, no door and empty bottles lying on the floor. Laila has a day-dream in which she sees young Mariam sitting at the table making a doll by the glow of an oil lamp. Laila watches Mariam glue strands of yarn onto her doll's head. In this day-dream Laila can see Mariam's features very clearly, as if she were alive and standing right in front of her.

**Example 12 – Chapter 50:**

The floorboards are back. Laila sees a pair of sleeping cots now, a wooden table, two chairs, a cast-iron stove in the corner, shelves along the walls, on which sit clay pots and pans, a blackened teakettle, cups and spoons. She hears chickens clucking outside, the distant gurgling of the stream. A young Mariam is sitting at the

table making a doll by the glow of an oil lamp. She's humming something. Her face is smooth and youthful, her hair washed, combed back. She has all her teeth. 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 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 (p. 389).

This deictic shift pushes into the last and most significant dream in the novel, it's the day-dream through which the reader can discern the differences between Laila and Mariam's personalities. So different on the surface yet greatly alike deep down. Both women have been strong in their own way, both have been immense givers and enduring in their own way, both have lived and/or died for a cause that mattered to them, that gave them self-worth, that fulfilled them in just the way that they wanted to be fulfilled. Mariam lived miserably because she didn't think she deserved to live any better. She had no sense of self-entitlement, not much inner strength but a lot of courage and sacrifice. She died so that Laila and her children could have a decent life and a great chance of happiness and peace.

Laila on the other hand had been her own person since she was a child. With her strong demeanor, resourcefulness and determination, with her high sense of self-entitlement, she was never left feeling helpless or wanting. There was always a way out that she could figure out somehow no matter the circumstances. Laila managed to do what Mariam would never be able to do. It doesn't matter though because Mariam finally passed on, content and satisfied: feelings she could never truly experience when she was alive.

## Conclusion

The analysis in this paper shows how cognitive poetics using Stockwell (2002) model of deictic shift theory offers an approach which allows more integration of language and literature, where the linguistic features of the text are incorporated with the readers' background knowledge. Responding to the research questions, deictic shift theory model offers the reader a dynamic movement throughout the process of analysis and interpretation, leading to the creation of a striking understanding of the characters and their world. Khaled Hosseini seems to be successful in using deictic shifts to provide insight into the characters' thoughts, feelings and motivations.

The analysis shows that the author has skillfully employed deictic shifting by means of pushes and pops through dreams, nightmares and day-dreams, to create a text world where characters' lives fatefully intersect, creating complicated relationships that will eventually transform.

Hosseini incorporates pushes through dreams to foreshadow significant events such as Mariam's death or to signify metamorphosing relationships such as Mariam's relationship with Laila and little Aziza, whom she sees in her dreams as budding flowers. The author even closes the novel with the most significant of all the dreams; one that shows how and why Laila and Mariam had to be so different as characters.

It's through this dynamic cycle of deictic shifting that the reader can cognitively identify the main thematic and aesthetic components of the novel. Two women, so different on the surface yet greatly alike deep down. Both women have been strong in their own way, both have been immense givers and enduring in their own way, they have lived and/or died for a cause that mattered most to them, culminating each other's existence in the process. They were only able to mature as such through their dreams, and we as readers would probably not have been able to interpret that if it hadn't been for the application of the Deictic Shift Theory.

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