

# Echoes of Anguish and Resistance of Leila Saman in Ava Homa's *Daughters of Smoke and Fire*

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## **Abstract**

The present study spotlights on echoes of anguish and resistance of Leila Saman in Ava Homa's *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* (2020). It is the debut novel of Homa in 2020. She is a Kurdish writer, journalist, and activist. Homa has succeeded in taking us on a journey to Kurdistan capturing the everyday life of 50 million Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria & Turkey. Reading the life stories of Kurds, the readers are exposed to the unchanging lifestyle of such minority people overwhelmed with the agony and resistance of men and women of Post-colonialism. It is worth noting that resistance is not only fought with the gun but also with written words. Through the eyes of a young Kurdish woman, Homa shines a light on the history of the Kurds, a story defined by brutal oppression but also rich with resistance and resilience.

**Keywords:** kurdish, anguish, resistance, oppression, etc.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Post-colonialism encompasses a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its impact, from the basic level of ex-colonial societies to the general level of global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire or Free states. Post-colonialism analyses the metaphysical, ethical, and political concerns about cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language, and power. The 20th century brought with it the promise of empowerment of women. We have some of the finest and internationally acclaimed women authors today who prominently proved to be game-changers in women's writing. Resistance in novels can refer to the act of writing as a form of resistance, or to novels that are about resistance (Dutta 2012). In literary studies, resistance literature is one subfield in which to study literary output that understood as a socio-political resistance throughout history (Bevan 1990). Resistance refers to the actions and movements undertaken by individuals or groups to oppose and challenge external pressures, control, or domination (Lewis 2008).

Ava Homa's *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* is an evocative portrait of the lives and stakes faced by 40 million stateless Kurds. The writer in an attempt to flag the plight of the stateless Kurds raised her voice till it knocked on the door of the government in a trendy way. Kurdistan is a mountainous region that includes parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Armenia. The Kurds' territory was first partitioned between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the 17th century. Kurdistan has never achieved statehood, and all soulful efforts to establish independence have been met with brutal repression and living a life of agony. On the other hand, Kurdish women experience a variety of levels of discrimination: national

chauvinism of the ruling nations, male chauvinism of one's nation, the misogyny of Islamic groups, and continuing war. Many of the female fighters come from rural areas where women.

### **Literature Review**

The study of Miriam Fuchs analyzes resistance in Barnes's *The Antiphon* and T.S. Eliot's *Nightwood* by describing the significant phases. It compares resistance in the works of Barnes and T.S. Eliot. Barnes invoked the depletion of energies and the diminishment of passions. Eliot mentions resistance in his work *Nightwood* and Barnes explored resistance in *The Antiphon* (Fuchs 1993).

The study by Jennifer Hays abbreviates anguish and analyzes a text from the daily newspaper in Botswana regarding the situation of the San, the indigenous people of Southern Africa related to the formal education system. They experienced social change and extreme poverty. The education system has a very important and paradoxical role in education. In this study, the author explores the analysis of problems of development and formal education. Mainly, it highlights textual analysis in newspapers, news reports, interview transcripts, popular literature, and advertising (Hays 2000).

The study of Peter Kitson analyzes Edward Said's *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism*. It focuses on the riches of Eastern culture and language. The living of anguish is represented in African subjects from the Romantic period. African slave writers explore their anguish in the form of writing (Kitson 2000).

The study of Cimen Gunay-Erkol states that Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's novel deals with a dichotomy in the early twentieth century in Turkey. This nation maintains traditions. This study analyzes Tanpinar's intentions in light of his political ideologies or philosophical attachments in *A Mind at Peace*. It deals with a multi-dimensional narrative. This story deals with an orphan boy's rites of passage, which lead to manhood. It highlights the protagonist's precarious masculinity and his gender anxieties (Gunay-Erkol 2009).

The study of Ali Feiz Khademi and Saadat Hajipour mentions the relationship between anguish and performance from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. The two constructs form a psychodynamic perspective. This study adopted Freud's instinct theory. In this study, the authors represent a review of player's performance and the anguish of separation. It is a review of a psychoanalytic approach to anguish in players. It gives the potential to provide a wide array of insights and interventions for the anguish-ridden player (Khademi and Hajipour 2011).

The study of Terene Chorba and Byron Breedlove states that the incidence of TB was much higher in the nineteenth century in France and Venezuela. Cristobal Rojas is Venezuelan artist. His grandfather, Jose Luis Rojas teach him to draw. Cristobal was thirteen when his father died then he began to work in a tobacco company. He developed an interest in oil painting. His famous work is *La Muerte de Girardot en Barbula*. He has written many works. During this time, disability and death due to TB continue to have major economic and social implications for areas of high endemicity. He feels anguish regarding people's activities (Chorba and Breedlove 2016).

From the literature review, it is proved that no one has done research under the title of echoes of anguish and resistance in Ava Homa's *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* through *Leila Saman*.

### **Echoes of Anguish and Resistance of Leila Saman**

The work *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* haunting autobiography of a young woman's perilous fight for freedom and justice for her brother, the first novel published in English by a female Kurdish writer Ava

Homa. The novel tells of the coming of age of Leila Saman, born in the Kurdish region of Iran. It spans five decades, from 1963 when her father witnessed the brutal massacre of his family by government troops, to the time of Iran's violent suppression of the Green Movement in 2009. Leila dreams about, attending university, having a job, buying my first camera, and making films, but she has multiple obstacles in her way. She is Kurdish, female, impoverished, and the daughter of a man who spent four years in Iran's Evin Prison for the crimes of being antirevolutionary and possessing two banned books by Kurdish authors. Leila and her younger brother Chia are defined by the campaign of ethnic persecution; Leila's father was arrested on the night her mother informed him she was pregnant, and Chia was born on the day Saddam Hussein blanketed Halabja, the town their father arrived from, with chemical weapons.

