

The Unturned Pages of American Civil War and Afghan History with the References of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With the Wind" and Khaled Hosseini's: A Thousand Splendid Suns

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Abstract

Historical Revisionism is the reinterpretation of history through a view that hasn't been equipped before. It challenges the preconceived notions of historiographers and gives us new insight into the orthodox ideas of history. It is the reexamination of the accepted facts of the world and interpretations of history or the rewriting of historical events with the ground view of the writer. "Gone with the Wind" belongs to American literature and it is written by Margaret Mitchell and on the other hand the well-known novel of Afghan writer Khaled Hosseini's "A Thousand Splendid Suns". Margaret has published only one novel during her lifetime which is "Gone with the Wind". It was published in 1936 and it has got Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1937. Margaret's "Gone with the Wind" has an inducing significance with Historical Revisionism. It revolves around the American Civil war which has happened between 1861 and 1865. The American civil war is one of the paths breaking war for the abolition of slavery and discrimination in America. In this novel, the protagonist goes through ineffable calamities in her day-to-day life because of the great American civil war. Margaret's reinterpretation of history portrays the platform view of the American civil war through the characters of Scarlet O Hara, Melanie, Ashley Wilkies, Charles Hamilton, Frank and Rhett. Nevertheless, in the novel "A Thousand Splendid Suns" the author Khaled Hosseini has first-hand experience in the civil war, in Kabul, Afghanistan. His own experiences kindle him to write about the impact of the civil war and its plight on the people who are lived in Kabul. He focused on the theme of culture and the scuffle of Afghan people. His writing style arbitrarily projects historical revisionism through this splendid novel. The story is set against the backdrop of several decades of Afghan history, spanning the Soviet invasion, the Taliban rule, and post-Taliban rebuilding. He has his own view in the war field with the Mujahideen against the Soviets. The novel begins during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1970s and subsequently the civil war occurs meanwhile, the narrative focuses on the personal lives of its characters, Mariam and Laila.

Keywords: Historical Revisionism, Plight of War, Discrimination.

Introduction

Margaret Munneryn Mitchell is an American novelist and a vogueish journalist. She has become an inevitable novelist in American literature because of her most crucial and intriguing novel “Gone with the Wind”. It has stepped into the world of literature in 1936. She has won the Pulitzer Prize for her one and only novel in 1937 which gives “Gone with the Wind” a momentous position among other illustrious literary works. History holds an ineffable credibility in everything when people need to know the context of a literary work. Thus, “Gone with the Wind” holds an inevitable existence in the world of literature and history. Mitchell has written a novella called “Lost Laysen” at the age of 15 which she has written in two notebooks for her boyfriend. On the other hand, Khaled Hosseini is born on March 4, 1965, in Kabul, Afghanistan and he grew up in a literate environment. His father served as a diplomat for the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother is a high school teacher. The early days of Hosseini is an exposure to classical Persian poetry which has begun at the age of five. The family later moves to Tehran due to his father's appointment and returns to Kabul in 1973, a year of historical significance with the establishment of the Republic of Afghanistan, marking the last period of stability for the country before social and political changes. Amid the Soviet army invasion and a violent communist coup, Khaled Hosseini's joyful childhood in Afghanistan came to an end. His family opts for political asylum in the United States, and in September 1980, they establish themselves in San Jose, California. Hosseini pursues a medical degree at Santa Clara University, completing his studies in 1988. Following his college years, Hosseini chooses the path of a physician and joins the School of Medicine at the University of California -San Diego. He successfully obtains his master degree in 1993. Hosseini embarks on the creation of his inaugural novel, “The Kite Runner”, published in 2003. His second novel is the most familiar and enhanced literary work “A Thousand Splendid Suns”, which is published in 2007, it effectively describes the scenario of Afghanistan and the impact of war through the two struggling souls in Kabul. The title A Thousand Splendid Suns is derived from a 17th-century Persian poem by Saib-e-Tabrizi, describing Kabul's enchanting streets and the radiant sun concealed behind its walls and it is translated by Professor Josephine Davis, the phrase "a thousand splendid suns" aptly captures the novel's theme.

