

Interrogating the Official Syrian History in Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple's

Brothers of the Gun: A Memoir of the Syrian War

When the researcher watches immense suffering, inhuman activities, crime against common people along with new born babies in bomb blasting on YouTube and in newspaper, he desires to get the real sense of the war. He watches many scenes of the war on YouTube channel, Al Jazeera and desires to know the real suffering and fact of the war. Further he searches recent books published on the theme of war. He finds the book more interesting after reading the first page which begins from a Syrian writer and poet Muhammad Al- Maghout's quote which begins from "They gave us watches and took away time ..." (1).

This study interrogates the official Syrian history of the Syrian civil war in Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple's *Brothers of the Gun: A Memoir of the Syrian War*. Marwan Hisham as a Syrian freelance journalist and resident of Raqqa during the war, attempts to display the more real scene of the bloodthirsty civil war countering the official history from his first hand experience. The recorded history of the Syrian war emphasizes on the data of the casualties, number of the states who support Syrian regime and which nations go against. It deliberately excludes the regime's violent reaction, massacre of the common people. It hides some crucial information about the war, its cause, real suffering of the common people who were in the trap of the government forces and the rebels. The history tells Russia, Hezbollah, Iran support the Syrian regime however the UK, France, the US, Israel, Turkey support the rebel. This history does not record the plight of the real sufferer, details of historical facts since the history speaks from the point of view of the government.

This memoir, thus, critiques the Syrian official history of the civil war giving details of violence and suffering of marginalized Syrian people.

The official history of the Syrian civil war narrates the story of the war and its devastating result from the perspective of the government. It presents the events as if it is external observation. It emphasizes diplomatic relationship of the Syrian government and other foreign nations which actively involved in the Syrian conflict. Where are the real scene and internal suffering of the common people? It does not record the extreme pain, suffering, brutality, torture, humiliation faced by the marginalized Syrian people. The government speaks undermining its people's deeds, protests. The history does not reveal the flaw, brutality done by the regime. It tells that the government has to face protest of the people blaming the regime has not brought reform. Furthermore, it does not tell that Assad has massacred its people. It demonstrates the data, foreign airstrikes and unrest during the war, foreign nations' intervene in the war.

On the contrary, the memoir sheds light on the violent picture of the war giving more details about historical facts from the real sufferer's perspective. It resembles the internal observation of the civil war during contemporary Syria. The memoir seems more credible than the recorded history of the civil war in order to get the true scene of the war since it is real sufferer's firsthand account. The memoir provides details of the narrator's suffering when he has to queue at 2 am for the bread but he returns empty handed. This memoir picks up the brutality of security personals to protesters. It reveals that Assad has massacred 1300 Syrians by 2013. Additionally, it provides the details of Nael, Hisham's friend's suffering in the prison and his brother, Tareq's obligation to join the Islamist Revolutionary. Through these

descriptions, Hisham and Crabapple attempt to give clear sense of the Syrian civil war.

In order to support the claim of interrogating the recorded history of the Syrian war, the researcher takes some theoretical insights from different intellectuals. The works of Michael Foucault, Hayden White and Linda Hutcheon are crucial to challenge the history and its claim of objective representation because their works critique on ‘objectivity’, truth of historiography and its claim on fact in historical representation of the past. They critique on singularity, absolute truth in historical representation and celebrate multiple truths in historiography underlying the history is also human constructed. They refuse that only history has truth, fact strongly emphasizing the new history that counters the history of the past revealing the history as socially, ideologically situated. Consequently, these theories are significant to talk about the power and truth, to challenge the truth of official history of Syrian war through the memoir.

Firstly, Canadian literary critic, academic Linda Hutcheon in her *Poetics of Postmodernism*, insists that ‘historiographic metafiction’ allows us to speak constructively about the past in a way that acknowledges the falsity and violence of the “objective.” This refutes the view of only history has a truth. It further claims that both history and fiction are discourses, and human constructed. This writing avoids that historiography is the autonomy of art. She states that ‘historiographic metafiction’ shows that fiction is historically conditioned and history is discursively constructed.

Likely, American historian Hayden White, in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth- Century Europe*, argues that ‘metahistory’ contradicts the view that ‘historiography’ can be objective or truly scientific in itself, unaffected by anything. For him, every representation of the past has ideological implication.

Implicitly supporting Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Croce, White asserts that there were many “truths” about the past as there were individual perspectives on it.

Next, French theorist Michael Foucault’s concept on genealogical history is applied. Writing on Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*, Foucault investigates the power in representation of history as it is often power practice. In his essay, “Nietzsche, *Genealogy, History*,” he insists genealogy deconstructs truth, arguing that truth is more often than not, discovered by chance, backed up by the operation of power and knowledge. The history is written from the people of the power. It is often the perspective of the dominants and the discourse functions as true. However, there are discontinuities in the history.

Accordingly, an American literary theorist and academic scholar, Louis Adrian Montrose in his essay, “New Historicisms,” insists on historicity of texts and the textuality of history. He further emphasizes that one can analyze history a dynamic force because it is not believed to have any fixed, objective facts. Nonetheless it should be taken as literature with which it interworks, as a text which can be interpreted.

The memoir questions on the mainstream history of the Syrian civil war as it only records the result and data of the death and countries involved in the war. The history does not tell the cruelty, brutal acts, and real sufferers’ experience, massacre done by the security forces and chemical attack by the regime. Thus, to critique this misrepresentation, Hisham as a resident of Raqqa in Syria presents his memoir and gives more details to reflect the real sense of the war. The text records the war scene and protest of Syrian people. Hisham, his friend Nael and Tareq, Nael’s brother take part in the protest as they demand for the regime’s fall. They ask Assad, the president of Syria to relinquish from his presidency. They hope some democratic reforms from

the regime nevertheless he is indifferent to the common people's demand. Instead, the regime has attacked the protesters by chemical weapon. It is illustrated that by 2013 Bashar al- Assad massacred 1300 civilians by using chemical. Nael is arrested by the security force and tortured brutally. He is asked to tell his god's name because Assad is considered as god for the Syrian. After being free from the security force, Nael joins the Islamist State and is killed in action. Hisham has to queue to have bread for his parents at 2 am but returns empty handed. During the war time, he has witnessed the airstrike and bombardment both by the government security forces and foreign countries like the USA and Russia. Hisham's uncle's café is blasted and his uncle has been exiled. They have to bear the extreme torture of both the security forces and the rebels. Tareq, Nael's brother joins the Islamist revolutionary after his brother's demise. After five years of time, they are displaced and separated from each other. Afterwards Hisham is exiled to Turkey because of unrest in Raqqa.

