I. Introduction to Ondaatje in the Light of Politics and Poetics of his Writing

This research focuses on the internal lives of multigenerational characters and exhibits a fascination with extra-ordinary personality types, the dynamics of family life, the violence of war and the loss of cultural identity in the postcolonial world. It attempts to illuminate the complexity, vitality, and relevance of Michael Ondaatje's use of postcolonial perspective with the experience of *The English Patient*. This is to recover a lost, silenced, authentic non-western voice, as well as to engage awareness of postcolonial experience in the reading process.

Ondaatje's *The English Patient* through its treatment of the protagonist who always shifts positions represents metaphorically this very postcolonial shift in the study of the changing perceptions and modes of existence. Individual identification and national boundaries are the major problems in the novel. For example, the protagonist of the novel is nameless although he is the focus of the action from the beginning to the end. He is not even English but Hungarian by birth and an international bastard in his adult life. National identity for him in the desert is completely irreverent. Similarly, Kip, an Indian man serving in the British Army, straddles two worlds, walking a fine line between adopting western customs and losing his national identity. The other characters presented in the novel, *The English Patient*, like Caravaggio, Hana, Katharine Clifton and Geoffrey Clifton etc. themselves hurt and their identity is mutilated to desire through the image of others.

Regarding the theoretical position in this research, poetics refers to the theory of literary discourse. It is broadly used to denote the concept of theory itself. The term 'poetics' originated with Aristotle's *Poetics* that laid the foundation for Western thought. It is an idea, thought and a concept on the subject to express truth, knowledge, values etc. According to *Oxford Dictionary of English*, poetics is a style

of expression, and it means, "having an imaginative or sensitively emotional style of expression" (1358). Similarly, The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms defines poetics as:

> The theory or principles of the nature of poetry or its composition; writing that expounds such theory or principles [. . .]. The term also refers to the aesthetic principles of any literary genre, including prose forms. For example, it is perfectly acceptable to speak of 'the poetics of fiction'. The term has also been used occasionally to designate the study of versification. (289)

Poetics, in general, creates hegemony to discover truth through discourse. It is a creators' or writers' strategy. In a simple form, it is a discourse. It is the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge; disciplines and values upon dominated ones. It constructs, defines and produces the objects of knowledge in an intelligible way that at the same time excludes other ways of reasoning as unintelligible. Therefore, it is an alternative strategy to resist dominant culture. There can be no truth, subjects or identities outside of language that does not have stable referents and is therefore unable to represent fixed truth or identities. They are not fixed universal things but description of language through which social conventions come to be counted as truth. Truth is temporary stabilization of meaning. That is why, poetics is a social discourse formed by the society that has power. People who hold powers formulate the discourse and present truth as such in the society. It is an instrument to practice hegemony in the society.

The literary discourse by the end of the 20th century is also known as postcolonialism developed into the study of cultural groups and their practices.

Postcolonialism was not limited, as the misconception goes**,** to literary discourse in the colonized world. It is the study of the ideological and cultural impact of the colonialism on the text written at any point after the period of colonization. It is based on the historical facts of European colonialism and the diverse material effects. At the same time, newly articulated independent national and individual identities have emerged. Cultural studies relate to the identity of the emergent epistemology along with the attendant concepts such as displacement, hybridity, syncretism, diaspora, migrations etc. This study, therefore, encompasses the global issue of culture, race, ethnicity etc. So, postcolonialism falls under the rubric of cultural studies.

The term ‘poetics of postcolonialism’ has emanated from the new politics of difference that took its rise after 1960s. Poetics of postcolonialism, therefore, has compelled the traditionalists to re-evaluate their current theorizing of class, gender, race, nation and sexuality. The canonicity of the text has lost its supremacy by the end of the 20th century. Less important issues and voices are heard, subaltern characters are given priority and their voices and choices are given the top position with the projection of their experiences. This shift has opened critical and hermeneutical grounds for the study of the texts otherwise sidelined by the colonial grand narration.

The field of Postcolonial Studies has been gaining prominence since the 1970s. Some would date its rise in the Western academia from the publication of Edward Said's influential critique of Western constructions of the Orient in his 1978 book, Orientalism. The growing currency of the term 'postcolonial' (sometimes hyphenated) within the academy was consolidated by the appearance in 1989 of *The Empire Writes Back*: Theory *and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Since then, the use of cognate terms

'Commonwealth' and 'Third World' that were used to describe the literature of Europe's former colonies has become rare.

Although there is considerable debate over the precise parameters of the field and the definition of the term 'Postcolonial', in a very general sense, it is the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they had colonized in the modern period. The European empire is said to have held sway over more than 85 percent of the rest of the globe by the time of the First World War, having consolidated its control over several centuries. The sheer extent and duration of the European empire and its disintegration after the Second World War have led to widespread interest in postcolonial literature and criticism in our own times.

Postcolonial is a very loose term. The list of former colonies of European powers is a long one. They are divided into settler (eg. Australia, Canada) and non-settler countries (India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka). Countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, which were partially settled by colonial populations, complicate even this simple division between settler and non-settler. The widely divergent experiences of these countries suggest that it is not wisely used. In strictly definitional terms, for instance, the United States might also be described as a postcolonial country, but it is not perceived as such because of its position of power in world politics in the present, its displacement of native American populations, and its annexation of other parts of the world in what may be seen as a form of colonization. For that matter, other settler countries such as Canada and Australia are sometimes omitted from the category 'Postcolonial' because of their relatively shorter struggle for independence, their loyalist tendencies toward the mother country which colonized them, and the absence of problems of racism or of the imposition of a foreign language. It could, however, be argued that the relationship between these countries to

the mother country is often one of margin to center making their experience relevant to a better understanding of colonialism.

The debate surrounding the status of settler countries as postcolonial suggests that issues in Postcolonial Studies often transcend the boundaries of strict definition. In a literal sense, 'Postcolonial' has been preceded by colonization. The second college edition of The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as of relating to or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony. In practice, however, the term is used much more loosely. While the denotative definition suggests otherwise, it is not only the period after the departure of the imperial powers that concerns those in the field, but that before independence as well.

The formation of the colony through various mechanisms like power, money and other technologies as well as other natural resources of control with the various stages in the development of anti-colonial nationalism interest many scholars in the field. By extension, sometimes temporal considerations give way to spatial ones (i.e. in an interest in the postcolonialism as a geographical space with a history prior or even external to the experience of colonization rather than in the postcolonial as a particular period) in that the cultural productions and social formations of the colony long before colonization are used to better understand the experience of colonization. Moreover, the 'postcolonial' sometimes includes countries that have yet to achieve independence, or people in American groups who are minorities, or even independent colonies that now contend with 'neocolonial' forms of subjugation through expanding capitalism and globalization. In all of these senses, the 'postcolonial', rather than indicating only a specific and materially historical event, seems to describe the second half of the twentieth-century in general as a period in the aftermath of the heyday of colonialism. Even more generically, the 'postcolonial' is used to signify a position

against imperialism and Euro-centrism. Western ways of knowledge production and dissemination in the past and present then become objects of study for those seeking alternative means of expression. As the foregoing discussion suggests, the term thus yokes a diverse range of experiences, cultures, and problems; the resultant confusion is perhaps predictable.

