

## I. Michael Ondaatje and *The English Patient*

Set in wartime Italy, Michael Ondaatje's intriguing novel *The English Patient* portrays four characters of different backgrounds, encountering and dwelling in a small villa at the end of the Second World War. The novel received the Booker Prize in 1992 and continued to enthrall the cinematic audience as it was "transformed" into a movie by director Anthony Minghella, bringing home nine Academy Awards in 1996. Although many critics have rightly pointed out that much difference lies between the plot of the novel and that of the film, both works nevertheless conquer the readers and the audiences repeatedly with the protagonist's ex-centric and self-abandoned personality and the love affair between Almasy and Katharine. Drawn to the interactions of the characters and their complicated yet intriguing relationships, Ondaatje explains in an interview: "I don't like to throw characters into a plot as though it were a raging torrent where they are swept along. What interests me are the complications and nuances of character. Few of my characters are described externally; we see them from the inside out" (Slopen 48). Since Ondaatje's interest is built on "the kind of people who behave as though there were a finite number of words" (Slopen 48), his concentration of the characters' depiction is demonstrated not on the elaborated dialogues and conversations, but on the characters' interior monologues.

Employing a multidimensional perspective in his novels, Ondaatje furthermore states that he does not "want the reader to feel locked into one character" (Slopen 49). As he comments:

I love that sense that history is not just one opinion. I prefer a complicated history where an event is seen through many eyes or emotions, and the

writer doesn't try to control the viewpoint. It is only when one steps back from those small things which are knitted together in the narrative that one can see, as Henry James said, "the figure in the carpet. (Slopen 50)

*The English Patient* is thus 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 in one way or another. 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. They are later joined by Caravaggio, the thief whose illegal business is ironically legitimized by the government as he is trained as a 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. The novel is filled with various small stories of irony and wounds from the overwhelming invasion of war and the trauma that resulted from 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 Europe but also that of the insignificant individuals within.

Generally accepted as a postcolonial text, *The English Patient* discusses numerous issues that are widely analyzed in the postcolonial spectrum, such as the narratives and the reinterpretation of history and remembrance, temporal as well as spatial crossings of boundaries, wounded body as the map of resistance, identity formation, and the compensated desire of the traumatic characters. Among various critical responses, the subversive of history and memories that are distorted and re-narrated in the novel are

granted with most attention. These topics are explained in Rufus Cook's two essays, entitled "Imploding Time and Geography": Narrative and Compressions in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*" concentration on finding the textual evidence of the fragmentary and discontinuous element of the novel, Cook contends that "[t]he book is filled with references to 'fragments' or 'gaps' or 'shards', to 'fractions' or 'remnants,' to characters who have been 'discontinuous' or 'reassembled,' to tapestries that have been 'slashed apart,' murals that have 'crumbled away'" (1998: 109). Suggesting the novel as a compression of time and geography, Cook believes that not only the fixed concept of temporality, that is, the linear development of time, is broken in the novel, the boundaries of geographies are also challenged in short, Cook argues that the boundaries are broken by the overlapping and the intertexture of geographical and personal spaces.

Moreover, Cook writes that such a compression is beautifully achieved by means of Ondaatje's creation of an "impression of an "impression of simultaneity" (1998: 111), which discontinuous time and different landscape appear simultaneity" not only in the eyes of the readers, but also in the fragmentary memories and the vision of the characters. In "Being and Representation," Cook observes that the repetitious motifs in the novel that connect and conjure the memories of the characters are taken from other literary or art work. According to him, intertextuality serves not only as a theme in the novel; it also helps to shape the characters' identity. Cook argues that the imitation or representation is evident in the characters' identifying themselves with figures or events from literary or art works in history. Works of art, such as novels, paintings, murals, and frescos, function to establish the characters' identifications, "helping them to define their identities, their purposes, their relationships with others" (Cook 1999: 36). While the patient's

representation of identity is exemplified by the other characters' projection of desire, their identity representations are testified by means of their readiness to accept alien forces, such as the plot of a literary work, or the incident of a historical event. However, Cook claims that the circle of repeatedly imitating literary or historical figures or of recycled events makes the starting point impossible to detect. The novel thus sinks into the repetition of recurrent events and episodes. He also points out the fluidity of the narrative, picking up where he left off in the other essay. He determines that although the chronologically disoriented narrative appears fragmented, the narration that Ondaatje adopts does achieve what he calls a "time-defeating" mode, in which the concept of time is abandoned from the text, allowing readers to feel the timeless arena.

Amy Novak's essay, "Textual Haunting: Narrating History, Memory, and Silence in *The English Patient*", focuses on what she calls the "spectral narrative economy" in the novel. Resonating Cook's contestation in pointing out the temporal fragmentations, Novak states that Ondaatje, making use of the fragmentary reflection of the patient's memories as well as the narrative of the novel, breaks the totality of Western history, geography, and the identities of the characters. He thus maps the resistance of the colonized and returns to them the right to voice and narrate their oppressed history. The "spectral narrative economy" of the novel is the specters of the silenced past and the colonized subjects. Novak states that by means of interrupting the coherence and linear development of history, Ondaatje blends the locations with the characters of past and present, creating an illusory world in the novel, where "[l]ying just below the surface of the present are the ruins of the past" and where "[i]n the midst of the present, the failures of the past reappear" (Novak 211). The ghost-like past and the disturbed present, along

with the people, the events and the locations of the events, are interwoven into one another, and their mingling relationship becomes un-separated yet disconnected. Novak believes that the English patient, traumatized by the loss of his lover Katharine and the betrayal of his friend Maddox, attempts to recover the past by virtue of narrating his memories. Frustratingly, the past is never to be recovered. Novak mentions that the memories of the patient, conjuring the memories of the other characters, propel the narrator calls "the well of memory" (Ondaatje 4). Borrowing Walter Benjamin's concept of translation, Novak argues that the memories of the past resemble what Benjamin refers to as the "translation" of literary works, which are at most "echoes" of the original and can never truly represent the spirit of original literary work. Likewise, the memories that the patient endeavors to recover and the silence of the past that he is determined to utter can never represent the past as it was, but vague impressions or "glimpse" of the past that are composed of splinters of distorted images, sentences, or sensations from past experience. Thus, the past remains untranslatable as the memories of the past are disabled to recover it, as the signifier can never accurately represent the signified. However, employing Benjamin's theory of translations to discuss the ill-functioned memories that fail to represent the past seem far-fetched as Benjamin's essay concentrates on the translation of literary works per se, rather than the fragmented memories' representations of the past.

Another critic who draws on Benjamin's concept of history and allegory in examining the novel is Marlene Goldman. According to Goldman, the novel is the angel of history who fixes its gaze mournfully on the past, and traces the lives of four ruined characters. *The English Patient*, as Goldman indicates, demonstrates the reluctant

situation of history's surrendering to the inevitable and powerful progress, which is analyzed in Benjamin's portrait of the angel, who got caught into the storm of progress. Goldman rightly explains the parallel structure of Benjamin's allegory and his usage of the term "montage" into Ondaatje's novel. In terms of the allegory of ruined images and fragmentation, Goldman contends that the ruined characters, damaged villa, and the fragmentary narratives mirror Benjamin's concept. Moreover, the setting of the Second World War is "the vantage point from which to survey humanity's precarious position in what both authors [Ondaatje and Benjamin] envision as an apocalyptic storm that threatens to erase all traces of the past," as is exemplified in the painting of Klee (Goldman 904). Goldman also brings up allegorically the "fall" of burning Almasy from the sky, burning Satan from heaven, the fall of Western civilization and Asia when Kip hears from the radio the bombing of Japan. Throughout the essay, Goldman illustrates how Benjamin's "allegorical way of seeing" and his idea of history resonate Ondaatje's novel, and how Benjamin's theory provides a proper explanation to the plot, characters and structures of the novel. The essay concludes with Benjamin's pessimist urging for a catastrophe in order to inspire humanity's longing for redemption, transforming the "history's deathmask into the angel's countenance, and thereby the unresolved ending of Ondaatje's novel is apt" (Goldman 921).

