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From Enforced Rivalry to Resistant Kinship: Female Solidarity, Domestic Sovereignty, and the Reconfiguration of Patriarchal Power in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns

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Abstract:
Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) examines the relationship between patriarchal domination, female subjectivity and collective resistance through the changing relationship between Mariam and Laila, two women compelled to inhabit the same marriage and domestic environment. Although existing scholarship has explored sisterhood, gendered violence and women's resistance in the novel, the relationship between enforced rivalry and the redistribution of authority within the household requires more precise attention. This article argues that Hosseini represents female solidarity not merely as emotional companionship but as a gradual challenge to the domestic arrangements through which patriarchal power maintains women's separation and dependence. Employing theoretically informed close reading, the study examines Rasheed's manipulation of marital hierarchy, Mariam and Laila's initial antagonism, the formation of trust through caregiving and shared vulnerability, and the political consequences of their collective resistance. Drawing upon feminist theories of patriarchal bargaining, relational agency, coercive control and the gendered production of space, the article proposes counter-domestic sovereignty as a bounded interpretive concept describing women's capacity to reorganize relationships, obligations and decisions within a household formally controlled by male authority. The analysis demonstrates that solidarity challenges patriarchal domination without necessarily providing equal protection or freedom to both women. Mariam's final sacrifice particularly exposes the unequal costs through which collective survival becomes possible. The article concludes that Hosseini's distinctive narrative achievement lies in representing resistance as a transformation of domestic relationships rather than an uncomplicated movement from oppression to emancipation.

1.INTRODUCTION

The relationship between women's solidarity and patriarchal authority constitutes an important concern within feminist literary criticism. Patriarchal arrangements frequently restrict women's opportunities for collective action by organizing intimate relationships through dependency, competition and unequal access to resources. Such arrangements can reproduce domination even when women share the same physical environment, because proximity does not necessarily create trust or common political interests. The question of female resistance therefore requires attention not only to individual acts of defiance but also to the processes through which women overcome divisions produced within oppressive social relationships (Kandiyoti 1988).

Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) develops this problem through the intersecting lives of Mariam and Laila, whose experiences unfold against Afghanistan's changing political circumstances. Mariam enters marriage with Rasheed following her mother's death and the rejection associated with her illegitimate birth. Laila subsequently becomes Rasheed's second wife after war destroys much of her family life and leaves her with severely limited alternatives. Their initial relationship is characterized by resentment and suspicion, yet their shared exposure to domestic coercion gradually transforms competition into a relationship of care. The significance of this transformation extends beyond emotional reconciliation. Rasheed's household functions through a distribution of authority that places the husband in control of economic resources, domestic decisions and the women's physical movements. His ability to distinguish between the wives and manipulate their relative positions helps sustain their dependence. Their developing solidarity challenges this arrangement by introducing cooperation where the household has encouraged competition. Female companionship consequently becomes a means of altering the internal organization of patriarchal power rather than merely a response to individual loneliness. The relationship between domestic domination and political violence further complicates this struggle. The characters' experiences occur during periods of conflict and changes in political authority, including the restrictions imposed under Taliban rule. Their opportunities for independent movement and protection are therefore affected by forces extending beyond marriage. Nevertheless, the novel does not portray domestic oppression as an automatic consequence of political instability. Rasheed's conduct possesses its own relational and moral significance, even as the surrounding circumstances influence the women's available alternatives. Existing scholarship has established the importance of sisterhood in Hosseini's novel. Asif et al. (2020) examine female solidarity and patriarchal oppression, while Ruhaida and Udasmoro (2020) explore the relationship between shared crisis and women's collective resistance. More recent research addresses storytelling, memory and female communion. These studies make it necessary to develop an argument more specific than the observation that Mariam and Laila become allies.