Leila was born in Iran but she is not accepted as Iranian because she is Kurdish. She is caught between worlds. She feels the soul does not belong to her body, when as a female in a culture that denies women value and freedom; she is Kurdish in a country where she is beaten in school for speaking her language. Her parents were wounded by their pasts to provide love and affirmation. At that time, no one was ready to help them. She says, "My father needed nursing just as much as the helpless Kurds in Iran, the homeless ones in Iraq, the hopeless ones in Turkey, and the stateless ones in Syria" (Homa 2020). Gazing thoroughly into the journey of childhood the writer has successfully left its crisis. Because their parents are often absent, Leila is Chia's caregiver. To comfort her brother, Leila creates stories and recites Rumi's poetry. When Chia is accepted at Tehran University, Leila moves with him to the city. A bibliophile since childhood, she finds employment at an independent bookstore that is her, source of income and joy. With her savings, she buys a video camera and films stories of life in Tehran. Following his father's footsteps, Chia becomes increasingly political, and the Green Movement demonstrations. Despite her pleas, Chia joins the protests and does not return home. For the first time in her life, Leila is helpless to protect him. But through her efforts to keep her brother safe, Leila discovers her voice and her strength. She speaks out not only for Chia but for the Kurdish people as well at this place. In Iran, this is a dangerous path, and she soon finds herself threatened with the government's wrath.

Ava Homa retells the story of a family and conveys something of the accumulated horror of a people constantly under assault. Even as a small child Leila understands that they are different. Seeing the scars on her father's back, she understands the torture underwent the reason behind his seething anger, and the grief of his scared soul. She knows their family that is not like others and she manages to highlight it everywhere. Leila and her brother Chia grow, and they begin to realize how different they are. Not only are they punished at school for speaking Kurdish, but their father is obsessed with the atrocities of past and present that have been committed against the Kurds. The children cannot help but be affected by his volatile emotions and tortured spirit. She says, "Time passed. I wasn't sure how long I lay there among the flowers, behind a huge stone on the hill, fantasizing about a serene nonexistence" (Homa 2020).

In this fiction, the author reveals the difficult life of Leila, who distorted the lives of repressed people. Leila's relationships with both her mother and father are complicated by their bitterness and anger. She feels most comfortable when she visits a friend of her father – Joanna and her daughter, Shiler. While Leila's mother resents Joanna and calls her a whore, Leila herself takes strength and consolation from her aunt's kindness and care. Visiting Shiler and Joanna is her first escape from the repressive atmosphere generated by a state that hates their existence. Growing up as a Kurdish woman in Iran means a double ounce of repression. Leila's only hope of having a better lifestyle in the future is to gain admittance to university and a good job. As Leila's story unfolds, the readers see how this upbringing

influences her sense of self-worth and personality. The researcher finds out how much of her father's indomitable spirit she inherited when her beloved brother Chia is arrested. He had been writing about the plight of Kurds in Iran and publishing his articles online through purportedly safe channels outside Iran. From his father, he has inherited a deep-seated desire for justice, which makes him involved in social and political affairs. He is arrested for participating in an anti-government demonstration and vanishes from Tehran.

No matter how strong Leila tries to be, the cracks in her veneer gradually widen into crevices. But when she publishes Chia's writings online, she finds herself in grave danger. *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* affords us a glimpse of the degrees of persecution they face from the mullahs and from Iranians in general, many of whom harbor anti-Kurdish prejudice. *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* might break our hearts. Leila also manages to depict the difficulties survivors of any trauma experience trying to come back from simply surviving. Homa personifies a people's suffering through one character, she shows the crumbling and shattering of the souls, piece by piece, and the emotional and psychological trauma of living as a persecuted minority gradually destroys a person's confidence and spirit. Yet the craving for normal life stepped up gripping the soul stronger. She mentions, "People do not suffer equally in this or any country. Talking about our reality is not spreading hate. It's inviting understanding" (Homa 2020). Leila dreams of making films to bring the suppressed stories of her people onto the global stage. She was successful in ignoring obstacles that kept piling up and her videos overwhelmed the trendy online media until they reached the government's notice. Thus, the novel in its every breath is filled with elements of anguish and resistance; hence the essence of Postcolonialism is also gripped. Leila says, "Remember, girls, you can be anything you want to be. Don't allow anyone to make you believe otherwise. See, these beauties were simple worms once" (Homa 2020). In the end, she encourages the women to achieve their goals.

## Conclusion

The present study spotlights on echoes of anguish and resistance of Leila Saman in Ava Homa's *Daughters of Smoke and Fire*. It is an evocative portrait of the lives and stakes faced by 40 million stateless Kurds and it is a powerful story that brilliantly illuminates the meaning of identity, agony, and resistance of men and women. It is worth noting that resistance is not only fought with the gun but also with written words. Through the eyes of a young Kurdish woman, Homa shines a light on the history of the Kurds, a story defined by brutal oppression but also rich with resistance and resilience.

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