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**Ondaatje's *The English Patient*: Exposition of Irony in the Gap of
Eurocentric History**

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Abstract

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* strikingly examines the silences in the work of historical production rupturing the notion of "official" history on the casualties of World Wars and provides an alternative way of unconventional history to expose the reality of pseudo Eurocentric history. The central character, Count Ladislous de Almasy, represents the European (supposed to be English but really Hungarian) desert explorer in Africa, Egypt and Arabia with the secret view of colonizing as a truth. The novel examines the effects of the Second World War and events of 1942 on the human psyche, and suggests how human beings have always searched for the silver lining despite the devastation and devaluation of values. The fall of Almasy represents that of colonization ironized by decolonization unmasking the reality of history against the tendency of western cosmopolitan authority.

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Chapter I

An Introduction to Eurocentric History

In annals, as history is supposed to be the objective presentation of facts, good history is regarded objective history. So there is always the danger, when reading history, that the author will have a revisionist, political agenda, in which, "university courses on the history of human thought that cover Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant and Marx, but neglect Confucius, Buddha, Upanishads or Ibn Sina, for example, might be regarded as Eurocentric" (<http://en.wikipedia>).

Post-colonial literature has dominated a big part of modern literature in many countries around the world. One of the most interesting post-colonial novels is Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. The goal of this thesis is to discuss the European tendency of history making with the gap of non-western values is as a false attempt and the confutation of Eurocentric history is as an irony to the west.

Ondaatje invokes the sense of worldly representative history with national and cultural identity for universal homage against the colonialist biased tendency of historical production. History should be of worldly representative and unanimously agreed. In the history there should not be any biased to the any one. History should not be for the purpose of power but for the purpose of exactness. But the "Eurocentric history" is not based on exactness rather mysterious. Mysterious history means the deceptive text produced by the European writers. They wrote for the European pleasure, for the west seek. In the text there is hesitation to include the non-western values and existence by Europeans as a trauma of superiority. Trauma as defined

being in the state of mental disorder, the Europeans have the same with the sense of not losing the status of superiority for ever.

Assumptions of European superiority arose during the period of European imperialism, which started slowly in the 16th century, accelerated in the 17th and 18th centuries and reached its zenith in the 19th century. The progressive character of European culture was contrasted with traditional hunting, forming and herding societies in many of the areas of the world being newly explored by Europeans, such as the Americas, most of Africa, and later the Pacific and Australasia. Even the complex civilization of the Islamic world, India, China and Japan were considered to be underdeveloped relative to Europe, and were often characterized as static. For many European writers of this time the history of Europe became "paradigmatic" for the rest of the world.

For some writers, such as Karl Marx, the centrality of Europe to an understanding of world history did not imply any innate European superiority, but he nevertheless assumed that "Europe provided a model for the world as a whole" (qtd. Blaut). Others looked forward to the "expansion of modernity" throughout the world through "trade" or "imperialism" (or both). By the late 19th century the theory that European achievements arose from innate racial superiority became widespread: Justifying slavery and other forms of political and economical exploitation, even being used to validate genocide.

The colonizing period involved the widespread settlement of part of the American and Australasia with European people, and also the establishment of out posts and colonial administrations in parts of Asia and Africa. As a result, the "majority population of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand typically

trace their ancestry to Europe" (17). For this reason a Europe- centered history may be taught in such countries, even though their populations are now far removed from Europe itself, but have nevertheless been brought up into what may be regarded as mainly European cultural traditions.

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is one of those novels influenced by post- colonial history, which has been viewed from great difference between imagination and reality, national and cultural identity and the revelation of traumatic perspectives.

The protagonist of the novel who is identified as the "English Patient" represents the central character in the western passion of history making tendency. The patient's narrative is a colonial worldview that sees the non-western world as empty and unexplored. As an explorer of the African deserts, the patient embodies the colonialist Eurocentric framework, although many critics have suggested differently. For example, Steven, Totossy de Zepetnek discusses at length Almasy's status as other in the novel. In conclusion, he asserts, "I very much like Ondaatje's invention of the "international bastard" Almasy and the suggestion that there are central Europeans and Hungarians who step outside, consciously, [. . .] and stereotypical (sic) of them" (par21).

The concept of the "international bastard" is reminiscent of a voluntary expatriatism that decries national ties while not confronting the conditions that make such a position possible. Although he asserts that he desires to "walk upon such an earth that had no maps," he himself has been part of the effort to create the maps that have been then used in turning the desert into a battlefield (261). Describing this work as a process of invasion and attack disproves the patient's claims that their work "had nothing to do with the world" (242).

Exploring the desert so as to pin it down, paste it into a book, the patient efforts, despite his claims to despise ownership and possession (138-39), have been part of a European endeavor to claim and mark the world. This is as a sarcasm at what he says and does the opposite.

The novel has been studied, praised, appreciated and interpreted by different scholars with various perspectives. These approaches, no matter whether they are author oriented or language oriented have tried to reformulate the meaning of the text. However, the approach of the present study of the novel is subversion of the Eurocentric history.

Ondaatje, as a Sri Lankan born Canadian writer, has written many novels, poems, plays about his native country Sri Lanka. Being a migrant writer, Ondaatje, in his marvelous memory fiction *Running in the family* has talked about his genealogy and landscapes of his native country. In another novel entitled *Anil's Ghost*. Ondaatje in particular talks about violence and terrorism of Sri Lanka in order to expose the postmodern notion of end of grand narrative. The civil war of Sri Lanka has become a tool to expose the post modern situation for Ondaatje.

In his recent novel *The English patient*, 1992, which received the worldwide acclaim leading to its 1996 film adoption, Ondaatje implicitly raises the question of identity through fictional history. The novel presents the history of the World War II as the background of narrative.

The world history constructed by European historian is based on the European superiority, in ideology, values, capitalism, geopolitics, climate and technological inventiveness from the new classic statement of Max Webers to

its contemporary best selling versions by Eric Jones, Jared Diamond and David Landes.

Eurocentrism is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing emphasis on European (and, generally, Western) concerns, cultures and values at the expense of those of other cultures. Since trade was widespread in other parts of the world, imperialism was the really essential factor in distinguishing Europe from the rest, because it gave European powers the critical mass of wealth that finally differentiated them from other commercial powers, and the rise of Eurocentrism is possible.

J.M. Blaut in *The Colonizer's Model of the World* argues:

World history taught in European schools frequently teaches only the history of Europe and the United States. [. . .] in the time line until they are colonized by Europeans, with no references to the pre-conquest culture, civilization or technology.
(243)

Similarly the history of science is usually taught as science having begun with the Greeks, then moving on with the Romans, then stopping during the Dark Ages, before continuing with Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. Slight is made of the many achievements of Asian, Moorish, Ancient Egyptian, or Muslim scientists. Western accounts of the history of mathematics are often considered Eurocentric in that they do not acknowledge major contributions of mathematics from other regions of the world, such as Indian Mathematics, Chinese mathematics and Islamic mathematics. The invention of calculus is one such example. Western accounts claim Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz as its inventors without acknowledging the

significant contributions of Madhava of Sangamagrama and other Indian Keralese mathematicians that preceded Newton and Leibnitz by up to 300 years.