Hisham is currently a Syrian freelance journalist. His work covers Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Even though this memoir is his first book in his career, the book clearly picturizes the truthful sense of the devastative war and its direct effect on the civilian. Molly Crabaapple illustrates many war-torn pictures to make it more factual. She co-authors with Hisham to illustrate the scene after the war. The memoir makes departure from the official history since it is more real and based on the experience of the real sufferer.

The memoir has been analyzed from different perspectives by many scholars and literary critics. For instance, Bryan Stevenson has emphasized on the conflict, struggle and tragedy of the civilian during the war. He proposes, "This powerful memoir, illuminated with Molly Crabapple's extraordinary art, provides a rare lens through which we can see a region in deadly conflict, a struggle for peace, and a

human tragedy in desperate need of attention ...” (2). He underlies the aspect of deadly conflict, struggle and tragic scene of the war in this memoir.

Additionally, Pankaj Mishra, author of *Age of Anger* and *From the Ruins of Empire*, focuses on despair of the war and its emotional power and intellectual depth. He assumes, “From the anarchy, torment, and despair of the Syrian war, Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple have drawn a book of startling emotional power and intellectual depth. Many books will be written on the war’s exhaustive devastation of bodies and souls, and the,... the Levant has already found its wisest chroniclers” (2). He strongly focuses on the despair, torment of the war and it captures the emotional power and intellectual depth on the reader.

Furthermore, Angela Davis asserts, “A revelatory and necessary read on one of the most destructive wars of our time. . . . In great personal detail, Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple poignantly capture the tumultuous life in Syria before, after, and during the war—from inside one young man’s consciousness” (3). Davis emphasizes the picture of lives of the people before, during and after the war. She focuses that the personal consciousness of the author captures the phases of the war clearly.

Likely, Anand Gopal, author of *No Good Men among the Living*, focuses on the true aspect of firsthand experience of the war. He assumes, “Marwan Hisham took part in the uprising against Bashar al-Assad and then,... journalism from inside ISIS territory, risking his life so that the world might know the truth. He gives us an unforgettable portrait of what it feels like to resist a tyrannical dictator...” (3). He analyzes the text as Hisham’s great attempt to provide the truth to the world risking his life.

Furthermore, Hillary Chute, a graphic novel columnist, in “Comics of Violence and Nostalgia from War-Torn Syria,” views, “Brothers of the Gun” tracks

the Syrian civil war in both words and images from the ground and from the inside, offering one of the clearest explanations of the war's growth and unrest that is its motor" (23). She emphasizes on author's imaginary depiction of the Syrian war through writing. For her, the author explains the war vividly including more details.

In addition, Cencepcion de Leon, "Making a Sense of the Syrian Civil War," views, "This book recounts Hisham's coming of age since those early days, how the Syrian War unfolded through the eyes of its citizens, and what became of his friends one was killed by government soldiers ..." (20). It underlies the aspect of war and its cruel effect on the residents such as Nael, Hisham and Tareq. For the author the memoir recounts the Syrian war from the real eyes of the sufferer.

These critics have focused on the creative issues and political aspects of the text. However the interrogation of official history by the text has not been explored. The memoir challenges the main stream history of the Syrian civil war. Throughout the text, Hisham has illustrated the real scene of the war torn Syria from his own experience. The sufferer narrates the history recalling the events he has witnessed during the war. His illustrations of killed people by security force, illustrations of destruction of buildings, suffering and homelessness of people are based on his first hand experience that presents the marginalized issues which were considered less significant in the mainstream history. Thus, the researcher states that the memoir counters the official history of the Syrian civil war by presenting marginalized issues of the Syrian in Raqqa.

In the text, Hisham and Crabapple clearly insist, "History might prove us wrong, but at least we could speak to the people killed when the regime tanks rolled into Deir ez- Zor mere weeks ago" (3). The authors clearly point out the cruelty done by the regime whereas the main stream history misses this violent act done by the

government. The official history is too selective in representation of reality of the scene. Michael Foucault, in his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,” assumes, “Genealogy,... to follow the complex course,... the complete reversals- the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to,... it is to discover that truth,... root of what we are, but the exteriority of accidents” (140). He suggests that genealogy investigates the truth in the history by analyzing errors, false assumption. Thus, the memoir investigates the truth of the past. From the lines of Hisham and Crabapple’s and Foucault, it seems clear that the memoir counters the official history of the Syrian war by giving the truth of the past.

Furthermore, not surprisingly, the memoir critiques the Syrian official record of the civil war because it reveals the wrong representation of the Syrian protesters by other strongest nations. In the text, Hisham and Crabapple explain, “The strongest countries promised protection but gave us only NGOs, warlords, and guns. While our government slaughtered us, propaganda networks claimed that we faked our murders” (33). It appears that the protesters suffer from double violence from their own government as well as from other nations since they provide war weapons in place of protection. The official history dismisses this fact as it is real sufferers’ experience. Foucault contends, “The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them....” (151). It strongly suggests that the historians’ duty is to replace, disguise and invert the meaning and redirect those who dominated them. They have to challenge the dominant and seize their power. The discussion of Hisham, and Crabapple and Foucault show that they vividly challenge the dominant, official history which misrepresents them as they are less significant.

