

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Blurring of the Demarcation between History and Fiction in Andrew
O'Hagan's *Our Fathers***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
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This thesis entitled **Blurring of the Demarcation between History and Fiction in Andrew O'Hagan's *Our Fathers*** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Mr. Santosh Gautam** has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

In *Our Fathers*, by fictionalizing the historical events, O'Hagan has suggested that, history, after being expressed in the form of words, can be viewed as a fictional entity. The novel dramatizes the housing history of twentieth century Scotland and portrays the lives of fictional Bawn family in the context of twentieth century Scotland. Doing so O'Hagan has succeeded to confute history as evolution and to blur the demarcation between history and fiction.

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I. Introduction

This research is an inquiry into Andrew O'Hagan's novel *Our Fathers*. It tries to see the Scottish housing history in the form of fiction. This novel, in this sense, is an example of fiction as history and history as fiction. History and historical facts are presented in the novel through its narrative. The novel depicts the socio-political agenda of the twentieth century Scotland through the fictional Bawn family. By fictionalizing the historical events, O'Hagan suggests that history, once it takes the form of words, can be viewed as a fictional entity. Historical events are presented in the form of details that support fiction. The main purpose of O'Hagan is to show the situation of twentieth century to the people in the days to come. O'Hagan tries to show what the reality was through his imagination. O'Hagan recreates the history by fictionalizing the events in different ways.

Our Fathers deals with unemployment, sub-standard housing, and poor level of health that had a dramatic effect on the national character of Scotland. Glasgow, the biggest city of Scotland, took the brunt of the depression in the 1930s and acquired many negative stereotypes which it is still desperately trying to lose. During the inter-war years Glasgow was the corpse of an industrial city, devoid of enduring images of the age. These images were perpetuated in the novel *No Mean City* (1935) by MC Arthur and H. Kingsley Long and countless other literary imitations over the years, focused on Glasgow's hard man character. It was a mentality which became

entrenched over the years, but reflected on economic and social problems which Glasgow was experiencing for much of the century.

The post-war period was also a time when urban Scotland saw a major facelift and there was a mass movement of people out of the city centers. Again, this was perhaps most noticeable around Glasgow where over crowding and slum housing had been a major problem for many generations.

Our Fathers covers three generations of the Bawn family. Jamie, the narrator, personifies the blend of New Labour and the deep ideals behind the Scottish renaissance. His father, Robert, is a never-to-do-well alcoholic whose self-hatred nearly destroys the family. His grandfather Hugh, a heroic labourite to the end, achieved the remarkable feat of building houses in and around Glasgow back in the 1960s and 70s. Now, however, old Hugh is dying, and his cheaply made apartment towers, decrepit and on the brink of destruction, are the center of scandal that threatens the old man's reputation. It is Jamie, the urban demolition expert, who must rescue the old man's reputation even as he sorts out his feelings regarding the family and the dream of progress. The story revolves around these issues which resemble the twentieth century history of Scotland. It's a beautiful elegy for Scotland's postwar Laborites men and women who felt ready and able to refashion their world along the socialist model. Caso says, "It is also a fine condemnation of the drunken, self-pitying Scottish sentiment that seems in vogue these days" (203).

Taking municipal housing that had a significant part in Scotland's social history in the twentieth century as the central issue, *Our Fathers* presents a poignant and moving account of man's relationship with history. The novel depicts the story of the fictional Bawn family and the conflict between the generations. It's main focus is on Hugh Bawn, a dominant social reformer in Scotland during the later half of the

twentieth century seen through the perspective of Hugh's grandson Jamie who lived out of Scotland for many years. Through Jamie, Andrew O'Hagan is able to take a look at the country's old left from a futuristic point of view (the same point of view that led to the collapse of the social reform movement of the sixties and seventies), while having it checked by the interests of his grandfather, that stay loyal despite the change in time. The result is a book that is filled with respectable conversation and ideas regarding the change of era of Scottish history. In this context new-historical analysis of the novel seems to be significant because as Montrose says:

From a multiplicity of sometimes convergent and sometimes incompatible perspectives, the writing and reading of texts, as well as processes by which they are circulated and categorized, analyzed and taught, are now being construed as historically determined and determining modes of cultural work. (393)

In this novel also the events depicted are historically determined and also create a version of history. O'Hagan has written a story which is a poignant and powerful reclamation of the past and a clear sighted gaze at man's relationship with history. *Our Fathers* is a beautiful and profound book which announces Andrew O'Hagan as a novelist of great distinction. The book raises a number of interlinked questions concerning the conflict between idealism and pragmatism, the conflict between desire for change and the desire to preserve the past and the conflict between the generations. Building, of course, is frequently used especially by the political left, as a metaphor for effecting social or political change. In phrases such as "building the future" or, "building a new society" Hugh sees himself as a builder in both the literal and the metaphorical senses of the word. His quarrel with Jamie's generation is that they are, both literally and metaphorically, demolishing what his generations built. In

Hugh's eyes modern politicians both Conservatives and New Labour, are undoing the social reforms of the past. All these generations of the family followed lives of pride and depression, of nationality and alcohol, of catholic faith and the end of idealism.

From the beginning of his writing career Andrew O'Hagan has pushed at the conventional limits of literary genre, blurring the boundaries between fiction, memoir, documentary and journalism. What characterizes all his work, however, is a resolute political and historical engagement. Though particularly perceptive in detailing the bittersweet experiences of 1970s childhood and the layered community histories of both rural and urban Scotland in the post-war era, his writing has a force in confronting British ideological fragmentation, and in many questions surrounding Scotland's troubled claims for a coherent national identity. The development and decline of Scotland's urban landscape also forms the thematic core of O'Hagan's novel *Our fathers*. In the collapse of continuity between past and present, the novel signals towards a breakdown of family inheritance and an irreparable fracturing of political traditions.

O'Hagan has much in common with fellow Scots William MacIvanney and Jeff Torrington, with the political and personal lives of his characters inextricably linked. Like, McIvanney's work, the novel takes place in rural Ayrshire with occasional forays into Glasgow and Scottish Borders. The readers familiar with Torrington's "Swing Hammer Swing" will recognize the stories of Glasgow's infamous gorbils estate as the slums were demolished and families shipped out to satellite states.

O'Hagan's book *The Missing* was non-fiction. Its vivid evocation of O'Hagan's childhood in Ayrshire and Glasgow and his poignant tales of the parents missing children are like a gripping thriller instead of a limp reportage. He was a writer with

an unusual empathy for people and the ability to look at situations from an unusual and refreshing perspective. While O'Hagan's work perhaps takes risks in sustaining stereotypes of Scottish identity, his flair for engaging in rich and authentic social detail removes any predictability from his writing. And if the Scottish landscapes he draws are familiar from the work of fellow writers such as William McIlvanney and James Kelman, his specific focus on urban architectural history as a framework for his character's life stories is highly original. O'Hagan gestures towards a crisis in paternalism as characteristic of general elements within Scottish culture. His novel *Our Fathers* presents failed fatherhood and blighted inheritance as an allegory for the decline of modern Scotland, tracing a blood-line from post-war Utopianism to flawed contemporary revisionism, via an instable lineage of brutality and weakness.