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 "decenter the authority of Western

power, opening up 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." That is, they are "'supplementary to the main argument' of their nation" (409-10). Kip, for instance 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. Almsy, 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 Kipling's colonial novel *Kim*. He writes that "the postcolonial novel cannot be told without confronting the colonial one, that the former will always contain marks of the latter" (Ismail 413-14). 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" (Ismail 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. Also, one of the most obvious instances is the resemblance between Kim the Irish in *Kim* and Kip the Sikh in *The English Patient*, "[w]here the former is British who successfully passes for Indian, the latter is an Indian who tries, but fails, to be accepted by the English" (Ismail 418).

Ismail suggests that India, by means of Kipling's depiction, lives under the cloud of Western imagination. "Indianness" in *Kim*, instead of a persecuted ethnicity, is "understood as the lack of a unifying principle," inviting the colonizers, the intended readers of *Kim*, to bring progress, prosperity, and modernity from Western civilization. Thus his contestation that "literature inhales, then exhales, history" and that "the colonial novel does the work of history" (Ismail 417). Stressing that history is the "complice" of colonialism, Ismail declares 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 (at least in colonial terms). As he concludes, "If to have a history is to be able to tell your own story on 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)

Unlike Ismail, Raymond Aaron Younis, in "Nationhood and Decolonization in *The English Patient*," focuses on Minghella's film version rather than the novel. Younis



points out that the film's interpretation of the novel is somewhat different from Ondaatje's original text in terms of its turning point at the end and the emphasis of placing the love affair of Almasy and Katharine rather than the relationship among the four dwellers in the villa. In addition, the film particularly diminishes the role Kip, the key character who brings out the theme of colonial and imperial concern in the novel, reducing him to a third-world sapper, whose self-identification is constructed on the recognition of white others. To these two diversion from the novel, Younis offers a satisfactory explanation that the theme of romance, in the eye of movie goers, are much attractive than nationhood and colonialism. Comparing to the trauma of alienation and exile, a heartfelt romance always wins the audience with great tears. However critics or writers may have no choice but to succumb to the great power of love, the diminution of Kip's ethnicity nevertheless abates the film's profundity.

The distinction of the novel and the film is also discussed in Jacqui Sadashige's "Sweeping the Sands: Geographies of Desire in *The English Patient*." She excavates the comparison of the two versions of the story, pointing out the different emphasis of several aspects made by Ondaatje and Minghella. Sadashige discusses the representations of history in terms of intertextuality, narrative style, and the characters' desire. She indicates that Ondaatje's technique in *The English Patient* resembles to that in his previous novels, such as *The Collective Works of Billy the Kid*, *Coming Through Slaughter*, and *In the Skin of a Lion*. These works, according to him, "all comprise, at one level, the fictional histories of historical personages" (Sadashige 243). Like Younis, Sadashige also mentions the omission of Kip in the movie, and the patient's identity, which was originally presented as an unsolved mystery in the novel, but identified as

Almasy in the movie version. The omission of Kip, that is, the erasure of Kip's characterization as a colonized subject and his rage toward the nuclear bombing in Japan, has transformed the cinema into a completely different version from that of Ondaatje's the novel. She moreover questions the praises that are given to the film. While asserting the preeminence of love and its omnipotence, which conquers racial and political obstacles, the film devalues the gravity and the importance of ethnicity. Disapproving of Minghella's delinquency of the vital subject in omitting Kip's racial and political awakening in the cinematic adaptation, Sadashige comments that Minghella turns Ondaatje's text into a love story that fits only in the movie.

Comparing *The English Patient* to Byron, who are 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*." Like many other critics, viewpoints that have been examined before, Clark in addition proposes the essential element of the characters, relationship, that is, desire. He states that "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 relate the male characters in the novel. Caravaggio, the most obvious example, resonates most to the theme in terms of his name that resembles the great painter in Italian Renaissance and his cut-off thumbs. As Clark writes, "Caravaggio's name is that of the famous painter who is though to have been a thief and whose work often depicted decapitation at the hands of seductive and betraying women, the ultimate scene of castration" (Clark 61). Caravaggio's painting "David with the Head

of Goliath," which is brought up in the novel, furthermore relates the theme of capitulation to 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 "oral pleasure and necrophilia" 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. Moreover, Clark argues that "[w]here Almasy and Caravaggio define themselves around the phallus and its loss, Kip admits to mother-love, albeit through the palliating guise of his ayah" (Clark 67). Kip, the alien who only loves strangers' intimacy, finds comforts not in his family but in his ayah and Hana. Clark concludes that "[i]n *The English Patient*, all lovers have to be strangers, all have to lie together like effigies above the tomb or under the wings of death" (Clark 67).

Analyzing Almasy and Katharine's identity as well as the desire of ownership 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 endeavors 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" (Emery 212); or in spite of Almay'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.

Stepen Scobie, in "The Reading Lesson: Michael Ondaatje and the Patients of Desur," discusses the anonymity of the patient by means of the symbol of fire that appears frequently in the novel. Instead of suggesting that Almay's desire erases Katharine's identity, Scobie declares that Katharine, too, melts Almay's identity away. He contends that the death of Katharine is "a literal fire, which burns away every trace of her lover's identity, leaving him as an anonymous patient in an English hospital" (Scobie 97). However, Scobie notes that Almay's loss of identity is of purpose and intention. As he points out, that the "willed (or faked) loss of identity" frees him from the limitation of nationality or boundaries of any other environments or circumstances. What is more, "the patient's anonymity, and his (un)readability, make him the perfect blank screen onto which the other characters can project their own devious passion" (Scobie 97-98). Scobie 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. Postcolonialism and Subaltern Studies

According to Stuart Hall, the postcolonial is "the universalizing displacement," the breaking down of the binary situation of colonialism. It overthrows Eurocentric histories, temporalities, and ethnic formations, melting all distinctions into a universal category. postcolonialism, as Hall comments, "re-reads 'colonialism' [...] and produces decentered, diasporic or 'global' or 'global' rewriting of earlier, nation-centered imperial grand narratives" (247). In short, it blurs the boundaries of the colonizing and the colonized. Chronologically, postcoloniality generally refers to the era that comes after colonialism, that is, the times of post-independence and "decolonization." However, the postcolonial period arrives at different times in different nations, and has been questioned repeatedly by scholars around the globe. Ironically, the doubt resonates the characteristic of uncertainty of the postcolonial condition. Like the other "post-" theories, postcolonialism rejects to be pinned down into a fixed definition or the idea of being "correctly described." As reactionary force against coloniality, postcoloniality refers to a long and disquieting "process," or what Hall calls the "periodisation" of decolonization (247). Hall suggests that postcolonial discourse aims to reverse the clear-cut binary distinction of the colonizer/outside, central/marginal, white/color. It blurs of histories, nations, class, and ethnicity, undoing the boundaries of differences that was prevalent in the colonial system of Western world. Anne McClintock furthermore argues that "[p]ost-colonial studies has set itself against this imperial idea of linear time" (245). It concentrates on the disengagement of the colonial condition, returning the voice and the right to the subaltern and the marginalized, who were once muted to narrate their history and subjectivity. In attempts to invert the perspectives of the Western world that saw the

"Rest" as the Other, allowing the emergence of third-world intellectuals to utter on behalf of their own nation or people.