Additionally, Hisham and Crabapple's memoir raises the question about the validity of Syrian official history which suppresses the extreme painful situation faced by the civilian. In the text, the authors strongly reveal, "“Who's your god, you animal?” the soldier asks. Out of fear, the helpless man replies: “Mr. President Bashar al- Assad.” “Liar!!” The soldiers' boots descend on his back” (41-42). They demonstrate an unbearable torture faced by the protester as he is forced to obey his government. The soldier forcefully asks him to tell his praiseworthy man. In contrast, one cannot see the description of people's suffering in mainstream history. Foucault contradicts the view about the truth of the history by asserting, “The historian's history finds its support outside of time and pretends to base its judgments on an apocalyptic objectivity,... because of its belief in eternal truth, the immortality of the soul, and the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself” (152). It projects that the historian's belief about the objectivity is only possible when it believes on the eternal truth otherwise it is not possible to have objective stance in history. The arguments of Hisham and Crabapple and Foucault account for the suspense of historical objective truth. Through this explanation, the text raises the question about the validity of Syrian war history by challenging its objectivity.

The text raises another more significant issue about the pain and maltreatment of the young protesters in the cell during their imprisonment. The authors explain, “Nael described what he had seen in the Criminal Security Branch basement. The jails overflowed with protesters, average activist guys about his age, packed so tight into their cells that they had to sleep on each other's backs and legs” (43). It emphasizes the pain of the protesters. Though they are protesters, they should have sufficient space for living there however the security force keeps the young protesters as parrots in the cage. The official history of the Syrian war does not give these details. Foucault

clearly emphasizes, “The new historian, the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade. He will not be too serious to enjoy it ... he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing” (161). It suggests the role of the new history to make reappear the masks that were placed in the history. The historian must push the different faces to its very limit. It must unmask the historical events. To examine both views of Foucault and Hisham and Crabapple, the identical point is both views question the historical knowledge.

Obviously, the next challenging issue is the text picks up the common people’s history to interrogate the official history of the Syrian war. Foucault views, “The role of genealogy is to record its history: the history of morals, ideals ... ascetic life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to appear as events on the stage of historical process” (152). For Foucault genealogy should record history of different kinds and they can have different interpretations. They must be appeared in historical process. He emphasizes that even an ordinary person’s history should be appeared in the historical process. In the memoir, the authors demonstrate, “Who’s your god?” The soldier slapped the naked man, who was too weak, too reluctant to answer. “Your god is Bashar, *wla!* Who’s your god?” “Bashar,” said the man” (46). The authors show the torture given to the protester by the security force. The soldier forces the man to obey the regime like god. The authors present the common man’s suffering in their writing on the other hand we cannot get such events discussed in the official history of Syrian war. The official history excludes immoral, inhuman activities done by the government. The authors bring the common people’s issue in their discussion as genealogy does. It shows the gap between the data of official history and the text.

A valid point is that the authors of the text contradict the view of the official history since the text unmasks the security forces' brutal act and foolishness to the common people. The official history hides such activities because they have power to ignore such events. Foucault observes, "The final trait of effective history is its affirmation of knowledge as perspective. Historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place..." (157). He emphasizes the knowledge as individual perspective in addition; the historians erase some events which they consider as unnecessary or unfavorable to them. Consequently, they develop history as selective tradition. Likewise, the authors of the memoir present the excluded events of the history. They point out, "Those security officers at the checkpoint had few duties, but foolishness was the one that they performed best,... exited above the law and social norms....They harassed customers, who had to pass through their checkpoint to reach the café..." (55). The security force should maintain security and peace to the civilian, instead the force seems to harass and exploit the people who pass through the camp. They seem to be above the law. The security forces threaten the people. Observing both Foucault and Hisham and Crabapple's point, it is clear that the text contradicts the official history as the history hides such activities done by the government side.

To reiterate, the text raises questions on the official historical representation of the civil war by illustrating the government's failure to address the protest. The history conceals the government's repression of people's protest claiming that it is one of the 'events' in history however the authors clarify the fact that they ignore people's demand. Linda Hutcheon, in her essay, "Historicizing the Postmodern: The Problematizing of History," notes, "What the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both

constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past” (89). She means that both history and fiction are human construct discourses so both have not objective truth of the past. The history is also constructed and has loopholes in representation. Similarly, Hisham and Crabapple note, ““Events,” especially covered up the fate of Hama. *Ahdath*. Those clipped syllables hid the tens of thousands who died in 1982 in Hama, ... army burned out not just insurgents but history itself” (62). Illustrating the history of 1982 when the National Army fought with Syrian Islamist, the authors analyze the hidden incident of the past. The army burnt the history of the war and disappearance of the city, Hama. It reveals that the government ignores the event. The official history seems less concerned with this fact. As a result, the text resembles the problematization of the official history explaining the past event took in Syria before 2011’s protest.

More importantly, the memoir raises the question on the Syrian history presenting the fact that the government ignores the 2011’s protest as if it did not take place either. The ignorance proves that a small cause can have destructive significance. It questions the history as it shows the lack of evidence in the history of the Syrian war. “History,” as Hutcheon asserts, “is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought- as a human construct” (16). She emphasizes history as a human construct so it is not absolute. Thus the truth of history is not ultimate one rather it is questionable as it is human construct. The other text or history can raise the question on its truthfulness. Hisham and Crabapple note, “The regime thought they could bury the “events” the same way. At first they denied that the protests even existed, calling protesters “infiltrators” and “vandals.” Then they insisted on ending the protests at any cost” (62). The regime wants to suppress the protests at any cost in place of solving it. He wishes to bury it like the events of 1982 nonetheless he becomes no

more conscious about the tiny cause can have great consequence that is the civil war. The government's history is indifferent to mention the weakness of the government so we get no more information about its fault, negligence. Thus, the detail of the memoir raises the question on the truthfulness of the official history.