In an overview of 17th century history, say, it would be Eurocentric to list numerous dates, events and political figures from the many states of Europe, but only brief mentions for the Manchu conquest of China or the Mughals in India, or the Aksum Christian period in Ethiopia. Then, as now (and for most of human history), well over half of the human population has lived in Asia.

This is the gap in the chronology of the world history which the European consciously constructed being superiority after or before the colonialism and desired to implement all over the world for power with the view of Eurocentrism to have the cosmopolitan authority. The subversion of Eurocentric history and power by the non western countries after de-colonization is itself becomes the irony in the pseudo construction of history for power and representation to the west.

On the issues of patient's efforts to the illusive memories Cathy Caruth states, "the ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it (152). At the same time the specters of this past that at the moment the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima bring about the rupture that has been developing through out the novel. As the economy of this narrative shatters the vision of history as a "totality" at the end of the novel, it also shatters the "Eurocentric colonial worldview" (Barbour 21) that organizes this totality.

Through out the narrative, the repressed and erased moments of colonial history are revealed as Kip "sees the streets of Asia full of fire. It rolls across cities like a burst map, the hurricane of heat withering bodies as it meets them, the shadow of humans suddenly in the air. This tremor of western wisdom" (284).

The inner logic of this western culture which he has adopted is suddenly revealed to Kip as he comes to understand how the power to write and construct history has the foundation of a process of colonization. With this event, the novel presents an attack on Western civilization and the structures of history that support it. Kip turns accusingly to the patient:

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

Kip reveals the way in which the ability of the western subject to write history orders and position the rest of the world. Within the logic of such History, only those colonial subjects are allowed to be represented and included who provide no contradiction to this homogeneous and coherent space. The hegemony of the western colonial world with its "speeches of civilization from kings and queens and presidents. . . such voice of abstract order" is threatened as the possibility for constructing history as self- present

totality is denied (285). This fragmenting of history decenters the authority of Western power, opening up a space for resistance to the colonial past and drawing forth the colonized.

With "a secret of deserts from Uweinat to Hiroshima," although this citation appears continuous, it is actually only a fragment of verses six and eight from chapter 51 of Isaiah (295). All of verse seven and the closing sentences of the verses cited have been omitted or forgotten. What comes forth points to what has been erased: all mention of the need for righteousness repeated through out these three verses. And it is this erasure of justice that is the "secret of deserts from Uweinat to Hiroshima" (295). This final sentence of the passage draws a line of connection from the patient's accounts of his explorations at Uweinat to the history of World War II. The secrets of these places are the event that have been erased from the totalizing gaze of western history. As the narrative present erupts and the hegemony of European civilization is challenged, the hunting memory of an ancient desert prophet enters the narrative and places a demand upon the present.

Walter Benjamin argues that through the act of translating, a work creates an "afterlife" "for in its after life [. . .]. [t] he original undergoes a change" (Benjamin 73) as the patient changes the history of Herodotus in his own perspectives. As an explorer of the desert the patient has the memories of Eurocentric and colonial logic to draw the readers attention to the site of a historical trauma at heart of western European history. The patient's narrative, while demonstrating the potential of memory, negates that potential and comes to represent the larger colonial process of erasing the presence of non- western people and denying the existence of alternative histories.

According to Rufus cook, "the patient removes himself from historical responsibility to claim a transcendental subjectivity that establishes universality." But that is only accessible by a few (Being and representation, 48). Similarly George Lukas, in his historical novel, argues that the aim of this genre is to reveal how the fulfillment of the present arose out of the failures of the past.

Derrida's *Spectrology In Specters Of Marx* illuminates, "how the shifting ontology of the specter when introduced into the present destabilizes its coherency and shatters its construction of history as a self-present totality" (6). The specter, "thus as both absent and present, as something that both is and is not, resists our attempts to know it" (7). As in *Anil's Ghost*, for Ondaatje, constructing meaning does not open a door to escape "grief and fear" for the survivors of catastrophe (55). Two lives and two nations intersect in the space of a novel in which the processes of colonization and colonial mapmaking are challenged, attacked, and dismantled. Continuities begin to be affirmed even as nationalistic oppositions begin to disappear.

What is interesting with Ondaatje is his interest in "unhistorical, unofficial" story. He seems irresponsible regarding the politics of world. Neither Ondaatje takes any sides of world war groups nor does he support Almasy, who represents the dominant version of colonial explorer. Almasy reflects the western brand of justice that Ondaatje denies in the novel. Similar like postmodernism that it deliberately wallows in the fragmentation, chaos, disorder, and alienation, the postmodern novel blurs the boundaries between the real and the unreal. In *The English Patient*, temporal linearity is ruptured

frequently in order to experience violence and terrorism, which Ursula Heise has called "chronoschism".

The fictionalization of historical figures in *The English Patient* and in Ondaatje's other works supposedly blurs the distinction between truth and fantasy in ways which postmodern writers think reflective of the subjectivity of truth in all areas of life. Totosy de Zepetnek Steven writes:

The English Patient is a postmodern text that succeeds in representing life- underlining its fullness, complicatedness, inexplicability, fragmentation, and sub-textual richness, which cannot be represented by either traditional uses or a linear (fictional) narrative of historical 'facts.' (141)

Another contemporary critic, Josef Pesch, in his *post-Apocalyptic War Histories*, places Ondaatje's novel among Canadian apocalyptic writings, finds it offers a post- apocalyptic perspective in which nothing is certain or stable since "the constructedness and fragility of reality has just been apocalyptically revealed," in this case by the atomic bomb dropped on Japan (118-19). This post- apocalyptic revelation is akin to postmodernism, with its attack on stable meaning, teleology, and totalization (131-33).

But does the style of Ondaatje's novel obliterate all forms of traditional linear history, teleological fiction, and stable meaning ? Is the novel simply a panoply of gaps and fractured? Almost; though in this sense some critiques opine neutrally like Rufus cook in *Imploding Time and Geography* argues:

If there is also an emphasis on narrative discontinuity and disconnection in the English patient, however, there is also an emphasis, at the same time, on the imagery of continuity and

connection, on techniques for 'bridging' the gaps, for filling in the 'missing incidents' in a plot, the washed out sections of a road. (112)

To this Ty, Eleanor writes, "the novel suggests that all characters are parts of one whole and that they are different versions of each other" (15). The idea of community emerges eloquently in the increased importance of women's roles and Ondaatje's male characters, unlike his earlier violent individualists, also develop relationally (22-36). Finally, as Bronwen Thomas in *Piecing Together a Mirage: Adopting The English Patient for the Screen* shows, readers eventually identify characters and develop a patched narrative line despite shifts in point of view and fragmentary style. However, incoherently expressed, that Ondaatje's novel is mix of post-modern and traditional fiction. Overall, then, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* fits more a post-modernism and a post-colonialism, though both contemporary paradigms partly inform what goes on in the text.

Similarly, Jaqui Sadshige in *Sweeping the Sands: Geographies of Desire in The English Patient* constructs two versions of the English patient: a complex postmodern novel and reductive Hollywood romance. Sadashige finds that, "the endless proliferation of discourse" or "din of voices" in Ondaatje's work "disrupts and denaturalizes narrative unity, teleology, and objectivity" (243). While simultaneously, and bringing post-colonial and post-structural concerns to the foreground: "the desire of [his] characters emerge from the particular circumstances of their selves as gendered, nationalized, radicalized, and textualized subjects" (246).

