



Transcultural Narrative in Khalid Hosseini's and the Mountains Echoed: A New Historicist Analysis

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ABSTRACT

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Hosseini in his third novel and the Mountain Echoed endeavours to portray the social, political, and historical background of different cultures and highlights the core issues running parallel within the situation of Afghanistan entangled in challenges of political instabilities, social unrest, insecurities due to foreign invasion, the rise of Taliban and the status of Afghanistan after 9/11. By keeping tabs on Afghan culture, this paper has explored Hosseini's paralleled narratives of other cultures such as Paris, America, and Greece. To generate a power discourse, these narrations construct an identity and authoritative stance by invoking the influential backgrounds and histories that cause these different ethnicities to revolve all around the world, a global movement towards the re-evaluation of the old notions and concepts about the fixity of boundaries of nation-states. By observing the cultural taboos in different countries, Hosseini points out the distressing factors that weaken a culture by referring to the Afghan wars and a certain political agenda in counter countries. By highlighting these cultural taboos, different nations uphold a discourse of power against rival cultures. Through counter-cultural practices, cultural values and taboos are set forth to evaluate the nature and function of different cultures presented in the novel. His indecisive affinity with his native place shows his monomaniacal focus on a transcultural outlook. Hosseini's ambivalent approach towards divergent cultural narratives inclines towards advanced and innovative aspects of the new historicism by Greenblatt. These radical concepts about culture and history are being employed in this paper to analyze the text. His idea of anecdote in new historicism exists between de-nationalization and re-nationalization, between de-territorialization and re-territorialization authenticates his view of culture as being a gigantic text which embraces small events that skirmish with each other in a way in which the author constructs a melodrama to back up non-fiction elements within fictional taste. To support the power factor in cultural analysis, Foucault's notions about the power structure are employed within Greenblatt's two-sided cultural concept. The complicated nature of culture has been traced by the analysis of historical incidents and dialogue by different characters having contradictory and complex nature as per the complicated procedure of cultural phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

Hosseini highlights a cultural shock in his third and incredibly multicultural novel *And the Mountains Echoed*. He imparts logic for judging other cultures and an interaction of numerous discourses through the different characters in the novel have been holding different positions amidst their locality by presenting the different nations for which they have affinities. He has investigated all these issues are materialized against the milieu of Afghanistan's inconsistent history. Moreover, the issues such as the diasporic and hybrid identities, the question of otherness in the west after 9/11 and post-colonial matters: the marginalization of low culture – working-class people are less committed to a luxurious life, identity issues and the striving of individuals to power their subjugated voices beneath constructed social structures within the description of cultural practices in east and west have been manifested. Instead of a detailed description of war, Hosseini detailed the consequences triggered to drive Afghanistan towards enduring uncertainty and insecurity in all spheres of life. The situation of most of the first chapter indicates the socio-economic surroundings and disorder of locals. For them, even finding "water was a daily struggle, because, after ten years of drought, the river too ran shallow" (Hosseini, 2013).

Hosseini discloses all these issues by presenting the past of Afghanistan- how individuals are fearful about the future of their children that they have to make choice: either they should own their parenthood or stained it on the cost of choosing a prosperous future for their children. In a crucial moment, the only option they have is to go against their choice, "no parent should have to make a choice" (Hosseini, 2013). Hosseini highlights these cultural practices within a specific period after the departure of the Taliban from the town. Rishi's story in the novel climaxes the Afghan brutality when she and her family are being slaughtered for the property by her uncle. Hosseini's revelation of cultural brutality leads his narratives toward a historic moment in Afghanistan.