A further argument is that Hisham and Crabapple's text puts uncertainty over the official history of the Syrian war as it documents the origin of an Islamic States. "As we shall see, contemporary historiographers- Hayden White, Michel de Certeau, Paul Veyne, Louis O. Mink, and others- have, for quite a while now, been questioning the nature of narrative knowledge in the discipline of history," remarks Hutcheon (56). To assess the argument, it seems that historians of contemporary time put question mark on the knowledge of history. Hisham and Crabapple describe the West as, "They did not care about the ideals for which Syrian protestors had died. To them, besides the war, Syrian land was ... just land belonging to God. Wherever they could build an Islamic State, they would" (66). To observe the lines one gets that the West would sow the seeds of Islamic State and they claim for the war. They seem both the doctor and the patient at the same time. The official history does not clarify this fact. Thus, the document of Hisham and Crabapple reveals the truth than the official one. There is obvious resemblance between the claim of Hutcheon and of Hisham and Crabapple

Equally, the text problematizes the official Syrian history's claim as it clarifies the regime's attack to its city by warplanes. "The postmodern," Hutcheon recommends, "... reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge" (89). This emphasizes that the postmodern texts and other art forms problematize the historical knowledge and its truth claim. The knowledge of the history is not completely

truthful. Likely, Hisham and Crabapple note, “The jets echoed. My family wept and prayed.... *Army convoys are coming from Hama and Brigade 93 in the northern town of Ain Essa. They will gas us all to death. We should leave. To where? We must*” (72).

This presents the plight of the real sufferer in the war. Neither they can escape nor they can stay in the basement because of the tremble of the bomb. They become helpless and stay in the same room whole day. The official history does not include the pain, voice of the civilian. The explanation of Hutcheon and Hisham and Crabapple seems identical as they both problematize the historical knowledge.

Accordingly, the memoir inquires the historical documentation of the events about the Syrian civil war. Hutcheon points out, “It is not by accident that I have been using here the language of Michael Foucault, for his description of the challenges offered by a Nietzschean “genealogy” to standard notions of history...” (90). She brings the language of Foucault to challenge the notions of history. Consequently, the language questions the historical notion of fact and representation. It searches the loopholes in the history. Likewise, Hisham and Crabapple note, “Always, the West comes here, posturing about the protection of minorities, freedom, democracy, fair play. Always they carve up our countries, steal resources, bomb our cities ...” (80). These lines strongly show that the United States often controls the weak nations and shows its power, domination. Most of the time, it interrupts other’s civil war. The Americans attack weak nations to capture the resources. They come with propaganda of freedom, security however they become violent later. The assumption of Hutcheon and Hisham and Crabapple shares identical in challenging the history. The official history of Syria does not include this detail about the West. The memoir seems more real as it opens the secret of the West vividly. A fundamental factor is that the point

made by the authors of the text and Hutcheon's idea of Foucault's genealogy resemble to challenge the knowledge of the history.

A further point is that the memoir disputes the official history of the Syrian war revealing the flaw of the government. Explaining that history is written with ideological implication, the authors reveal truth about the massacre of the Syrians. Hutcheon believes, "Thanks to the pioneering work of Marxists, feminists, gays, black and ethnic theorists, there is a new awareness in these fields that history cannot be written without ideological and institutional analysis, including analysis of the act of writing itself" (91). It seems she underlies history is written from ideological and institutional analysis. Thus, history is not always factual. It has more falsity and gaps of knowledge. She is identical with theorists like Marxists, feminists and gay since they advocate history as ideologically situated. By analogy, the authors of the memoir show the data that is hidden in the official history. Hisham and Crabaapple note, "This idea grew stronger after 2013, when Assad massacred 1,300 Syrians with chemical weapons in Eastern Gjouta. When the international community ignored the victims of the Syrian regime ..." (80). The history does not tell the regime has massacred the Syrians by chemical weapon, it just tells the death of the people. The history is ideologically situated as the regime has the power to bury the events. The observation of the text suggests that the history is ideological and institutional analysis. This indicates that the concept of Hutcheon and the data explained by the authors of the text bears a striking resemblance to talk the history.

Moreover, the text projects uncertainty on official history of the Syrian war investigating the real face of Islamic State. On the one hand, the history does not represent the Islamic State positively; on the other hand, the authors of the text represent Islamic State as civilian's friend. They cooperate with the revolution. For

the residents, the government seems enemy than the Islamic State. The authors of the text state the point, “Syrian Islamists wallowed in contradiction. They alternately condemned and co-opted the revolution, alternately fought and allied with non-Islamist groups. All the while, ISIS prepared Raqqa as its stronghold” (96-97). It clarifies that at that time the government was more enemy than ISIS. The ISIS was supporter of the activists. They make Raqqa strong co-operating the revolution. This shows uncertainty over the historical representation of ISIS. Likewise, “This new literary history,” insists Hutcheon, “is not an attempt to preserve and transmit a canon or a tradition of thought; it bears a problematic and questioning relation to both history and literary criticism” (91). This emphasizes new history questions both history and literary criticism and its representation of truth. A closer examination of Hutcheon and Hisham and Crabapple arguments shows that the duty of new history is to raise the question on historical knowledge.

Furthermore, the text shows the gap between the official history’s representation and its interpretation illustrating how government invites Shia jihadist. The official history does not explain details about it. “In postmodern writing of history- and fiction ...,” Hutcheon admits, “... challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation” (92). To evaluate the statement of Hutcheon, postmodern writing challenges the historical assumption of objective representation. It helps to show the gap in historical assumption. An identical point of Hisham and Crabapple is the text gives detail of origin of jihadi in Syria. Hisham and Crabaaple note, “The government – thanks to efforts excreted by the Islamic Revolutionary Government of Iran- invited Shia jihadist militias from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan to come to Syria and take starring roles in their war movie” (105). To evaluate this illustration, one gets the

origin of jihadist as the government already invited to take part in war movie. It shows foreigners influence in Syria before. This explanation seems more truthful because of the authors' real experience. Through the analysis of statement of Hutcheon and the authors of the memoir, the text shows the gap in representation of history.