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The present article advances the concept of *counter-domestic sovereignty* to examine how women develop limited collective authority within a household whose formal structure remains patriarchal. The argument distinguishes emotional attachment, practical cooperation, resistance to domestic control and the achievement of sustainable freedom. Rather than interpreting sisterhood as a complete solution to domination, it investigates how solidarity changes the distribution of power while exposing the unequal consequences of resistance.

Previous Scholarship and Research Intervention

Critical studies of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* have repeatedly identified female resilience, patriarchal violence and sisterhood as central aspects of the novel. Asif et al. (2020) investigate the relationship between female cooperation and resistance, arguing that solidarity provides an

important means through which women challenge patriarchal arrangements. Their analysis establishes that sisterhood is not an unexplored theme. The present study builds upon this interpretation by asking how the initial production of rivalry contributes to Rasheed's authority and how the subsequent development of kinship changes the household's internal distribution of decision-making power. Ruhaida and Udasmoro (2020) similarly examine solidarity between Mariam and Laila through a framework informed by intersectional feminist criticism. Their study emphasizes the differences in age and social position between the wives and identifies crisis as an important condition for developing collective resistance. This analysis is particularly relevant because it prevents the women's relationship from being represented as an automatic consequence of shared gender identity. Nevertheless, the present article shifts attention toward the mechanisms through which domestic competition is produced and subsequently challenged.

Research on female characterization has also examined the relationship between obedience, resistance and empowerment. A study published in *Frontiers in Sociology* (2022) interprets Hosseini's women through contrasting patterns of accommodation and defiance. Such approaches provide important accounts of changing agency but risk treating Mariam and Laila as fixed representatives of submissive and resistant femininity. Their narrative development instead suggests that both women negotiate shifting opportunities for action and that their capacities cannot be understood independently of their relationship.

Frontiers

Recent scholarship has further complicated the question of gendered representation. Garmo (2025) examines the implications of male authorship for the representation of Afghan women's experiences, while Neimneh (2025) investigates storytelling and shared memory as practices through which women establish solidarity. These contributions demonstrate that neither the legitimacy of Hosseini's feminist narrative nor the importance of interpersonal communication can be regarded as unexplored. The present intervention therefore concentrates on the reorganization of domestic authority rather than the general restorative value of female companionship.

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Most importantly, a 2026 postcolonial feminist study explicitly examines the movement from rivalry to kinship, alongside gender, class and political power. The proposed argument must consequently be more precise than its title alone suggests. This article differentiates itself by treating the household as a changing system of authority and examining how caregiving, access to movement, economic cooperation and final sacrifice alter that system without guaranteeing equivalent freedom for Mariam and Laila.

Nature

The resulting research intervention is deliberately bounded. *Counter-domestic sovereignty* does not describe the complete replacement of patriarchal authority or the establishment of a legally independent household. It identifies forms of collective decision-making and mutual protection developed by women whose formal freedom remains restricted. Its value lies in clarifying why solidarity may transform everyday power relations without eliminating the institutional conditions that make resistance dangerous.

Theoretical Orientation

Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargaining provides a framework for understanding the unequal alternatives available to Mariam and Laila. Patriarchal authority does not depend exclusively upon direct violence; it can also operate through expectations of obedience, dependency and access to protection. Within Rasheed's household, the wives' positions are shaped by their unequal status and the husband's ability to distribute approval and

disapproval. Their initial rivalry must therefore be examined as a relationship produced within an existing structure of power rather than simply as personal antagonism.