The traditional notion of viewing official historical discourse as an absolute, authentic and the final version of history has been undermined in the novel. *In Our Fathers* O'Hagan attempts to encourage the readers to reconsider the interpretation of history. History, like fiction, is subjective and in the creation of which memory plays a vital role. The subjective nature of history gives way to create many other versions of history. O'Hagan, thus, replaces the notion of one absolute truth used in terms of history with multiple truths. He undermines the claim that the official historical discourse is pure and valid. For him, official history functions as a kind of writing affected by the ideology of an era. By fictionalizing twentieth century history of Scotland, he suggests that history once it takes the form of words can be viewed as a fiction i.e. as something which might or might not contain truths.

The interest of O'Hagan goes beyond recovering history as he demonstrates that by fictionalizing historical events we can assume power over them. Hence, he demonstrates that history is fiction. O'Hagan apparently believes that by producing

fiction that looks like truth, just as the narrator Jamie narrates his family history with the twentieth century socio-political situation of Scotland, we can redraw the boundary between history and fiction.

History is no more the record of events in the order they occurred. Evidence is but a fact, or combination of facts which provide grounds for belief that historical events actually happened. It is common that evidence is available on the certain aspects of what happened and historians then use the known facts and fill in the unknown elements with their own theories. This is why different versions of history can and do arise.

O'Hagan's *Our Fathers* is set in Scotland and covers the lives of three generations of men in one typical, Scottish family. The ambitions of the grandfather Glasgow's Mr. Housing, are contrasted with the drunken, fecklessness of his son, which are in turn compared to the different viewpoint of Jamie, the grandson, from whose point of view the story is told. Unlike his father and grandfather, Jamie tears down the tower blocks built by this grandfather, and rejects the drunken brutality of his father. He is, therefore, a metaphor for a new Scotland and a new generation of Scottish men who refuse to repeat the mistakes of their forefathers and yet show forgiveness for the 'sins of their fathers'. Scotland fuels a confusion of feelings in Jamie. He loves its beauty but the memories of the past hurt him.

The episodic nature of the opening chapters in which Jamie recounts the difficulties and traumas of his young life with his real parents' problems which include alcoholism and domestic violence, could have been vaulted into East Enders territory, but instead O'Hagan offers voice that explains all aspects of the story in a quiet and well-considered manner. Jamie says "I sat myself on the train leaving Berwick; six years old in long trousers. Jamie the boy with watery eyes. That was

me"(1). Obviously, the boy has suffered but he never takes it out on us... instead he weaves his story with the weathered and matured voice of a man who has moved past his past in the twentieth century Scotland and realizes that there is still more redeeming and learning to do as he continues to get older.

O'Hagan's *Our Fathers* has elicited much criticism since its publication. It is a book filled with respectable conversation and ideas regarding the change of era of Scottish history. The text also includes a very vivid description of the old and new Scotland as well as its landscapes, faith, and drink. It presents the conflict between desire for change and desire to preserve the past and the conflict between the generations through the lives of Jamie and his grandfather, Hugh. It is a tale of pride and delusion, of nationality, of catholic faith and the end of old left. Among many critics Sybil Steinberg discusses at length about Hugh Bawn describing him as a socialist hero in charge of Glasgow's postwar rebuilding program. In short he asserts, " It is a tale of dark hearts and modern houses, of three men in search of Utopia. Andrew O'Hagan has written a story, which is a poignant and powerful reclamation of the past and a clear-sighted gaze at our relationship with history, personal and public" (31).

In 1930s, 67% of dwellings in Scotland were public housing; the figure which rose to 85% after the war, far higher proportion than in England. The high-rises were seen as the solution to urban deprivation and Hugh clings stubbornly to his faith in that solution, even as now notorious blocks are coming down around him. O'Hagan clearly draws distinction between the ties of nationality and religion that binds generations together and the wedge of different ideas that drive them apart. Frank Caso says, "O'Hagan's first novel is a generational story that argues for the idealism

of progress while simultaneously acknowledging the inherited faults of such an idealism and the faults of dreamers themselves" (5).

James Hopkin opines, "It's a "happy lament" to the old Scottish fathers of tower blocks and steel works but also vividly contemporary in its urgency and intent" (47). The novel is concerned with expressing and exploring Scottish sense of identity not only through Scottish accent but also through what he calls a Scottish accent of mind. The subject of the book is also Scottish in the sense that municipal housing played significant part in Scotland's social history in the 20th century.

Our Fathers is a moving account of our relationship with history and the nature of progress: One generation's pride is another's ruin and the next one's shame. More pointedly O'Hagan gestures towards a crisis in paternalism as characteristic of general elements within Scottish culture. In drunken melancholia of Robert, Jamie's abusive father, the author locates a national dysfunctionality. Jeff Giles asserts, "It is a novel that's both a public history and a private one" (15).

Thus there is the mingling of personal and private history in the novel. The book is also reviewed as the tale of redemption as Jamie not only gets to spend some time with his grandparents before Hugh's death, but also acquaints himself with his father (a new man since he sobered up) and mother (now happily married).

From the critiques referred above, it is evident that critics, as in most other novels, irrespective of the author and content, vary in their reading of *Our Fathers*. Though it may be implicit, no critique is voiceless in criticism of slum clearance, postwar housing and demolition for rebuilding, failed fatherhood, and national dysfunctionality of twentieth century housing and socialism in Scotland. They have in general, sensed O'Hagan's style of describing politics and housing history of twentieth century Scotland shedding more light on housing issues like slum-clearance,

post-war housing, involvement of public sector in housing, demolition for re-building etc. There is no schism with critics in their judgment of national dysfunctionality, crisis in paternalism and socialist housing utopia.

In fact *Our Fathers* is a poetic and at times majestic look at one man's life as well as the social and political history of contemporary Scotland. The action in *Our Fathers* takes us from one character to another, from the present to the past and back. As James Hopkins opines in his critique of the book published in *New Statesman* "We are everywhere reminded of how small truths and untruths trickle down the years; . . . At one point, Jamie devastates his grandparents with his revisionist ideas of history" (47). Then O'Hagan gives his own fictional account of the twentieth century history of Scotland.

But his history doesn't move in a linear fashion. It doesn't reach perfection as argued by Hegelian humanist. For him it has multiple beginnings and descents. In *Our Fathers* he sets out to elucidate historical bases and truths to expose the picture of Scotland in the twentieth century. He has tried to create his own history by delving into the lives of common people and by shedding light on different minor incidents. His history is not evolutionary one, a continuous development towards the present, it is a literary work in the circumstances of twentieth century Scotland.

Hence, the theories of new historicism given by, Foucault, Montrose, Greenbelt etc. can assist this research in its attempt to see the historicity of *Our Fathers* and textuality of twentieth century Scottish history in the novel. The research can be significant in the sense that it will try to explore the depiction of many truths, ignored by so-called mainstream history.

II. Relationship Between History and Fiction

New Historicism: An Introduction

The New Historicism, which arose in 1980s reacted against both the formalist view of literary text as an autonomous entity and Marxist views which related texts to the socio-economic context. It saw the literary text not as a unique phenomenon but as a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses which both shape it and are also shaped by it. The age old demarcation between history and fiction was now blurred and this merging of 'historical actuality' and fiction parodied the search for 'objective truth' in the history. History, as a work of art, became something like a negotiated product of a private creator and public practices of a given society. If there was anything new about this procedure, it was its insistence, drawn from Foucault and post structuralism, that history itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history.

New Historicism also rejected any notion of historical progress or teleology, and broke away from the literary historiography based on the study of genres and figures. In the same way, the culture in which New Historicism situated literary texts was itself regarded as a textual construct. Hence, new Historicism refused to accord any kind of unity or homogeneity to history or culture, viewing both as harboring networks of contradictory, competing, and unreconciled forces and interests.