Ondaatje's *The English Patient* as a heteroglossic novel reflects the post-modern times through narrative of the text in which irony lies in the claim of history and action of European exploration. In which on the way of making Eurocentrism through power, discoursed and representation demises themselves morally and physically as the reality of having gaps of non-western values, for the purpose of colonization, governing and being authentic, is exposed. Ondaatje's novel foregrounds "most prominently" (160) the story of Kirpal Singh and thus is essentially a post-colonial statement. Almsy as a Eurocentric character reveals "an orientalist tale" (164) in which he and his passion for Katherine Clifton are central, in which the Bedouins and other Arabs merely provide an exotic background, and in which kip becomes simply a mystical "other" (167). This is Ondaatje's confrontation to the European tendency of colonization and violence in history creation as Eurocentrism.

What is the theoretical background upon which Ondaatje holds this view? From the study of most of his novels, it is apparent that he has been concerned through out his career to identify and examine the different kinds of power and their projection of violence in the world. Whether through his fictional writings or non-fictional ones, he aims to expose these levels of violence in different facets. In *The English Patient* too there is similar violence as Carl Rollyson sees the violence in Norman Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam*? He sees three kinds of violence which are but the result of working of (misdirected) power. Firstly, it is "the violence, of nature working upon an individual to help him lead an authentic existence" (31), secondly "the violence of society that shapes a person to make him corporate" (31), and

thirdly it is the violence, probably the most fearful and unnatural, of a "man upon another man" (32).

These kinds of violence analyzed by Rollyson can be interpreted in relation to Michael Foucault's ideas of discourse and power. Foucault says that every epoch of human society is governed by diverse discourses each of which corresponds to a particular arena of human knowledge. Because human knowledge encompasses various fields, a society has many discourses. Foucault's more radical thesis is that such discourses contradict each other and as a result there is no harmony and "Oneness" in the society. This is because in a discourse lies a kind of power which produces the effects and is itself produced out of the network of representation and truth. Power, for Foucault, is all pervasive and resides in every domain of a society. It is according to him, neither evil nor dominating but it is always dangerous.

Foucauldian concept of discourse, therefore, assists this research in its attempt to invalidate the historical bases of Eurocentrism, for his concept confutes the myth of integrated 'oneness' in a society. In the same way his idea of power helps to examine European involvement in World War II as a European exercise of power upon the 'other'. His idea of power also incorporates the subjection of an individual and his resistance that easily corresponds in this research, to Kip's attempt to run away' from the corporate life he is compelled to live.

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, therefore, when seen through the methodological tools like Foucault's ideas of history, discourse and power, can be read as the depiction of European power as exercised in World War II for Eurocentrism, colonization and cosmopolitan authority through history

production. In such exercise of power each individual is 'subjected' to what the discourse of 'colonization and Eurocentrism' says and prescribes for him. *The English Patient* confronts the historical justification provided by European and examines the European delivery of historicizing as it politics for power and authority. The subversion and failure of the mystery of European tendency, what they claim as truth, itself exposes the subtle irony to themselves as being untruth.

Chapter II

Post-colonial Theories on Literature

Post-colonial Literature cum Theory

The Western metropolis must confront its post-colonial history, told by its influx of post-war migrants and refugees, as an indigenous as native narrative *Internal to National Identity*; and the reason for this is made clear in the stammering, Drunken words of Mr Whisky Sisodia from *The Satanic Verses*: "[t]he trouble with the [English] is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they [. . .] don't know what it means." (Bhabha 6)

Post-colonialism is based on the impact of colonization on cultures and societies. The term 'post-colonial' was originally used by historians to describe the period after colonization. In literary criticism it has been used since the late 1970's to discuss the various cultural; political and linguistic effects of colonization. At the beginning, this term referred to "cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles" (Ashcroft 186).

According to Ashcroft the term "post-colonial" is used to cover "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft 2). It concerns the period of European imperial domination and the effects of it on contemporary literature and culture.

Over half of the contemporary world was affected by imperialism and colonialism. There are many countries, such as African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka, whose literatures are called post-colonial. However, these literatures have their

special regional characteristics, though they also have many common features, which:

Emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumption of the imperial centre. It's this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. (Ashcroft 2)

During the imperial period, writing was produced by a literate elite whose primary identification was with the colonizing power. Such texts cannot form the basis for national culture and integrate with the culture of the invaded countries. Ashcroft draws attention to the other kind of literature which was "Produced 'Under imperial license' by 'natives' or 'outcasts' for instance, by the English educated Indian upper class or African 'missionary literature'" (Ashcroft 5). They wrote about problems such as the brutality of the convict system, the historical power of the substituted and slandered native culture, or the subsistence of a rich cultural inheritance older and broader than European culture. Writers could not go deeply in their anti-imperial potential. The imperial ruling class controlled literature in the colonies. It is the reason why the development of independent literature is the most fundamental feature in modern post-colonial literatures.

Artistic and literary decolonization is a process which "has involved a radical dismantling European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses" (15). Post-colonial cultures tried to create or recreate independent local identity. Post-colonial theories and literatures have developed "to accommodate the differences

within the various cultures traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions" (Ashcroft 11)

A major theme of post-colonial literature is the aspect of place and displacement. It is always a feature of post-colonial societies, which have been created by both of process of settlement and of intervention. Here appears the special post-colonial crisis of identity and develops on effective identifying relationship between self and place. This feature is called the defining model of post-coloniality. According to Ashcroft "a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour" (Ashcroft 9).

The alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image, which this displacement produces, is often found in the accounts of residents of many colonies. This social and linguistic alienation can be explained as resulting only from public unjust forms of colonization such as slavery or conquest. Ashcroft indicates that many usual categories of social alienation such as "master / slave; free / bonded; ruler / ruled" are very important and widespread in post-colonial cultures (Ashcroft 9). They sometimes show clear signs of alienation even side the first generation of settlement, and point to a tendency to find an alternative, differentiated identity. The construction of 'place is the most popular discursive practice, in which this alienation can be identified. It arose in an empty space between the experience of place and language available to describe it. According to Ashcroft, this gap forms a classic and all pervasive feature of post-colonial texts. This shortage is present for those people whose language sounds not good enough to describe a new place,

whose language is gradually damaged by enslavement, and whose language "has been rendered unprivileged by the imposition of the language of a colonizing power" (Ashcroft 10).

Some components of these models can describe the situation of all post-colonial societies. In all these situations, a condition of alienation can't be avoided until the colonizing language has been replaced or appropriated as English. It appeared the difference between the "standard" British English received from the empire and English which had formed in post-colonial countries. The distinction between English and English, presents the statement of powerful "centre" and a multitude of interesting usages designated as "peripheries". The results of the energies uncovered by the political tension between the idea of a normative code and a variety of regional usages are the most exciting and innovative literatures of the modern period.