Sylvia Walby's (1990) analysis of patriarchy provides a complementary understanding of the connection between domestic and wider institutional arrangements. The household can operate as a site of gendered domination while remaining connected to economic, legal and political structures. This distinction is important because Mariam and Laila's vulnerability cannot be explained solely through Rasheed's individual behaviour. Their limited alternatives are intensified by circumstances that restrict women's ability to live independently. Evan Stark's (2007) theory of coercive control further clarifies how intimate domination operates through sustained restrictions on liberty. Physical assaults are central to the novel, but Rasheed's authority also involves economic dependence, intimidation, surveillance and control over movement. The theory helps explain why the women's solidarity becomes consequential even before their most visible acts of resistance. Sharing information and developing independent decisions can challenge a relationship in which the husband seeks to monopolize authority. bell hooks (2000) provides a feminist account of solidarity that does not require women to possess identical experiences. Mariam and Laila differ in age, education, family background and expectations of marriage. Their eventual cooperation becomes meaningful because these differences do not disappear. Instead, they develop relationships of care that contest the household's initial organization around comparison and rivalry. Doreen Massey's (1994) feminist geography offers a means of understanding the home as a socially produced environment rather than a neutral setting. Domestic space contains relationships that determine who may move, speak, decide and receive protection. Applied to Hosseini's novel, this approach allows the household's transformation to be assessed through changes in interpersonal authority rather than through the assumption that physical residence itself determines belonging. Finally, Saba Mahmood's (2005) critique of agency defined exclusively through resistance provides an important qualification. Mariam's earlier accommodation should not be mistaken for the complete absence of agency, just as her final defiance should not be treated as the sole moment when her subjectivity becomes significant. The study therefore examines agency relationally, considering how the women's capacities change as their obligations and opportunities are reorganized.

Materials and Method

This article employs qualitative, theoretically guided close reading of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, first published in 2007. The study investigates the representation of female solidarity, domestic hierarchy, gendered violence and relational agency through selected narrative episodes. Its unit of analysis is the narrated event, considered in relation to characterization, household organization, dialogue, changes of allegiance and the distribution of decision-making authority. Five interconnected narrative clusters organize the analysis: Mariam's earlier experiences of rejection and marriage; Laila's entry into Rasheed's household; the development of solidarity through Aziza and shared domestic responsibilities; the women's attempted escape and confrontation with violence; and the consequences of Mariam's final intervention. These episodes are examined sequentially to distinguish the production of rivalry from its transformation into resistant kinship. The analysis asks who controls domestic decisions, which relationships support the husband's authority, how the women's cooperation alters available choices, and whether their eventual resistance provides sustainable autonomy. Particular attention is given to the distinction between collective action and equal outcomes because Mariam's final sacrifice makes the benefits and costs of resistance profoundly uneven.

The study makes literary interpretations rather than empirical claims about Afghan households or women's experiences generally. The exact primary-text edition has not been independently

checked for passage-level quotations in this drafting process. Consequently, the manuscript avoids invented verbatim quotations and page references. Final submission requires verification of textual evidence against the specific edition cited.

Analysis

The Production of Rivalry Through Patriarchal Domestic Hierarchy

Mariam's early experiences establish the emotional and social conditions through which Rasheed's authority becomes difficult to challenge. Her illegitimate birth, her complicated relationship with Jalil and her mother's death place her in a position of dependence before marriage begins. Her subsequent union with Rasheed is arranged within circumstances that give her limited control over her future. The marriage therefore extends an earlier pattern in which decisions affecting her life are authorized by others, while her preferences possess little practical influence. Rasheed's household initially offers the possibility of belonging through marriage, yet its apparent security becomes conditional upon Mariam's ability to satisfy expectations concerning femininity and reproduction. Her miscarriages gradually alter the husband's treatment of her. His disappointment becomes a justification for hostility, demonstrating how a woman's standing within marriage may be measured through reproductive success. Mariam's personal vulnerability is intensified because the household provides few independent sources of recognition once her husband's approval diminishes. Laila's arrival transforms this arrangement by introducing a younger woman whose education, appearance and reproductive potential threaten Mariam's already insecure position. Her entry does not produce rivalry simply because two women occupy the same domestic space. Rather, Rasheed's ability to compare their relative value and distribute his favour creates conditions in which the women are encouraged to perceive one another as competitors. The household's hierarchy becomes more effective when the wives interpret their different positions as evidence that the other's presence threatens their security.