Thus, like fiction, history is textualized; therefore, it is a kind of human fabrication. The writer interprets the past, presents it in a written form and makes it intelligible to the readers. History, therefore is always contaminated, oblique and subjective. The assumptions such as neutrality of language and absence of domineering, ideologies narrating voice are contested by new historicism. Its view of history stresses on the impossibility of an all embracing and totalizing account of the

past. The history cannot be represented in pure form, for it always romances with respect to the narrator's prejudices and preoccupations. So the proclamation of universal truth in history can no longer sustain. What is available to us is only different version and perspective of interpretation of history. Different factors manipulate the representation of history.

Nietzsche and Foucault: Confutation of the Traditional History

Nietzsche is notorious for stressing the 'will to power' that is the basis of human nature, the 'resentment' that comes when it is denied its basis in action. Nietzsche's current influence derives not only from his celebration of the will, but more deeply from his skepticism about the notions of truth. In particular, he anticipated most of the central tenets of post modernism and aesthetic attitude towards the world. The contemporary practice of viewing history as the representation of truth no longer existed after Nietzsche because he said life could never be understood in terms of ultimate truths. He denied facts and essences and celebrated plurality of interpretations and fragmented self.

For Nietzsche truth is relative and subjective. It is something that never exists. It is history that determines truth. "Everything has become: there are no eternal facts just as there are not absolute truth" (Nietzsche 5). Historical facts are only perspectives, determined by power. According to Nietzsche history emphasizes on emergence, beginning and fall of events. So, all truths are interpretation, and there is no ultimate truth. No writing can present truth. Writing, according to Nietzsche, is presented through a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism. He further says, "Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" (336). History and literature, in this sense, are not two extremes- as if one presents the truth and other the lies.

According to Nietzsche, the world runs with the individuals having "a will to power". He had found that the "will to power" is at work in all sorts of human behavior and valuations. He views 'power' as the only important thing in the world. Everyone desires it. "The only thing that all men want", for Nietzsche, "is power, and whatever is wanted is wanted for the sake of power. If something is wanted more than something else, it must represent power" (511).

Nietzsche provided Foucault, and nearly all French poststructuralists, with the impetus and ideas to transcend Hegelian and Marxist philosophies. Nietzsche taught Foucault that one could write a genealogical history of unconventional topics such as reason, madness, and any subject which located its emergence within the sites of domination. Nietzsche demonstrated that the will to truth and knowledge is dissociable from the will to power, and Foucault developed these claims in his critique of liberal humanism, the human sciences, and in his later work on ethics. He did accept Nietzsche's claim that systematizing methods produce reductive social and historical analyses, and that knowledge is like a perspective in nature, requiring multiple viewpoints to interpret a heterogeneous reality.

However, Michel Foucault viewed that "the discourses including texts are the embodiment of power" (Selden 100). This is to say that the texts can not be free from social and political sphere of an era. Foucault, therefore endeavors to make a link between the texts and the external world. At first, we will see how Foucault influences the new historicist idea of textualization of history and historicization of text.

An often quoted phrase that describes the new historicist's reciprocal concern with 'historicity of text' and 'textuality of history' seems to have emerged from M.H. Abrams' clarification of Foucault's notion, which calls text "a discourse which, although, it may seem to present, or reflect an external reality, in fact consists of what

are called representations" (183). The Foucauldian notion that views a text as verbal formations in the form of ideological products or cultural constructs of a certain historical era assist the concept of historicization of the text. The text, to Foucault, never represents or reflects pre-existing entities and orders of a historical situation, rather it speaks of the power structures, oppositions and hierarchies which are after all the products and propagators of power. A text, in Foucault's view, speaks of 'history' but not as it is described by traditional Marxists and historicists. It, within itself, buries the 'situatedness' of institutions, social practices including their workings amidst the power relations and hierarchies. So, a text becomes, 'a history of otherwise' in that it presents a historical situation not as background but as something with which it can have constant interaction, for text is both product and the propagator of the power structures of society.

Now comes the question; how does Foucault influence those who believe in the textuality of history? As he is always aware of the fact that a historian can't escape the 'situatedness' of his time, Foucault takes a historian to be embedded in the social practices. It is by this logic, clear that history is also written from the perspective of the historian.

Foucault's idea of counter-history gives primacy to the ideas of individual and subjectivity. Alece McHoul and Wendy Grace in *A Foucault Primer: Discourse Power and the Subject* Observe:

Foucault thought of the human subject itself as an effect of, to some extent, subjection. Subjection refers to particular, historically located disciplinary processes and the concepts, which enable us to consider ourselves as individual subjects and which constrain us from thinking otherwise. (3)

Hazard Adams in *Critical Theory since Plato* says "Foucault's influence in a literary theory has been strong among revisionist literary historians known as "new historicists" who study the culmination of power through society and the literary texts that are part of it" (1133).

The position a historian occupies in society determines the history he writes. The way he goes inside the forms of power structures and social practices determines his description of history. Is history, then, different from fiction, if it is nothing other than fictionalized details of person's perspectives? In this regard, Foucault has some affinity with Derrida; for both of them say that a 'subject' who thinks may not know his own limitations. This indicates the uneven history of relations that testifies to the civilization failure of the Cartesian Project which Foucault says "brings as it ends in violence" (85). He further says in the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" that "Devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of completion- their personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reasons" (86).

In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Foucault commented on the nature of humanistic notion of history by finding in it a contradiction that began with Cartesian Mathesis. It is, as Foucault writes, "an exhaustive ordering of the world as though methods, concepts, types of analysis and finally men themselves [. . .] [are in] inevitable unity of knowledge (75-76). The insight which is so dispersive sees history as not having a casual law or final goal but as having a network of power relations to work upon an individual.

Foucault's radical anti humanism is best expressed in his essay entitled "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History." Taking the concepts truth and power as

described by Nietzsche in his idea of genealogy, Foucault, in this essay has three-fold aim. First, he offers his arguments supporting his break with archaeology. Secondly, he expands the scope of genealogy. And thirdly he reviews the role of the historian.

In an argument that supports his break away from archaeology, Foucault describes genealogy as a diachronic method. Genealogy, for him, is a Nietzschean effort to undermine all absolute grounds and to demonstrate the origins of things only in relation to and in context with other things. So, genealogy, unlike archeology which seeks to uncover the layers of civilization by positing in them the stability of systems of thought that stay long for an era and come to a sudden end, turns towards the problems of power and practice. Regarding his movement towards genealogy Foucault states, "the search for descent is not the erecting of foundation: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (88).

Writing about Foucault's shift from archaeology to genealogy, Arun Gupto describes the Foucauldian concepts of these two historical readings to be complementary. Both of these historical approaches are, for Gupto, in disagreement with "a fairy tale like totalizing concept of history" (114).

Most interesting idea with genealogy is its scope. Firstly, genealogy attacks the supposed coherence of a thinking 'subject'. Secondly, it dissolves the fiction of singular human identity. Thirdly, it attacks the notion of origins in historical investigations. Fourthly, genealogy stresses the ideas of history as discontinuity. Finally, it focuses not upon ideas or historical mentalities but upon the 'body' so as to show it totally imprinted by 'history'. Genealogy is the study of history not in relation

to facts or events but in relation to power and dominance. It is the study of consequences of a historical event.

Genealogical approach is a critical one which analyses the incidents and gives a detailed analysis of society in general. It tries to explore into race, body and desire. In genealogical history individual suffering and emotions are analyzed. Unlike the traditional one genealogical history is the history of oppressed people-not of the rulers but about ruled. Genealogical history attacks the supposed coherence of the subject.