As a major critical discourse in the humanities during the last two decades, post-colonialism has occupied its place among other theories such as feminism, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. As a consequence of its diverse and interdisciplinary uses, this body of thought has generated an enormous corpus of specialized academic writings. Nevertheless although much has been written. Under its rubric, post-colonialism itself remains a diffuse and nebulous term. Unlike Marxism or deconstruction, it seems to lack an originary moment or coherent methodology. Although post-colonial theory is instrumental in bringing the matters of colony and empire in a prominence, it is not only unique or inaugural in its academic concern with the subject of imperialism and its consequences. So it is methodologically and conceptually indebted to a variety of both earlier and more recent western theories. It is

highly indebted to the intellectual tradition of Marxist anti-imperialist and radical rupture of western metaphysical tradition by post structuralism and post-modernism. As Leela Gandhi writes:

Intellectual history of post-colonial theory is marked by a dialectic between Marxism, on the one hand, and post-structuralism/post-modernism on the other. So this theoretical contestation informs the academic content of post-colonial analysis, manifesting itself in an on going debate between the competing claims of nationalism and internationalism, strategic essentialism and hybridity, solidarity and dispersal, the politics of structure and totality and the politics of the fragment. (viii- ix)

Both post-modernism and Marxism could not explicitly account for the consequences of colonial encounters. Marxism has become unable to accommodate the specific political needs of the colonized world . It has been unable to theorize colonialism as an exploitative relationship between the west and the rest. As Frederic Jameson concedes:

That imperialism systematically cripples the growth of its colonies and its dependent areas- this belief is utterly absent from the first moment of Marxist theories of imperialism and is indeed everywhere contradicted by them, where they raise the matter at all. (47)

Marxism also has ignored to address sympathetically the historical, cultural and political difference or alterity of the colonized world. So, it has failed to exert potential appeal to post-colonial thought. This is further reflected in Marx's blindness to the violence of colonialism, as Said quotes

Marx in his book *Orientalism*, "whatever way have been the crimes of England . . . she was the unconscious tool of history, which raised India in this instance from its semi-barbaric state into the improved condition of modernity" (153). Thus, for Marx British colonialism compensates more than the violence and injustice done.

The publication of Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 is generally regarded as the principal catalyst and reference point for post-colonial theory, but sufficient attention has to be paid to the fact that this text evolved within a distinctly post-structuralist climate dominated by Derrida and Foucault. Said's own work draws upon a variety of Foucauldian paradigms as he defines orientalism as a kind of discourse. The impulse post-colonial theory imbibed from post structuralist theory is its critique of Western epistemology and theorization of culture alterity, as Leela Gandhi writes, "post-colonialism has learnt-through its post-structuralism parentage to diagnose the material effects and implication of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of western rationality" (26).

But post-structuralism or post-modernism could not go across the boundaries of the west, "to address the problem of colonialism directly" (Gandhi 26).

In the above section, the intellectual background to post-colonial literature cum theory is figured out. In the subsequent sections, the theoretical presumption of the present thesis will be put forward.

Overview and Politics of Irony

Irony, in its simplest semantics, can be defined as, in the words of Samuel Johnson, "a mode of speech of which the meaning is contrary to the

word" (qtd. in Muecke 5). However, such a simplified definition itself sounds ironical since irony in its concept, use, and function is quite dynamic and mobile. Etymologically, the term irony is derived from the *Greek eiron*, a dissembling character in Greek comedy by Aeschylus to denote a mode of behavior and expression where in the *eiron*, "more plausibly pretends to be saying or doing one thing while really conveying a quite different [often opposite] messages" (Muecke 33). The Greek term *eironeia* for irony has been first recorded in Plato's *Republic* referring to the irony implied in Socratic dialogue. Similarly, Latin term *ironia* is used by Cicero to elaborate the rhetoric of irony. Irony, especially in its Greek use, is the outcome of the deliberate pretension of the *eiron*, an ironist, and the self-deception of the *alazon*, a victim of the butt of the irony. Such a dialectical discrepancy of the appearance and reality of "*eironic*" and "*alazonic*" features in irony has been later explored as a powerful "rhetorical enforcement" for its special rhetorical and artistic effects (8), and then later as "a discursive strategy" for analyzing the politics of representation (Hutcheon 194) . However is not easy to define it. However, it is generally defined as the discrepant gap between what is said and what is intended. In other words, the sense of irony emerged from a contrast between what is implied by actions and what is their actual outcome; what said and what is meant; or what is thought about a situation and what is actually the case.

The scope of irony as a rhetorical enforcement was first available in the irony implied in Socratic dialogue. Such and irony was later called as the Socratic irony that refers to Socrates' simulated ignorance to make his arguments stronger. Socratic irony is attributed to the irony generated out of the

speaker's pretension "to be ignorant ... under the guise of seeking to be taught by others," but ultimately s/he teach[es] other by" [. . .] investigating the things beneath the earth and in the heave" (Muecke 9). The Socratic irony has also been adopted by Cicero and Quintilian who define irony "as a figure of speech" to elaborate "the verbal strategy of a whole argument " (Muecke 9).

Verbal irony arises from the ostensible use of language intending a sharp contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. In the case of verbal irony, the speaker who provides some clues makes the sharp ironic undercutting of the ostensible meaning inevitable. The ironic intensity of the verbal irony depends on the ironist's pretension to "aim at achieving maximum plausibility for his /her ostensible meaning" (Muecke 45). In this sense ironist and ironic pretences are [the] basic features of verbal irony.

The verbal irony depends on the author's ironic intention that is shared with the reader that allows for playing a verbal game of irony to take place. Verbal irony is, however, most often confused with sarcasm as the latter, too, has its surface meaning undercut by the intended meaning. However, the difference is more explicit as the sarcasm is merely intended as a taunt: seeming praise for implied dispraise. So, sarcasm is harsh, direct, and crude, while verbal irony is, "outwardly accommodating and amiable and inwardly serene and reserved...[being] qualified by gentleness and benevolence" (Muecke 17).

Irony becomes "rhetorically effective and aesthetically pleasing" that generates the "curious feeling of paradox, of the ambivalent, of the ambiguity of the impossibility made actual, of a double contradictory reality" that

conjoins with the "feeling of liberation" as in verbal irony "reality definitely unmasks the appearance," while sarcasm lacks this feel of liberation, which is not "for a moment plausible in its literal sense, [and] the tone conveys reproach so strongly that no feeling of contradiction is possible" (Muecke 45-6).

Besides the exploration of irony through the means of dialogue and language, structural irony as a common device is to invent a hero, or a naïve narrator or speaker who is either naive or fallible and whose persistent judgment or interpretation is the expressed meaning in the text impaired by the person's prejudice, personal interests and the limited knowledge.

The next type of irony is dramatic irony, which involves spoken words. The ironic effect of the dramatic irony depends on the author's ironic intention shared with the audience. Dramatic irony is a situation in which the reader or audience knows more about the immediate circumstances or future events of which a character is ignorant. The audiences come to detect a discrepancy between characters' perceptions and actions and the reality they face. Character's beliefs and actions become ironic within that dramatic situation because they are very different from the reality of their actions. The ironic intensity in dramatic irony, therefore, is achieved by lending its alazonic (ignorant) "character's maximum conviction over what they believe and act" so that the inevitable reversal of the situation or the recognition of the reality generates intense tragic or comic irony (45). Dramatic irony becomes tragic when the demystification of that real situation leads to a:

Typical case involving a victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who acting on the basis of these takes steps to avoid

a foreseen evil or profit from a foreseen good, but his/[her] actions serve only to lock him/[her] into a causal chain that leads inevitable to his/[her] downfall. (Muecke 69)

Dramatic irony can; however becomes comic irony if the revelation of reality generates humour, thereby leading the characters to the happy resolution. Though the term "dramatic" is used to connote a "powerful sense of exciting and gripping situation" (66), it can also occur in narrative fictions "whenever an author deliberately asks us to compare what two or more characters say of each other, or what a character says now with what he/[she] says or does later" (Booth 63).