Historical Revisionism in “Gone with the Wind”

Historical Revisionism is the reinterpretation of history through the eyes which anybody has never used before. It challenges the preconceived notions of historiographers and gives us new insight over the orthodox ideas of history. The revision of the historical record gives an unhackneyed outlook towards history. It sometimes disregards and reinterprets the motivations, notions, and decisions of the people involved and subjugated in the history. History plays a prominent role in every literary work directly or indirectly. Reinterpretation of history gives various approaches over a literary work and it provides various perceptions on things which writers haven't habited before.

Historical Revisionism is intimately connected with the novel *Gone with the Wind*. Margaret has mastered this and used it in a concise and feasible manner to get the better insight about it. In the history of America, the Great American Civil war plays a crucial role. The Civil war has spanned from 1861 to 1865 which is one of the most notorious things that ever occur in American history. The war is between Northern and Southern states of America. The Northern states have the upper hand during the civil war and they are called as Union. The Southern states have joined together to fight against the Union and they are called as Confederacy. The solemn cause for this dispute is slavery and the discriminations they

have encountered by the Union. The war has brought ineffable despondency towards American citizens; moreover, America has buried many piles of dead bodies as the consequences of Civil War. The particular atrocious act has gulped nearly 7,50,000 lives which is not a minuscule digit. When people scrutinize the history, they get the insight of the historiographers who have written that, however there is no any assurance for the authenticity of facts. Like the saying, “History is written by the winners” so, the readers aren’t unchained to wade through the dark side of the history when they read biased or one-sided stand. The Historians so far have written from the side of the Union however Margaret has pictured the state of Confederate states of America during the civil war, which makes this novel more unique in its features. Margaret Mitchell has brought the dark side and the unpursued outlook of American civil war through her novel to the world.

The protagonist of “Gone with the Wind” is Scarlet O’ Hara lives as a daughter of a plantation owner and the plantation is named as Tara which is in Georgia. The novel actually set in the year 1861 it is when the American civil war has its dawn. The novel begins like, “It is the spring of 1861” (“Gone with the wind”-1). Margaret has shown Scarlet as a belle from the Southern side of America (one among confederate state) which itself manifests the stand of Margaret. Scarlet loves a man called Ashley Wilkes but he doesn’t reflect it back. It is one of the root causes for all the pros and cons that she is up to face in her life. Ashley marries Melanie Hamilton instead of Scarlet who is from Atlanta. Scarlet later marries the brother of Melanie who is Charles Hamilton. He has been fighting for the freedom of Confederacy against Union. Here Margaret shows the inexorable significance of the American Civil war in the life of Scarlet and Charles Hamilton.

As the result of joining his hands with the confederate army, his soul evades his body because of measles. Here Margaret exhibits the eminence of the American civil war which brings distress in the life of the protagonist Scarlet O’Hara. She forfeits her husband which is the greatest disaster in her life. Later on, she moves to Atlanta to live with his sister-in-law Melanie Hamilton. She is the wife of Scarlet’s first love Ashley Wilkes. Ashley also fights in the army for the confederacy against the Union so it causes Ashley to ask for approbation from Scarlet to be with his pregnant wife during his absence when he is engaged in the war. The mental state of Scarlet sprouts out through the song she sings “When This Cruel War Is Over.” (“Gone with the wind”-180)

Scarlet acknowledges and decides to stay with Melanie during his absence. This decision generates abundant havocs in the life of Scarlet. Scarlet has left her plantation Tara in the hands of her parents Gerald and Ellen. During the Civil War, there is a bloody massacre at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and the Gettysburg battle is being fought for three days. Soon, as usual, Civil War has started ruining the life of Scarlet and at the same time it also affects Melanie’s life. Ashley was captured and sent to prison by the Yankees. Yankee is the name given by Southerners to the Northerners. Melanie is pregnant at that time; making the situation worsen, Yankees have captured Atlanta and they have taken over the control of Atlanta and set fire to it.

Soon Scarlet and pregnant Melanie are forced to leave Atlanta before getting grabbed by the Yankees. Once again Civil War plays the plight role in the lives of these characters. They fly out of Atlanta with the succour of Rhett who later becomes the life partner of Scarlet. In the meantime, Melanie gives birth to a child during their skedaddle. After assisting them to flee, Rhett manages to join the confederate army like Ashley and Charles Hamilton. People have stopped saying “One more victory and the war is over”. (“Gone with the wind”-181) So, most of the characters in the novel are somewhat connected with the civil war. Margaret efficiently showcases the history from the eyes of the common man who is being

suppressed (Confederates).