Foucault, departing from the traditional concept, reformed the role of a historian. A historian, for Foucault has a three-fold task. First, while confronting the 'one' reality, a historian should be in favour of the use of history as a 'parody'. Second, he should be against a singular continuist human identity. And thirdly the 'investations' should be directed against truth.

Foucauldian radicalism of history manifests itself in three dimensions – it rejects absolute truth or origin and argues for fictionalized history and historicized fiction, it confutes the linearity of history and exposes how a body is imprinted and inscribed by history. Foucault tells us what effective history is:

Effective history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man-nor even his body – is being sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for this self-recognition or for understanding other men. History becomes effective to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets itself against itself. (qtd. in Shreedharan 285)

To sum up Foucault's idea of historical reading, we can say that his is the general approach that seeks to analyze "the order, mechanism, and exclusion that

have been the feature (s) of western societies since enlightenment" (Gupto 114). This general approach is a contrast to the total history which looks at the overall development of the period, attempts to describe differences, alternations, mutations and so on.

Foucauldian Concept of Discourse

Foucault developed a theory of discourse in relation to the power structures operating in a society. His main thesis is that discourse is involved to power. He views that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operate through discourse. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable from power because discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. This enables institutions to exercise power and dominate. Those who possess the authority to define discourse exclude others who are not in power. Discourse informs us of the state of affairs, so it is informative or mis-informative. Discourse also tells us of the propriety or impropriety, of something and consequently influences our attitude, opinion and behaviour. The exclusive function of discourse is to serve as a transparent representation of things and ideas standing outside it. Therefore it is directive too.

M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* writes:

Discourse has become the focal term along critics who oppose the deconstructive concept of a "general text" that functions independently of particular historical condition. Instead they conceive of discourse as social parlance, or language-in-uses and consider it to be both the product and the manifestation not of a timeless linguistic system, but of particular asocial condition, class structures, and power-relationships that alter in the course of history. (262)

Following Nietzsche, Foucault believes we can never possess an objective knowledge of history "because historical writings are always entangled in tropes" (Selden 102). Discourse is produced within a real world of power struggle. It is used as a means to gain or, sometimes even to subvert power. For Foucault, discourse is a central human activity. He is interested in the process how discursive practices change over time.

Foucault opened up a avenue away in the post-deconstruction impasse of literary theories by reaching beyond the traditional hierarchy of history over literature. Foucault denies that history can ever be objectively known. Historical writing can never be a science. All discourses, including history, according to Foucault, "are produced within a real world of power struggle [. . .]. Claims to objectivity made on behalf of specific discourses are always spurious: there are no absolutely 'true' discourses, only more or less powerful ones" (Selden 102).

The social, moral and religious disciplines always control human behaviour directly by means of discourse. So people at times can not do whatever they feel like doing. The discursive formations have enabled institutions to yield power and domination by defining and excluding 'the other'. Discourses, according to Foucault, are produced in which concepts of madness, criminality, sexual abnormality and so on are defined in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. Such discursive formations determine and constrain the forms of knowledge and types of normality of a particular period. These discursive practices also have the power. Truth is being told, with "facts" to back it up, but a 'teller' constructs that truth and chooses those facts. In fact, the teller of a story or history also constructs those very facts by giving a particular meaning to events.

According to Foucault, truth is not outside power, or lacking in power. It is rather a thing of this world which is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints in a society. So each society has its own regime of truth. Furthermore, power diffuses itself in the system of authority and the effects of truth are produced within discourses. But the discourses themselves are neither true nor false. Foucault argues, "Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Adams 1145). Thus Foucault sees truth as a product of relations of power and it changes as systems change. Both literature and history are narratives and they are in the form of discourses. They are entangled in the power relations of their time. Literary works are not secondary reflections of any coherent world – view but the active participants in the continual remaking of meanings. In short, all texts, including history and literature, are simply the discourses through which the ruling class seeks the power to govern and control. Hence, the dividing line between history and literature is effaced.

Foucault's notions of 'power' and 'discourse' were particularly formative to develop a critical approach to literature known as new historicism in the 1970s and early 1980s. These literary critics, new historicists, are more interested in the relationship between history and literature. They tried to reconstruct the bridge between literature and history dismantled by New Critics, Structuralists and Deconstructionists. As with old Historicism, New Historicist argues that we can not know texts separate from their historical context. But unlike old Historicists, New Historicists insist that all interpretation is subjectively filtered through one's own set of historically conditioned view points. Hence, there is no "objective" history.

Redrawn Boundary between History and Fiction

Stephen Greenblatt begins his most theoretical statement about new historicism in *New Historicism: Towards a Poetics of Culture*, by stating that his methodology is, at best a practice rather than a doctrine: "One of the peculiar characteristics of the 'new historicism' in literary studies is precisely now unresolved and in some ways disingenuous it has been – I have been – about the relation to literary theory" (1). He goes to point out some of the influences on the school (Michel Foucault and European anthropological and social theorists) while distinguishing the approach from both Marxist critics like Frederic Jameson and post-structuralist critics like Jean-Francois Lyotard. On the one hand, he questions Jameson's characterization of capitalism as a force seeking to establish a false separation between private and public spheres or between aesthetic and political domains, while rejecting Jameson's belief in a utopic future moment when we will finally achieve a classless future, stating that post structuralism "has raised serious questions about such a vision, challenging both its underlying oppositions and the primal organic unity that it posits as either paradisaal origin or utopian, eschatological end" (3). On the other hand, Greenblatt questions Jean-Francois Lyotard's tendency to associate capitalism with the effort to impose a single language onto all experience, thus destroying all differences between people or cultural spheres as well as all differences between aesthetics and politics. Greenblatt argues that both Jameson and Lyotard employ history in an effort to support one theoretical viewpoint that in turn leads to their monolithic and contradictory versions of capitalism.

The difference between Jameson's capitalism, the perpetrator of separate discursive domains, the agent of privacy, psychology, and the individual, and Lyotard's capitalism, the enemy of such domains and the destroyer of privacy,

psychology, and the individual, may in part be traced to a difference between Marxist and poststructuralist projects. Jameson, seeking to expose the fallaciousness of a separate artistic sphere and to celebrate the materialist integration of all discourses, finds capitalism at the root of the false differentiation; Lyotard, seeking to celebrate the differentiation of all discourses and to expose the fallaciousness of monological unity, finds capitalism at the root of the false integration. "History functions in both cases as a convenient anecdotal ornament upon a theoretical structure, and capitalism appears not as a complex social and economic development in the West but as a malign philosophical principle" (5).

Greenblatt argues that New Historicism works to remain always attuned to the contradictions of any historical moment, including those moments dominated by capitalism. On the issue of the relation between private and public or between the aesthetic and political realms, Greenblatt argues:

The effortless invocation of two apparently contradictory accounts of art is characteristic of American capitalism in the late twentieth century and an outcome of long-term tendencies in the relationship of art and capital; in the same moment a working distinction between the aesthetic and the real is established and abrogated. (7)

What characterizes capitalism is, rather, a circulation between the two apparently contradictory versions of capitalism that Greenblatt associates with Jameson and Lyotard: "I am suggesting that the oscillation between totalizing and difference, uniformity and the diversity of names, unitary truth and a proliferation of distinct entities – in short, between Lyotard's capitalism and Jameson's – is built into the poetics of everyday behaviour in America" (8).