Unlike the radical or even violent tendencies in the initial resistant movements of postcolonial activists, a great deal of cultural and literary resistance of the postcolonial realm is demonstrated by means of literary works. The emergence of postcolonial literature in the past few years shows that literature has become a "writing cure" for the formerly colonized subjects to express their discontent and to regain what they have been deprived of in the years of colonization. The "writing cure" enables writers of different ethnicities or of (pre-)colonized background to document their personal experience or the communal histories of their once colonized countries. The composition of postcolonial literary works thus functions as literary resistance. It is the media for literature writers or critical theorists to imagine, (re-)construct the oppressed stories of their own or of their forefathers, and to express their opinions about the condition of the coloniality or postcoloniality. Accompanying the movement of cultural decolonization, the literary resistance of the postcolonial is to reclaim authority in the acts of narrating subaltern histories, presenting and (re-)mapping geographical boundaries, and rebuilding traumatic identities. Benita Parry, author of "Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism," points out that "the project of a postcolonial critique is designated as deconstructing and displacing the Eurocentric premises of a discursive apparatus which constructed the Third World not only for the west but also for the cultures so represented" (172). What Ondaatje attempts to overthrow in *The English Patient* is precisely the fictional image that is planted on the subaltern characters. Kip's political and racial awakening, for instance, may be interpreted as the resistance to the colonial gaze,

which the Western hegemony fixes upon the subaltern or the represented subject. Moreover, Parry also notes that instead of searching for the 'remote paternity,' a postcolonial construction of the past should be "an imaginative reworking of the process of *metisage* or an infinite wandering across cultures" (174). Hence, Ondaatje's adopts Herodotus's *The Histories* to elaborate the atmosphere of artificial and fabricated histories.

For Almasi, history is "like the air we breathe, it enters (or interpellates) us unconsciously, without our knowledge or attentive participation; it does the work through books, all books" (Ismail 421). Said, however, mentions that history, or the narrating of an alternatives history, is the device for the postcolonial novelists to reconstruct their past and thus to question the colonial way of documenting the past. As Said writes, "[appealing] to the past is the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps" (Said 1993: 3). Unlike the novelists of the nineteenth century who celebrated Imperialism and Colonialism, and who, as Said claims, exaggerated the almighty power of empires, and the religious, economic, and political benefits of postcolonial terrain write in the attempt to question the historical value of colonization, and to reveal the unnoticed colonized subjects. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said designates the deeply rooted connections between novels and imperialism. He suggests that the celebration of imperial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth century novels is ubiquitous and taken for granted. Contending that the novelists are the ones who grow seeds of imperialism in the minds of

the mass reading public, Said states that imperialism, in one way or another, flourishes on the pages and in the imagination of the readers than in reality. Said claims,

I'm not trying to say that novel-or the culture in the broad sense-'caused' imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other. (70-71)

Commenting on nineteenth century English novels, Said elaborates on the deeply-bounded relationship between the art work and the imperial expansion. In the postcolonial terrain, the rewriting of novels is thus prevalent in that they wish to subvert not only the classical, but also the official history of Western hegemony.

Literary resistance not only concentrates on (re-)narrating histories, but that it also attempts to (re-)map the geography of the once colonized territory, whether it be the land or the body, and the identity of the colonized. Although the production of identity is well-known to critics who are familiar with the postcolonial theories, or cultural studies, the definition of one's identity should not be conducted entirely in the hands of the colonizing other. As Parry argues,

Anticolonialists writings did challenge, subvert, and undermine the ruling ideologies, and nowhere more so than in overthrowing the hierarchy of colonizer/colonized, the speech and stance of the colonized refusing a



position of subjugation and dispensing with the terms of the colonizer's definitions. (176)

Europe's fabrications of "Asian," for instance, is deflected and subverted by Asian and Asian-American literary discourses. That "Asian identity" is the product of refusing Europe's gaze and returning its own anti-colonialist look. Hence "the modes of subaltern colonial resistance, far from being demonstrated by forms and vocabularies borrowed from the dominant culture, were rearticulations of pre-colonial traditions of protest" (Parry 176).

### **Telling History and Remembrance**

"How to write a new history? When [...] the only history is white" (Young 1990: 120)? The radical question that Robert Young proposes in *White Mythologies* is answered, or at least attempted to be solved, by many ethnic or national critics and literary writers who are dedicated to the unmasking or (re-)writing of their cultural histories. Like many other literary works that spring from the critique of colonialism, or the post-colonial terrains, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* attempts to overthrow the (Western) official history, allowing the subaltern and their historical account to surface from the barriers of narration of historiography. The temporal setting of the novel has strongly suggested the rebelling atmosphere of postcolonialism. It is after the Second World War that decolonization takes place, with the Eurocentric thoughts and disciplines, and their superior "forms of history" being questioned and thus decolonized. In addition, Ondaatje's disruption and rejection of a single, authoritative history may be observed in the novel's temporal-disordered narratives, repetition and distortion. It also merges history and history and fiction, of which Herodotus's *The Histories* may best serve as the

example of incorporating indigenous oral mythologies and legends with the well-documented histories of written facts. He demonstrates a sense of literary resistance in the novel.

Textulizing a world in which creative fiction and documented history are interwoven into the novel, Ondaatje explicitly demonstrates the technique of history-telling that he borrows from Herodotus's *The Histories*. As the narrator of the novel writes, the patient's copy of *The Histories* is "added to, cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his [Almasy's] own observations-so they all cradled within the text of Herodotus" (16). Unlike modern historians, who are more accessible to documentations of the past, those of ancient times in which no sense of archeology or perhaps that of history is well-developed knew considerably little about what had happened in the past, that is, the time before the existences of the historians. Herodotus, however, did not seem to be bothered with the inaccessible past when composing *The Histories*. According to James Romm, "[m]ost ancient historians, beginning in the generation after Herodotus, solved the problem of the knowability of the past by writing only about the events they themselves had lived through [...] with a wealth of documentary evidence for their information" (7). Unlike most ancient historians, Herodotus "alone explored an era well before his own birth, and did so, for the most part, without the aid of written sources" ((9). One cannot help but questioning what it was that Herodotus gained from the Knowledge of the past to compose his book. The question is answered by Romm as he states that Herodotus learned about the past by listening or documenting the tales, legends, myths, or the dramatized facts that he was told. "[A]llow[ing] those stories to lend shape and meaning to his narrative," Herodotus

composes what Romm calls the "mystic history." Considering the readers' responses to the authenticity of the text. He furthermore refers *The Histories* to a text that is "based on a true story" (Romm 5-11). In short, Romm counts *The Histories* as a documentation of "fact-oriented" tales, much like Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, in which no reader needs to know how authentic the content of the text is as he/she enjoys the process of reading.

Employing historical figures and events of the Geographical Society of Britain during the Second World War, Ondaatje indulges his imagination on the particular incident of the 1939 desert expedition to search for the lost oasis Zerzura. At the very beginning of the novel, he quotes a brief announcement from the Geographical Society meeting in London at 1994-in order to prove the existence of the figures that he adopts in the novel, that is, the members of the Royal Sand Club, as well as the death of Geoffrey and Katharine Clifton at Gilf Kebir. However, like Herodotus, Ondaatje (re-)shapes the historical facts into fictional events, including the secret love affair between Count Ladislaus de Almasy and Katharine Clifton, and the fictional plane crash that caused the death of Geoffrey Clifton. Ondaatje's adoption of the historical materials and figures is similar to what Romm comments on Herodotus's inventive attitude and technique in telling histories: "Histories may be his subject matter, but his approach to that subject differs from that of historians as we know them." Based on the similar approaches to deal with histories, *The English Patient* may be called a novel that is based on a true story." Ondaatje's merging history into fiction helps to introduce doubts on the authenticity of history, and to furthermore overthrow the so-called official historiography.

Contrary to the "official history" that is narrated and established by the dominant class, the history of the repressed or of the subaltern emerges as a vital issue in the

postcolonial studies. In *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, Said proposes the idea that the entire Oriental World is constructed under European thinking. Although Said is not the first to discuss the discrepancies of ethnicities or Franz Fanon's radical tendency toward decolonization, and Michel Foucault's theories on power and knowledge, develops his critique of Orientalism. Said's *Orientalism* unites and transcends oriental studies in history, geography, and philosophies, bringing all Oriental studies into the realm of the influence of power structure and hegemony. In short, Orientalism is the studies of the relationship between "the Orient" and "the Occident," which is a relationship of dominance, control and of political and economical interests. Even when the Occidental scholars show a great interest in or have mercy on the Orient, their grounds of any reaction are very unlikely to be interest-free. The entire Western discourse on the East is based on the Occident's dominance over the ethnicity and the land of the Orient as well as the possible interests that can be gained from it.