Irony locates itself not only in a dramatic situation but it also comes into being in the implied faith in the relationship between the supernatural power and human beings. When explored in such a way, irony turns to be what has labeled as cosmic irony. Cosmic irony occurs when individuals are usually struck with tragedy, frustration and moking because of their belief that the universe or human life is deliberately manipulated by supernatural power like a deity, or fate, thereby leading them to false hopes. The ironic intensity in cosmic irony is reinforced by the characters; blind faith in divinity and destiny, though such a faith may generate frustration and tragedy.

Another type of irony, which especially has come to the fore in the nineteenth century, is romantic irony, which is also called paradoxical irony. Romantic irony has emerged out of the philosophical and aesthetic speculations about the paradoxical relationship between Nature and human beings. For ironologists such as Fredrich schlegel, August Wilhelm, Ladwig Tieck and Karl Solger, Nature is "an infinitely teeming chaos – an overflowing

exhaustless vital energy" being in "process of becoming" with a dialectical process of continual creation and decreation, while human being is "the created [and] soon to be decreed" with limited "thought" and "fixed language", becomes unable to "acquire [any] permanent intellectual experimental leverages over the world" (Muecke 23).

The nutshell survey of irony came out in the preceding pages demonstrates the dynamic and complex nature of irony. Realizing this mobility, Wayne C. Booth gives his interpretive, strategy of irony in his book, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1975) by categorizing all types of ironies into stable and unstable. Stable irony, for him, comprises four "intended", "covert", "fixed", and "finite" in application (6). That is, the irony whose ironic intention of the speaker is shared with the reader by some patent clues offered in the established circumstances by the writer is called stable irony. The ironic writer in such an irony provides, "literary fixity of which we can have unequivocal, absolute, and fixed ironic interpretation" (6). The stable irony, in this sense, covers all intentional Socratic, verbal structural, dramatic and cosmic ironies, which say one thing and give to understand the opposite. On the contrary, the unstable irony offers no any fixed standpoint for its unequivocal interpretation since to give and fixed clue is either impossible or inadequate as the one interpretation essentially undercuts another. Rather such an irony explicates the world and human existence as essentially ironic and equivocal. Unstable irony, therefore, is a mode of reflecting the paradoxes and incongruities implicit in the structure of universe and in our existence. In this sense unstable irony comes close to what we call deconstructive irony.

The deconstructive irony, which is based on the theoretical concepts of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, exposes the impossibility of unvocal and stable meaning.

Privileged in the mix of semantic meanings that constitute irony allows a way to think about ironic meaning as something in flux, and not fixed. It is precisely and virtually impossible to fix ironic meaning as every position undercuts itself. It operates where as de Man claims, "the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference" (qtd. In Hutcheon 64).

Irony, as a pervasive discursive strategy is supposed to be concerned with discursive analysis-the politics-of representation in the practice of cultural studies. Discursive analysis, which examines how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connects with power, intertwines irony with wider historical and socio-cultural contexts.

The use and interpretation of irony always takes place in a certain discursive community. The discursive community encompasses "those strangely enabling constraints of discursive context and foregrounds the particularities" not only of space and time "but of class race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice-not to mention nationality, religion, age, profession, and all the other micro-political groupings" in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society (Hutcheon 92).

The study, therefore argues that politics of irony happens because of such a discursive communicative processing which irony "itself comes into being in the relations between meanings, between intensions and interpretations" (13). Irony explicitly sets up a relationship between ironist and

audience that is political in nature as irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority.

Another radical transideological political function of irony is to use it in a positive and constructively progressive way where in it is used as a powerful tool or even as a weapon in the fight against a dominant authority by demystifying or subverting the repression. Oppositional theorists like feminists, post colonialists, and other marginal use this function of irony where, as Culler reminds, "The forces of oppression are subverted by the boundless powers of irony that no prison can contain" (qtd. in Hutcheon 28). The recourse to irony's multivocal instability is exploited by the oppositional theories at the expense of necessarily univocal social commitments in which irony not only works to point to the complexities of historical and social reality but also has the power to change that reality. In this view, irony's intimacy with the dominant discourse it contests is its strength to relativize the authority and stability in part by appropriating its power. This intimacy is what makes irony potentially an effective strategy of oppositionality since the ironized discourse can point to difference to avoid both imperial and simply oppositional single voicing. The ironized language can allow "alternatives of being" through the, "alternities of saying," (31).

In such alternatives, the marginalized can be heard by the center, and yet to keep their critical distance and thus unbalance and undermine the authority. It becomes as Bakhtin says, "a special kind of substitute for silence" wherein the irony's working as self-protective suggests that irony can be interpreted as a kind of defense mechanism (qtd. in Hutcheon 35). Thus, the irony's politics is not only relational but also counter discursive:

This is a function of irony that does not reject or refute or turn upside-down : no evasiveness or lack of courage on conviction, but an admission that there are times when we cannot be sure, not so much because we don't know enough as because uncertainty is intrinsic of the essence. When such a provisional position is seen as valuable, it is often called demystifying. For some, this provisionally actually becomes the essence of 'true' art, over which irony rules as a kind of divine protector. [Such a] function of irony has specifically been called "counter discursive" in its ability to contest dominant habits of mind and expression.(Hutcheon 51-2).

The counter discursive function of irony, which rests on irony's denial over certainties by unmasking the world as an ambiguous and instable, is frequently exploited in oppositional theories. Such a function of irony lies in the realization of the power that lies in its potential to destabilize with critical ends and ideological contradictions so that not to let the marginal resolve in to coherent and potentially oppressive dogma.

The dialectical power of atterity arises from the said and the unsaid. The unsaid is related to the repressed, marginalized and colonized; it is not just unsaid, but unsayable within the hegemonic homogenous discourse. But irony is a matter of unspoken understandings, which can obviously cut across professional lines. So, just as the uncanny is never "surmounted," the repressed is similarly related to said in dialectic uncanny fashion; it can be seen as at once constitution and disruptive of any discursive structure or controlling intention. Morrison describes the kind of history or art with an eye to the

uncanny as possessing a constant presence of haunting. The unsaid does get said in a hidden way-as the negative residues of a repressed history.

Discursive irony, therefore, can also be linked with the question of writing alternative histories and unearthing repressed memory.

Eurocentric Notion

Eurocentrism is a generic term that usually implies various things in different fields. As wikipedia describes it:

Eurocentrism is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing emphasis on European (and, generally, western) concerns, cultures and Values at the expense of those of other Cultures. It is an instance of ethnocentrism, perhaps especially relevant because of its alignment with current and past real power structures in the world. (<http://en.wikipedia>)

In historiography, Eurocentrism has its own meaning, in which, it is the particular bias to consider everything only when they relate to Europe and its cultural extensions (the so called "west"). This means that history and its teaching is based around the European history, basically suggesting that history only matters when it connects to Europe. In Eurocentric historiography, history starts with the supposed the ancestors of the European civilization. Eurocentric historiography in its purest form is like a westward orient express, "starting in the Near East, continuing its way to Greece and Rome, further continuing to western Europe and finally crossing the ocean to North America" (qtd. Blaut 143).