Building on, the text brings the issue of women in detail which official history keeps in margin because it is from the perspective of top. Louis Montrose believes, "To resolve history ... by effacing those complex historical formations in which not only the details but also the essences are produced, revised, challenged, and transformed" (395). He suggests that to resolve and refuse history are historical formations that revise and reproduce the details and essences of history. In the text, Hisham and Crabapple imply, "They ruled that women had to wear not only the face-concealing niqab but also gloves and the floor-length black abaya. Even their eyes must disappear behind black gauze" (113). This shows that the women are forced to follow the rule governed by ISIS. They have to wear the dress as they are supposed to. The authors bring the marginalized issue in discussion nevertheless the official history does not record such ordinary issues.

By implication, the memoir debates the official history of Syrian war claiming strongly about foreigners' air attack to Raqqa. The history just reveals France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey, and Israel support the rebels and Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah support the Syrian government nevertheless it does not provide descriptive details about the attack and its direct effect on the civilian. The authors of the text note, "THE BLASTS BROKE MY CONCENTRATION, along with the windows. These air strikes were different from any I'd witnessed. Each strike was precise ... then vanished ghostlike after their efficient discharge" (151). Hisham witnesses the American airstrike which seemed distinct from his earlier experience.

They blast the city and terrify the residents. History does not put the details so the memoir leaves the doubt in its representation of facts. Hutcheon points out, “It puts into question, at the same time as it exploits, the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction” (92). To view Hutcheon’s argument, historiographic metafiction questions and exploits historical knowledge of the past since it may not be true. A closer look to both Hutcheon and the authors of the memoir suggests that both try to question and exploit historical knowledge of the past.

A related argument is that the memoir presents the American wish to Hisham after they bombed Syrian city. In the text, Hisham clearly writes American’s wish to him to be safe from the chaotic situation. Hisham documents, “Americans wished me safety. Their country bombed mine, and here they were, showing concern more readily than my own people, who were asleep. *What irony*, I thought” (153). It seems Americans blasted author’s city and they give wish for him to be safe from the airstrike. It is like giving wish and trouble at the same time. The official history does not document the detail as the author does in the text. The assertion of Hutcheon is significant to alternate the view of history since she advocates for problematizing the historical writing. Hutcheon proposes, “It can often enact the problematic nature of the relation of writing history to narrativization and, thus, to fictionalization, thereby raising the same questions about the cognitive status of historical knowledge ...” (93). To examine the perspective of Hutcheon, it shows that history writing is a process of narrativization and historiographic metafiction questions the historical knowledge, facts.

A further argument is that the memoir challenges the view of the official history of Syrian war thereby reporting the Americans airstrike in the night. One can

not get details of Raqqan attack and its dreadful scene. The memoir illustrates the truth about the incident during American airstrike. Hisham reports, “THE AMERICANS LAUNCHED AIR STRIKES the next night and the night after, their symphony a curtain-opener for the fighters futile chatter, the gossip neighbors shared ...” (154). This reports the American attack to Syrian city in the night. This detail justifies that history has not more truth rather the memoir is truthful by reporting the fact in logical manner. Linda Hutcheon puts virtually identical view about the history in her essay. Hutcheon considers, historiographic metafiction, “refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are human constructs, signifying systems ...” (93). To observe the statement in detail, historiographic metafiction refuses the assertion that only history has truth by claiming both history and fiction are human constructs. People construct both history and fiction so; there is no guaranty of the truth in history. The findings indicate that the text refuses the statistics of history of war which does not have ultimate truth however the memoir has truths about the war.

In addition, the memoir illustrates the damage of his uncle’s café by American bombing. “One midnight,” Hisham explains, “a strike hit five hundred feet from the café. The thick glass panes fell sheet after sheet in the aftershocks” (154). The American airstrike destroys his uncle’s café’s panes. During the war, the people in the power destroy the common people’s construction, property with carelessly. A closer examination suggests that the official history does not record such marginalized issue. One can get the details of real suffering and destruction of public property in the text. Montrose assumes, “By such descriptive means, versions of the real, of history, are experienced, deployed, reproduced, and by such means they may also be

appropriated, contested, transformed” (415). To assess the statement, it highlights that version of reality can be reproduced and transformed. The history may not be factual rather the new history can project reality. The investigation of Montrose and Hisham claims suggests that the new text questions the previous text as does the new history to the history of past. The memoir can be other version of reality of Syrian war revealing more factual knowledge.

In a similar vein, the memoir illustrates the Syrian war with mini description of an ordinary man’s brutal death by ISIS. The official history does not record of the death of an ordinary man. The authors give the space for the marginalized people died in the war. Hutcheon advocates, “... like the poststructuralist, Marxist, and feminist challenges to the similar assumptions still underpinning much literary study today, the provocations of the theorists of history are starting to work to counteract the increasing threat of marginalization of historical study brought about by historians’ ...” (96). Examining the statement, it focuses the work of history to counteract the threat of marginalization brought by historians. Today’s history works as counterchallenge to the history of the past. In similar way, the authors of the text counteract the history of the past giving the space to the marginalized person for whom the official history does not particularize. The authors add, “Forty days into its reign, ISIS shot a man on accusations of burglary and murder, then hung his crucified body against the base of Raqqa’s clock tower. ISIS announced the execution like a carnival, but even after years of war...” (114). People view ISIS as their companies however they kill the man with the charge of murder. They celebrate man’s death as carnival even after the war going against humanity. The authors bring the marginalized issue into discussion. The findings of Hutcheon’s claim and Hisham and Crabapple indicate that both counteract the history’s fact and its representation which

does not concern common issue. The new history works to counter the earlier historian's claim of truths.