The result of such attunement to the contradictions of any given historical moment lead Greenblatt (and other New Historicists) into a number of basic premises: (1) one should begin with specific details, anecdotes, and examples in order to avoid a totalizing version of history; (2) one should proceed from such details to illustrate how they are tied up with larger contradictory forces in a given time period, no matter how apparently innocuous the details may seem at first; (3) one should remain self-conscious about one's methodologies, thus resisting "a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of signs and interpretative procedures" (12); (4) one should be suspicious of liberatory narratives: everything is, on some level, caught up in the circulations of power in a given time period; and (5) all cultural products, whether they are high art, political documents, personal letters, or trash, are a part of larger discursive structures and, so, can offer clues to the ideological contradictions of a given time period. In introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, Greenblatt differentiated. New Historicism from New Criticism and earlier Historicism:

Both of these earlier modes of analysis, according to Greenblatt, engaged in a project of uniting disparate and contradictory elements into an organic whole, whether in the text itself or in its historical background. The earlier historicism, moreover, viewed the resulting totality or unity as a historical fact rather than the product of interpretation or of the ideological leanings of certain groups. (qtd. in Habib 763)

The goal of new historicism, for Greenblatt, is to put cultural objects in some interesting relationship to social and historical processes. He distinguished between the new historicism and the old principally by the contention that the new correctly

holds that at no stage of history is there one single political vision but rather each cultural environment which the old historicism regarded as an historical fact is, instead, a creation of the historian. In an interview with Harvey Bloom he says, "One simple way to describing new historicism is to say that it's interested in the symbol dimensions of symbolic practice" (2).

Louis Montrose, a prominent new historicist critic, views literature and history as fully interdependent. He thinks "new historicism" has been constituted as an academic site of ideological struggle between containment and subversion. "Within the context of the containment – subversion debate my own position has been that a closed and static, monolithic and homogeneous notion of ideology must be replaced by one that is heterogeneous and unstable, permeable and processual" (404). He further argues that:

All texts are embedded in specific historical, social and material context. Literary texts too are the material products of specific historical conditions. Literary texts, therefore, must be treated along with its historical context. Likewise, by the textuality of histories he means that access to a full and authentic past is never possible. (410)

Montrose, in his study of Elizabethan drama, focuses on how Elizabethan culture involves bringing oppositions and otherness into visibility so as to reinforce the norms of the dominant Elizabethan power. This type of cultural structure is dispersed across a whole range of texts, from literature to travel writing. Montrose, thus, sees the impossibility of subverting the dominant culture when he says that "a text creates the culture by which it is created, saves the fantasies by which it is shaped, begets that by which it is begotten" (qtd. in Branningan 169). Montrose emphasizes that literary texts act out the concerns of ruling class by reproducing and renewing the powerful discourses which sustain the system. According to Montrose, we live in history and

that the form and pressure of history are made manifest in our subjective thoughts and actions, in our beliefs and desires" (394). Our knowledge and understanding is part of history.

According to new historicists, "the idea of a uniform and harmonious culture is a myth imposed on history and propagated by ruling classes in their own interests" (Selden 105). So the new historicists focus not on history but on histories. New historicism, thus, is characterized by, as Louis Montrose says "a shift from history to histories" (411). This is to say that history is not a homogeneous and stable pattern of facts and events. New Historicists assert that the historians, like the authors of literary texts, possess a subjective view. They too are informed by the circumstances and discourses specific to their era. So they can no longer claim that their study of the past is detached and objective.

Furthermore, literary texts present the dominant ideas of a particular time by representing alternatives or deviations as threatening. The new historicists tend to examine widely different texts in order to show that those texts play a key role in mediating power relations within the state only to contain, and make safe, that subversion.

III. Blurring of the Demarcation between History and Fiction in *Our Fathers* Scottish Housing History in the Novel

The traditional ideas of viewing history as a group of facts as existing in a text and the text representing the history as it really was have been questioned in O'Hagan's *Our Fathers*. It is the story of three generations of Glasgow men: Hugh, a left-wing idealist who spearheaded Scotland's municipal housing programme after the Second World War; Hugh's son Robert, an abusive alcoholic who looks for the utopia in oblivion and Robert's son Jamie, who shares his grandfather's passion for buildings but works in urban clearance pulling down the high rises of which Hugh is so proud.

Hugh Bawn is "Mr. Housing", the man whose dream of demolishing Glaswegian slums and replacing them with hi-tech tower blocks earned him high acclaim during his career and damnation in his retirement. Through the relationship between Jamie and his grandfather we learn of Jamie's own father (Hugh's son), an alcoholic who used to rage and mourn. Violent and oppressive, the man's increasingly unhinged behavior forces the estrangement between father and son, husband and wife, and as the book progresses we see Jamie's career as a direct reaction to his father. Where Hugh sought to build Jamie's father seeks to destroy, hitting out at the world with words and fists. For Jamie's father the world "was a thing to be hated and dreaded and vilified" (10). Drunk most of the time, he created for his wife and son a living hell of daily verbal and physical abuse. Hugh's mother Euphemia Bawn led the rent-strikers during World War I in a battle against slumlords.

Written in the first person, the novel's tone is that of a memoir, and the characters ring so absolutely true that we are compelled to think that they were indeed alive. O'Hagan also has a keen eye for details that give the scenes he describes a lifelike vividness.

The historical context of the novel i.e. the post-war period (after 1945) was a time when urban Scotland was given a major facelift and there was a mass movement of people out of the city center. Again this was perhaps most noticeable around Glasgow where over-crowding and slum-housing had been a major problem for many generations. This was one of the biggest challenges for state intervention policies to face, but the challenge was met swiftly, with a staggering 86% of all houses built after the war coming from the public sector. As land became scarce to build on, the architectural fashion shifted to the construction of tower blocks and while communities were spilt up and rehoused in accommodation whole was quite often completely unsuitable for families or pensioners. Many of these housing projects were built in a hurry, they degraded at an alarming rate, and had often no shops, amenities or adequate transport facilities. Yet at the time they were viewed as the savior of slum Britain and were welcomed by many in the community. The council's role as a major landlord also protected people from the unscrupulous activities of private landlords, who had caused such grief both during and after the First World War.

In the 50s, council rent was a third of that in the private sector. Again, all these developments made Scotland a country dependent on state intervention for its survival and a strong hold of labour at every election- a loyalty which labor have carried with them into the twenty-first century. During this period Glasgow was taken as a redundant, post-industrial city fuelled by alcohol and violence. During 1990s new building projects spread along docks and the city cleaned up much of its image, although many of the city's peripheral housing projects are in terrible states of despair.

In fact the twentieth century has seen some remarkable changes in the pattern of housing in Scotland as housing markets adopted to changing circumstances and

elements, and as the views and actions of the public authorities altered and developed in response to new policies and changing aspirations of the public. The process of urbanization and industrialization in the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century changed the face of Scotland in many ways, not least in the way people were housed. In particular these forces led to the growth of one of the most distinctive features of urban Scotland. Almost all of Scotland's tenements were built by private builders and rented from private landlords. In 1914 private landlords owned an estimated 90% of the dwellings. The failure of the private sector to satisfactorily meet housing needs was recognized during the early part of the twentieth century. This resulted in a significant increase in the size of the local authority housing stock in Scotland. In the late twentieth century only Scottish housing went to the private sector.