Terms associated with the teaching of history those we use everyday and take for granted are essentially Eurocentric. "Ancient times", "classical

Era", "the Medieval Ages", "the Renaissance" etc. are all referring to various eras of the European history. In many senses, the Chinese "Middle Ages" started a good 700 years before the European one. In the Near East, "feudalism" (a staple of the "Medieval Age") started 1000 years before it did in Europe.

In Eurocentric historiography, even geography reflects a certain bias: Near, Middle, and far-East are all assuming that Europe is the centre. In the same way the centrality formation is alike about the Americas. So, in short, as for as history is concerned, Eurocentrism is the misconception that history is an essentially European thing and it can only be applied to other places when they come in to contact with Europe. What so ever Europe does bias to the other histories in the sense it wants to implement Eurocentric history throughout the world as a truth that they wrote in their own tendency keeping others in silence for powers.

During the colonial era, the naïve assumption of western superiority was given authority by thinkers such as Hegel, who developed a "Universal" (Hegel 138) theory of history, which was, in essence, a theory of European history in which the rest of the world was taken to be objects rather than subjects. For Hegel, as Edward said has pointed out Asia and Africa were, "static, despotic, irrelevant to world history" (168). Hegel's view of history was highly influential, on both Marxist and humanist historiography. His rather extreme ethnocentrism should thus not be swept under the rug, but analyzed as a central aspect of his thought. Since Hegel, ethnocentrism has often blinded the west to the parochialism of its supposed "Universals."

Particularly egregious are the attempts by thinkers such as Hegel to define as universal features that are, in fact, quite culturally specific. This includes his "Universal history," which saw Europe and America as the pinnacles of human evolution. Hegel wrote, for example, "Universal history goes from East to West. Europe is absolutely the *end of Universal history*. Asia is the beginning" (243).

The idea was clearly a justification of western colonial exploitation. But Hegel took the idea even further. Since his "history" is solely defined in Eurocentric terms, any act committed by the Europeans, no matter how reprehensible, is justifiable as a necessary step in human evolution. Hegel wrote:

Because history is the configuration of the spirit in the form of events, the people which receives the spirit as its natural principle . . . is the one that dominates in that epoch of world history . . . Against the absolute right of that people who actually are the carriers of the world spirit, the spirit of other peoples has no other right. (245)

Hegel saw the evolution of human history as a Unified totality, proceeding via the evolution of the "world spirit" (245). The "world spirit," for Hegel, was Western, with other cultures subsumed to the dustbin of history, forced either to adopt to the west or be trampled underfoot by this "world spirit," which in Hegel's writing appears as a complex metaphor for the reality of western aggression. Even within the west, Germany occupies a special destiny. Hegel writes:

The Germanic Spirit (*Germanische Geist*) is the spirit of the New World (neuen welt), whose end is the realization of the absolute truth, as the infinite self-determination of liberty that has for its content its proper absolute form. The principle of the German Empire ought to accommodate the Christian religion. The destiny of the Germanic peoples is that of serving as the bearer of the Christian principle. (189)

All non-Europeans are mere objects in the hands of the Europeans, under this theory of history. When applying his theories to Africans, Hegel arrived at the following blatantly racist conclusions, "it is characteristic of the blacks that their consciousness has not yet even arrived at the intuition of any objectivity.[. . .]. He [the black person] is a human being in the rough" (342). Colonization was the teleological imperative by which consciousness in the form of the superior Europeans must appropriate the others. He wrote:

This expansion of relations also makes possible that colonization to which, under systematic or sporadic form, a fully established civil society is impelled. Colonization permits it that one part of its population, located on the new territory, returns to the principle of family property and, at the same time, procures for itself a new possibility and field of labor. (125-26)

Hegel also applied this "logic" specifically to his analysis of India. He depicted the British colonialization of India as an inevitable stage in his process of "evolution." He wrote, "the British, or rather the East India company, are the masters of India because it is the fatal destiny of Asian empires to subject themselves to the Europeans" (131). Reading through

Hegel's works, it is apparent that he based conclusions such as this on the rather warped assumption that *India has no history*. His clearest statement to this effect occurs as follows:

If we had formerly the satisfaction of believing in the antiquity of the Indian wisdom and holding it in respect, we now have ascertained through being acquainted with the great astronomical works of the Indians, the inaccuracy of all figures quoted. Nothing can be more confused, nothing more imperfect than the chronology of the Indians; [. . .] in it they have neither stability nor coherence. It was believed that such was to be had at the time of Wikramaditya, who was supposed to have lived about 50 B.C., and under whose reign the poet Kalidasa, author of *Sakuntala* lived. But further research discovered half a dozen Wikramadityas and careful investigation has placed this epoch in our eleventh century. The Indians have lines of kings and an enormous quantity of names, but everything is vague. (qtd. Halbfass 137-38)

This is an important passage for two reasons. First, this assumption has been very influential, and its consequences continue to be felt today. Secondly, Hegel gives this as the reason why "he has lost respect for Indian's cultural heritage" (167). Yet his (Hegel's) conclusion is baseless, and can be critiqued on several points. "Classical Indian astronomy was no more inaccurate than the classical Greek Ptolemaic system" (167), which Europe followed until the seventeenth century, and in many respects the former was more accurate. Regarding the Vikramaditya era, it is true that there were several kings with

that name in Europe (just as there were many kings named Louis, Charles, etc. in Europe), but it does not follow from this that the Indians confused them. There in fact never was "confusion concerning the Vikramaditya era," starting 57 BCE and Hegel is absolutely wrong that this era begins in the eleventh century (168). One might argue that there never was a king of that name who lived at that time, but one could also argue that "there was no Christ born at the year Zero" (168), but such a critique would not "prove" that the west has no history; the history based on such a chronology would still be sound, regardless of the status of the legendary founder of the era. It is interesting that he takes this rather inconsequential reason for carte blanche dismissal of Indian *wisdom*, as if the contents of a text are false merely because it is misdated.

Such mistaken views concerning Indian history (or lack there of) are at the root of much of the dismissal of India and things Indian. Also, once it is established in the minds of an oppressed people that they have no history of their own, other than what has been gifted to them by the oppressors, then it also legitimizes (and glorifies) historical scholarship by the oppressors. In fact, "many a Macaulayite today is grateful to the colonialists for having given him a sense of his own history which, the Macaulayites were programmed to believe, they never had of their own" (179). As goes history, so go identity and values. This re-engineering is how Indians were conditioned to believe that their tradition requires them to be world negating, to leave materialistic progress to Europeans as it was against their own ethos. In fact, since giving up wealth could be seen as very pious, why bother if colonialists took it over?

The false perception that India was a stagnant, historical land was further perpetuated by Karl Marx. Marx described India as "being caught" in what he called the "Asiatic mode of production" (qtd. Blaut 163). He posited that India was trapped in a stagnant unhistorical economic state in which "oriental despots" wielding absolute power governed unchanging, stratified villages. His analysis was flawed by a serious ignorance of the actual economic history of India, and of the numerous underlying causes of decline. (This is why to this day, Marxists do not wish to encourage scholarship on India's traditional knowledge system, as the historical record clearly refutes the belief that there was no progress on the materialistic front from within the indigenous culture.) From a certain perspective, the greatest despots in India were not Oriental but Occidental, that is, the British.