However, the agenda of the author is not to foreground the setback and predicament of Afghan culture by the cruelty of war but he synchronizes the Afghan wars with the historic moment of 9/ 11, the most significant and major historical event that has been discussed in the present study within the reference of Afghan/America relations before and after 9/11 and for which Afghanistan has to face a cultural shock for a long time. Politics of the past generates today's culture and philosophy of life. Both are responsive and respond to one another. The purpose of the author is to investigate the reasons behind the cultural idiosyncrasies and abnormalities- cultural taboos and vices. Moreover, he locates the optimistic and strong elements in the culture through which a nation can uphold its power of discourse. To examine the counter cultures, this study contextualizes the social and cultural practices of individuals are the emblem of the particular nation in the text. Khalid Hosseini in his novel *And the Mountains Echoed* unveils a counter-cultural narrative by foregrounding important historical periods of different countries. He generates a local and foreign cultural narrativity of socio-political and socio-economic conditions of Afghanistan particularly and of other nations in general. By employing the concepts of the cultural model the contemporary along with the past counter-cultures have been studied.

2. Literature Review

Fetters (2013) wrote her article about the violent history of Afghan female poets by presenting a bold lady in *and the Mountains Echoed*. Naila Wahadati is a morally complicated writer and intellectual. She is also a rebellion against Afghan culture's traditional notions of women signifying a rich and controversial tradition of women's poetry in Afghanistan and the surrounding regime.

Yarra and Steele (2013) craved out "And the mountain echoed" as a feminist study a sit is a very broad subject and covers numerous aspects of human life. So, Yarra did the same in her research when she touches on the core issues of women's vital role in creating harmony and may them in society. To discuss, some unique characters had taken from the novel such as Naila Wahadati who speaks out about the oppression of women in Afghan society.

Kurnia (2014) investigated power and love issues in Hosseini's novel that happened between different characters of the novel. The focus of researchers was on two major problems: kinds of love and how power has exerted in love between characters. To express

and explains this view, three concepts of theory had been used to find out different kinds of love in the novel.

Ashraf (2014) set the study of *And the Mountains Echoed* in a comparative mode with *The shadow line* and *Our lady of A lice Bhatti* while focusing on the trends of globalization in South Asian English novels concerning Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. While talking about *And the Mountains Echoed*, the researcher discussed Afghan national, cultural, and geographical boundaries issues.

Mustafa (2020) has traced the phenomenon of alienation in the text and how it affects the lives of the characters dependent on each other. Almost every character experienced this estrangement and they feel alienation from their surroundings, people, culture, and even from themselves.

3. Theoretical Framework

New Historicism reconstructs and refashions the literary crux of different eras and revises the literary morals were the subject in prior ages by negating the conformist and traditional methods of approaching the text. It is a restoration of old and past values by weighing the present situation that is to say interaction between past and present constructing the future of the nation affixed with the past and is constructed by the values and ethnicity of a particular culture and its subjects according to their conformation within the specificities in a given time and space. Contextualization of the facts is an easy approach to the fabrication of social-economic and socio-political phenomena and, also the constitution of the forces that are the discursive social practices and activities adopted by the subjects of society. The amalgamation of imagination and social facts in a text broadens the horizon of analysis which is the cultural analysis amidst the literariness of a text and the reconstruction of previous ideas to analyze and scratch the truth against the backdrop of a history of a particular culture. Greenblatt opines it in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Greenblatt, 1980). Greenblatt's use of the terms: literary foreground and political background in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Greenblatt, 1980) represent that the outside world is not away from the inside realities of literary work but keeping some distance from it. One element is the center, while the other is the context in this point. Unlike the formalist approach, this view refers to the influence of literature on the culture and society residing outside of the work. This point leads toward the broad debate of the connection between the facts and the imagination that Greenblatt debates breaking with the domination of old procedures over the explication of texts. *Political* reference has been drawn on the social and political issues in the culture of contemporary society coming from and going back to the past.