***Our Fathers* as a 'History of Otherwise'**

With this brief account of twentieth century, housing history of Scotland in the backdrop *Our Fathers* can be read as a depiction of 'history otherwise'. Scottish history, therefore, is inextricably associated with the novel. There are ample evidences for us to draw a parallel between the Scottish housing and the novel. Hugh Bawn was a builder of towers that were to serve as safe and comfortable healthy homes for residents of Glasgow. His work is a continuation of the efforts made by his mother to force the government to provide decent housing and health care for the poor wives and children of soldiers serving in World War. She fought for the fatherless families who were being evicted from tenements when they had no money to pay the high rent unscrupulous landlords were charging. She led the women in a revolt that changed politics in Great Britain:

The rent strikes began. Life would not be the same again. Not for those women, nor the babies they held. And not for the country either. The stuff of Mary Barbour's heart of social change would be bred in the bone, and Scotland would make a legend of change, of socialist leaders, and future bliss. A century of hopes would stand in our blood.

(98)

Her son Hugh attended Socialist Sunday School where the martyrs and heroes were honored. Hugh loved construction process for the sake of future. For him "The past was held in evidence. But the world Hugh loved was a future world. A Scotland of turbines and giant engines" (105). He loved the world of construction, the building of bridges and buildings, the building materials of concrete and plywood.

Talking about writer's situatedness in the novel, he is very much influenced by the Scottish passion for construction and progress and by the happenings in Scottish history. Their desire to create a Utopia in the midst of frustrating socio-political situations of Scotland has been vividly reflected in the novel:

It's a place to be built, said Buie. You begin by building it with your own hands, in your own minds, in your own hearts. Our fathers were themselves away to make this true. That is the history of this century, and of others before us, going back to Industrial Revolution, and further. And it must remain with us. (30)

Talking at length about his English teacher, Buie Jamie portrays his figures as a true Scottish patriot who "was all for the Scots and the language on his forefathers" (28). According to Jamie his eyes spoke of long ago. They spoke of lost ground, lonely evenings and sins. We can find ample evidences of colonial pangs and the hatred of Scottish people towards the colonizers. Talking about Buie the narrator further says,

"He banned Mc Diarmids 'English poems' from the class. He wouldn't hear of Robert Louis Stevenson, except for those stories in braid Scots. He thought Walter Scott was a fascist. Buchan was a swine Muriel Spark was a 'turn-coat London harpie'" (29).

So, we can't expect O'Hagan to write about twentieth century Scotland without expressing his true love and patriotism towards Scotland. The narrative he develops through out the novel shows his deep concern regarding the progress of Scotland and the problems during the transitional periods that the Scottish people like himself were compelled to face.

O'Hagan has tried to create his own history regarding the happenings of the twentieth century Scotland. We get ample evidences of his personal vision of different happenings in Scotland. Housing was a central issue in the socio-political context of Scotland. With the story of the fictional Bawn family, O'Hagan gives us its glimpse. Talking about the miserable condition of Scotland Jamie says, "*Our Fathers* were made for grief. I could see it now. And all our lives we waited for sadness to happen Their sunny days were trapped in a golden shag box. Those Scottish fathers. Not for nothing their wives cried, not for nothing their kids" (53).

The narrator of *Our Fathers* is referring to the men he knew in Scotland but more specifically he hints at his own father as well as his grandfather to reveal the pitiable condition and pathetic plight of Scottish people during the first half of the twentieth century. Jamie Bawn returns home after 20 years of self exile in England to be at his grandfather's death bed. In his heydays, Hugh Bawn was a socialist hero in charge of Glasgow's postwar rebuilding program. Cursed with a Don Quixote type of personality, he supervised the construction of the tower blocks that were to replace the slums dating back to the Industrial Revolution with some sort of modernist utopian dream. Thirty years later the towers stand decrepit, vandalized by time as well as

humans. Hugh is too proud to acknowledge his defeat, and lives on the eighteenth floor of one of his crumbling monuments. The irony of the situation is that his grandson is employed as an expert on the demolition of tower blocks. Though they had a falling out, Jamie is very close to the grandfather who raised him after the boy was no longer able to live at home. As Hugh is lying in a bed on the 18th floor of some wretched tower and raging against the dying of the light Jamie has come to be with him during the last moments of his life. The elevators aren't working the stairways are reek. The plaster is showering down. And though Jamie returns home in the name of place, love and understanding he comes back home with a hope to escape again because he knew that in Scotland “. . . hard drink had ever been the only promise. The only promise, and now here named in our history books.” (54)

Thus, it is the story of a time of transition on the West Coast, of changing politics and ideals, of Old and New Labour, of religion and drink and of family reconciliation. The story is presented from the perspective of Jamie. His family history and the historical and political affairs are depicted from the view point of Jamie. He uses his memory to talk about the lives of his family members and the historical context.

As past is mediated by the texts, literary text in this sense works as a vehicle of the representation of history. No objective knowledge of the past is possible because all knowledge is relative and all theories are equally valid and that a text is but an indefinite play of signification. In order to undermine the objective nature of history, O'Hagan uses memory as a tool to present Scottish history. The past exists in one's memory and any historical writing, in this sense, is a construct of human subjectivity.

On the other hand, the family history of *Our Fathers* is not the history of privileged people possessing power and authority. Rather it is the story of working-class people. Hugh family is a representative of marginalized, lower class people who were the victims of poverty. It is a story related to the problems of their accommodation and survival. Jamie says "Yes, yes Our fathers all were poor, poorer our father's fathers" (74) O'Hagan has endeavored to voice out the feelings and experiences of the suppressed and underprivileged people of the society. Unlike traditional history genealogical history is the history of oppressed people not about rulers but about ruled. He has also tried to point out a crisis in paternalism as a dominant feature of Scottish culture and national dysfunctionality as the main cause of poverty and agony. His father Robert is an angry abusive alcoholic who charges the world with words and fits. He is violent and oppressive and he rages and mourns. His unhinged behavior forces the estrangement between father and son. O' Hagan depicts this hopeless situation of Scotland in the first half of the twentieth century in his father's anger, "In my fathers anger there was some thing of the nation. Everything torn from the ground, his mind like a rotten field. His was a country of fearful men: proud in the talk, paltry in the living, and every promise another lie" (8).

Our Fathers by Andrew O'Hagan is a piece about a grandfather, a father and one son who has gone to great lengths to prevent becoming the third parent in the generational series. Readers can judge his reluctance, or possibly fear to become a father. Jamie says.

Our Fathers were made for grief. They were broken-backed They were sick at heart weak in the bones. All they wanted was the peace of the defeat. They couldn't live in this world. They couldn't stand who they were. Robert's madness was nothing new: he was one of his own kind,

bred, with long songs of courage, never to show a courageous hand.

(8)

He further shows his reluctance to have a baby. He says "Her sparkling eyes. I knew she wanted it . . . Let us have no more of families. She terminated it. We never spoke of babies again. Our pregnancy we caused it to become to nothing. I caused it" (168).

We can notice the situated ness of the text in these expression. In Jamie's view Scotland was "lashed, betrayed and forgotten" (8).