Shortly, Scarlet and Melanie have reached Tara the plantation field of Scarlet. The Civil War also has something obnoxious for Scarlet, it is that their plantation is being looted by Yankees and her mother Ellen is found dead and her father has gone crazy. It has brought great despondency to Scarlet's life. Moreover, Civil War has accompanied the scarcity for foods and clothes. Hence civil war has made the rich plantation owner to scavenge for subsistence like vagabonds. Once again, the influence of civil war is shown by Margaret making Scarlet to search for a new life partner to resolve her financial crisis.

Finally, Margaret has found a man called Frank, the husband of Scarlet's sister. She has married her sister's husband deceitfully for her financial urge. Indirectly the Civil War influences the personal life of Scarlet and particularly her marital status. She has needed money to repay her debts to save her plantation and once their needs are attained, they get parted.

After a while, the Yankees have released their captives so, Ashley is also heading back to home. During the solemn crisis, a soldier from the Confederate helped Scarlet in her plantation. There are lots of soldiers returning to their hometown aftermath of war. She marries again for the 3rd time. It is from her bucket list who is Rhett. Finally, Scarlet loves someone truly but after the loss of the son of Scarlet and Rhett, named Bonnie Blue Butler. Rhett started to hate Scarlet.

Aftermath of the Civil war, Melanie falls ill because of the miscarriage and soon she has died of it. Scarlet's life is full of abundant and obnoxious miseries and a few moments of jubilation. However, most of her miseries are caused by the civil war and its atrocious side effects. The Civil War has nullified her first marriage and looted her plantation, also has dragged her life into poverty. The Civil war has made her to depend a man to solve her financial crisis, etc... these are the remarkable impacts of the Civil war in Scarlet's and other characters' lives. Hereby Margaret Mitchell unknowingly induces the existence of historical revisionism in her novel "Gone with the Wind".

Historical Revisionism in "A Thousand Splendid Suns"

The book spans a significant period from Pre-Soviet invasion to Taliban rule to post-Taliban reconstruction. It depicts a poignant tale against the backdrop of Afghanistan's tumultuous history. The narrative unfolds the lives of two women, Mariam and Laila, in Kabul, offering a glimpse into their intersecting paths across different generations. Through these protagonists, Hosseini portrays the harsh realities of female lives in Afghanistan which marks by the oppression and distress, spanning nearly five decades of the country's tragic history.

History is the study of past events, actions, and developments. It encompasses the exploration and analysis of human societies, cultures, and civilizations over time, providing insights into the evolution of societies and the factors that have shaped them. It is crucial for several reasons. It helps us to understand the roots of current issues, learn from past mistakes, and appreciate the achievements and progress of human civilization. It provides a context for our present and insights into potential future developments. Additionally, studying history fosters critical thinking, empathy, and a broader perspective on diverse cultures and societies. History has a profound impact on shaping the present and future. It influences societal norms, political structures, and cultural identities. History also contributes to the development of national identities and inspires positive change by highlighting examples of resilience, progress, and cooperation. Overall, the impact of history extends across various aspects of human life and collective memory.

On the other hand, Historical Revisionism is a blooming branch in literature which refers to the reexamination and reinterpretation of historical facts and events with the aim of presenting a different perspective or narrative. While some revisions are driven by new evidence or a desire for a more accurate understanding, others are motivated by ideological, political, or nationalistic agendas. It is important to approach Historical Revisionism critically, considering the credibility of sources and the motivations behind the reinterpretations. The impact of Historical Revisionism is significant and it influence the public perceptions and cultural narratives because, sometimes it leads to distorted views so the writer heeds to be vigilant to the nuances of historical narratives and the truthful representation of events.