Alternatively, the memoir explains the security force's assault to the protesters. The mainstream history does not pay attention towards the pain of victims. The text asks the question about the historical fact, and its claim of transparency. Hutcheon indicates, "The premise of postmodern fiction is the same as that articulated by Hayden White regarding history: "every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications" (qtd. in Hutcheon, 120). She brings White's argument in order to assert that every historical representation has ideology of the historian. The person who writes the history represents the past events from his/her own perspective. Thus the question of truth arises throughout. The authors of the text have identical view on the historical representation writing victims' history during the protest. Hisham and Crabapple include, "In March 2012, security services murdered Ali al-Babinsi at a protest.... The teen lay on a blanket. His lips were parted, his face dehydrated and lean" (34). It seems the killing of civilian is normal during the protest. The security forces kill and make the alive helpless. However, the official history does not show concern about the death of civilian. The authors explain it giving place to common victim. It is possible to speculate that Hutcheon and authors of the memoir challenge historical, ideological representation. The government does not write their brutal activities in the history. So, the memoir challenges the official history of the Syrian civil war illustrating the victims' history.

Next, the memoir explains the fact of American's secret of entering in the civil war. The history does not clarify instead it simply tells that the American supports the rebels. The authors point out the American involvement in Syria has not to stop cruel Assad. For instance, Hisham reasons, "Not to mention the revolutionaries'

disappointment that the American intervention in Syria had not even attempted to stop Assad” (182). It implies that Americans do not intervene to stop Assad’s violent activities instead they have certain secret to enter in Syria. Even though Americans strongly critique Assad’s cruelty, they do not stop him. The history does not reveal this truth about Americans’ policy in Syria. The text includes the formerly excluded facts in the official history. Likely, Foucault justifies, “A characteristic of history is to be without choice. ...Nothing must escape it and, more importantly, nothing must be excluded” (157). It resembles that history should not be choice. It should not exclude the crucial information. It should include those facts in the past to show the real incident. To analyze both arguments, the points are similar as they both defend for the inclusion of the facts in history. The memoir includes the excluded past about Americans’ intervention.

Next, the memoir illustrates the experience of exile and displacement of the Syrian people. The residents have to exile caused by unrest war and ISIS invasion of Raqqa. The memoir gives details about the displacement of real sufferer caused by the invasion. Hisham and Crabapple present, “For those Raqqans whom ISIS’s invasion had forced to pack their bags and taste the sourness of exile...” (200). It underlies that ISIS’s invasion of Raqqa forces the Raqqans to leave the city. The people face displacement caused by the war. The official history does not give this detail to get real scene of sufferers. Conversely, the memoir presents the real suffering of the resident caused by the war. In a similar way, “Truth,” Foucault estimates, “is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history” (144). It seems the truth of history is an error and it is hardly refuted because it is made unchangeable in the

process of history writing. The data suggest that both claims resemble to refuse the truth of historical writing.

Also, the memoir objects the Syrian official history of civil war showing common people's helplessness, suffering since they have to lose their children's lives. During the war many mothers have to cry losing their children. They are helpless and in the trap of the security forces and rebels. The history does not show such dreadful scene and emotion of marginalized people. The text demonstrates helplessness and cry of the people who suffer more. The authors remark, "*How many old women like her had cried out, helplessly, begging for the help of young, able men like him*" (204)? This resembles that the mothers whose young child fights in the war become helpless after losing their children. They cry and suffer more but neither regime nor rebels feel their tears and emotion. The history does not have space for such cry and helplessness of mothers. Hutcheon notes, "The result is a very postmodern paradox, for in Foucault's theory of discontinuous systematization, "the discourse of modern knowledge always hungers for what it cannot fully grasp or totally represent..." (98). She means that the discourse of modern knowledge cannot fully represent the historical facts. Thus, the history is not sufficient to get real sense of the past. This seems to indicate that both Hutcheon's statement and authors of the memoir's explanation of the past match since they advocate for gap in historical representation.

Building on, the memoir refutes the official history's negative assertion about ISIS thereby projecting common people's positive belief upon them. For many people of Raqqa, ISIS are not enemy, merciless rather they are generous. Hisham and Crabapple put forward, "She knew everyone in the neighborhood and told me how ISIS guys were generous with her, paying forty dollars for every carpet she washed" (214). It shows the old woman is not indifferent with ISIS guys because they pay her

well and they are kind. The history takes ISIS as regime's antagonist nevertheless the text shows how ISIS guys are generous among the local people. Identically, Hutcheon bringing the idea of Nietzsche indicates, "... in *The Use and Abuse of History*, Nietzsche argued for a critical history, one that would "bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly" (1957, 20-1)" (99). It implies that critical history interrogates past history. The critical history raises question about the facts of past as it cannot fully acknowledge the past. The findings indicate that Hutcheon's argument and authors' argument are identical since they try to question the past history.

A further argument is the text uses details or historical data about Assad since the Syrian praise him before the protest. The Syrian did not have negative attitude towards Assad before the unrest war. The history does not tell the people's positive praise to regime before. Hisham notes, "I remembered leaving Aleppo in 2012. Posters hung on the walls, praising Bashar, criticizing the news channels Al Jazeera and Al Arabia ..." (219). This seems that the Syrian people praised Assad and people idolized him so that he would bring reformation in country. Then, the people recognize his fault and curse him. People unmask the historical record about the regime. In similar way, Hutcheon maintains, "First, historiographic metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record...The second difference lies in the way in which postmodern fiction actually uses detail or historical data" (114). She means historiographic metafiction refutes the historical record by using historical details of facts in writing. The results suggest that statement of Hutcheon and Hisham seems synonymous because of their lies to historical record and implementing new details of facts in the text. Thus, the memoir contests the official history of Syrian war lying historical data and giving details of the past.