Talking about the official housing history of Scotland Glasgow's physical contours began to change in 1953 when the first tenants moved into what were described as skyscrapers. Five years later, the corporation approved Sir Basil Spence's scheme for 19-storey high blocks or flats as the shape of the new Gorbals. The policy of building high rich housing was one factor in the destruction of a group of virtually village communities which made up much of working class Glasgow. The Scottish Housing Act of 1954 forced local authorities to draw plans for slum clearance. In the ten years following the passing of the ACT 32,000 homes in Glasgow were close demolished, though the 1961 census indicated that there were still 11000 homes in Glasgow unfit for habitation. In 1966 dozens of people who had moved to new homes in eastern house queued every morning at the scheme's housing office, to request transfers out of the area. The rehousing of families in new towns and peripheral areas, along with the demolition made necessary by plans to build motorways and dual carriage ways round and through the city, destroyed the tight-knit communities which had existed for generations in the city's quite distinct communities. This was a time when state intervention in Scottish society became a necessity in many people's eyes in order to halt the impending economic crisis. This form of left wing politics was made popular during the war. O'Hagan has his own interpretation of this housing

history and the history of socialism in Scotland. The narrator says, "The war years made a tough politician of Hugh. The great housing speeches of his youth were now hardened with personal expertise. He wore rosettes for the Labour party. He doted on National Health" (117) He further says:

Labour was made from men like Hugh. They came into their own after the war. My granda used his connections to attract thousands of new workers to the building industry. The time had come. Glasgow would build. Hugh's plans seemed to embody all the lessons of the past: the gains of three decades, the losses of the war. He invented a motto for the City Housing Department: The maximum number of houses in the shortest possible time. (117)

Thus, he was one of the pioneers of the Labour Party in Scotland who untied and worked for the sake of lower class people. Hugh Finally found his machines for living in. High rises, Multi-storeys Tower blocks. All his modern training, all his modern thought, had readied him for tower blocks.

He was made in charge of the high-buildings programme in Glasgow. Hugh loved to show Jamie the picture of his new flats. He has been portrayed as a true patriot. "And Scotland to him was an entire globe. A full history. A complete geology: A true politics. A paradise of ballads and songs" (144).

Like his grandfather, Jamie believes passionately in providing affordable housing for the masses, but his vision involves the demolition of his grandfather's constructions, cities in the sky whose initial promises have crumbled like the concrete from which they were made. Hugh Bawn's mother has been described as a founder of Labour Party that has an influential role even at present in the politics of whole Britain. Narrator says " Famine became a Glasgow councilor. After 1918 it was his

own speeches she read in the papers. She was a builder of the Labour Party. She did not want to go with her friends, the Independents, and she chose not to call herself a Communist”(103). In order to underline the objective nature of history, O'Hagan uses memory as a local to present Scottish history. The past exists in one's memory and any historical writings, in this sense, is a construct of human subjectivity. Though O'Hagan's history resembles the so-called mainstream history of Scotland, it is his own version. We find the textualization of Scottish history and clear historicity of the text blurring the demarcation between history and fiction. Furthermore everything is seen from Jamie's view point. In a sense, *Our Fathers* is a history of history.

The description of twentieth century housing and socialism in the novel depicts the situated ness of the text and its writer. *Our Fathers* is therefore an expression of 'history' by a person who can never detach himself from the material conditions that he lives with, while developing the novel as a personal history of otherwise. Therefore, the fact that the novel both refers and is referred to by the twentieth century Scotland becomes clear with O'Hagan's techniques of historicizing the novel and fictionalizing the history.

Discourse of Municipal Housing

In *Our Fathers* Hugh Bawn's character has been portrayed as a Modernist hero. A dreamer, a socialist, a man of the people, he led Scotland's tower block programme after the war. Hugh used his connection to attract thousands of new workers to the building industry. For years he tired to bring a clean breeze to the people of Glasgow. He dreamed of making perfect streets up in the sky. Now he had it. Jamie says, "The 1960s found Hugh at his clearest (and highest) aspiration. All his modern training, all his modern thought had readied him for this tower blocks" (119).

He was a sincere socialist town planner. His high-rise flats stood as testament to the idealism of his time. So obviously he was in the lead. He had made housing a holy cause, building prefabs under the motto "Maximum number of house in the shortest possible time." He used to say:

We must make ourselves all over again.

Rub out the past.

And what are we here for if not for progress? If not for change! "Join the air. High over Glasgow we can look down on who we were before.

Who our people were. And by climbing high we escape our troubles.

We leave the past and its rubble below. (119)

Such was his discourse which touched the sentiment of the people of his time. They thought him to be their true leader who was capable of giving them a solution to their long standing problems. He was put in-charge of the high building programme in Glasgow. A small group of them, architects and planners engineers and tradesman, were to oversee it with Hugh as the guiding light. They knew a thing about leverage and bolts, but Hugh gave them philosophy. He gave them reason. He gave the people a vision, an idea, and showed them the way to go ahead. Thus he became able to create truth and gained power. This made him the forerunner of the housing campaign. "The people called him Mr. Housing. The paper called them skyscrapers" (119). For Hugh Bawn the main purpose of the discourse was to achieve power and supports to accomplish his mission. Some of those Glasgow blocks went up in months. Hugh basked in glory, he felt the flats were the great triumph of his life. He cut ribbon on many of the new towers. Thus he become the pioneer among the Glaswegians and represented them too. His patriotism, honest desire to build his

modern cities in Scotland and his true concern towards the Scottish people gave him ample confidence and determination to go ahead. Jamie says:

He was the sort of man who couldn't afford to feel diminished. This was his world. He was a great man here . He wanted no part of foreign soils. Let us water our own gardens he would say. All his waking life he pretended not to hear other voices. He had no ear for differences, no time for the opposing view, valiant in his deafens to contradiction.

(145)

He was of the opinion that modern housing would not only change the way they lived, it would change who they were. He wanted the Scottish people to reach upward.

Hugh Bawn inherited the passion of social welfare through his mother Euphemia Bawn (also called Famie). She was s great Socialist leader. She even became a Glasgow councilor. After 1918 her speeches were published in almost all of the newspapers. She was a builder of the Labour Party. She didn't want to go with her friends, the Independents, and she chose not to call herself a communist. "The Labour Party will show the way" (103), she said "We live in a socialist country, and that will never change" (103). Socialism was her discourse. Effie was never political before the rent-strikes. But the rent strikes brought her out to the world with her small fists clenched and even kept her in the forefront. The landlords also had a good war They also fought for rent because they wanted more rent than people could give. She never gave up. She wanted proper accommodation of the people in Glasgow. So she led the Glaswegian rent strike during the First World War. "We know the laws of God well enough about here"(102) she said "and we know that justice will be ours and is harmful only to them whose business it has been to profit by ignoring it. (102)

Giving such speeches and many more she touched the sentiments of the suffering people particularly women. She unified the women to fight for their cause. Their husbands and sons were fighting for their nation and they were deprived of the opportunity even to stay in proper houses. She said:

But whatna country sends its men to war and throws their wives and weans out in the street? The soldier fights for his country and the broker calls for his furniture. Women of Glasgow see it plain. We will not be paying these higher rents. We are not answering to hun landlords. We are not removing. We know that justice will be ours and we will pay the cheaper rent, and we will work and our men will work. (102)

She became a very popular leader. The papers quoted her word for word. Her words went to the hearts of the women because she wanted to deal with their problems. She wanted her country to be a fit country for heroes to live in. She new that the first step to deal with those problems was to deal with the housing conditions.

Jamie says, "The Bawn family obsession with public housing really began with Famie. She was in there at the start. Her shyness, her general air of sadness, never held her back in that field. It was to become the great issue of her life. (96).