The expansiveness of the 'postcolonial' has given rise to lively debates. Even as some deplore its imprecision and lack of historical and material particularity. Others argue that most former colonies are far from free of colonial influence or domination and so cannot be postcolonial in any genuine sense. In other words, the overhasty celebration of independence masks the march of neocolonialism in the guise of modernization and development in an age of increasing globalization and trans-nationalism; meanwhile, there are colonized countries that are still under foreign control like that of Afghanistan, Iraq etc.

The emphasis on colonizer as well as colonized relations, moreover, obscures the operation of internal oppression within the colonies. Still others berate the tendency in the Western academy to be more receptive to postcolonial literature and theory that is compatible with postmodern formulations of hybridity, syncretization, and pastiche while ignoring the critical realism of writers more interested in the specifics of social and racial oppression. The lionization of diasporic writers like Salman Rushdiefor instance, might be seen as a privileging of the transnational, migrant sensibility at the expense of more local struggles in the postcolonial location. Further, the rise of Postcolonial Studies at a time of growing transnational movements of capital, labor, and culture is viewed by some with suspicion in that it is thought to deflect attention away from the material realities of exploitation both in the First and the Third World.

Despite the reservations and debates, research in Postcolonial Studies is growing because postcolonial critique allows for a wide-ranging investigation into power relations in various contexts. The formation of empire, the impact of colonization on postcolonial history, economy, science, and culture, the cultural productions of colonized societies, feminism and postcolonialism, agency for marginalized people, and the state of the postcolony in contemporary economic and cultural contexts are some broad topics in the field.

Ondaajte who belongs to the lineages of two cultural and racial statuses: Dutch (Western, White) and Sinhalese (Orient, nonwhite), has demonstrated his position of hybridity in his writings. Along with his trans-cultural experiences of Canada and Sri Lanka, Ondaajte gives voices to the people in the assertion of their identity and their history in priority. Through his novels, he creates communal and public readers who are often perceived as culturally and locally specific. They create their own world which inevitably reflects the world out of which borderless community is possible.

Critics have enthusiastically received Ondaatje's works, praising the originality of his imagination and his successful blurring of literary conventions throughout his career. His effective integration of mythical and historical allusions both in poetry and fiction impressed by the musical, sound-conscious language and consistency of his experiments with the shapes and sounds of words made him popular. His skill at exploiting elements of humor, extravagant metaphors, and sudden shifts of perspective are noted. Inter-textual nature, narratives as well as explorations of personal, family, community and national identities become the key elements in his writings that make him postcolonial artist. National boundaries, increased sensitivity to gender relation, the complex cultural effects of war and the glamorization of violence, cultural hegemony, mimicry, dislocation are themes of his writings.

With his *Running in the Family*, he conjoined fact with fiction. He revisited his native land and wrote of his childhood, adding the stories he was told about his family and of the generations of Ondaatje who had lived in Sri Lanka. Through a blend of anecdotes, poetry and period photographs, he attempts to understand his father, apparently a manic depressive, who served as a major in the Ceylonese Light Infantry, commandeering trains with his revolver.

Theme of power of language in his 1987 book In the Skin of a Lion can be observed. The book describes the coming of age of Patrick Lewis, an artistic young man from rural Ontario who befriends several exploited Finns and Macedonians struggling to learn English through attending plays and movies and mimicking the actors. Through the tutelage of Patrick's anarchist lover, Alice Gull, an ex-nun, he turns against Toronto's ruling elite, and plans to destroy the city water works, a grandiose depression-era project.

Postcolonial writings speak of identity in the heteroglossic structure of the novel, a particularly rewarding object of study. It has given special attention to the many voices present in the novel; sometimes in the service of amplifying those voices that have perhaps not been heard in traditional literary study and more generally, in the attempt to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of the novel. History becomes its part to make plurality of the text along with the originality of it. To provide a useful context for the study of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Herodotus's Histories play an important role. Universal concept of good or bad is untenable in modern society because it unjustly marginalizes dissenting points of view. His views of autonomy, reason and pluralism are very useful to bridge past and present. Conflict and violence are virtually inextricable from human affairs. Minor characters become the hero and major as they are thought become the minor in his writings. Subaltern gets the voices

and comes into priority. Postcolonialism seeks to intervene to force its alternative knowledge into the power structures of the West as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different people of the world. So, it is about a changing world, a world that has been changed by struggle which its practitioners intend to change further.

His first volume of poetry, *The Dainty Monsters* juxtaposes surrealistic images and fantastical creatures drawn from classical mythology with events from everyday domestic life. His poems include monologues spoken by a variety of mythical and historical figures, including Lilith, Prometheus, and Queen Elizabeth I. Widely considered his most important volume of poetry, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* draws upon the author's fascination with the culture of the American West and examines the nature of heroism and violence. The collection combines prose, verse, photographs, and drawings to present a fictionalized biography of the notorious outlaw William Bonney, also known as Billy the Kid. Rat Jelly, a collection of short lyrics informed by Ondaatje's marriage and family life, displays a preoccupation with domestic relations between humans and animals, and the destructive impulses of artistic personalities.

Similarly, the subject matter of *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do* concerns such topics as friendship and family history while including selections from Ondaatje's previous works. *Secular Love* (1984) is comprised of four unified sequences of confessional lyrics exploring paternal love, Ondaatje's traumatic divorce, and the redemptive qualities of love. The poems feature the author himself as both a character and the creative observer who molds his experiences into art. In 1999 Ondaatje published Handwriting, which consists of poems focused primarily on

imagery drawn from the history, geography, mythology, and cultural traditions of Sri Lanka.

The English Patient is a 1992 novel, which deals with the gradually revealed histories of a critically burned man, his Canadian nurse, a Canadian thief, and an Indian sapper in the British army as they live out the end of World War II in an Italian Villa. This is a collection of mosaic events and viewpoints from different characters of different backgrounds, under the single event of the Second World War. It portrays four traumatic characters who being abandoned in the warfare; suffer from the loss of identity, displacement, mimicry, hegemony, language, culture etc. It begins with Hana, the nurse who betrays her job and persistently takes care of the unknown patient; whose appearance is beyond recognition, and whom Hana is convinced to be an Englishman. Caravaggio, the thief whose illegal business is ironically legitimized by the government as he is trained as spy, and Kip, a Sikh sapper who joins the British squad of defusing bombs and mines, literally serving for the empire that colonizes native Indian, later joins them. The novel is filled with various small stories of irony and wounds from the overwhelming invasion of war and the trauma that resulted form it. It reveals and narrates the minor incidents and personal stories that are neglected by the official history of Western hegemony of the Second World War, emphasizing that the war not only causes the trauma of western world but also that of the insignificant individuals within.

Anil's Ghost, set in the midst of the 1980s Sri Lankan civil war, recounts the story of Anil, a Sri Lankan emigrant to the United States and forensic pathologist, who returns to her native country to investigate human remains for evidence of possible war crimes. She is assisted by Sarath, a Sri Lankan government archeologist, whose motives prove dubious at best. It is less experimental than *The English Patient*,

In the Skin of a Lion and Running in the Family. Anil's Ghost constructs a narrative with elements of both fact and fiction as demonstrated by the novel's appended bibliography of nonfiction sources.