Although Said's works are without doubt significant, they nevertheless arouse various questions and further discussions. Robert Young, for instance, comments on Said's *Orientalism*. He writes that "the analyses of *Orientalism* force us to the recognition that all knowledge may be contaminated, implicated even in its very formal or objective' structures" (127). The question that follows is to what extent other knowledge are contaminated. However, Young proposes that if all disciplines are dominated by the Western hegemony. Orientalism should not be immune from the contamination of western hegemony. As Young points out, *Orientalism* offers no alternative to the phenomena that Said criticizes, depriving the entire Western academic circle of the ability to produce any discourse. Not only is it not Said's intention nor his duty to offer

any alternative or workable critique that can survive under the examination of *Orientalism*, Said's refusal to provide such an alternative solution only strengthens this observation on the Western-dominated world phenomena. As for critics who object Said's *Orientalism*, a dilemma of whether a solution is required or not is presented since "to provide an alternative to *Orientalism* would be to accept the existence of the very thing in dispute" (Young 127). However, such critique also produces a problem. It deprives the credibility and any fundamental meanings of the existence of other knowledges. Thus the recognition of *Orientalism* would only overthrow the entire Western legitimate disciplines on the orient. In addition, another problem that puts the construction and authenticity of the orient into question appears when Said criticizes that the oriental discourse, especially those made by the early orientalists, tend to construct the orient by presenting it in images and "visions" rather than by allowing the oriental subjects to narrate their own histories in words and languages. The dehistoricization of the occident, according to Said, deprives the orientalists of the ability to see the World outside the West through narrative. The object under their description and studies is merely the representation of the oriental world. However, if what Said says is correct, why should the object under his discussions and analyses be the true orient? Indeed, the question as to whether there is a true orient is presented by Young, who contends that "typical of this kind of difficulty would be his criticism that orientalism created an eternal unchanging platonic vision of the orient" (Young 127-28).

Pointing out that the history of the orient is either denied by Western hegemony or presented by the "official history" of the occident, Said in *Orientalism* also encourages the (re-)construction of oriental history. In the novel, however, the presentation of the

(oppressed) history is demonstrated by the subalterns pasts and remembrances.

"Subaltern" here means the four main characters in the novel who, compare to the dominant western hegemony that causes the Great War, are relatively the sacrifice of the power wrestling of Western countries. According to Bill Ashcraft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, the term "subaltern" is first employed by Antonio Gramsci to "refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes (215). That is, groups that are "denied access to 'hegemonic' power". The term "subaltern," applied to the Subaltern Studies group-which initially includes Ranajit Guha, Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, Divid Hardiman, and Gyanendra Pendey-in the postcolonial terrain takes on a specific meaning of the character, and the level of the oppressed group in South Asia, which is determined by class, race, gender, and caste. The Subaltern Studies brings into discussion the histories, politics, economics, and sociology of South Asia, especially of Southern India. The group aims at distinguishing the circumstances, the political, economic, and historical injustices that are done to the subaltern class, allowing them to be liberated from not only the British colonizers, but also from the indigenous elites of the country. As is observed by Ashcraft, Griffiths and Tiffin, "[t]he goals of the group stemmed from the belief that the historiography of Indian nationalism, for instance, had long been dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeoisie-nationalist elitism-both the consequences of British colonialism. (217). Therefore, in according the Subaltern Studies group, the history of India is practically the history of the dominant class, which includes both the British colonialists and the indigenous intellectuals. In other words the historiography of India captured by the dominant class of elitism and colonialism is

merely another interpretation of a colonized country that is muted to speak for its own. Such images and construction is very likely to resemble the un-realistically oriental picture that Said attempts to reveal in orientalism. Like many postcolonial critics and theorists, the group concentrates on rectifying the current situation, returning the subaltern class the voice and power to utter their own history, that is, the history of the subaltern.

The attempt, however, gives rise to various responses and discussions. Among them, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak delivers her significant viewpoints in the essay entitled "Can the subaltern Speak?" in her opinion, whether or not the subaltern is able to voice is an essential and foremost question that members of the subaltern studies group ask. Designating the insufficiencies of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's understanding of Western hegemonic subjectivity and ideology, Spivak problematizes the subjectivity of the subaltern by means of Marxist criticism on Capitalism and Western economics. Unveiling the ubiquity of the global situation-that is, the current situation of the dominant subject of the West, or "the West as Subject"-Spivak points out that "some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire" to disguise such a situation, such as the above two theorists, and most of the French intellectuals (271). Spivak concludes in the first part of the essay, "[t]his S/subject, curiously sewn together into a transparency by denegation, belongs to the exploiters' side of the international division of labor" (280). But for the French intellectuals, it is impossible to realize the inter-connected relationship between power and desire that inhabits in the transparent Western Subject, and in the construction of Europe's Other. As she points out,

It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of that other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest? its itinerary-not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law. (280).

And it is such kind of transference, or deliberate ignorance of Western Subject that indulges European hegemony to construct the image of other on behalf of the subaltern, deepening the subordination of the subaltern.

However, as one of the critics who concentrates on analyzing the (post-/anti)colonial condition, Spivak, too, deviates from her own theory by adopting the dominant language (English) and Western methodologies to utter the oppressed condition of the colonized subjects, including the gender difference in the (post-/anti-)colonial discourse, one of her most concern issues. One is inevitable to question Spivak's over-determinant answer as she adopts the Western methodologies as the proofs that the subaltern cannot speak while pointing out that other critics, such as Foucault and Deleuze, are fallen into the cognitive failure in adopting Western methodologies in the attempt to narrate the (post-)colonial condition. What Spivak discusses in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is not necessarily the subaltern's ability to voice political concerns, but a more fundamental definition of a subaltern identity. The reason why the subaltern cannot speak is because of their subaltern identities. Spivak believes that the identity of the subaltern lies in its difference from the dominant class. Such difference is caused precisely because that the subaltern cannot speak for he/she own while the dominant class



can. To be a subaltern is to be continually suppressed by the dominant, ruling class. That is, if a subaltern speaks or if his/her voice is successfully heard, the identity of the subaltern is not applied onto him/her. Thus, Spivak claims that the subaltern cannot speak.

However, such a complete negation of the possibility that subaltern is heard is over-determinant. To follow Spivak's definition of subaltern identity is to agree that the entire critique of post-colonial discourse is useless in attempting to voice the oppressed and the marginalized communities. If indeed it is in vain in attempting for the subaltern to be heard, Spivak and other postcolonial critics' works are functionless in describing the postcolonial conditions. Although post-colonial discourse is perhaps loose and problematic, as many critics have suggested, in the beginning of the discourse formation, it is not as incorrigible as what Spivak suggests, nor useless in voicing for the subaltern. Ashcroft et al comment in *Post-Colonial Studies* that "in most cases the dominant language or mode of representation [or post-colonial discourse] is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard" (219), which is precisely what Spivak herself and many other critics do. The emergence of the discourse itself, too, is the demonstration of how the subaltern is heard little by little.

### III. (Re-)Constructing an Alternative History in *The English Patient*

The definition of the subaltern subjects that are widely discussed by the subaltern studies group and Spivak is applicable to the four main characters in *The English Patient*. In the novel, 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 for the end of 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 the Sikh who is not only subaltern to India but also British imperialism. As for the other three characters, although the ethnicity of Hana, Carvaggio, 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 nationalities of Hana and Caravaggio are both of Canada, 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 a Hungarian whose nation is tormented and constantly dominated by foreign political power, such as Russia, and who, according to the novel, receives his education in the foreign land of England. He not only is treated but also actively perceives himself as an unassimilated other. The subaltern quality of the characters moreover may be detected by virtue of their oppressed condition in the novel. They are in a sense deserted in the villa, subjected to the hegemonic power of the Great War. Striving to live through the remains of the war, the four characters are rendered powerless, becoming the "subject[s] of insurgency" (Aschraft et al 219).