This process is central to understanding enforced rivalry. Mariam's resentment emerges from a relationship in which she has repeatedly experienced rejection, humiliation and the withdrawal of affection. Laila, meanwhile, enters the marriage under circumstances shaped by bereavement, pregnancy and limited alternatives. Neither woman possesses full authority over the arrangement that brings them together. Their antagonism consequently reflects the unequal conditions through which marriage is organized rather than an inherent inability to cooperate. Rasheed benefits from the separation because it prevents the development of an alternative source of domestic authority. His power is sustained not only through physical intimidation but also through his ability to define the wives' positions in relation to himself. When their security depends upon his approval, collective decision-making becomes difficult. The household's hierarchy thus creates an environment in which emotional isolation and dependence reinforce one another. The distinction also complicates the assumption that Mariam initially represents submission while Laila represents resistance. Mariam has developed strategies of endurance under prolonged coercion, whereas Laila enters marriage with expectations shaped by a different upbringing. Their responses cannot be understood without considering how age, experience and available support influence their decisions. The novel's narrative sequence makes these differences important before the women discover the possibility of solidarity.

Caregiving, Shared Vulnerability and the Formation of Resistant Kinship

The birth of Aziza becomes a turning point in the relationship between Mariam and Laila. Initially, the two women occupy conflicting positions within Rasheed's household, but care for the child creates opportunities for contact that are not organized solely through the husband's approval. Mariam gradually develops an attachment to Aziza, while Laila begins to recognize the older woman's vulnerability and generosity. Their relationship changes through repeated

practices of care rather than an immediate declaration of solidarity. The significance of this development lies in the creation of obligations that do not depend upon biological motherhood. Mariam's miscarriages had previously been used to diminish her value within marriage. Her attachment to Aziza challenges this logic by demonstrating that meaningful maternal relationships can develop beyond biological reproduction. The child becomes important not because she supplies Mariam with the reproductive status Rasheed demanded, but because caregiving creates a relationship in which her capacity for affection and responsibility is recognized. This transformation also unsettles the husband's control over domestic relationships. Rasheed attempts to regulate the household through hierarchy, but Mariam and Laila develop a bond that he does not authorize and cannot entirely determine. Their cooperation creates an alternative structure of recognition within the same physical environment. What changes is not the formal ownership of the house but the relationships through which belonging and obligation become meaningful. The women's exchange of personal histories further strengthens this development. Mariam's earlier experiences of abandonment and Laila's losses gradually become subjects of mutual understanding. Their stories reveal that the differences initially separating them have been shaped by circumstances neither independently controlled. This recognition enables them to reinterpret apparent rivalry as a consequence of an arrangement that benefits from their separation. The movement toward solidarity is therefore both emotional and interpretive. Mariam and Laila begin to understand one another through explanations that differ from the judgments imposed by Rasheed. Their recognition creates a shared perspective from which the household's violence can be questioned. The importance of this development lies in the redistribution of interpretive authority: the husband's description of the wives and their value is no longer the only explanation available within the home. Adrienne Rich's (1976) distinction between motherhood as a lived experience and motherhood as a social institution helps clarify this change. Within Rasheed's marriage, maternity becomes associated with status and obedience. Within the women's emerging relationship, care develops through attachment and responsibility. The contrast reveals how maternal practices can challenge the institutional expectations through which women's worth is regulated. The resulting kinship does not eliminate conflict or difference. Mariam and Laila remain distinct individuals whose histories and aspirations cannot be merged into one identity. Their solidarity becomes consequential because it permits cooperation without requiring sameness. The household begins to contain an alternative set of loyalties that weakens the emotional isolation on which Rasheed's domination depends.