In sum, desire, identity, breaking down the canonization of the text, hetoroglossic structure, voices to subaltern characters, bringing in the center to the insignificant characters, giving strong support with the blazing issues are some of the points that make Ondaatje a postcolonial writer.

A large body of literature exists in the study of postcolonial literature. Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, too, has been looked at from various perspectives. Various critical studies of *The English Patient* have labeled it as an outsider in the author's intention seeking for equality in the white world. This approach largely undermines its indispensable cultural aspects. Ondaatje, who prefers to call himself an immigrant, is not the so-called outsider, but one who seeks for self-revelation, rediscovery of culture and its importance. He presents a world seen from an immigrant's perspective of rootlessness. Geetha Sahib notes, *The English Patient* zooms in "on the identity crisis that has taken hold of the contemporary man as a result of the imperialist/native confrontation" (8). In the construction of identity, Simone de Beauvoir discussed issues of 'otherness' (xxiii) and what Julia Kristeva would later call a process of 'abjection' (219).

The focus of *The English Patient* is on the two love stories during the Second World War. One important concern is the negotiation of the subject-hood in people who are exiles, immigrants, or expatriates, and have only what Salman Rushdie calls "Imaginary homelands" (9). The work can be read as what Donald Pease calls "'Post-national narration' which struggles to make visible the incoherence, contingency, and transistorizes of the national narratives and to reveal this paradoxical space" (10).

Ondaatje not only criticizes war, violence, and imperialism but also gives us examples of alternative communities for constituting self and society for people's identification.

For the case of identification, Encyclopedia of Post-colonial Literature in English tries to explore the relation between or among the nations in Postcolonial situation. It mentions: "*The English Patient* [. . .] appears to have smaller ambitions, but its exploration of the relation of Britain to its colonies and of First World politics to Third World ones, signs its desire to engage the postcolonial imagination" (1181).

Similarly Darryl Whetter argues *The English Patient* as "a travel literature, that the desert functions as a body of a character and an unfinished companion which encourages a communal identity" (12). Here, the desert is certainly one of the more important elements of the work. It is only one of the things around which Ondaatje suggests alternative communities can be formed.

In the same way, the color of the patient's skin confounds his interrogators: "Everything about him was very English except for the fact that his skin was tarred black, a bogman from history among the interrogating officers" (Ondaatje 96). Postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha has noted that "skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as common knowledge in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies" (15). He further argues that hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effect.

Facts presented by Westerners about non-westerner are uncertain and unreal. History about the non-westerner written by Westerners is so. Dennis Walder says:

> *The English Patient* is not a history lesson but an interpretation of human emotion- love, desire, betrayals in war and betrayals in peace-

> in a historical time [. . .]. Multiplicity of identities suggests the direction post-colonial literary studies may go: recasting histories to create a set of achronic narratives which reach back and forward in order to rechart the world, testifying to what Ondaatje through the patient calls Our communal histories, Communal books. (204)

In Ondaatje's portrayal of Kip, historically the colonial subject, he is careful not to create an exotic piece. While Kip's dark complexion and his otherness are mentioned several times, they are not what we remember mostly about him. All the characters have different versions of each other. Ondaatje's view of self and other is a fluid one, a view not based on formal ties of nation, family or society, but one which responds to the concerns of the moment to the necessities of circumstance. This happens because of the power and nation. Critics such as Geetha Sahib and Lorna Irvine have said much about *The English Patient* as a critique of power and imperialism. Irvine points out "the landscapes of the novel frequently bring into play questions about nation" (19).

The idea of monolithic identity is highly complex and ambivalent in postcolonial studies. As Benedict Anderson has pointed out "[n]ations are imagined communities [. . .] cultural artifacts of a particular kind based on the need for a narrative of identity [. . .]. It is an act of communal imagination, informed by the search for decisive clues" (4).

Like many postcolonial novels that are composed of fragmentary memories, *The English Patient* challenges the Western world by disrupting its self-presented history, revealing the violence of projecting its history onto the non-Western world. These memories those of Kip's in particular, segment the official history of the Western world and penetrate the borders of European history. They "de-center the

authority of Western power, opening up a space for resistance to the colonial past and drawing forth the colonized" (Novak 223). The novel is accepted as a postcolonial text not only because it rewrites the colonial history of the Western world, but also because it is anti-colonial. It attempts to uncover the masks of colonial and erases it from the non-Western world. As Qadri Ismail contends,"what the four characters have in common is their relationship to their nationality" (409). That is they are "supplementary to the main argument of their nations" (410). Kip, for instance, is portrayed as a repressed and marginalized character in terms of his ethnicity and personality throughout the novel. Hana and Caravaggio, in spite of their Caucasian ethnicity, are former colonized subjects from Canada of the British Empire. Almasy, the hero of the novel and the presumed English cartographer, is in fact a traumatized East European from Hungary, a country with tenuous claim on a past and constantly dominated by foreign power.

In "Discipline and Colony: *The English Patient* and the Crow's Nest of Post Coloniality," Qadri Ismail discusses the postcolonial characteristics of the novel and its relationship with colonialism by means of unthreading the text's anti-colonist response toward colonialism. Moreover, Ismail significantly states that Ondaatje rewrites Rudyard Kiplling's colonial novel Kim. He writes, "the postcolonial novel cannot be told without confronting the colonial one, that the former will always contain marks of the latter" (413-4). The reason that Ondaatje chooses Kim as the object of his revision lies in the various aspects of colonial superiority and false consciousness Kim revealed. Ismail rightfully observes that Kim is "a novel of conquest; it is the pre-eminent novel depicting and naturalizing the conquest of India within the canon of English Literature" (414). Not only the characters of the two novels resonate, the plot and structure of *The English Patient* echoes that of Kim.

Ismail argues that Ondaatje makes a clear yet relevant comparison by contrasting 'He sat' in the first phrase of Kim to 'She stands' in the beginning of *The English Patient*, purposely subverting the writing of Kim and the masculine narrative by introducing a female protagonist as the central character. One of the most obvious instances is the resemblance between Kim the Irish in Kim and Kim the Sikh in *The English Patient*, "[w]here the former is British who successfully passes for Indian, the later is an Indian who tries, but fails, to be accepted by the English" (418). Stressing the history is the scrutinization of colonialism. Ismail argues that the novel's question of history and its authenticity is the central question of postcolonialism. *The English Patient* may thus be conceived as a story without history. As he concludes,

> If to have a history is to be able to tell your own its own terms, this option is not available to the postcolonial story. In other words, while history and colony may be accomplices, history and postcolony are not. Indeed, Postcoloniality might imply the interrogation of history. (426)

Thorough the above passage we can say that history is not only telling the story rather it is a root to know but it is not to forget rather it is a better way to keep on for the identification.