She called herself a socialist. She taught Hugh what it meant to be a citizen, to be a visionary and to be a patriot. He learned to fight for the people through his mother. He wanted the houseless people to be housed as soon as possible. "He wanted more flats for the people. And he wanted them quicker" (219). In doing so he was following the footsteps of his mother, Effie. He advocated in favour of municipal housing. He said that by the involvement of public sector in the construction work it was possible to facilitate the people with affordable housing. Because of his calibre,

passion, unfathomable dedication towards the welfare of people he became the Housing supremo of Glasgow. He said that the tower blocks answered to people's needs. He believed in those blocks to the end of his life. We find the reflection of socialistic discourse in his attitude and saying.

Jamie: Resistance against 'Subjection' of History

The story of *Our Fathers* is told in a series of flashbacks through the eyes of Jamie, the grandson who has made it his life's work to knock down the crumbling tower blocks that his grandfather built. He was a demolition expert. Though he had deep respect towards his grandfather and his works, he was guided by different ideology and political faith. His profession and political vision compelled him to undo what his grandfather did. Jamie says, "We had studied hard. Those towers had everything of us. My heart was there. And the needs to destroy my heart was there" (68). We can notice a sort of ambivalence in his speech but the power of resistance is far higher. Hugh was quite shocked to find his grandson being involved in demolition profession. He found his fame and ideology insecure from his own grandson whom he had brought up. When Jamie went up to the eighteenth floor of the decrepit building to see his dying grandfather Hugh said, "You better lock him in, Maggie. He'll blow the house from under our arses before you know what's what" (84).

In such a way he expresses his hatred and disgust over the policies and activities of the New Labour, both literary and metaphorically, demolishing what his generation built. In his opinion modern politicians were destroying the social and political works of the past. Jamie is a representative of the new political and social beliefs and deeds of Scotland. He says, "Was there a Hugh like maker of bridges? But why would there be? Why should there need be? We had our own ways now, our world had its different glories. It's just that Hugh's kind was so suddenly going or

gone" (74). Jamie had his own opinion regarding municipal socialism in Scotland. Though the root was socialism directed toward public welfare, his image of new Scottish settlement was quite different from that of his grandfather. He has pity and reverence towards his grandfather but he doesn't have support for his policies. So he says "And now a man like Hugh must lie with his regrets" (74).

In fact Hugh had built his visionary complexes too cheaply and too fast. His tower blocks cement slabs and plazas were meant to create machines for modern living. He built them with a motto 'maximum number of houses in the shortest possible time. Jamie has given an excerpt of Scotsman magazine, "The so-called streets in the sky', which were believed to be the answer to the city's notorious housing problem, were built at a break-neck speed throughout the sixties and early seventies. But, in recent years, Bawn's blocks became better known as 'the blight of Glasgow" (187).

He wanted his houses to serve the working class people as soon as possible. He had his own kind of socialistic vision to accommodate the houseless people in shortest possible time. Jamie says,

He made deals with the builders; he got them to deliver cheaper materials, so he got more stuff for the same money. And he sometimes paid them in cash, to speed things up. He only wanted to build more and more. But the high-rises were never as good as they should have been. They were built too cheap. They were too damp. That was his mistake. (220)

As old Hugh is dying, and his cheaply made apartment towers decrepit and on the brink of destruction, are the center of the scandal that threatens the old man's reputation. Jamie supervises the demolitions of apartment towers – exactly the sort of

towers that his grandfather used to build. Though Hugh stuck to his political faith, the reality was that the image of Scotland that he conceived was a matter of past. He was unable to keep pace with the time. Jamie says: "By the time I saw him he had slipped from the world, but not from himself. I wondered, as I sat on his bed, how long he could keep this going. Everything in that room spoke of his agonies, but he could not" (83).

In Jamie's view the Old Labour Socialism of his grandfather has become outdated. People can no longer find themselves comfortable in those so-called modern machines for living. With this discourse he counters the discourse of his grandfather. Though for the time being he remains with his grandfather learning the elderman's craft he later leaves him rejecting his suffocating idealism and outsized ambitions.

IV. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters we saw that O'Hagan's main focus in *Our Fathers* has been to question the basic relationship between historical actuality and fiction. The novel is a tale of New and Old Labour centered on the history of high rise housing in Scotland. It follows the passions and fears of three generations of Glasgow men whose lives are shaped by grandfather Hugh's passion for building high rise council flats. In fact in *Our Fathers* O'Hagan recreates the history as a meaningful fiction. The fiction is made from the source of historical background of socialism and municipal housing of the twentieth century Scotland.

For O'Hagan, the project of Old Labour and the goals of New Labour are summed up in housing. The main character of the novel Hugh screams at Jamie, accusing him of tearing down the homes and replacing them with nothing-and that is precisely what happened as New Labour tore down the old blocks and privatized the new. All the way through the novel we can see O'Hagan searching for some role he can assign to Jamie other than tearing down his grandfather's work. But he can't find him one that is in keeping with the realism of the novel. So, at the end Jamie can only understand his grandfather's idealism and explain the Old Labour project in terms of an unachievable but noble dream centered on the needs and psychology of men from traditional industrial areas like Ayrshur. In defending Hugh from the charges of corruption, O'Hagan makes it clear that he hates the New Labour contempt for what went before but he has nothing to say about the future because he is conscious that history, with all happenings, does not move in linear fashion. Historical predictions may not come true. With such mingling of historical reality with the lives of fictional characters O'Hagan has blurred the demarcation between history and fiction.

By presenting the housing history of Scotland in the novel, O'Hagan has succeeded to confute history as evolution. The failure of Hugh Bawn and Robert to provide warm fatherhood to their respective sons indicates the crisis in paternalism. On the other hand, by depicting the progressive passion of Hugh Bawn who represents the Old Labour, the drunken melancholia of his abusive alcoholic son Robert and the demolishing work of his grandson Jamie, O'Hagan indicates that the new generations are not going ahead on the path shown by their ancestors. By portraying the picture of Hugh's son Robert as a 'good for nothing' man who takes this world to be hated, dreaded and vilified, O'Hagan throws light on the disfunctionalism of their generations. Through this O'Hagan also rejects the humanist contention that civilization progresses from a primitive age to one of a higher order. He thus falsifies the 'myth' of continued progress in the history of making.

Moreover the story is told in a series of flashbacks through the eyes of Jamie, the grandson who has made it his life's work to knock down the crumbling tower blocks that his grandfather built. Jamie feels his childhood and personality are scarred by the effect that Hugh's all-consuming passion had upon his father, Robert and later upon himself. His journey back to be with his grandfather is all about the rediscovery of his past personally and politically. A lot is said in describing Jamie's childhood and his traumas and how, until he hears that Hugh is dying on the 18th floor of one of these blocks, Jamie turns his back on Scotland and his family.

Recreating history in fiction is necessary to preserve some perception of life and culture. Here in the novel Jamie's narration is an act of revising the history. Following Foucault who believes that history should be used as a parody, O'Hagan parodies the Scottish history in *Our Fathers*. New Historicists assert that the historians, like the authors of literary texts possess a subjective view. Though

different important dates and events of history have been referred, he creates his own presentation of the events.

The most powerful writing, however, is about woman, not the men upon whom the story centers. For instance, the chapters that describe how Hugh's mother Effie becomes one of the women who led the Glaswegian rent strikes during the first World War. The marching women shake the government into passing the rent restriction laws. Effie's struggle recedes into Hugh's dream of getting up the 'streets in the sky'. For Hugh the streets and factories are replaced by the council chambers as the arena of struggle.

Thus, the story presents the collision of the old Scottish municipal socialism and the new. The novel dramatizes the housing history and portrays the lives of fictional Bawn family in the context of twentieth century Scotland by blurring the demarcation between history and fiction. The author presents his own version of the twentieth century history.

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