In literature, Historical Revisionism shapes how societies perceive certain events, figures and time periods. Writer reinterprets historical events to offer alternative perspectives, challenge prevailing narratives, or highlight overlooked aspects. It enriches cultural understanding, fostering empathy and critical thinking. However, it is important to distinguish between responsible revisionism which is grounded in thorough research, and manipulative revisionism that distorts facts for ideological or political purposes. Literature has the power to influence public perceptions and the impact of Historical Revisionism in the context on how well it aligns with an accurate representation of historical realities. Through, Historical approach a writer reconceptualize the history as his point of view with the influences of his contemporary world so, it helps the readers to revisit the history with their present-time aspects. It kindles the readers' mind to ensure the real history with the writer's revisionism. It is quite interesting area and nowadays most of the writers have excelled the features of Historical Revisionism "A Thousand Splendid Suns" (2007) is a prominent novel which brings out four different viewpoints and the first begins with a tale of Mariam who has born in Afghanistan in 1950's. The second part portrays the early days of Laila who is born in Kabul in the late 1970's. In the next part delineates the life of Mariam and Laila, their struggle and how the sequences of war make more havocs in their routine life. Marriam Laments, "you are afraid, Nana, she might have said. You are afraid that I might find the happiness you never had. And you don't want to me happy. You don't want a good life for me. You are the one with the wretched heart". ("A Thousand Splendid Suns"-20) It manifests the cruel history of Afghanistan in the life of lay man. The last part exhibits the major character Laila and the domestic vantage of the history of Afghanistan. It also describes the global and regional power struggles which bring chaos and destruction to both women's lives and the country.

The novel peeps into the history of Afghanistan which approximately spans over forty years, from the early 1970s to 2003. In the period of time, Afghanistan is subject to a series of violent, brutal wars and numerous political coups. When the story opens, Afghanistan has undergone a bloodless coup in 1973. In 1978, there is a Communist counter-coup and it has followed with the invasion of Soviet Union in 1979. After battles with the Mujahedeen or Islamic fighters who are being supported by the United States, the Soviet Union finally withdraws its last troops in 1989 and finally Mujahedeen takes over. However, Mujahedeen themselves are divided racially and fought in the war. After spending a decade with the brutal face of war, the Taliban holds the power of Afghanistan and establishes peace but also the firm Islamic Shari'a law. Shari'a law is nothing but adhering to the rubrics and norms of Islam and conformity of the people's devotion towards God. Finally, the book concludes with the establishment of American colony in Afghanistan following the events which have happened on September 11, 2001 Hosseini attempts to anchor the reader in the complex history, by showing how the specific historical events such as the departure of the Soviets from Kabul, the war of Mujahedeen and the reign of Taliban

which haunts the life of Afghan people. The narrator uses chronological history as a reference for the novel's action. Many events in the characters personal lives are tightly bound to political events. By embedding the historical facts, Hosseini helps to show how global and local politics have influenced every Afghan people's life. The present research deals with these interweaving historical facts with fictional narratives. The novel illustrates the social, cultural and economic aspects of Afghan history through the characters, events and settings. During Taliban rule the hospital scenario of Afghanistan "A young women pushed forward, said she had already been there. They had no clean water, she said, no oxygen, no medications, no electricity. "There is nothing there"" ("A Thousand Splendid Suns"-171) Hosseini brings out the profound history of the common people, through the tormenting lives of people akin Mariam, Laila, Rashid and Babi.

While the Afghan-born American writer traces the socio-political and cultural history, he challenges the images of his nation associated with the war, racism, religious extremism, gender and ethnic discrimination. In this context, Hosseini aims to challenge and subvert the narrow outlook towards his native country by providing the deep-seated conflicts and problems of the nation and the writer hopes to elucidate the faithful representation of Afghanistan in his novel. Through the lead characters Mariam and Laila, who have suffered, endured and resisted the domination and violence of their husband Rashid and also by their country. Hosseini presents his nation as enduring, resisting and surviving the invasions and wars while presenting the gender, racial and class discrimination. The narratives have reawakened the idyllic history of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The rationale of this research is to highlight the beleaguered and intensely subjugated living of the people in the backdrop of the political and social conflict and to explicate how the fiction reveals the recent history, social fabric and cultural peculiarities of the world. This study aims to facilitate on retaining the identity of history with the lens of Historical Revisionism and to observe how the power struggle affected the lives of people. The research aims to understand how fiction helps in representing the cultural, political and social history. It explores how the text aids in transmitting history, war and plight of people in time of war and the impact of war in their culture and life. Through the approach of Historical Revisionism, the novelists illuminate the path towards an undisturbed perspective of the history.

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