Desire is the key element of postcolonial writings. *The English Patient*, who is both "the figure of the outsider, master of many languages [. . .], aristocratic by birth and exile by calling," Robert Clark designates the fatal attraction of 'the romantic hero' Almasy in "Knotting Desire in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*." He states "the evasion of authority and its consequences is integral to desire in the book" (60). He also mentions the recurrent scene of decapitation and castration that relates to the male characters in the novel. Caravaggio, the most obvious example, resonates

most to the theme in terms of his name that resembles that great painter in Italian Renaissance and his cut-off thumbs. As Clark writes, "Caravaggio's name is that of the famous painter who is thought to have been a thief and whose work often depicted decapitation at the hands of seductive and betraying women, the ultimate scene of castration" (61). Caravaggio's painting 'David with the Hand of Goliath,' which is brought up in the novel furthermore relates the theme of capitation of the castration of the characters.

Almasy, however, is castrated of the ability to love. His physical condition, that is, his body, burned by the fire of Geoffrey Clifton's hatred, and his penis, which 'sleeps like a sea horse', deprives him of the ability to live and to love again. According to Clark, the handicap of *The English Patient* brings Hana the erotic love and desire of pleasure toward the patient. She drowns herself in the pleasure of feeding him, washing his body, mourning the tragic love affair of Almasy and Katherine to the degree of necrophilia. Hana's inclination to view the patient as both the father figure and a lover in need of care brings out the theme of desire, which is passed on by the patient's recollection of the doomed love affair.

Identity as well as ownership is another important element of postcolonial writings. In "Call Me by My Name: Personal Identity and Possession in *The English Patient*," Sharyn Emery asserts the deeply inscribed notion of boundaries that is observed in the identity formation of the two characters. Citing examples from the novel, she is convinced that no matter how much one endeavor to cast away the burdens of boundaries and rules, one's identities are nevertheless constructed by the boundaries of names, nationality, ethnicity and patriarchy. For instance, "Katharine dies because she was not identified according to her husband's last name, a patriarchal boundary the lovers had swept away" (212); or in spite of Almasy's detest in

ownership and the colonialists who attempt to draw the desert within their borders, he becomes one of these detestable characters as he dehydrates Katharine with his dryness and the desire of claiming her his own.

In postcolonial writings, the protagonist's purpose and intention is loss of identity. He frees him from the limitations of nationality or boundaries of any kind, enabling him to be assimilated into the desert which he longs for, or any other environments or circumstances. Stephen Scobie says, "the patient's anonymity, and his (un)readability, make him the perfect blank screen onto which the other characters can project their own devious passions" (97-98). He points out that the patient's loss of identity becomes other characters' device to (re) build their own traumatic identities. That is, he is free to be identified as a burned patient in order for Hana to project her desired images, for Caravaggio to perceive him as a traitor, and for Kip to treat him as an Englishman, the representative of the colonial manipulation of the British Empire so that Kip can throw his anger at.

II. Blending the Poetics and Politics in Ondaatje's *The English Patient*

Ondaatje's *The English Patient* starts with frequently interrupted and mediated first person narration with an acknowledgment of the influence and power of the re-writing history. The narrator tells Hana, his devoted Canadian nurse "I am a person who if left alone in someone's home walks to the bookcase, pulls down a volume and inhales it. So history enters us" (18). That he inhaled the smell of Herodotus's writings becomes clear when Hana looks at the book which came with him through the plane crash and the fire. It is "a copy of the Histories by Herodotus that he has added to, cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations ... so, they all are cradled within the text of Herodotus" (16). *The English Patient*'s creating of history and identity appears as an acknowledgment of Herodotus' claim that "this history of mine has from the beginning sought out the supplementary to the main argument" (119). His exploration endeavors to complete Herodotus's project of "piecing together a mirage" (119). This desire to explore further and map in greater detail locates *The English Patient* and Herodotus within a long-standing tradition of writing about the other. The patient acknowledges this tradition: "I knew. Charts painted on skins that contain the various routes of the Crusades. So, I knew their place before I crashed among them, knew when Alexander had traversed it in an earlier age, for this cause or that greed" (18). Here, Ondaatje blurs the thin line between history and fiction in order to complicate both the perception of the other and the self and his blurring occurs in a narrative in which fragments become centrally important in dealing with questions of identity.

Fragmentations on a formal level thematize the concern of the novel. In the second part of the novel "In Near Ruins" (25), It parallels the reality that the characters have to face. At the end of the World War II, they have taken refuge from

reality in a bombed Italian monastery that is "in ruins" (26). Although their stay in the Villa San Girolamo could appear as a flight from the outside world, the fact that each character attempts to remember the past in order to get a grip on his/her identity stresses the importance of the larger context. The novel has provided a fragmentary flashback accounts with vague description of both history and each character's story. It is an attempt to redefine their identity that is the representation of the cultural other. Herodotus's writings, *Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans, Tacitus's Annals, Passages from the Bible, Kipling's Kim, Stendhal's The Charterhouse of Parma, Song lyrics,* and *accounts from the London Geographical Society* are some of the elements presented in the novel. These fragmentary descriptions are the good examples of the other, here, become the mirror of the characters' mutilated identity, inscribed with history's ruins. The mutilated body cared by the Canadian nurse, Hana, shows the scene and the condition of fragmentary events of the characters throughout the novel in the time of war. "She would care only for the burned patient. She would read to him and bathe him and give him his doses of morphine-her only communication was with him" (14). This shows the condition of the hero in fact in the time of war. The patient's body represents the ambiguity of the term history. Metonymically it contains both the events of history and his story. In The Writing of History, Michel de Certeau describes history as a text organizing units of meaning and subjecting them to transformations whose rules can be determined. Similarly "The History of Herodotus that he has added to cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations- so they all are cradled within the text of Herodotus" (Ondaatje 16), presents own definition with the help of other and their history. *The English Patient* becomes the battlefield from different historical meanings, which his body- the text, establishes for those who read it and attempt to understand its rules. Each character

transforms the text's meaning in different way by establishing his or her own relationship to *The English Patient*.

The English Patient tries his best to defining himself in relation to other showing their history as well as their story. He describes Bedouin people as water people. They are nomads; they escape definition because they are not contained within one place. "These were water people. Even today Caravans look like a river. Still, today it is water who is the stranger her" (19). He presents his importance to Bedouin and knowledge to show that third world people are more laborious and more knowledgeable for any works and any subjects. "The Bedouin were keeping me alive for a reason. I was useful, you see. Someone there had assumed I had a skill when my plane crashed in the desert. I am a man who can recognize an unnamed town by its skeletal shape on a map. I [. . .] information [. . .] history enters us. I knew [. . .] various routes of the crusades" (18). These sentences show the way of colonizing the terrain using power and knowledge later the same colonial knowledge brings to their own ends. Maps and weapons are the inventions of the Westerners but no more controlled by them as mentioned in "For some he draws maps that go beyond their own boundaries and for other tribes too he explains the mechanics of gun" (22).

Language is the manifesto as one of the markers of identity. Standardization of language identifies an individual as civilized but not barbarian. *The English Patient* speaks various languages — English, German, and the tribe's dialect — rather than only one. He crosses linguistic as well as national boundaries and therefore remains an unidentified alien figure with his black body and his dark face. His identity remains fluid and therefore suspicious. He is the unsettling presence at the end of colonialism and the war because history writes the problem of "a period of adjustment" (54) upon his boy.