These following words were written in "The Future Results of British Rule in India" on August 8, 1853 in the concluding of a series of articles on India, that were published in the 'New York Daily Tribune; in a letter to Engels, Marx claimed that he had written these casual pieces primarily for financial reasons and that India was "not his department":

India, then, could not escape the fate of being conquered, and the whole of her of past history, if anything, is the history of the successive conquests she has undergone. Indian society has no history at all, at least no know history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the basis of that unresisting and unchanging society. . . . From the Indian natives, reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence, a fresh class is spring

up, endowed with the requirements for government and imbued with European science. Steam has brought India into regular and rapid communication with Europe, has connected its chief ports with the whole south-eastern Ocean, and has re-vindicated it from the isolated position which was the prime law of its stagnation. (qtd. Blaut 169)

The predator-prey mentality of foreign rulers and scholars working on the ancient texts of India did not fail to influence the famous Max Mueller. This is reflected in one of the letters by Prof. Mueller addressed to the Duke of Origoil, the then Secretary of State for India. Mueller wrote on 16th Dec. 1868, "The ancient religion of India is totally doomed and if Christianity doesn't step in whose fault will it be" (163). Further more, in a letter addressed to his wife in 1868, he wrote, "I hope I shall finish that work and feel convinced that though I shall not live to see it, yet this emotion of mine and translation of Vedas will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of the souls in this country" (168).

In the same letter, he further observes, "[i]t [Veda] is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, the only way of uprooting all that has been sprung from it during the last three thousand years" (168-169). The text of his letters is self-explanatory to the fact that scholars like Max Mueller often started studying Sanskrit with ulterior motives. The modern condition demonstrates that he was more or less successful in his vision.

Monier Williams another important European scholar who was hard pressed by the Church. He wrote, "[w]hen the walls of the mighty fortress of

Brahmanism are encircled, undermined and finally stormed by the soldiers of cross, the victory of Christianity must be signal and complete" (Sanskrit English Dictionary VIII).

In preface to his famous *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, the professor of the prestigious Boden Chair at Oxford, Monier Williams reveals the objective of founding the chair for Sanskrit studies by Col. Boden as to convert the natives of India into Christianity. He writes thus:

I must draw attention to the fact that I am only the second occupant of the Boden chair [. . .] was to promote the translation of the scriptures into Sanskrit; so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion. (ix)

The prevalent view of most modern Western scholars is that European tradition is not simply one cultured tradition among others. The European self identity is predicated upon its distinct achievements in philosophy and pure theory, and as such, has a unique, global mission to fulfill. Husserl claimed, "Europe alone can provide other traditions with a universal framework of meaning and understanding. They will have to Europeanize themselves, whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, will never, for example, Indianize ourselves. The Europeanization of all foreign parts of mankind is the destiny of the earth" (qtd. Blaut 167).

Focusing on the European conquest of America and the subsequent 'construction' of history to depict it as the miracle of European triumph, Enrique Dussel writes:

The traditional the Eurocentric thesis, flourishing in the United States, modernity's culmination, is that modernity expanded to the barbarian cultures of the South undoubtedly in need of modernization. One can only explain this new- sounding but age-old thesis by returning to medieval Europe to discover the motives which produced modernity and permitted its dissemination. (19)

Another scholar, on the assumption of Eurocentrism, Max Weber posed the question of world history Eurocentrically, "[w]hich chain of circumstances has resulted in the fact that on Western soil and only there, cultural phenomena have been produced which, as we represent it, show signs of evolutionary advance and universal validity?" (340). And he further continues, "[n]either scientific, artistic, governmental, nor economic evolution has led to the modes of rationalization proper to the Occident" (340).

Europe possessed, according to this paradigm, exceptional internal characteristics which permitted it to surpass all other cultures in rationality. This thesis, which adopts a Eurocentric (as opposed to world) paradigm, reigns, not only in Europe and the United States, but also among intellectuals in the peripheral world. The pseudo-scientific periodization of history into antiquity, the Middle (preparatory) Ages and finally the modern (European) age is an ideological construct which deforms world history. One must break with this reductionist horizon to open to a world and planetary perspective and there is an ethical obligation toward other cultures to do so.

Chronology reflects geopolitics. According to the Eurocentric paradigm, modern subjectivity especially developed between the times of the

Italian Renaissance and the Reformation and of the Enlightenment in Germany and the French Revolution. Everything occurred in Europe.

Confutation of History as 'Truth' and 'Evolution'

The tendency of new historicism to view history as a social science and the social sciences as historical became very radical in its textualization of history and historicization of text. 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, like a work of art, became something like a negotiated product of a private creator and the public practices of a given society. The more radical thesis of new historical thinking – as inspired by Michel Foucault was refusal to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development toward the 'present'. Neither was history regarded as an abstraction, idea or ideal, or as something that began in the beginning and would reach to 'the end', a moment of definite closure.

The concept of 'historicity of the text' arose because of the thinking that sought to connect a text to the social, culture and economic circumstances of its production. The text, now, was not to be read with the motto of 'art for art's sake'. It was but to read in connection with all discursive practices and power relations expressed in it by the language that is, as argued by new historicists, necessarily dialogical and materially determined. Similarly, the idea of 'textuality of history' came as a jolt to the age-old search for metaphysical spirit that was said to be all pervasive throughout the historical movement. This was because new historicists tended towards less fact and event orientedness. This may be perhaps because they realized that 'Truth' about what really

happened could never be purely and objectively known. They, in this way, developed a theory of history which was no more linear and progressive, as something developing toward the 'present'. Such review considered history to be less identifiable in terms of specific eras, each with a definite, persistent and consistent Geist or spirit of the time.

Some attempts to put a text in its historical context can also be found in previous literary criticism. The historicism of 1930s, for instance, tried to examine works within the diverse and interrelated historical contexts by analyzing them with respect to the cultural and the social forces that influenced and were revealed through texts. The 'historicity of the text' therefore seems to have been practised by critics even before new historicists.

The way history is dealt with by the new historicists in their analysis of text differs from the previous approach in at least two ways. First, the latter tries to see the significance of a literary work along with the reception of that work in certain historical circumstances. Second, they seek to analyze a literary work with respect to historical forces that encompass power relation and discursive practices which were in operation during the composition of that work. This becomes clear when we take the reference of J. Hillis Miller's 1986 presidential address to the Modern language association. He, in his speech answers (though with some dismay) why new historical concept of the text is 'new':

Literary study in the past few years has undergone a sudden, almost universal turn away from theory in the sense of an orientation toward language as such and has made a corresponding turn toward history, culture, society politics,

institutions, class and gender conditions, the social content, [and]
the material base. (Miller 283)

Miller's portion though somewhat hyperbolic, sees a literary study turning away from theory. But his arena of theory implicitly includes formalism, new criticism and deconstruction which saw language as not concerned with outside things. This shift, Miller says, forms the theoretical bases of historical and socio-economic circumstances in literary analysis, which however seems to assume that work of literature both influence and are influenced by historical reality. It shares the belief in referentially, that is, a belief that literature both refers and is referred to by the things outside.