However, considering the relationship between the four main characters and the other subordinate personas that appear in the margins of the novel, one may observe the author's attempt to give the subaltern voice while denying the dominate party the position to speak for their own. Ondaatje not only narrates and re-narrates the history of medieval and modern Europe, but also tangles the remembrances of the subaltern personas that disturb the official history of Europe with the fragmentary yet intensive memories of the four characters. Unlike what Spivak claims as the silenced subaltern, the characters in the novel are given chances, under Ondaatje's depiction, to narrate their personal or national histories. The subaltern studies group and Spivak's essay also demonstrates a clear sense of class consciousness, which is observable in *The English Patient* as well. Comparing with the four subaltern characters that are active in the novel, the subordinate characters, such as Lord Suffolk, Katharine, Madox, and other members of the Sand Club, are relatively the dominated party who are contrarily denied voices of their own. The class consciousness in the novel is deliberately reversed and reconstructed by Ondaatje. For instance, both aristocrats of England, Lord Suffolk and Katharine, the two characters who may be rightfully referred to as secondary characters in the novel, speak only 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. What is more ironic and subversive is that in *The English Patient* all the Englishmen die. Not only do 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 terms of Ondaatje's adopting four subaltern subjects as his main characters and of his favoring the subaltern over the dominant class. In the novel the subaltern are thus granted the chance to narrate their histories while all the Englishmen exist in the memories of the four main characters.

(Re-)Constructing an alternative history for the subaltern by means of adding fictional elements into historical documentation or by merging the past with the present, Ondaatje depicts a fictional world that is chained by both the histories of European wars and the broken memories of the four characters. An instantly observable example that proves Ondaatje's merging of past and present is the resonance between the medieval war that had taken place in ancient Florence and the Second World War that took place in modern Italy. Apart from the invented love affair of Almasy and Katharine that is entirely made up by Ondaatje, another inventive instance of fusing fiction into history and past present is the sequel of the fatal incident of Michaelangelo Caravaggio the Renaissance painter and the man whom he killed in a dispute of a tennis match. According to *Art Book: Caravaggio*, the Renaissance painter Caravaggio may have accidentally killed a young man named Ranuccio Tomassoni on May 29, 1606. Told by Ondaatje, the most mysterious murder that takes place in the history of art world has sequel in the novel in which the Canadian spy Caravaggio is caught and has his thumbs chopped off by a German officer Ranuccio Tommasoni, whose name is that of the murdered young man in 1606, veering the difference of one more M and without an S. Reuniting the two historical figures with different names, Michaelangelo Caravaggio as David Caravaggio, and Ranuccio Tomassoni as Ranuccio Tommasoni, in different time and space, Ondaatje

designs the plot and justifies the victim to revenge the murder. Instead of indicating any significance, such trick is but a means to toy and distort history, implying the depreciation of any official Western history.

Intertextuality with intentions or specific purposes is common in postcolonial writings. The purpose of such rewriting is to overthrow the imperial histories or ideology, presenting an alternative or a subaltern voice. Such rewriting may be observed in literary works such as J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, a postcolonial response to the colonial story of *Robinson Crusoe* by the eighteenth century novelist Daniel Defoe, and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the story of Antoinette Cosway, who is Bertha Mason, the Jamaican mad wife of Edward Rochester in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, and Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, the rewriting of Kipling's *Kim* and perhaps of E. M. Foster's *A Passage to India*. These examples clearly aim at deconstructing the imperial ideology by rewriting or giving an alternative narrative or perspective on the well-known literary works that celebrate or assert imperialism or Colonialism. Ondaatje's rewriting of *Kim* may be observed in the various similarities and differences that Ondaatje designs in order to challenge the previous text. As Said points out, it is inspiring to see "Kipling (few more imperialist and reactionary than he) [writes] his novel *Kim* not only depend[s] on a long history of Anglo-Indian perspective, but also, in spite of itself, forecast the untenability of that perspective in its insistence on the belief that the Indian reality require[s], indeed [besought] British tutelage more or less indefinitely" (Said 1993: xxi). Ismail also states 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; thus its selection by *The English Patient*" (414). Ondaatje chooses to write his own work as a response to *Kim* because of

such colonial consciousness that springs from the novel. The opening sentences of *Kim*, for instance, clearly suggest that India is a conquered country:

He sat, in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam-Zammah on her brick platform opposite the old Ajib-Gher-the Wonder House, as the natives call the Lahore Museum. Who hold Zam-Zammah, that "fir-breathing dragon," hold the Punjab; for the great green-bronze piece is always first of the conqueror's loot. There was some justification of Kim—he had kicked Lala Dinanath's boy off the trunnions—since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English. (7)

From Kim's actions, that is, an Englishman who disregards the municipal orders and sit "astride the gun Zam-Zammah on her brick platform," the famous gun that whoever possesses it owns Punjab, his attitude of contempt toward the government of India is clear. Kipling's intention of acknowledging his implied readers (British metropolitan public) the empire's complete dominance over India is demonstrated as well. Ismail writes, "there [Kim], all India is quite literally put on display for the metropolitan reader [of British]" (414), the mysterious yet somewhat dangerous Britain. In *The English Patient*, however, the desert of Libya and the rest of Africa that Almasy introduces to Hana and the readers of the novel are already put into words and documentations by Herodotus. Here, in spite of being the hero of the novel and the ethnographer of the Royal Geographical Society, Almasy is not the explorer, nor the discoverer of the land of which he produces maps (413-20).

*The English Patient* overthrows the conventional narrative of the subject/object positions. In the novel, the English patient is rescued by the Bedouin, and kept alive so

that they can use him to identify the guns and bullets that scattered in the desert during the wartime. Once the patient has completed his job, he is no longer useful to the Bedouin and is handed over to the British. Although in the novel the Bedouin are still silenced, they are, compared to other subalterns in colonial novels, the ones who have the power, the power to not save the English patient, or even to kill him. They are also the party who possesses knowledge as the patient is brought back to life not by Western medicine but by the tribal medication. The Bedouin are depicted here as both knowledgeable and of authority. In addition, rather than attempting to represent the subaltern community whom Ondaatje does not know much, he has returned the Bedouin the power of silence. The narrative object who usually does the narration is rendered vulnerable in such a state that his life is in the hands of the object. In short, the power structure of subject and object in Western narrative is reversed by Ondaatje in depiction the situation of the protagonist's stay with the Bedouin. Unlike the natives in *Kim*, who are portrayed as clearly dominated and understood by the colonialists, the Bedouin in *The English Patient* is depicted as a mysterious tribe, who possesses knowledge yet unknown to the outsiders. As the patient, a knowledgeable man who claims to "ha[ve] information like a sea" in him, and is entered by history, wonders to himself, "what great nation had found him" (Ondaatje 6). Although the Bedouin are muted in the pages of the novel, their silence takes on a more different meaning than those of the subaltern who are deprived of the right of speech in colonial novels. They silence by will, not by force. As Ondaatje notes, "the Bedouin silenced themselves when he was awake" (6). The Bedouin's silence furthermore demonstrates that the subaltern narrates their history in their own languages, and is unknown to the outsiders, including the patient, the author, and the readers.

Apart from overthrowing the credibility and justice of Western history, the novel also integrates the past and the present, disrupting the traditional linear technique also appears in other postcolonial novels. Considering *The English Patient*, one may find that introducing a great deal of European history, whether it is of art or of war, into the novel, Ondaatje seems deliberately disorganize its presentation, allowing the past (the histories and the remembrances) to haunt the present. According to Novak, *The English Patient* is "a text about the trauma of History. Examining the cultural trauma of the World War Two-not so much the 'truth' of that happened, but instead its place today in cultural imagination-the novel probes how the present confronts the unimaginable and the silences of the past" (211). In doing so, Ondaatje brings out a great deal of past in Europe in order to contrast the present, such as the last mediaeval war the fought in Italy (Ondaatje 69-72). The interweaving narrative of the ancient war and the present situation of World War Two creates a sense of synchronicity, leading readers to experience the authenticity of historicity and the presence of wars. Mingling the past into the present, Ondaatje repeatedly reverses temporal sequences, foretelling the endings ahead while revealing the events later. For instance, readers are foretold the future developments of the characters, such as Kip, who becomes a dentist and gets married in India, Hana and Caravaggio, who return to Canada and go on with their lives, and the patient, who eventually ceases to exist.