The characters of the novel seek to cope with their traumatic experience drawing the event into a narrative space that contains and will position of the past. It is the patient's memory, "he whispers again dragging the listening heart of the young nurse beside him to wherever his mind is, into that well of memory he kept plunging into during those months before he died"(4). This passage shows the dynamics of the text's narrative movement. The Patient's remembering moves the narrative and other characters with him into the well of memory. His remembering works as a discourse of re-telling history as well as the narrative as a whole. The movement of the repeating is replicated at the level of the entire text. His recounting of the past "There are stories the man recites quietly into the room which slip from level to level like a hawk. He wakes in the painted arbour that surrounds him with its spilling flowers, arms great tress. He remembers picnics, a woman who kissed parts of his body that now are burned into the color of aborigine" (4) tells more about the haunting past of his experience and his originality but now is burned and discolored.

The fragment of images and sentences that does not provide a defined representation of the past. The Patient remembers:

> When I went back into the desert, I took with me the evenings of dancing to the 78 of "Souvenirs" in the bars, the women pacing like greyhounds, leaning against you while you muttered into their shoulders during " My Sweet." Courtesy of the Societe Ultraphone Francaise record company. 1938. 1939. There was the whispering of love in a booth. There was war around the corner. (243)

The above passage tells not only about past but also about disjointed instances of dancing, encounters with women and music heard somewhere perhaps in 1938 and 1939 into a single account. It is also an act of translation that is not about a word for

word transcription of the text. There is a slippage between the language of the origin and the translation. In the translation, the echo of origin is heard that is the formation of impression of past to point out and re-write the past. The two dates 1938 and 1939 revealed a tension in memory of uncertainty in knowing that provides distorted images that remain un-translated rather present direct stable information to rewrite/retell history and present identification. The patient remembers his past as Bedouin asks various guns and ammunition

> When he was a child he had brown up with an aunt, and on the grass of her lawn she had scattered a deck of cards face down and taught him the game of Pelmanism. Each player allowed to turn up two cares and, eventually, through memory pairing them off. This had been in another landscape, of trout streams, birdcalls that he could recognize from a halting fragment. A fully named world. Now, with his face blindfolded in a mask of grass fibers, he picked up a shell and moved with his carriers, guiding them towards a gun, inserted the bullet, bolted it, and holding it up in the air fired. (20-21)

The above passage expresses the significance of the Patient's encounter with the Bedouin to destabilize the history and identity.

The English Patient is filled with ghosts and ruins to the site of a traumatic past. Traumatized and haunted by the violence, the characters reside amongst, "[d]ead cattle. Horses shot dead, half eaten. People hanging upside down from bridges. The last vices of war"(29). Left behind at the end of war, they feel the pull of the dead that surround them in the landscape of Italy. Ruins show the meaning that they once possessed for people now gone, continue to endure, haunting the present with reminders of a past that has been forgotten.

The failures of the past reappear in the passage given below. Ondaatje bringing the reference of Medieval War to retell/rewrite history into the Modern War that of suffering, trauma of the subaltern people who cannot raise their voices, experienced by them in their own world with their own language. These subaltern are suppressed by others, superiors, tells that the present ruins are the ruins of the past:

> The last mediaeval war was fought in Italy in 1943 and 1944. Fortress towns on great promontories which had been battled over since the eighth century and the armies of new kings flung carelessly against them. Around the outcrops of rocks were the traffic of stretchers, butchered vineyards, where, if you dug deep beneath the tank ruts, you found blood axe and spear. (69)

Here the past or history is drawn into the space of present. It is revealed as repetitive and contradictory. The feudal medieval past absorbed and erased by modernity to rewrite history for identification.

Telling the story of four characters struggling to remember the horror of the World War II, the novel probes the intersection between history and memory. The trauma of the characters links to the trauma of history. Trauma is in itself a loss of event. Trauma results from the prevention of certain voices and events from being known within the history in a way to displacement.

Retelling history of fragment of ruins, isolated statues and images of arts replicates the discourse of the Patient who "speaks in fragments about oasis town, the later Medicis, the prose style of Kipling, the woman who bit into his flesh. And in his common place book, his 1890 edition of Herodotus's Histories, are other fragments-maps, diary entries, writings in many languages, paragraphs cut out of other books"

(96). It shows the copy of Herodotus's Histories the Patient caries with him operates as a motif for conceptualization of history. The Patient says:

> I see him more as one of those spare men of the desert who travel from oasis to oasis, trading legends as if it is the exchange of seeds, consuming everything without suspicion, piecing together a mirage. 'This history of mine,' Herodotus says, 'has from the beginning sought out the supplementary to the main argument.' What you find in him are cul-des-sacs within the sweep of history-how people betray each other for the sake of nations. (118-19)

These fragments of memory and telling the history escape definitive meanings and singular interpretation. Ondaatje tells "things are smashed, revealed in new light" (97). So, the superiority, canonicity, centrality, whiteness etc. are no more worked at all in the present situation. Old ways of seeing things are smashed and new ways have emerged with a new light. To understand the new light requires new eyes to grasp and gain new things.

Significance of Fire Image

Fire, here, is an image of strong desires of something by which the four characters in *The English Patient* are satisfied that their wills themselves to be projecting their identity onto the blank screen. Fire in the body, fire in the mind and fire in thought are the pain inflicted upon the third world people by the Westerners. It is concerned with the interaction between private identity and public events and with the inescapable intrusions of geopolitical forces into people's lives.

Fire dominates the novel right from *The English Patient*'s first account of his crash: "I fell burning into the desert [. . .] I flew down and the sand itself caught fire. They saw me stand up naked out of it. The leather helmet on my head in flames" (5).

Later revisiting the same scene provides an even more vivid image: "Then his legs are free of everything, and he is in the air, bright not knowing why he is bright until he realizes he is on fire" (175).

But English Patient is not the only one haunted by fire. The nurse, Hana, is devoted to caring for him at least in part because as we learn late in the novel that her own father died of burns: "So burned the buttons of his shirt were part of his skin, part of his dear chest" (295). The thief Caravaggio, escaping his torturers, rests for a moment on a bridge, but the bridge explodes. "Light was pouring into the river. He swam up to the surface, parts of which were on fire" (60). Caravaggio's ascent through burning water thus parallels and inverts *The English Patient*'s fall through burning air. The mined bridge links Caravaggio to the fourth character, Kip, whose whole elements is fire: he works as a sapper, defusing bombs, in daily and imminent danger of going up in lames. Another passage describes one of Kip's colleagues who "had been working in a shaft with frozen oxygen and the whole pit had suddenly burst into flames they hauled him out fast, already unconscious in his harness" (211). Thus the image pattern extends: a burning man rising from the ground to meet the burning man who falls from the sky. This is the vice-versa of the world to see from the white eyes.