Domestic Sovereignty and the Reorganization of Everyday Power

The concept of counter-domestic sovereignty becomes especially useful when the women's developing solidarity is examined through everyday decisions. Sovereignty here does not refer to legally recognized ownership or complete freedom from external authority. It designates their growing capacity to establish shared obligations, interpret their circumstances and make decisions without relying exclusively upon Rasheed's permission. Initially, the household is organized around the husband's control of economic resources, physical movement and acceptable conduct. The wives occupy subordinate positions within an arrangement that limits their opportunities for independent action. Their subsequent cooperation introduces a different structure in which information, emotional support and practical responsibilities can circulate between them. The importance of this transformation can be understood through the relationship between space and power. The same household that previously sustained rivalry becomes a location where trust develops. Its physical boundaries remain largely unchanged, but its social meaning is altered by the women's relationship. Domestic space is consequently neither

inherently oppressive nor automatically protective. Its meaning depends upon the authority exercised within it and the relationships through which its inhabitants experience belonging.

This distinction also reveals why solidarity is politically significant before visible rebellion occurs. Mariam and Laila begin to challenge patriarchal domination when they cease to interpret one another as competitors for scarce approval. Their cooperation undermines the emotional divisions that help Rasheed maintain authority. The transformation may initially appear private, but it changes the structure through which power operates in everyday life. Nancy Fraser's (1990) account of counterpublics provides a useful, though limited, analogy. Subordinated groups can develop alternative interpretations of their experiences in spaces not governed entirely by dominant social expectations. Mariam and Laila's relationship is not a public political organization, but their shared conversations create a restricted interpretive environment in which the husband's authority becomes contestable. The women's attempted escape extends this emerging independence into a direct challenge to Rasheed's control over movement. Their plan requires cooperation, secrecy and a shared understanding of the risks. However, their failure demonstrates the limitations of domestic solidarity when wider institutional arrangements continue to restrict women's mobility. Their interception and return expose the relationship between household domination and public mechanisms of control. The failed escape is therefore analytically significant because it distinguishes the formation of collective intention from the achievement of practical freedom. Mariam and Laila develop the capacity to act together, but their resources remain insufficient to secure safe departure. Their solidarity changes their relationship to one another without immediately changing the institutional conditions that determine whether they can leave. The episode also prevents the argument from idealizing resistance. Acting collectively does not guarantee success, and unsuccessful resistance can intensify coercion. The women's subsequent experiences reveal the physical consequences of challenging a husband whose authority is supported by broader restrictions on female independence. Counter-domestic sovereignty thus remains fragile because its internal achievements cannot independently eliminate external forms of power.

Political Violence, Restricted Mobility and the Limits of Household Resistance

The novel's representation of political conflict complicates the relationship between domestic authority and public institutions. Mariam and Laila experience war, economic deprivation and changing restrictions on women's movement. These conditions influence the practical alternatives available to them, particularly when travel, employment and access to public space become increasingly difficult. Rasheed's authority should not be explained simply as an expression of national political circumstances. His coercive conduct precedes some of the later restrictions represented in the novel, and his treatment of the women reflects decisions for which he remains responsible. Nevertheless, the surrounding political order can reinforce domestic domination when women lack dependable institutional protection or opportunities for independent movement. The restrictions associated with Taliban rule become particularly significant in the context of Aziza's placement in an orphanage. Economic hardship and Rasheed's decisions create circumstances in which Laila is separated from her daughter. Her efforts to visit Aziza expose her to danger because movement through public space is constrained by regulations governing women's mobility. The separation demonstrates how domestic and political structures can produce cumulative restrictions on maternal responsibility. The significance of these episodes extends beyond the representation of suffering. Laila's determination to maintain contact with Aziza demonstrates that caregiving can motivate action even when available alternatives are severely limited. Her movements challenge restrictions that

treat women as dependent upon male accompaniment, but the dangers accompanying those movements prevent them from becoming straightforward evidence of freedom.

Mariam's support contributes to the continuing relationship between the women. Their solidarity makes hardship more bearable and sustains shared commitments, yet it does not remove the structural conditions responsible for separation and insecurity. The novel thus differentiates emotional strength from institutional power. Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between gender and national belonging. Women's lives can become sites through which political orders regulate family, morality and public participation. Applied to the novel, this perspective clarifies why the household's internal struggle cannot be fully separated from the political environment in which it operates. Hosseini's representation also requires a qualification against cultural generalization. Mariam and Laila's experiences are situated within a particular fictional household and a historically changing political environment. Their suffering cannot establish that all Afghan families or men reproduce Rasheed's conduct. The narrative's ethical force depends upon the specificity of its characters rather than the assumption that they represent a culturally uniform society.