Moreover, in the novel the present is tangled with the past. Often the description of the present is interrupted by the sudden remembrance of the past while the actions of the remembrance are again cut off by the present actions. Such disruption happens when Caravaggio tells the story of how comes to lose his thumbs. The story is continually



interrupted by Caravaggio's own narrative disorder, Hana's contemplation of both the patient and Caravaggio, the environmental and historical description of the broken villa, Caravaggio's memory of seeing Hana as a young girl, and finally, the appearance of a stray dog. The simple story eventually lasts for pages in fragments for readers to realize how and why his fingers are chopped off. The telling of the past thus integrates into the present, triggering the motions and certain points that draw the diversion of the present back to the telling of the past. Another obvious instance of such integration of past and present occurs when the patient starts to recount his memories before the accident. It starts with the fourth section and lasts till the end of the novel, haunts, and is haunted by, the present, that is, his remaining days in the villa. Such interaction, however, is mutual. The present actions and its occurrence, too, are disrupted and triggered by the past. For instance, a scene in which the patient is taken to identify and demonstrate the variety of guns that the Bedouins gather in the desert, the patient suddenly recollects his childhood memories of the little card game that he used to play with his aunt on the grass of her lawn. And thus the fusing of past and present:

And he [the patient], now in this desert, was sane, with clear thought, picking up the cards, bringing them together with ease, his grain flung out to his aunt, and firing each successful combination into the air, and gradually the unseen men around him replied to rifle shot with a cheer.

(21)

We may notice here that the integration of past and present, which is already too deeply fused to separate from each other in terms of the description, the scenes, and similar actions, are not only inseparably tied together, but also create an alternative space that is

both the desert and the green lawn, both the card game and the shooting demonstration. Such combination of pieces of fragmentary memories serves the purpose of disrupting the present, allowing the past to emerge and be re-membered again. As Novak states, "the fragmentary memories in *The English Patient* endeavor to supplement the past with the present and the present in the past" (209). In other words, the pieces of present and past are complementary to each other. However, the past that is presented by the memories of the characters does not reveal what it really is. They are the interpretations, or as Novak terms, the "translations" of the unrepresentable past.

Memories as the interpretations of the past means that memories cannot represent what the past really is like. In accounting the past, the characters in the novel tend to remember, or sometimes exaggerate, the splinters of details that make impressions on them. These glimpses of the past thus perform different functions and serve various purposes for characters who down themselves into the well of memory. Novak argues that "traumatized by the past, the characters of this novel seek to cope with their traumatic experience by drawing the event into a narrative space that will contain and position the past" (207). For Kip, the flashbacks of the memories are nostalgic remembrance, reminding him of his nation far away in Asia, and his new founded family in England, who, unfortunately, disappoints him at the end. For Hana, the memories of her childhood and of her traumatic experience as a wartime nurse that are mostly triggered by Caravaggio's appearance and the patient's memories serve as both the nostalgic memories and the remembering cure. For the patient, the attempt to remember the past, or in part, the repeatedly production of the past, serves to (re-)construct a position in which he feels comfortably hiding inside. The characters' remembrance

furthermore overwrites the collective memories of the war and the histories of previous literary works. Hana, for instance, spontaneously writes down how she feels about Caravaggio on the blank pages of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Later she "closes the book and then walks down into the library and conceals it in one of the high shelves" (61). The textualizing of her memories produces a history of her own that is written down on top of other histories, the histories of the last of the Mohicans. The patient, on the other hand, combines the historical documentation and his personal histories on the pages of Herodotus' *The Histories* or "the information glued in from other Books" (58). In other words, the characters document their personal histories on the margins of the other subaltern histories, and against the great history on the margins of the other subaltern histories, and against the great history of World War II. History and remembrance thus tangle together, moving the story forward while luring more memories to come to the surface of the present.

Said once comments in *Culture and Imperialism* that "stories are the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (xii). Narrating an alternative history and highlighting the remembrance of 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*.

Borrowed by post-colonial discourse, the term "deterritorialization" portrays one of the most fundamental concepts of colonialism, which is to deconstruct and reconstruct the colonized geography, transforming the conquered land into the subaltern territories. One may say that while imperialism is the action of an empire's expanding its domination

territory, colonialism is the consequence and the practice of imperialism. As Said observes, such expanding action means "thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is lived on and owned by others" (1993). Although direct colonialism has ceased to exist in our time, the impact and profound influence that caused by imperialism and colonialism lingers on, creating a sense of cultural atmosphere that clouds the once colonized territories. Territories here refer to the land, the body, and the traumatized souls of the colonized subjects. Postcolonial discourse and literature, thus, in its attempts to deterritorialize, and sometimes reterritorialize, the boundary and geography made by colonialists, narrates and unveils the traumatized atmosphere. The wounded geography, the colonized subjects, and the body, for instance, are what postcolonial discourse and its literary works endeavor to unravel or heal in the literary resistance against the imperial and colonial violence.

Arguably, the motif of deterritorialization in Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is demonstrated by the violent destruction of Europe and the characters. Adopting wartime Europe, the center of the imperial hegemony, as the prime site of the novel's background, Ondaatje hints at the postcolonial concept of deterritorialization, which is not only rebelling but also subversive. Contrary to the conventional imagery of Europe that is depicted as a prospective, an advanced and civilized continent in the colonial novels, the Europe in *The English Patient* is portrayed as a desolate and damaged earth in which the atmosphere of death lingers on and stinks. The wartime Europe, as Ondaatje writes, "is still terrible out there. Dead cattle. Horses shot dead, half eaten. People hanging upside down from bridges. The last vices of war. Completely unsafe" (29). Dragging the superior Europe down to the same level as the colonized continents, Ondaatje erases the

differences of the colonizing subjects and the colonized objects. He presents the vivid scene of an outcast and wretched Europe imagination, or his hometown Punjab in India, where people need to wash their hands constantly for sanitary problems. Contrasting the wartime Europe that suffers from the Second World War with the pre-war and peaceful desert in the patient's memories, Ondaatje furthermore dissolves the demarcation between the two lands, implying the previous standards of what is perceived of Europe and Africa. In the patient's memories and the surrounding that he situates, the so-called "dark Africa" appears to offer more comforts than what Europe can do. The desert in his remembrance is peaceful, quiet but alive (the Bedouin doesn't talk much, but they take care of the injured pilot) while at the same time Europe is burning with fires of anger and greed, attempting to stretch its claws onto Africa and Asia.

The traumatized 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 bodies, Caravaggio incomplete fingers, and Hana's cut-off tonsils and long hair. Illustrating the miserable condition of the wretched earth, the traumatized souls and bodies, the author begins the process of reterritorialization. That is, the construction and (re-)presentation of the imaginary geography in the novel. The demarcation of locality no longer exists in the novel. It is replaced by spaces of infinity: the desert is without boundaries, the villa without walls, the two sites merging into one in the patient's narratives and memories without differences, and the homelands and the settling spots where Hana and Kip dwell becomes distant-less in their narration and memories. The act of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, however, extends beyond spatial aspects. It

also includes the process of de-colonization and the re-making of the colonized subjects. In *The English Patient*, the deterritorialization is demonstrated by means of the undefinable territories of the deserts, the infinite-extended villa, and the characters' broken bodies. The open space of the Villa San Girolamo, where the four characters temporarily shelter from the war, implies both the postcolonial rejection of violent setting of boundary as well as the presentation of injury. Not only are the rooms of San Girolamo decorated with paintings of natural environments and landscapes, the villa itself, suffering from the devastation of the war, is knocked down several walls and forced to open into the landscape of the surrounding. The originally fixed and confined space thus become infinite. Furthermore, the dwellers, bewitched by the artificial paintings of landscapes and the nature that 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. The narrator of the novel portrays, "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" (Ondaatje 43).