3.1 A framework of the Cultural Model

The discussion of two contrasting ideas: mobility and constraints is the foremost part of the methodology of the present research. The notion of constraint denotes the dualistic nature of the cultural phenomenon that can be observed by the technology of control. Greenblatt uses this term to formulate the sense of check and balance over culture and its activities acting by its people. Technology signifies some set rules made for the accuracy of society. With the help of it, individuals can recognize the limitation of social connections that are stretchy because limitations are on the attitude of individuals cannot be bounded but specific behaviors in a particular culture are for the representation of its particularities shaping its structure. However, punishment and reward are always here to maintain the rules and discipline of society; punishment is for the violation of rules, and appreciation is determined for invoking positivity in society. Constrains help individuals fashion their individuality. It is a power- a discourse that oozes from the limitations of culture to legalize the boundaries strengthening within limitation and is a way to strengthen the position as an individual of a nation, no matter, whether it is supreme power or a marginalized one. Power resides in the voice of an individual and specific cultural objects. Consequently, Greenblatt's concepts: of technology, punishment, and discipline are profoundly indebted to the ideology Foucault had opined to express and formulate a authenticate module of an organized culture. For Foucault, "the state is by itself an order of things" (Robson, 2008). His declaration develops the logic of peculiarities of a nation that give the power to individuals and society to fashion their uniqueness by recollecting a power to dialogue with the variant historical manifestation of culture and it would be a more exciting and powerful discourse. Constraints generate mobility

as adherence to cultural ethics and norms causes for creating a sense of respect for other cultures and religions that leads toward the collectivity of humanity and brotherhood all around the world. From this perspective, Greenblatt observes fixity and mobility in cultural phenomena stapled with the complexity of human attitudes and behaviors. As culture and society are fastened with one another, ideology determines the range of a specific culture. This fixity is nourished by the ways people learn to affiliate with other people beyond the limited range of customary outlooks of their local life.

To describe the narrowness of culture and social mobility, Greenblatt notes in his cultural essay: 'Internalization and practice of a code of manners' (Greenblatt, 1995). To juxtapose the internalization with the social energy, he stresses that the restriction upon flexibility is dispensable for its flourishing in different societies.

This booming of cultural liberty is not possible by employing refinement and a different measure of discipline nor is it an accidental course of signs but a matter of exchanging ideas and cultural materials. However, a culture is a framework of dialogs and knowledge that is being transmitted through different channels like adoption, marriage, travel and tourism and enslavement, etc. From one region to another there is the diffusion of alternative signs and activities boosting up social energies towards different directions in society and what he calls this structure are a social design and social structure (Greenblatt, 2001). To justify Greenblatt's cultural model as per *And the Mountains Echoed* he chooses to explain similarities between literature and society that are intertwined on a cultural basis. Greenblatt stresses the functionality of the author's social life and his background. So, he analyses the text in three domains: as a display of how does a particular author intensify his feelings towards the specific work of literature, as a representation of codes and norms signifying the background scenario of that particular behavior of an author, and how do the cultural objects in text respond to those codes (Greenblatt, 1980).

4. Analysis

This chapter discusses the claims that are framed according to the major issues in the novel determined to locate the ideology behind these issues.

4.1 Story-telling Practice and its Implications

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini puts forth a labyrinth of diverse cultural practices running parallel to an emotional story of two siblings in the mountains of Afghanistan echoing through different periods and generations, a major theme in his novel that provides sources and clues for scratching various traditional activities of numerous events and incidents. As the novel starts, we can notice the very first page:

So, then you want a story and I will tell you one. Don't either of you asks me for more? It's the tale and we have a long day of travel ahead of us, Pari, you and I.....I am counting on you, boy, while your sister and I are away. Now, one story, then, Listen, both of you listen well. And don't interrupt (Hosseini, 2013).

The story told by a father is a microcosm of detailed descriptions and scenarios that would change the entire lives of his kids and it is a long journey of generations that takes the characters from the mountains of Kabul, Afghanistan to France, Greece, and America. Hosseini revives the history of Middle Eastern tradition through the enormous impact of Arabic narrative talent that is not overlooked by European academics. Even European travelers to the Middle East come across this variety in the eighteenth century. So, what history imparts become the roots of a specific culture that extends far beyond national boundaries turning into a unanimous cultural form. Representation of cultural phenomena through storytelling echoes through generations within the uniqueness of individuals and goes beyond the basic textual interpretation focusing on the constitution of cultural practices.