Fire extends in more personal directions to show love and strong desire for love of absence, love of loss and so on. As *The English Patient* himself proclaims, in a passage Hana reads from his diary, "the heart is an organ of fire" (97). All the characters in *The English Patient* are bound together by love and loss, by absence and desire. At the center of the pattern, controlling it of her terrible absence is Katharine Clifton, whose death forms the awful secret of *The English Patient*'s memory, and of the novel's plot. Her death becomes a literal fire, which burns away every trace of her

lover's identity, leaving him as an anonymous patient in an English Hospital. This anonymity, this willed of loss of identity, fulfils what had already been his conscious desire:

> Ai, Bir, Wadi, Foggara, Khottara, Shaduf. I didn't want my name against such beautiful names. Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert [. . .]. Still, some wanted their mark there [. . .]. Fenelon-Barnes wanted the fossil trees he discovered to bear his name. He even wanted a tribe to take his name, and spent a year on the negotiations. Then Bauchan outdid him, having a type of sand dune named after him. But I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from. (139)

Here, the mark of the name is inscribed on the blank page of the desert or like a scar on the blank page of the body or the gaps of pages of the text as well as the gaps of text. That is why, *The English Patient*'s desire to erase his name leaves him indeed nameless, professing ignorance of his own identity and with his body reduced by fire to one all encompassing scar with others' scar and is thus himself unreadable.

Subaltern is a term first employed by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to hegemony of the ruling class. That is, groups that are denied access to hegemonic power. So, they are of inferior rank. It takes in a specific meaning of the characters and the level of the oppressed groups that are determined by class, race, gender and caste. It is the voice and power to utter their own history. Leela Gandhi in her *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* writes, "Subaltern defined itself as an attempt to allow the people finally to speak within the jealous pages of elitist historiography and in doing so, to speak for or to sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed" (2). So, it is an oppressed subject, that can not speak

itself of its pain and suffering as well as its experiences of life, rather other should speak for it because of its all round inferiority.

In the novel *The English Patient* the four characters are subaltern. The counter position of the Western Subject and the oppressed other is observed in the circumstances between the Great War and the four personas who dwell temporarily in the broken Italian Villa in order to wait in the War. Kip, for instance, is the most obvious persona who is dominated and pinned down by the sovereign subject of Western hegemony. He is Sikh who is not only subaltern to India but also to British Imperialism. As for other three characters, although the ethnicity of Hana, Caravaggio, and Almasy seem to rule them out of the definition of subaltern since they belong to the white dominate circles, they are nevertheless dominated by the force of the war and rendered subaltern in the novel. On the one hand, the nationality of both Hana and Caravaggio is Canadian, which is the former colony of French and the British Empire, and after the war the subaltern country of the United States in terms of its economy. The protagonist, Almasy, on the other hand, is Hungarian whose nation is tormented and constantly dominated by foreign political power. He not only is treated as an unassimilated but also activity perceives himself so. They are in a sense deserted in the Villa, subjected to the hegemonic power of the Great War.

However the relationship between the four characters and the other subordinate personas appear in the margin of the novel. It may be observed the author's attempt to give the subaltern voices while denying the dominant party the position to speak for their own. The subordinate characters Lord Suffolk, Katharine, Madox and other members of the Sand Club are relatively the dominant party who are denied voices of their own. The class-consciousness in the novel is deliberately

reversed and reconstructed by Ondaatje. Lord Suffolk and Katharine speak through Kip the Sikh sapper and *The English Patient* who is in fact a Hungarian.

Although Lord Suffolk and Katharine both play significant roles in the novel, they live like phantoms in the memories of Kip and *The English Patient*. The subversive in *The English Patient* is that all the Englishmen die. Not only Lord Suffolk and Katharine die miserably in the novel, Madox, Almasy's English friend, also commits suicide in the Church in which he pulls out the gun and fires a shot into his mouth. The class-consciousness of the dominant British and the subaltern subjects are subverted in term of Ondaatje's adopting four subaltern subjects as his own main characters. Thus subalterns are granted the chance to narrate their stories though there are presences of Englishmen.

Narrating an alternative history and highlighting the subaltern, Ondaatje subverts the dominant position of Western hegemony allowing the subaltern and their stories to be the prime concerns in *The English Patient*.

Postcolonial literary writing does have the key concept of place and space as their identity. The demarcation of locality no longer exists in the novel. It is replaced by spaces of infinity. The space in the novel is exemplified by the Libyan Desert that suffers from the pillage of European empires during the Second World War, the severely damaged Italian villa of San Girolamo, and finally the wounded bodies of the characters: the patient's burned body, Caravaggio's incomplete fingers, and Hang's cut-off tonsils and long hair. Ondaatje successfully presents the figure and miserable condition of the wretched earth with the traumatized souls and broken body with the desert without boundaries, the villa without walls and characters without fixed identity. So, the originally fixed and confined space thus becomes infinite. Furthermore, the dwellers, bewitched by the artificial paintings of landscapes and the

nature that is introduced into the room such as the breezes and rain and darkness are led to believe that the rooms are a part of the landscape while the natural surrounding a part of the broken villa. As the narrator says, "there seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth. To Hana the wild gardens were like further rooms" (43). Similarly, he talks about a space where "doors open into landscape. Some rooms had become an open aviary" (13). Place or any fixed area as the sites of fullness, identity, insight and human activity where as space is the emptiness between places in which nothing happens except the movement from one place to another. Undiscovered region of the world has been categorized by the British Empire in the intervention of colonialism detected by means of the Sand Club and the Royal Geographical Society. As the narrator states:

> There is after Herodotus, little interest by the Western world towards the desert for hundred of years. From 425 B.C. to the beginning of the twentieth century there is an averting of eyes. Silence. The nineteenth century was an age of river seekers. And then in the 1920s there is a sweet postscript history on this pocket of earth, made mostly by privately founded expeditions and followed by modest lectures given at the Geographical Society in London at Kensington Gore. (133)

The above passage shows the situation of undiscovered land that how under the disguised of the thirst of knowledge British legitimates the invasion, cultural as well as economical categorizing foreign and unfamiliar territories onto the maps made by the colonizing countries. Maps are in fact a solid space onto piece of paper. Almasy believes that none of the members of the Sand Club and Royal Geographical Society cares about nationality: "We were German, English, Hungarians, Aftrian— all of us

insignificant to them. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states" (138). Place and space is the location where social and natural things meet. Villa, desert, meeting of the different people in the villa are the good examples of place and space. Almasy speaks "in the desert it's easy to lose a sense of demarcation" (18). Similarly, Hana tells "she turns into the room which is another garden - this one made up of trees and bowers painted over its walls and ceiling. The man lies on the bed, his body exposed to the breeze [. . .]" (3). In the above sentences the clear notion of space and place is presented with the combination of natural objects and its placement.

Space is in a way a sense of infinity that has depicted in the novels bringing out that of histories and remembrances. As the narrator of the novel describes "[h]ere in the desert, which had been and old sea where nothing strapped down or permanent, everything drifted [. . .]" (22). Water, although not visible, is everywhere. Similarly, characters in the novels are existed but not visible with the name and their location. They dance and swim in the sea of fire and yellow sands till they burn into. The thing like water in the desert is a quest in the novel as "in the desert you celebrate nothing but water" (23). In the desert, it is "the exile, carried back in cans and flasks, the ghost between your hands and your mouth [. . .] today the caravans look like a river" (19). These sentences present infinity of place and location in the desert. Hollowness and darkness present with the imagery of water. The Patient says, "[s]ome books open with an author's assurance of order. One slipped into their waters with a silent paddle" (93).