Mariam's Final Resistance and the Unequal Costs of Collective Freedom

The confrontation that culminates in Rasheed's death represents the most consequential transformation of domestic authority. When Rasheed attacks Laila, Mariam intervenes to prevent further violence. Her action interrupts the husband's immediate power over life and death within the household. The significance of the intervention lies not only in its physical consequences but also in the reversal of the relationship through which Mariam had previously been expected to endure domination. This moment should not be interpreted as the sudden creation of agency in a previously passive woman. Mariam's capacity for care, judgment and action has developed throughout the narrative. Her final intervention emerges from relationships that have transformed her understanding of responsibility. Protecting Laila becomes inseparable from preserving the family and belonging that she has gradually acquired. The action also demonstrates that resistance is relational rather than exclusively individual. Mariam acts because another person's survival has become central to her own ethical commitments. Her decision cannot be understood solely through personal liberation, since its immediate purpose is to protect Laila and the children. The culmination of solidarity thus appears as an act through which one woman's freedom is defended at profound cost to another. This distinction is essential because Mariam's sacrifice produces unequal outcomes. Laila eventually gains the opportunity to leave Rasheed's household and rebuild a life with Tariq and the children. Mariam, by contrast, accepts responsibility for Rasheed's death and is executed. The removal of the husband's domination does not result in equal freedom for the women whose cooperation made resistance possible. The narrative therefore complicates a triumphal interpretation of sisterhood. Mariam's action is consequential, but its ethical importance should not be confused with the justice of her fate. Her death exposes the inadequacy of a social arrangement in which protecting another woman requires the loss of one's own life. Carol Gilligan's (1982) account of care and moral reasoning provides a perspective on this decision, although Mariam's actions should not be reduced to a universal feminine ethic of sacrifice. Her choice develops within a particular history of deprivation, attachment and responsibility. The novel's significance lies in representing her action as meaningful without implying that women are naturally obligated to suffer for others.

The concept of counter-domestic sovereignty reaches its clearest expression here and simultaneously reveals its limits. Mariam and Laila have developed an alternative structure of loyalty powerful enough to challenge the husband's absolute control. Yet this achievement cannot

shield Mariam from the punitive consequences of her resistance. Collective agency transforms the household without securing equal protection from the wider political order.

Memory, Reconstructed Home and the Afterlife of Resistant Kinship

Laila's subsequent life demonstrates that the consequences of female solidarity extend beyond Mariam's death. Her relationship with Tariq and the children allows a different household to emerge, one not organized around Rasheed's coercive authority. Nevertheless, the novel does not represent this reconstruction as the simple disappearance of loss. Mariam remains central to Laila's understanding of family and to the ethical commitments shaping her future. The return to Afghanistan and the decision to contribute to rebuilding community life demonstrate that belonging can extend beyond private domestic security. Laila's future involves relationships and responsibilities that connect personal survival with the restoration of opportunities for others. This development should not be interpreted as the automatic political transformation of Afghanistan through individual sacrifice. Rather, it suggests that the consequences of resistance can persist through memory, education and continuing acts of care. Mariam's memory becomes particularly important because it challenges the social judgments that initially defined her as unwanted or inadequate. Within the relationships she helped sustain, her life acquires a significance that exceeds the status assigned to her by Jalil and Rasheed. The narrative thus reverses the earlier hierarchy through which her worth was evaluated according to legitimacy, obedience and reproduction. Marianne Hirsch's (1997) work on family narratives and memory provides a framework for considering how identities persist through relationships that survive separation and death. Laila's remembrance of Mariam does not restore her physically, but it prevents her significance from being confined to the circumstances of execution. The narrative gives lasting form to a relationship that patriarchal hierarchy initially sought to prevent. The reconstructed household consequently differs from the earlier domestic arrangement not merely because Rasheed is absent. Its significance lies in the relationships through which care and responsibility are organized. Mariam's influence persists as an ethical memory rather than as an authority requiring obedience. This ending establishes the wider significance of resistant kinship. The transformation from rivalry to solidarity changes how characters understand belonging, obligation and personal worth. Nevertheless, the material consequences remain uneven. Hosseini's novel permits hope through reconstruction while refusing to erase the cost at which that possibility was achieved.