4.2 Child Adoption Practice and Its Implications

Pari's adoption is an example of the hybridization of culture and tradition, a powerful episode in the novel taking the characters from Kabul to France and then to California for the search for identity and roots without which she feels hollowness throughout her life. A cruel practice executed in Afghan culture: one sells his daughter and the other's adoption for the sake of motherhood causing the contextualization of hybrid cultural practices in the story:

"She hunkered down beside him now, her glasses pushed up on her hair. There was wetness in her eyes too, and when she dabbed at them with the handkerchief, it came away with the black smudges." I don't blame you if you hate merit's you're right. But-and I don't expect you to understand, not now -this is for the best.It really is, Abdullah.It's for the best. One day you'll see" (Hosseini, 2013).

Within the framework of Greenblatt's concept of cultural *exchange*, this cultural practice of child adoption can be put within two scenarios: how it is contextualized in local culture and how it functionalizes in some foreign place. By using an economic metaphor of exchange and Negotiation Greenblatt means how texts and social practices provide different ways of negotiation and exchange. It injects the powers of different experiences that matter differently in different cultures but are dispensable for boosting society towards recognition and identity positively.

4.3 Migration Practice and its implications

Not a simple phenomenon but as old and complex as civilization and development of humankind, migration is one of the indispensable and historic constituents of cultural histories encompassing the issues of cultural rootedness, it enhances the transcultural collaboration of people of different ethnicity and background. Within the reference to national identity, Hosseini accounts for this historic phenomenon by highlighting different reasons: war, economic instability in Afghanistan, marriage, travel, and adoption. During Soviet intrusion, many Afghan families found solace in moving toward America, France, Pakistan, and other parts of the world. They have to flee away at the cost of the loss of their identity. An amalgamation of a materialistic approach and a sense of genuine connectedness with local culture gives a significant concept of a mixture of two cultures representing two different approaches; firstly, Timur inclines towards local cultural ethnicity and multiculturalism. Secondly, Idris is a kind of Afghan-American who" come and take a picture. They take videos and make promises" (Hosseini, 2013) with the victimized Afghan people. Greenblatt calls it "the stoppage of mobility" (Greenblatt, 2001). Instead of the circulation of positivity and lending decent and virtuous cultural values over other cultures, there is the blockage of negotiation in the course of a situation that a particular country is facing in a specific period.

Hosseini exploits this issue in the fourth chapter entirely where a local Afghan, Nabi, transfers his cultural specifications in his conversation with a Greek doctor, Markos, who has left his country, Greek, for Kabul and has been part of this country for almost eight years. For this, he labels himself as a "crazy Greek" (Hosseini, 2013) who never thinks about his return to his native land despite the insistence of his aged mother. His coming to Afghanistan is for the treatment of deformity of people by shelling and bombing during the war. Going back to 2002 a post-war era, "we left behind our country...our friends; our family. So, we have come to this godforsaken city to lift up our motherland" (Hosseini, 2013).

Nabi's acknowledgment of other righteous cultural ethics, values, and performance for his country approaches Greenblatt's idea of "hybrid network theory" (Greenblatt, 2001) that is dispensable to mobility a circulation of ideas and information beyond the margins of nations e.g. Dr. Markos lives for a cause in an alien culture and people with whom he sustains an underlying affinity essential to humanity and to an international culture that is the same everywhere in the world and that can be located under "masked by skin and bones" (Hosseini, 2013). From both sides, there is an exchange of positivity amidst a war situation and fascism in which sustaining equilibrium is not possible but Hosseini presents both characters as a microcosm of cultural clash and celebration of motion and mobility.