Water symbolizes the lack of space and place as well as desire. For instance, Hana says, "In Canada, the piano needed water. You opened up the back and lest a full galss of water, and a mouth later the glass would be empty" (63). Similarly,

Katharine is the figure who Geofrey and Almasy both desire. She is a woman who never fits into the desert but stays only in the attempt to experience Almasy's passion of the dryness and boundless of the desert. She has "grown up within gardens, among moistness [. . .] always happier in rain, in bathrooms steaming with liquid air, in sleepy wetness" (170). Water transforms into desire that is something having space or place in the heart. As Almasy notes: In the desert the most loved water, like a lover's names, are carried blue in your hands, enter your throat. One swallows absence. A woman in Cairo curves the white length of her body up from the bed and leans out of the window into a rainstorm to allow her nakedness to receive it" (141).

The bridge between desire and space indeed is affirmed by the imagery of water. Like the desert and the villa that are engraved with traumatic histories and personal memories, body is another space that records the wounds of resistance. Body is the container of stories and histories of the experiences of life. *The English Patient* says that human beings are in fact "Communal histories, communal book" (261). As he contemplates:

> We die containing a richness of lover sand tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears, we have hidden in as if caves. I wish for this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography- to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. (261)

The above passage clearly says that the injuries for accepting into the life as the deterritorialization of the body, a good place and space for own's identification. Women are taken as an aboriginal lands here. As Said, "She has taken the blood. Tear.

He feels everything is missing from his body, feels he contains smoke" (17). These sentences show the relationship between Almasy and Katharine as once open forcefully then open forever to the invasion of colonialism.

The villa that merges space and place into one location provides a shelter for the characters to escape from the war and the brutal reality. Caravaggo, for instance has "loosened his body and freed his tenseness, so he seemed bugger, more sprawled out his gesture. Only his silence of movement remained. Otherwise there was an easy inefficiency to him now, a sleepiness to his gestures" (Ondaatje 265). The inhabitants of the villa are all displaced and decentered individuals who begin 'Shedding skins' of earlier selves, and find new identities through the relationships they develop in their Tuscan refuge.

Ondaatje weaves space, place and past, human experience, into a single novel that documents and narrates the resistance and the condition of the marginalized and subaltern characters, placing them under the traumatized land trapping them inside the wounded body, but directs them to come out of the darkness and into the future at the end of the novel. Ashcraft, Griffiths, and Tiffin comment that "although the body is a text, that is, a space in which conflicting discourses can be written and read, it is a specially material text, one that demonstrates how subjectivity, however constructed it may in fact, is felt, as inescapably material and permanent" (184). Inscriptions suggest a characteristic in *The English Patient* "inscription is not an instrument of power-knowledge, but part of a necessary exchange in which an individual loses his or her previous self and finds a new identity through relationship with other" (39).

Almasy, the hero of the novel, on where the novel moves around from the beginning to the end, teases with the possibility of solving the mystery of identity reveals into another realm of fragmentation, questioning, imagination and

ambivalence, undermines the idea of monolithic identity because Hungerian national identity is a complex and ambivalent to begin with. As Benedict Anderson has pointed out, Hungary is a forceful example of that the nations are "Imagine Communities-cultural artifacts of a particular kind based on the "need for a narrative identity" (205). The readers' and the characters' attempt to reconstruct identity for *The English Patient* becomes an act of communal imagination informed by the search of decisive clues. When he acknowledges his ability to speak German upon his arrival at the Allies' hospital, *The English Patient* seems to provide the reader with a clue to his cultural identity by referring to the Habsburg Empire's Germanic center, Vienna. But at the same time he knows everything not only about Britain but others. He states, "ask me about Don Brad man. Ask me about Marmite, the great Gertrude Jekyll" (95). He further asks, "[w]here every Giotto was in Europe [. . .]" (95).

The other characters in the novel themselves hurt and their identity mutilated gather around *The English Patient* in their attempt to come to identify in terms with others. "[e]ach character deflects his or her true desire through the image of another" (99) repeat shows the intention of the writer in writing the novel for solving the mystery of identification in the postmodern time. *The English Patient* provides those surroundings with the ultimate images of others; he absorbs their own quest for identity. *The English Patient*'s cathartic quality in this framework of "deferral or substitution" (99) becomes clear in his interactions with Caravaggio. Caravaggio wants to know what *The English Patient*'s political involvement was during the war, he attempts to return of what was forgotten and repressed. *The English Patient* could speak only as he is administered the morphine by Hana. Caravaggio reassembles *The English Patient*'s identity, "Caravaggio watches the pink in the man's mouth as he talks. There is more to discover, to divine out of this body on the bed, nonexistent

except for a mouth, a vein in the arm, wolf-grey eyes. He is still amazed at the clarity of discipline in the man, who speaks sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third person, who still does not admit that he is Almasy" (247).

Caravaggio assigns *The English Patient* to the place of nomadic and unidentifiable other. *The English Patient* acquires characteristics of a wolf threatening and concealed presence in the wilderness. At the same time, he also appears as a saint who the members of a specific community visit for their own identification. He is referred to as "a despairing saint" (3) and an "effigy" (161). Caravaggio has been robbed of the use of that body part which previously constituted the most essential part of his identity, his hand. During the war, Nazi officers cut off his thumbs. He is now the "man with bandaged hands"(27). Caravaggio holds *The English Patient* responsible for his loss of identity because he suspects him of having been a German spy. But his pain is tinted with the pleasure associated with the focus on fragments. At the same time, bandages act as protective "gloves" (53).

By highlighting absence, the subject defends itself against the lack of identity by establishing whole as individuality. By displacing the attention onto the fragmentation of others, the subject attempts to come to terms with it own disintegration. At the same time that Caravaggio tries to heal himself, he also desires revenge to Almasy, *The English Patient*. Caravaggio feels most comfortable in the presence of "the headless statue of a count"(34), which acts as a substitute for the punishment he wants to see inflicted on Almasy. Seeing the bandage in the hand of Caravaggio, Hana desires to care for him. Now she doesn't only care for *The English Patient* but to that of Caravaggio that leads her self destruction during the war like cutting her hair, "the irritation of its presence during the previous days still in her mind [. . .] when she had bent forward and her hair had touched blood in wound" (49-

50). She breaks with her past by acknowledging her miscarriage and the deaths of her lover and father. Continuous fear and destruction tell more about the self-mutilation of identity. As Hana feels, "had the look of a besieged fortress, the limbs of most of the statues blown off during the first days of the shelling" (43).

The danger of destruction hovers over everyone in the Villa San Girolamo, but especially over Kirpal Singh, the Indian sapper who defuses bombs for the British army. The danger the sapper faces daily is displaced unto his desire to "aim his rifle and fire and hit some target precisely. Again and again he aims at a nose on a statue or one of the brown hawks veering across the sky of the valley" (73). By targeting the statue, he wants to mutilate that part of himself which figuratively enables him to detect bombs, his nose. He can literally smell the danger in the air when he comes near a hidden bomb. But this nose is not mere intuition because Kip has been taught by the British army. He is the product of English colonial power in India and exemplifies the domesticated Other who, being a "not quite/not white" (Bhabha 92) subject, is never granted full equality. His teacher, Lord Suffolk, represents the colonial desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. Kip is one of the "authorized versions of otherness" (88), as the mutilation of his name indicates. His name is Kirpal Singh but the British gave him the nickname Kip when some officers interpreted the butter stain on one of his reports as kipper grease. A kipper is "a salty English fish" (87), usually smoked or dried. Kip's identity has been "smoked out" so to speak, and "within a week his real name, Kirpal Singh, had been forgotten" (88).