What is at work here is the concept of locality: place and space. Discussing one of the challenges that postcolonialism and cultural studies confront, Lawrence Grossberg, in "The Space of Culture, the Power of Space," predicts that "[t]he new global economy of culture entails a deterritorialization of culture and its subsequent deterritorialization, and challenges culture's equation with location with location of place" (169). In the article, he defines the term "place" as "the sites of fullness, identity, 'the inside' and human activity" while "space," "the emptiness between places in which nothing happens except the

movement from one place to another" (175). According to Ashcraft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, the term "place" is hardly an issue or a separation of "space" from "place". It is Colonialism's intention to turn uncolonized "spaces" into colonized "place" by means of cartography and naming, such as the British's imperial conquest is detected by means of "the Sand Club" and the Royal Geographical Society, which is "a prime mover in the imperial conquests of the 'undiscovered' regions of the world, and it is significant that as Kipling's *Kim* illustrates (the cover of the Head of the Secret Service in that text, Creighton Sahib is that of the Director of the General Survey of India), the colonial mapper and surveyor was frequently the most ubiquitous figure of imperial control" (Ashcraft et al 33-4). Around the time of the Second World War, cartography plays the role of the spokesman of empire. As the narrator of the novel states:

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

Under the disguise of the thirst for knowledge, Royal Geographical Society legitimates the invasion, cultural as well as economical, of the European hegemony, taking the "undiscovered land" under the wings of the empires, categorizing foreign and unfamiliar territories onto the maps made by the colonizing counties.

Mapping, furthermore, is in fact the act of textualizing substantial and solid spaces into symbolic and abstract graphs onto pieces of paper. In *Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient*, John Bolland suggests that "[p]ostcolonial fiction differs from colonial in its more critical awareness of the role of mapping the history Empire" (45). He also comments that "[t]he naming of places and features grants title and controlling knowledge" (44-45). By naming and renaming the indigenous geographies with foreign names for European powers to direct their influences onto native continents, cartography is rightfully perceived as the act of allegorical exploitation and inscription, and "literary mastery" of power and control. Ironically, as a dissident of the Royal Geographical Society, which is purposefully imperial and national-oriented institution, Amasy firmly believes that none of the members of the Sand Club cares about nationality: "We were German, English Hungarians, African-all of us insignificant to them [the Bedouins]. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states" (Ondaatje 139). Amasy's attitude of disbelieving nationalities or loyalty furthermore demonstrates in his handing the British maps to the Germans in order to exchange a ride that would assist him in rescuing Katharine.

The concepts of space and place that are widely employed in the novel are discussed by Arif Dirlik, who defines the terms "place" and space in place-based imagination: *Globalism and the Politics of Place*:

Space is product, the geographical equivalent of the commodity; place, on the other hand, is product and work, with the uniqueness of the work of art or the craft of the artisan. Space and place stand in opposition to one



another, as the opposition of different kinds of labor (and different stages in the production of space). (18)

However, contending the two terms from a capitalist point of view, Dirlik suggests that "places come to attention at the moment of their extinction" (35). With globalization, the blurring of places and spaces becomes obvious and inevitable. The deterritorialization of places is exemplified by the diasporas all over the world and the postcolonial atmosphere that has been going on for the last decade. Discussing the challenges that postcolonialism and cultural studies confront, Lawrence Grossberg, too, predicts that "[t]he new global economy of culture entails a deterritorialization of culture and is subsequent deterritorialization, and challenges culture's equation with location of place"(169). In the article, Grossberg defines the term place as "the sites of fullness, identity, 'the inside' and human activity" while space, "the emptiness between places in which nothing happens except the movement from one place to another" (175). The process of turning spaces into places in *The English Patient* is not only demonstrated but reversed when Ondaatje turns specific places such as the villa or the site of desert that is perceived as a fixed target into unbounded spaces. Dirlik argues that "[p]lace is a location[...] where the social and natural meet, where the production of nature by the social is not clearly distinguishable from the production of the social by the natural" (18). In this case, the place, "where the social and natural meets," is without doubt the villa, the wretched building that opens itself to the scenery around it, while the space the desert, the construction of nature. The sense of emptiness and infinity is revealed and stressed in Ondaatje's describing San Girolamo and the Libyan Desert. Almasy speaks of such feelings: "in the desert it's easy to lose a sense of demarcation" (Ondaatje 18). Like the

patient, Hana, too, feels that the boundaries of the villa and the gardens outside disappear as "[s]he turns into the room which is another garden-this one made up of trees and bowers painted over its wall and ceiling. The man lies on the bed, his body exposed to the breeze" (3).

In addition to revealing the sense of infinity, the space that is depicted in the novel brings out "the layering effects" of histories and remembrances. That is, histories enter everything, including spaces and bodies. Like the overwritten inscriptions on a palimpsest, the memories of the past (re-)emerge in the midst of the wounded spaces. The desert, for instance, is possessed by the histories of water. From the beginning of the novel, Ondaatje has hinted the motif of water by suggesting that reading the novel is like sinking into the "well of memory" (3). The imagery of water continues to haunt the present. As the narrator of the novel describes, "[h]ere in the desert, which had been an old sea where nothing was strapped down or permanent, everything drifted" (22). Water, although not visible, is everywhere. It is in the cave of the swimmers, in the semen of the boy who dances till his ecstasy, and in the sea of fire and yellow sands which Almasy falls burning into. All he could think of then was, "I must build a raft" (18). The memories of water are repeatedly spoken of and cherished in the novel: "[i]n the desert you celebrate nothing but water" (23). Like the histories of the pre-colonial construction and culture that are lost but its remembrance cherished, water symbolizes lack and desire for someone or something, and is placed into imagination. Although uprooted from the surface of the earth, water remains a shadow that haunts the inhabitants and the landscape. It also haunts the readers' imagination as it haunts the characters' remembrance. In the desert, it is "the exile, carried back in cans and flasks, the ghost between your hands and

your mouth" (19). Even the narrator records, "today the caravans look like a river" (19). In the villa, the water is soaked into the wet chairs and dump bookshelves and the moist air that lingers on in the air of the villa. But no visible sight of water is described until the heavy rain that brings Kip to the villa, the man who in one way becomes the savior of Hana and the patient.

Indeed, the imagery of water has been an essential element in the novel, as the patient says, "[s]ome books open with an author's assurance of order. One slipped into their waters with a silent paddle" (93). Resonating the image of well at the beginning of the novel, in the scene when Kip invites an old mediaevalist of oxford colleges to see the church frescoes, he hoists himself into the dome of the church of Arezzo, and is "aware of the depth of thus church, not its height. The liquid sense of it. The hollowness and darkness of a well" (72). Although readers are led to imagine a dry desert and a villa that runs out of tap-water, they are nevertheless constantly reminded of the lost water that existed long ago in the cave paintings of the desert, or on the water marks of the floor of the broken villa. The remembrance of water furthermore extends to more than the two sights. Hana, for instance, remembers the story about water and piano when she plays the half-broken piano in the villa: "In Canada the piano needed water. You opened up the back and left a full glass of water, and a month later the glass would be empty" (63). In the villa, however, water reappears a Kip arrives, reviving the traumatic souls of the broken characters. The moisture of the villa thus reflects the dryness of the desert, suggesting emotional revival of the characters from the exhausting experience of the war. By the end of the story, the patient, too, is eager to have rain on his charred and blacken

body. But for him, water not only functions as the revival of spirit and emotional trauma, but also serves as a reminder of what/who he desires.

In addition to providing comforts for the damaged and traumatic souls, water also symbolizes the lack and desire. Katharine, for instance, is the figure whom Geoffrey 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 for the dryness and boundless of the desert. She has "grown up with gardens, among moistness [and who is] always happier in rain, in bathrooms steaming with liquid air, in sleepy wetness" (170). Almasy remembering bathing with Katharine, washes the desert sand off his ears in his apartment in Southern Cairo. The remembering of water is transformed into desire. As he notes, "In the desert the most loved waters, like a lover's manes, 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. It not only symbolizes the forbidden and transgress love affair between Almasy and Katharine, but also moisturizes the transcultural and transnational relationship between Kip and Hana, breaking the spatial limits geography and body. Kip, as is mentioned earlier, appears in the stormy night, bringing rain and water to the villa and to Hana. Out of her curiosity and later the affections for Kip, Hana revives herself and walks out from the trauma. The love affair of Kip and Hana is of benefit to both them. For Kip, it is the practice of intimacy with strangers that he-as a diasporic subject-relies on. For Hana, it is the beginning of a relationship that eventually storms her out of the emotional trauma.