Discussion: The Scope and Limits of Counter-Domestic Sovereignty

The preceding analysis demonstrates that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represents female solidarity as a process through which relationships organized by patriarchal authority become open to transformation. Mariam and Laila do not begin as natural allies. Their rivalry emerges within a marital arrangement that gives Rasheed considerable control over their security, recognition and opportunities for action. Their subsequent cooperation challenges this arrangement by establishing relationships of trust that no longer depend upon the husband's approval. The concept of counter-domestic sovereignty clarifies the political significance of this transformation. It identifies the development of collective authority over care, interpretation and shared decisions within a household that remains formally controlled by the husband. Such authority differs from complete independence because its effectiveness is restricted by economic dependence, physical danger and unequal access to institutional protection. The women's relationship also challenges interpretations that treat female empowerment as an exclusively individual accomplishment. Mariam's changing sense of self develops partly through her attachment to Laila and Aziza, while Laila's capacity to resist is strengthened through the support she receives from Mariam. Neither woman's agency can therefore be understood independently

of the relationships through which her available choices change. An alternative interpretation might regard Mariam's sacrifice as the triumphant culmination of sisterhood. This reading recognizes the ethical significance of her intervention but risks overlooking its unequal consequences. Mariam's death demonstrates that effective resistance does not necessarily produce justice for the person undertaking it. The distinction between collective survival and equal emancipation is consequently central to the novel's political meaning. The argument also requires attention to narrative mediation. Hosseini represents Afghan women's experiences through a literary work authored from a particular social and historical position. The novel cannot be treated as transparent evidence of women's lives throughout Afghanistan. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's (2003) critique of universalizing representations provides an important reminder that feminist interpretation must preserve differences of class, history and circumstance rather than reduce women to an undifferentiated category of oppression. The study's contribution is therefore limited but specific. It does not claim that female solidarity or resistance has previously been overlooked. Instead, it explains how enforced rivalry supports patriarchal domestic power, how resistant kinship reorganizes authority within the household, and why the final redistribution of freedom remains profoundly unequal.

Conclusion

This article has examined the transformation of female rivalry into resistant kinship in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Its central argument is that Mariam and Laila's relationship challenges patriarchal domination not only through emotional companionship but also through the gradual reorganization of authority within Rasheed's household. The analysis demonstrates that their initial antagonism is shaped by a domestic hierarchy that encourages competition for security and recognition. Their developing relationship, particularly through shared caregiving and the exchange of personal histories, creates an alternative structure of loyalty. This transformation enables cooperation and collective resistance while exposing the limits imposed by economic dependence and political restrictions. The article's principal interpretive contribution is the concept of counter-domestic sovereignty, which distinguishes women's collective decision-making from the achievement of complete freedom. The women's solidarity transforms the relationships through which domestic power operates, but it does not eliminate the wider structures that constrain their opportunities. Mariam's final intervention makes this distinction especially significant. Her sacrifice enables Laila's survival while revealing the unequal costs through which resistance becomes effective. The novel consequently refuses a wholly reassuring account of liberation in which solidarity guarantees justice for everyone involved.

The central conclusion remains deliberately qualified: **female solidarity can challenge the internal organization of patriarchal power, but the achievement of resistant kinship does not automatically secure equal autonomy, protection or survival for the women who create it.**

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