In an intertextual level, the mutilated name Kip evokes Rudyard Kipling and his titular "hero", Kim. In his own mutilation, Kip turns to the "English Patient". The relationship between Kip and *The English Patient* "seemed to her a reversal of Kim"

(111). Yet, it is more than a simple reversal of Kipling's narrative into "the young student was now Indian, the wise old teacher was English" (111) because English is used to the Patient and Indian is to Kip are classification of nationality that do not acknowledge the new sense of identity in the postcolonial and postwar context.

For mutilation and appropriation, Kip clings to his carefully layered turban and his long hair, the only markers distinguishing him from the British Soldiers. Yet, he knows that his attempt to establish a whole and monolithic identity is doomed to fail because in any respects he is the most British among his fellow soldiers.

> I grew up with traditions from my country, but later, more often, from your country. Your fragile white island that with customs and manners and books and prefects and reason some how converted the rest of the world. You stood for precise behavior. I knew if I lifted a teacup with the wrong finger I'd be banished. If I tied the wrong kind of knot in a tie I was out. Was it just ships that gave you such power? Was it, as my brother said, because you had the histories and printing presses? (283)

The above passage clearly shows his resent and anger toward the man who he assigns to the place of those who forced their culture upon him. He directs his rifle away from the statue and instead "points at Englishman" (283), *The English Patient*. He wants to kill what he sees in himself. This occurs when Kip puts the earphones of his radio set on *The English Patient*'s head and forces him to listen to the account of One bomb. Then another. Hiroshima. Nagasaki" (284). He wants to rid himself of the guilt he feels because he helps defusing those bombs the colonizers throw on each other's countries instead of using his part of the "tremor of Western wisdom" (284) to prevent the "bombing [of] the brown races of the world"(286) by the contract makers. He resents and acknowledges his complicity with the colonizer "the moment the eyes of

the sapper and the patient meet in this half-dark room crowded now with the world" (285). He realizes the paradox of "cutting away, defusing, limbs of evil" (285) for those who are bombing the brown races, with who he has consciously started to identify after the crucial event of the dropping of the atomic bomb.

In this way, the characters in the novel are trapped in a new binary celebrating their hybridity. It does not matter to Kip whether *The English Patient* was on the side of the Germans or the British; what prompts Kip to return to India as a doctor is his inclusion of *The English Patient* into the category of those who dropped the atomic bomb: "American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have fucking Harry Truman of the USA. You all learned it from English" (286). Kip realizes that "they would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (286). In this sense the atomic bomb forcefully reconstructs the binary that the characters have gradually and painfully deconstructed in an attempt to emerge from their solipsism. The Villa world is destroyed as the outside world breaks in for the new one to exist. The glances the reader gets at Kip and Hana at the very end of the novel when they are both back in their native countries show a new kind of imprisonment and make Caravaggio's earlier statement "the trouble with all of us is we are where we shouldn't be" (122) appear as a dark prophecy. It provides the reader with the possibility to participate in the writing of history and therefore also in the shaping of the future. The reader must take a place in the communal act, must stay awake to keep the teller company and finally tell his own version of the story. The reader comes to his or her own conclusions about how to gauge the binary opposition on which the novel ends for its unique feature. Yet the implications of a novel that focuses on the unavoidable reality of fragmented identities are not neutral in this respect. Binaries establish oppositions, which eventually give identity with others. It does not have any identification other the presence of the next competitor.

IV. Writing for Resistance: An Awareness of Postcolonial Subject

This research explores an issue of poetic and politics of Ondaatje in *The English Patient.* Like many literary works that can be classified under the terrain of postcolonial discourse, the novel too attempts to build around the concept of resistance, of resistance as subversive or opposition or mimicry— but with haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of resisting. It is a two-edged sword. It deals with the human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality etc. which ideas may not have been held or held in the same way in the colonized culture's view of human kind.

Placing the character in the wartime Europe, rather than in the marginal spaces such as the colonized countries, Ondaatje portrays the traumatized condition of the European continent as under the same violent attacks as the third world continents. Readers are thus introduced to a group of characters whose identities are not so much as the subalterns but suffer from the traumatic experience in the traumatized land.

Ondaatje's is an attempt at rewriting of the colonial novel, *Kim*. The main purpose of it is to interrogate European discourse and discursive strategies from its position within and between two worlds. It is to investigate the means by which European imposed and maintained its codes in its colonial domination to the rest of the world. The responses and reflections are crucial in the terrain of postcolonial discourse. It is a counter-discourse rather than homologous. It is the subversion of ways of writing than the construction of essentially national or regional alternatives. The relationship between *Kim* and *The English Patient* is the relationship between the colonial and the postcolonial novel. His rewriting of Kipling's *Kim* is similar to Kip, subversive plot and reversed position of subject and object. Kim in India is depicted as under the total control and domination of the British government, the Bedouins in

The English Patient are portrayed as a mysterious tribe, unknown to the knowledgeable English patient. British authority of narrating the histories of the subaltern is deprived of in Kim while returned by Ondaatje in *The English Patient*.

Ondaatje borrows various literary works and artifacts as the targets of his revision in the text including K*ipling's Kim, the Bible, Milton's Paradise Lost, Herodotus's The Histories, Caravaggio's biography and his painting David with Head of Goliath*. These literary texts are to inter textualized in postcolonial literary work. There is not anywhere presence of Western hegemony to narrate an alternative story with different from as well as the presentation of the representation of the subaltern characters.

Ondaatje maps a half real and half fictional world adopting existing historical figure like Count Ladislaus de Almasy, Geoffrey and Katharine Clifton and other members of Royal Geographical Society. The fictional plot is secret love between Almasy and Katharine. Remembrance and histories are recoded by the space both bodily and geographically. For instance water and gaps in the pages are the depiction of continual absence in the desert.

Demonstration of broken, mutilated, ruins and wounded space are crucial and inevitable terrain of postcolonial literature. The four mentally and physical traumatized characters in the wartime of ruins villas and in horrified desert plays an important role to find a way out of their mystery and begin a new life. In order to undergo the process of healing, Ondaatje breaks the limitation of characters for instance giving injections to the Patient and Caravaggio himself for telling the truth about identities breaking all complexities.

Mutability in identity representation is another key element of postcolonial writings. The protagonist on whom the novel moves around, *The English Patient*,

liberated from a fixed identity, is rendered nameless and nationless from the beginning to the end of the novel. Enjoying the condition, he becomes the cure for other characters as they attempt to fulfill their lacks in identifying him. Cultural identity is always undergoing transformations. It is always unstable, metamorphic and sometimes-even contradictory. Unlike the Western thought that subaltern cannot speak, the novel demonstrates that these subaltern and marginalized characters do speak for themselves and are able to narrate their own histories and their experiences.

Ondaatje rewrites Western cannons breaking all canonicity within a single text presenting a wounded space, damaging bodies, vulnerability of the subaltern characters, their struggle to survive under the Western political struggle with the topics of histories, space, identity, nation, language, ethnicity, culture as artifacts as a whole.

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