COLSON WHITEHEAD’S APEX HIDES THE HURT –
A METONYMY OF A TOWN’S LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

V. Gajalakshmi
Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English,
Holy Cross College,
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli.
&
Dr. Catherin Edward,
Research Supervisor, Associate Professor, Department of English,
Holy Cross College, (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli

ABSTRACT

Colson Whitehead’s third novel Apex Hides the Hurt is a satire as well as humourous novel. The overall thematic thrust of the novel places abundant stress on the importance of truth in history. The protagonist discovers that history will usually be altered or obscured supporting the whims of many authoritative individuals. The novel additionally emphasizes the importance of history by highlighting the prime discoveries created by the protagonist as he researches; his attention to the reality of history helps to make a fuller and accurate view of formative historical events. Specifically, the protagonist learns several salient facts about the original settlers and the problems they faced. They endured several hardships of maltreatment and violence from White people when they tried to go away from a centralized society and make their town. Then, once they had finally established the town of Freedom, the economic influences of the Winthrop family encroached and eventually took over the town. The novel ultimately warns that erasure and obfuscation of history will result in the loss of awareness of traditionally persistent issues, and therefore history should be honoured, remembered, and studied recollecting such continuous issues. Hence, this article examines how psychological perversion disintegrates the history of a town in Colson Whitehead’s Apex Hides the Hurt.

Keywords: history, race, domination, culture.

Paper

Colson Whitehead’s 2006 novel Apex Hides the Hurt, begins with the entry of an African American ‘nomenclature consultant’, renowned for successful branding of consumer products. He holds a meeting with Albie Winthrop, the scion of an old white family for town’s naming crisis. It is currently called Winthrop, and the town’s leaders are split on whether to keep it the same as Councilman Albie Winthrop would prefer, or to change it to Freedom, which was what the former slaves christened the town, or opt for New Prospera – the name that the namer’s former firm chose. So nomenclature consultant decides that recovering lost history is vital to understand the current cultural state. He discovers the town founders and the ex-slaves who named Freedom to form the denouement of the novel. The hero discovers that the town was initially established by African-Americans and was initially named Freedom. The industrialist Winthrop family, in the long run, showed up and utilized their monetary impact to take over the town, renamed it, and reworked its history.

The novel underscores the significance of a total and precise perspective on history to increase a more profound comprehension of steady recorded issues. The accounts of the initially African-American pioneers remain as demonstrations of the routes in which American chronicles and customs have been founded. The personality town of Winthrop is founded on the possibility that the first pioneers didn't make a difference, and consequently their battles and oppression didn't make a difference. The novel and the hero are both mindful of the industriousness of racial strains in the United States, and accordingly, the historical backdrop of these strains must be concentrated as a method for progressing in the direction of fixing those issues. This idea is
symbolically represented at the end of the novel when the narration states that the protagonist’s “foot hurt more than ever” (Apex Hides the Hurt, 212). His injury represents historical wrongs, and the persistent pain represents the persistence of those wrongs.

This novel clearly investigates the issues of race and racial tension in the United States, as the story examines and exposes salient dynamics by which racial conflict and persecution are still perpetuated. During the first conversation that the protagonist ever has with Jack and Dolly, they give the following as one of their reasons for wanting to move to Winthrop and away from urban areas: “School system going to pot. Do you know in some classes they have kids who don’t speak a word of English?” (Apex Hides the Hurt, 48). This statement has strong racist undertones, and the larger implication is that socio - geographical shifts in the United States are often influenced by racial antipathy.

The novel stresses the way that these issues of race are profoundly established in American history and endured even today since they have been so imbued in American culture for hundreds of years. As the hero peruses the first draft of the town's history, he is exceptionally charmed by a story in which the first African-American pilgrims, while voyaging west, ran over a lost white kid. Regardless of the pilgrims’ acceptable deed, they were assaulted by an enormous gathering of white individuals particularly for being African-American. The protagonist then has the thought, “There was always that kindling problem of being black in America—namely, how to avoid becoming it” (Apex Hides the Hurt 145). The narrative portrays the ubiquity of persecution and prejudice within the African-American experience, thus emphasizing the urgency with which such issues must be acknowledged and addressed.

The epic further calls attention to that trouble intending to these trenchant social issues in such a way that their history is frequently overlooked or concealed because of smugness, detachment, elements of corporatism and commercialization. The tale depicts components of American culture like industrialism and corporatism as for the most part destructive to social equity in which they fit and conceal the issues to promote their plans. For instance, the industrialist Winthrop family changes the town’s history after dominating with the goal that they can promote their own business interests. Also, when Apex swathes are changed to come in various skin tones, the change depends just on business personal circumstance, and hence the novel depicts the go about as one of allocation of racial personality. These factors generally cover-up and draw attention away from the true gravity of racial issues in America, making these tensions “an invisible wound” (Apex Hides the Hurt 139) that, like the protagonist’s injured toe, will only become worse if not recognized and treated through social action.

The story at times deviates to give an article on the hero’s backstory. He had no enthusiasm for being a terminology specialist, however, he had a natural ability for it also, consequently built up an enthusiasm for the work. Nonetheless, around the time that he gravely harmed one of his toes, he started to get disappointed about the work, seeing it as shallow. He secured his injured toe with a brand of gauze, Apex, that he had helped name. Inconspicuous, the injury, in the end, got tainted, and the toe must be evacuated. The hero quit his place of employment before long.

The protagonist proceeds with his examination into the town's history, and he discovers that one of the first authors, William Field, had proposed the name Struggle for the town’s unique name. The overall focus of the novel not only helps in naming names as powerful forces, but also in determining the essence and identity. Throughout the novel, it describes the effects of names on the concept and identity of the named subject. This thematic aspect of the story is illustrated by the protagonist's role as a “nomenclature consultant” (22) because his professional focus is constantly centered on the dynamics of names. He deeply absorbs everybody’s notion while investigating. He wonders when he comes to know how the city became corrupt by the council in the town. Winthrop family to rejuvenate the town occupied more places and named the town even
commintioned the history of the town. According to the original settlers’ wish he renames the city as Struggle at the end.

**Works Cited**