4.4 The practice of tourism and its implication

Tourism is a socio-cultural movement in and outside countries and places. Different reasons compel the people to adopt this adventure e.g. social, economic, political, and environmental reasons that provide them chances to negotiate the counter-cultural practices and activities and also to analyze the biases of people towards other cultures. Greenblatt notes that tourism has a scope for stability and mobility that gives air elasticity by traveling and visits for the exposure to a new world because constraints are no more than a lethargic motion (Greenblatt, 2001). In the same way, Hosseini puts forth that there is always an impulse in

human nature that would take the people towards unusual circumstances and exposure to new worlds embedded with new hopes, dreams and aims to do something new by intermingling in new places with other people (Hosseini, 2013).

4.5 Cultural Narrativity as a Discourse of Power

The discourse of power is a way of thinking over a subject to speak against injustice raising some kind of ideology. It responds to hegemonic attitudes and dominant social models are unable to notice the marginalized voices beneath powerful social and cultural structures. It is a phenomenon through which tenants of a particular society perceive themselves culturally and the development of social knowledge and meaning that they share amongst generations within the limited scope of discursive practices amidst an indigenous cultural realm that they owe to their ancestors continually. All this happens to the episteme of marriage, family law, customs, religion, reward, revenge, and other cultural practices. The element of responsiveness refers to the diversification of cultures in the novel can be analyzed because of Greenblatt's cultural critique of two opposite and contradictory elements: constraint and mobility. Mobility has been set forth for the events and cultural elements in the novel where characters are busy in negotiation and exchanging their views within and ahead of cultural boundaries. However, like Greenblatt, Hosseini takes his shift from international to local and indigenous culture has been evaluated within Greenblatt's concept of cultural constraints. As Greenblatt owes much to Foucault while talking about a repetitive pattern of discursive cultural practices and mentions a discourse of power and response. Foucault's argument about this pattern is:

Neither the dialectic, as the logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts. Dialectic is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict (Foucault, 1980).

In other words, Foucault imparts different ways to contradict and respond to other civilizations and subjects as the dominant power of discourse in a specific cultural ambiance within which such happenings and events are related and people fashion their life according to these trends in society. Likewise, discourse generates its meaning by producing knowledge. What Foucault wants to label discourse is a wide range of repetitive patterns of episteme and experiences shared by a community horizontally. Through the discourse in the fourth chapter, the constituency of a turning point in the novel is evident when Hosseini claims his individuality as an Afghan demonstrating a way that brings him in contact with other cultures and nations towards he has set a motion of response by imparting his message and showing the discursive practices. In his dialogues with the Greek doctor, the narrator, Nabi, holds a strong position as a native Afghan inhabitant observing decades packed with the trauma of war causing cultural anarchy in his country. Nabi's position as a pure Afghan is what Foucault opines as:

"Some have examined the changing ways that power circulates throughout societies, constructing social institutions as well as individual subjectivities, as it imposes order and discipline in historically specific ways" (Foucault & Ewald, 2003).

Hosseini is asserting his individuality and subjectivity apart from the reality of his diasporic identity fluctuating between the references to Afghanistan and other nations. Hosseini's advance and backward movements between history and the present are an effort to approach the political history of his native land lurking in the present culture of its people. Observing from this point of view history shapes the culture that is a form of discourse. Since each period in Hosseini's narrative generates its episteme. This is Foucault's concept of imposing order and discipline in historically specific ways.

Likewise, New Historicism juxtaposes the power and knowledge to generate the historicity of culture and provides sources to study and analyze a particular stance on which the phenomenon of subjectivity is constructed displaying certain values and standards that are fundamental to the obvious discipline. It shows the inability of immobilization and the possession of one's uniqueness varies from culture to culture.

5. Conclusion

The discussion in this paper shows that the contemporary transnational movements and the cultural phenomenon must not be considered as an all-encompassing entity that would not need to have interacted with other cultures in other zones. Rather Cultural mobility is an urgent need to re-establish the orthodox understanding of the limitations and flexibility of cultural boundaries. On the other hand, a strategy that is being searched out with the concept of cultural mobility to bring forth a variety of discourses and the power of the uniqueness of a particular nation is the interplay of restraints and creativity in the sphere of different cultural zones constructed distinctiveness and identity for each nation has been described in the text.

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