The remembrance of water in the desert furthermore resonates the history of the medieval war that was fought a century ago on the same land of Italy where the four characters dwell temporarily. Ondaatje juxtaposes the past and the present that happened on the same land, both the desert and the broken villa resemble a palimpsest, an effective symbol that demonstrates how colonial invasion erases the prior construction of the land and culture, presenting it as empty, ready to receive the inscriptions of the foreign hegemony. The body, too, demonstrates similar characteristics in remembering the past. 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. Ashcraft, Griffiths, and Tiffin mention in *The postcolonial Studies* that "the body is a crucial site for inscription" (183). In *The English Patient*, the sights and records of wounds and mutilations are everywhere, physical and psychological. The body is the container of stories and histories. *The English Patient* says that human beings are in fact "communal histories, communal books" (261). As he contemplates,

We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallows,  
bodies we have plunged into and swim 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  
map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. (261)

The body is the space that documents and narrates personal histories while the land the communal histories. The charred body of the patient, for instance, reveals and reminds him of his past. The vaccination scar on Katharine's childhood as he "[saw] the

instrument scratch and then punch the serum within her and then release itself, free of her skin, years ago, when she was nine years old, in a school gymnasium" (158). The crippled hands of Caravaggio also functions as a mark and as a remainder of what he has experienced. In the novel the main characters' broken bodies are the vivid documentations of their personal histories. Hana cuts off her long hair to strengthen determination of her indifference towards the dying soldiers while Kip's long, black hair not only declares his origin, but foretells the failure of his attempt to mingle with the British.

Both the land and the body are portrayed as broken and wounded. The "list of wounds" that Almasy receives from Katharine exemplifies the violent and intense love affair:

The various colors of the bruises-bright red leading to brown. The plate she walked across the room with, flinging its contents aside, and broke across his head, the blood rising up into the straw hair. The fork that entered the back of his shoulders, leaving its bite marks the doctor suspected were caused by a fox. (153)

The various injuries that he receives since the underground love affair symbolize Almasy's opening up for Katharine and the compromises that he makes for accepting her into his life. Almasy's wounds are the territorialization of his body, which is open in order to accept the entrance of Katharine: "she has taken the blood from his hand when he cut himself cooking for her. Blood. Tear. He feels everything is missing from his body, feels he contains smoke" (157). The relationship between Almasy and Katharine are contrary to those portrayed in the colonial novels, in which women, and in some cases

the aboriginal lands, are the ones that are (forced to) "open" physically to men or the invasion of Colonialism. This is another subversion of postcolonial rewriting of colonial literary works. Like the desert that are de-and re-territorialized by European cartographers, or the non-Europeans that are colonized by the Europeans, Almsy's injured body that wounded and opened by Katharine is the demonstration of physical deterritorialization. Almsy, in his own words, "all[s] in love and be disassembled" by her (158). However, readers are not informed of Katharine's injuries. In this secret love affair, it is Katharine who dominates the entire relationship. As Almsy notes, "[h]e cannot alter what he loves most in her, her "lack of composure" (157). She is, throughout the entire love affair, physically intact, until the night she ended the relationship, "her head sweeps away from him and hits the side of the gatepost" (158). But Almsy suppresses the thought of drawing her into his arms. He thinks to himself that they "have separated already into themselves now" (158).

In addition to the wounds that are given by Katharine, Almsy the patient later experiences severer injuries because of the plane crash. Owing to the burning, the patient has no recognizable facial features, nor prestige muscles that produce facial expression. Unlike the body of the beautiful actor in Minghella's cinematic version, the incomplete and wounded body in the novel becomes a broken space that is no longer under the dominance of the patient, but awaited for the colonization and the reterritorialization by other characters. Introducing broken images of the space, both the land and the body, Ondaatje highlights the motif of deterritorialization that is prevalent in postcolonial literature. The purpose of demonstrating the images of wounded land and body is to present the condition of the colonial subject's deprivation. The "castrated bodies" of the

four main character illustrate their decentered and displaced conditions, physically and psychologically. Hana's remembrance of being "surrounded day and night by their [the dying soldiers] wounds" (49) and her refusal to "never [look] at herself in the mirror again" (51) exemplifies the symptoms of the colonized subjects who are victimized and traumatized by the colonial force. In a scene in which Hana feels disgust when her hair touches the blood of the dying soldiers, she

Picked up a pair of scissors out the porcelain bowl, leaned over and began to cut her hair, not concerned with shape or length, just cutting it away-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 a wound. She would have nothing to link her, to lock her, to death. (50-51)

Caravaggio has also observed Hana's broken and tired-out body, noting that "her body had been in a war and, as is love, it had used every part of herself" (81).

The character's bodies not only demonstrate histories of traumas and resistance but also reveal a positive sign of healing as they move into the villa. During the days in the ruined shelter, Caravaggio, for instance, has "loosened his body and freed his tenseness, so he seemed bugger, more sprawled out in his gestures. Only his silence of movement remained. Otherwise there was an easy inefficiency to him now, a sleepiness to his gestures" (265). The villa that merges space and place into one location provides a shelter for the traumatized characters to escape from the war and the brutal reality. The inhabitants of the villa are all displaced and decentered individuals who begin "shedding [the] skins" of earlier selves, and find new identities through the relationships they develop in their Tuscan refuge.



As is demonstrated in *The English Patient*, the space of geography and body weavers a spatial history that demonstrates the interrelationship between space and history. 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 be, is 'felt' as inescapably material and permanent" (1994: 184). Bolland also suggests a characteristic in both *The English Patient* and *In The Skin of a Lion*, that the "inscription [of the body] 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 another" ( 39). Ondaatje weaves space and history 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 bodies, but direct them to come out of the darkness and into the future at the end of the novel.

#### IV. Conclusion

This research maps the condition of the subaltern and the colonized subjects in Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*. Unlike novels that set the temporal and spatial background in the exact time and space of colonized countries, attempts something new by presenting his characters as the "new subaltern" who are rendered victims under the war regardless of their skin colors. Placing his characters in the wartime Europe, rather than in the marginal spaces such as the colonized countries, Ondaatje furthermore 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 seemingly not so much as the subaltern but suffer from the traumatic experience in the traumatized land.

One of the reasons why the novel may be treated as a postcolonial text is its obvious rewriting of the colonial novel *Kim*. Ondaatje's rewriting of Kipling's *Kim* in this novel to create a counter discourse is exemplified by means of the similarities of names (Kip and Kim), subversive plot (the inverted position of the characters in both novels), and the reversed position of subject and object. That is, while the Indians in *Kim* are depicted as under the total control and dominance of the British government, the Bedouins in *The English Patient* are portrayed as a mysterious tribe, unknown even to the knowledgeable English patient. British colonizers' authority of narrating the histories of the subaltern/colonized subjects is deprived of in *Kim* while returned by Ondaatje in *The English Patient*. Ondaatje also borrows various literary works and artifacts as the targets of his revision in the text, including Kipling's *Kim*, the Bible, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Herotodus's *The Histories*, Caravaggio's biography, and his painting *David with the Head*

*of Goliath*. These significant literary works and artifacts enable Ondaatje to (re-)narrate an alternative history that is different from that of the Western hegemony, geography, are broken, or deterritorialized, in order to undergo the process of healing are reterritorialization. By the end of the novel, each character has founded a way out of their misery, and managed to storm out of the trauma of war and begin a new life outside the villa.

Subverting Western histories in a single text, Ondaatje re-writes Western canons, narrating a wounded space and damaged bodies that remember the past, and demonstrating the vulnerability of the subaltern characters who struggle to survive under the western power/political struggle.

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