Building on, the text responds the official history of Syrian war illustrating people's suffering in chaotic war and regime's welfare though it is destructive war. The text problematizes historical knowledge because it speaks from the government's perspective. It challenges such ideologically, historically situated knowledge. Hutcheon in essay, "Discourse, Power, Ideology: Humanism and Postmodernism," puts forward, "Historiographic metafiction is always careful to "situate" itself in its discursive context and then uses that situating to problematize the very notion of knowledge – historical, social, ideological" (185). It projects that historiographic metafiction problematizes the historical knowledge that is social, ideological. Consequently, knowledge is ideologically and socially formulated in the course of history. So, new history critiques on historical representation of the fact as it is socially, ideologically formulated. Hisham insists, "These were the entirety of our options, provided to every last Syrian-with one exception: Bashar al-Assad. He fell into a deep sleep every night, his conscience clear" (230). It proclaims that the war brings hostile situation to the common people however the powerful people sleep soundly. The war does not directly affect them because they live safely. The war mostly affects women, children and other marginalized people who directly witness and face its chaotic effect. Though Assad seems more conscience towards his people, he does not feel their emotion and helplessness. It indicates that the claim of Hutcheon and Hisham resembles certain synonymous attributes as they both problematize historical knowledge.

By implication, the text formulates details of displacement and its negative effect to common people. The people become homeless, helpless, and, regretful as a result. The official history just gives the data of migrants nevertheless it does not provide details of real suffering. "Historiographic metafiction, therefore, represents a

challenging of the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history writing through its acknowledgement of their inescapable textuality,” Hutcheon proposes (129). This shows that historiographic metafiction challenges both conventional forms of history writing and fiction thereby giving details of the past. Likewise, Hisham and Crabapple mention, “As soon as I got off the minibus, I was embarrassingly followed by Syrian kids, perhaps as young as six, who hustled me to buy their cookies and bottles of water. Syrians were in every street: selling, smuggling, negotiating, and scamming” (231). To look closer, it seems Syrians face displacement due to unrest in their country. They have no alternatives except selling, smuggling in Turkey. The history does not record the details of homelessness, helplessness of civilian due to the war. It just projects the statistics which does not clarify the real sense of displacement and exile. One interpretation of this would be both Hutcheon and Hisham challenge the conventional method of history writing.

Similarly, the memoir objects the official history’s representation of historical knowledge about the migrants who roar and face violence. The official history does not record their roaring, plight of being homelessness, helplessness caused by unrest war. The historian records the data, number of the people of migrants but does not seek the effect to migrant people. Hisham includes, “I saw familiar images: The roaring and the violence to get something or to get somewhere-whether it was to the front of the line for bus tickets or a spot on the line at the immigration office ...” (231). This explains that Syrians are everywhere at the bus station and immigration office with roaring and violence to get something. They face the hunger, roaring, extreme pain in other’s country. The author notes their pain, helplessness caused by exile. Synonymously, “Historiographic metafiction,” justifies Hutcheon, “shows fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured, and in

the process manages to broaden the debate about the ideological implications of the Foucauldian conjunction of power and knowledge ...” (120). It suggests that in history there is chance of fictionalize the facts and in fiction, there is chance of presentation of historical facts. Thus it is not certain all history is factual and all fiction is discursive or fictionalized. The memoir takes the context and real scene of the war which seems more real than the history. The result of both Hutcheon’s statement and Hisham’s view suggests that the text though it is not true history projects more truth and scene of marginalized people’s pain than true history.

Accordingly, the text problematizes the official history of Syrian war exemplifying Russian air attack in Raqqa. The history just gives the glimpse of Russian involvement to support regime. History tries to narrate the events about what might be the truth without details, firsthand experience. On the other hand, Hisham has firsthand experience since he is a witness of the events. Hisham discusses, “The Russians visited at midnight, sometimes a minute past ... it was a Russian plane from its loud sound, from the wide scale of its destruction ... leveled the building next to its original target” (234). This seems that the Russian also bombs the city at the midnight whether they target ISIS or the state. The planes destroy the building widely. Only the sufferer knows the real scene of that time. In the same way, Hayden White in his book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth_ Century Europe*, urges Saint-Real’s assumption, “... the histories he actually wrote are flawed by the fact that, on his own terms, they represent not a “truth” about the past but only a “fiction” of how the facts *might have been*” (60). It seems White advocates that the historian projects historical facts as fiction as they attempt to project the facts. So, the truth of history is questionable because it is not certain that historian writes the truth. The analysis suggests both statements made by White and Hisham reveal that history does not

record the facts instead estimated facts of the past. The text has more facts discussing the Russian involvement in Syria than the history has.

In a similar vein, the memoir doubts the official history of Syrian war about the construction of history as it is not fully about the facts. Some events are based on inference, guesswork, and estimate in writing history. The historian can do simple presentation of the past. White notes, “Humboldt began with an explicit denial that the historian can aspire to a nomological comprehension of history; instead, he argued, the most the historian can hope for is “a simple presentation” of “what actually happened” (qtd. in White, 179). This emphasizes that the historian cannot present full understanding of history. The historian can only do simple presentation of what actually happened in the past. One cannot grasp full knowledge of facts of history through reading it. Likewise, Hisham and Crabapple include, “The French, it seemed to me, were less successful in creating havoc. Unlike the Russians, their capital had been attacked by ISIS-so they attacked what they attacked what they supposed was ours” (235). It seems the history cannot explain the damage and attack done by French airplane vividly. It describes the French involvement in Syria in surface level. We can get only simple description in history nevertheless we see vivid description in the text. The French would attack the city and destroy in the name of attacking ISIS because their city was attacked by ISIS. This underlies the important task done by text and Hayden’s claim of historical knowledge as it is simple presentation of the events. It cannot give full-fledged scene of the events.

Moreover, the memoir provides the details of how people of Raqqa are obliged to join the religious class of ISIS. The history’s objectivity is questionable because it does not discuss how ISIS forces Raqqa’s people to join their religious class. Hisham and Crabapple include, “Others were forced to attend as punishment.

These unwilling attendees had been limited at first to lightly punished “disobeyers,” such as smokers and those who did not close their shops on time before prayers ...” (237). This emphasizes that ISIS forces the people to join their religious class as punishment. They want to spread their ideology in Raqqa through religion. This shows how local people are maltreated under ISIS’s control. White, talking on Benedetto Croce’s assumption, insists, “... historical knowledge was nothing but knowledge of the particular presented in a narrative account of what had actually happened in the past, one could not draw any general conclusions from its study ...” (401). It highlights that history is not fully representation of historical facts. It is narrative account about what actually happened in the past however one cannot conclude past events based on it. Thus, new history can question its representation. One interpretation of both White’s claim and Hisham’s explanation can be history is narrative and not sufficient representation of past. Thus, the text can have more ideas and truths than the history.

Next, Hisham and Crabapple’s text clarifies the motive of French, British, Dutch and Belgian to invade Raqqa. “A bunch of Belgian, Dutch, British, and French followers of Baghdadi,” estimates Hisham, “helped invade Raqqa in the name of the Islamic State and built,... distinctive form of colonization,... kidnapped local kids and enslaved, raped, and forcibly married local women” (240). It seems the author witnesses the real motive of British, Belgian, Dutch and French to invade Raqqa as it is another form of colonization. They torture local people, girls, and women. The history does not tell these events however as Hisham has seen their actions, clarifies it. It seems true because of Hisham’s firsthand experience. Similarly, “Nietzsche’s purpose was,” advocates White, “to destroy belief in a historical past from which men might learn any single, substantial truth. For Nietzsche,... there were many “truths”

about the past as there were individual perspectives on it” (332). It highlights that Nietzsche destroys single truth and forwards there are many truths according to individual perspectives about truths. It seems to clear that White’s claim and Hisham’s illustration match because they both advocate for multiple truths. In this sense, Hisham’s details are based on facts.

Another significant argument is that the text reveals the motifs of the West to intervene Syria. Hisham’s real experience in Raqqa shows he is true in claiming the facts of history. White puts forward, “The desire to believe that there was one, eternally true, or “proper,” idea of history was, in Nietzsche’s opinion, another vestige of the Christian need to believe in the one, true God ...” (332). This underlies there is not eternal, single truth. The belief in eternal truth is like Christian’s belief in only one God. Thus the truth is not single, and ultimate rather there is possibility of multiple truths based on individual knowledge on it. Hisham and Crabapple indicate, “The U.S.-led coalition which included European countries whose citizens were flying from European airports ... Syria-was bombing Raqqa, while those jihadi organizations were still active in European cities, sending more and more jihadis to us” (240). It shows that the U.S.-led coalition which included most European countries bomb Raqqa caliming jihadi in Syria yet many organizations of jihadi are still active in their nations. It shows they do not effort to clean jihadi in their own country but they charge and attack weak nations such as Syria. It reveals their attitude towards other nations that they are not actually for removing jihadi but for controlling and spreading their ideology to Syria. Hisham’s explanation seems real based on historical facts as he has witnessed the unrest war. The findings suggest that both White’s claim and Hisham’s projection of truth about the West and European are identical as they advocate for multiple truths about past.

A related development is the memoir shows historical truth about the West and Europeans' charge of terrorism to the Syrian. The history does not tell the charge made by the West and European nations. Hisham and Crabapple point out, "They had sentenced us to death by aerial bombardment. Our charge was terrorism ..." (241). The history does not write about the charge of European and the West's towards the Syrian. They send jihadi and attack the Syrian city claiming Syria is basement of jihadi and terrorist. It reveals the truth more than the history because the history is constructed on the basis of events partially visible to the historian. White implies Humboldt's stress, "... events are only "partially visible in the world of the senses; the rest has to be added by intuition, inference, and guesswork"; ..." (179). This shows that historical events are partially visible so there is no possibility of truth of events. Afterwards historian uses guesswork, inference to tell the facts about past events. It shows history is not objective rather it is based on narrative of events. The findings suggest that White's argument and Hisham's explanation meet together.

It is reasonable to conclude that Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple's *Brothers of the Gun: A Memoir of the Syrian war* challenges the official history of Syrian war presenting vivid descriptions of the war from marginalized people's perspective. The history records the data, results of historical facts and foreigners' intervene to Syria however it does not project the real sense and suffering of the Syrian people. The history speaks from the perspective of the government and it masks government's cruelty, violent activities to common Syrians. The history attempts to clarify events excluding marginalized issues of common people and real sufferer nevertheless it fails to display the internal scene of the war. The plight of the real sufferers, their displacement, helplessness, and isolation are not in official history. The history hides regime's brutal acts, security personals' torture, rebel's

assault, American's, Russian's and European nations' intervention and its direct effect to the Syrian. On the other hand, the memoir is based on real sufferer's firsthand account seems more factual than the history since the authors; Hisham and Crabapple illustrate details vividly.

The authors reveal Assad's assault to his citizens such as his reaction to protest with chemical weapon, the security forces' threatening to common people, ISIS's torture, rebels' assault, the death of innocent people, Russian, American, European nations' bombing the Syrian city. The authors clarify the motifs behind the American and European intervention to Syria since they wish to control and spread another form of colonization. In order to support the claim made by authors, Michael Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" is applied to talk about the history's representation and its power, politics of the government. Similarly, to challenge the historical objectivity, truth of Syrian war as the historian presents narrative account on the basis of certain incidents, Linda Hutcheon is used for she insists Historiographic metafiction challenges, problematizes historical truths. Likewise, Hayden White's "Metahistory" is applied as a tool to prove the argument that historical knowledge is socially, ideologically situated. Next, "New Historicisms" of Louis Montrose's is put to talk the history can be read and interpreted as literature. Therefore, we cannot claim history is best form of reality. The new history counters the past historical representation providing vivid descriptions and marginal issues which were once considered to be less significant.

Hence, the text, providing formerly excluded, marginalized people's suffering and factual description of the war challenges the official history since history selects some events about historical facts and excludes marginal issues. From this point, the researcher insists that the text challenges the historical which seems based on historical facts and marginal issue.

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