When analysing a text with reference to all historical forces, it is not possible to have a single and definite meaning. They now historical thinkers, therefore, are unlikely to suggest that a literary text can have an easily identifiable historical context. With this parallel, then, we can say that fictionalization of history and historicization of text, both result in indeterminacy any various 'truths'.

The argument of new historicists that we can never possess objective knowledge of history because historical writing is always entangled in tropes owes much to the philosopher and the historian of otherwise' Michel Foucault. Although Foucault shares a lot with those new historicists, his redrawing of boundaries of history has had a central influence on the domain of the ideas like power, discourse and subject.

Because this research is mainly concerned with Foucauldian ideas related to history, power, discourse and governmentality, it is necessary to understand the Foucauldian concept of history. His ideas of history will be

examined through three dimension. Firstly, we will see how Foucault influences the new historicists idea of textualization of history and historicization of text. Second, we need to examine his confutation of humanistic or Hegelian concept of linear and progressive history. And lastly, Foucault's analysis of a 'subject ' being imprinted and a 'body' inscribed by history.

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 relation and the hierarchies. So, a text becomes, 'a history of otherwise' in that it presents a historical situation not as a '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.

Foucault's main interest in historical reading was to see how various discourses govern a certain era but in a contradictory way, where a discourse doesn't come to terms with others. For example, how an age defines 'civilization' may not be in harmony with its practice and similarly philosophy of a certain age may not correspond with the reality of the time. With this idea, now comes Foucault's confrontation with the traditional concept of history and his apparent neutrality in describing the deep- rooted techniques of power in historical movement. Writing about Foucault's idea, and describing his as the 'historian of otherwise' Mchoul and Grace write:

Foucault is no historical determinist [. . .]. What are we how is not what we must necessarily be by virtue of any iron laws of history. History is as fragile as it seems, in retrospect, to be

fixed. But for Foucault, history is never simply in retrospect, never simply 'the past,' it is also the medium in which life today is conducted. (viii)

From this depiction of Foucault as 'no historical determinist' he becomes more difficult in his analysis of history. He, at the same time, takes a person at present to be affected by 'the past' and denies that we are what 'iron laws' of history makes us. This is not a deviation in Foucault's theory. It is his standpoint making strategy to attack the humanistic tendency of seeking the 'culmination' of history.

Foucault's radical antihumanism is best expressed in his essay entitled 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history.' Taking the concepts of truth and power as described by Nietzsche in his idea of genealogy, Foucault, in this essay has a three-fold aim. First, he offers his arguments supporting his break with archaeology. Secondly, he expands the scope of genealogy. And thirdly he revises the role of the historian.

In arguments that support 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 archaeology which seeks to uncover the layers of civilization by pointing 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 toward genealogy Foucault states "the search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: 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 Gupta describes, "the foucauldian concepts of these two historical readings to be complementary. Both of these historical approaches are for Gupta, 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 idea 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'.

What, then is the task of a Foucauldian historian ? Foucault (departing from the traditional concept), reformulated 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 the favour of the use of history as a 'parody.' Second, he should be against a singular continuist human identity. And thirdly, the 'investigations' should be directed against truth.

To sum up Foucault's idea of historical reading, we can say that this is the general approach that seeks to analyze "the orders, mechanism, and exclusion that have been the features) of western societies since enlightenment" (Gupto 144). This general approach, in contrast to total history which looks at the overall development of the period, attempts to describe differences, changes alternations, mutations and so on.

Considering Foucault's general history, we can conclude that he wants to confront 'essentialist' humanism by showing how the so called unique, unified and enduring personality is inscribed of the forces by history.

Chapter III

Exposition of Irony in the Gap of Eurocentric History

Irony on Almasy's failure as Eurocentric Representative

On the surface Ondaatje makes Almasy a heroic character but about his tragic failure at the end due to his deceptive nature through out the desert exploration proves him as evil and failure with the irony of tragic fall. The death mask of history hovers over Ondaatje's entire text, which opens with the patient's fall and concludes with the nuclear bombing of Japan. It non-progressive structure- coupled with its use of biblical and Miltonic allusions, (paradise lost), which stress death, fire and destruction unmask the idea of modern progress and implicitly align it with catastrophe. Paradoxically, catastrophe, associated in the novel with the war and the rise of fascism, is tied to humanity's faith in civilization and progress. When Hana explains that "Kip is involved in the war because he believes in a civilized world. He's a civilized man, Caravaggio announces bitterly, first mistake" (122).

The evil tendency of western mentality is carried by Almasy. He speaks something and does the next. The haunt of the hidden mystery is hovering on him. He does not want to identify himself, as he is disfigured by plane crash, in the Italian villa. He is named as 'The English patient' but actually he is Hungarian by birth. The objection is that 'The English Patient' depicts an evil person in a way that misrepresents his true nature. It is this very fact the fact that Almasy fails to think beyond a very limited horizon, and is completely indifferent to the effects of his action on those who live beyond this horizon that is in fact the most powerful consideration in favor of the claim that he is an evil person. A person who thinks nothing of what his actions might do to

others does not intend to cause harm, but he also doesn't intend to avoid harm; and given the way human aims and goals tend to conflict, the chances of his causing severe harm to some innocent party are not insignificant. This recognition forces us to abandon the popular thought that a necessary condition of being evil is that one intends to cause evil. Rather we should accept that evil can proceed from indifference as well as malevolence.

Unlike evil as malevolence, which tends to wear its moral nature on its face, evil as indifference sometimes wears the mask of virtue: it can easily be made to appear as a kind of moral purity, a sort of high-minded innocence that refuses to dirty its hands with the sordid details of our messy moral lives. If we ask whether exploiters and oppressors know what they are doing, the right answer seems to be that they do not know, because they carefully avoid thinking about it- but that they could know, and therefore their deliberate avoidance is a responsible act. Almsy requires the aid of the Nazis, in exchange he helps Romel's forces cross the desert to Cairo. This act is the focus of the most significant moral complaints against Almsy's conduct.

In Ondaatje's novel the image of the ruin predominates. From the start, the text portrays the patient, burned to the bone, with his "black body" and "destroyed feet" as a physical ruin. The first section clarifies that this human wreck is mirrored by the architectural wreckage that surrounds him. Referring to the villa, the narrator explains that some rooms "couldn't be entered because of the rubble. One bomb crater allowed moon and rain into the library downstairs"(7-8). The second section, which bears the title "Near Ruins" focuses on Caravaggio, the thief whose thumbs were brutally cut off during a torture session. The title of the section is drawn from the narrator's comment

that Caravaggio was 'in near ruins' when he was brought to the hospital, for care (27). In this same section, the narrator goes on to compare Hana to a ruin. "[n]urses too became shell-shocked from the dying around them. Or from something[. . .] a man dismantling a mine broke the second his geography exploded. The way Hana broke in Santa Chiara Hospital [. . .] the death of her father" (41). Narrative fragmentation is also the principle feature of the book that patient brought with him through the fire, 'a copy of Herodotus that he had added to, cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations' (16). Almsy draws the maps and attempts to create the history for own glorification through out the desert exploration, keeping the gaps of existing values, that leads him to be an unidentified patient with full of trauma.

What might we uncover instead ? what more could we learn about the telling of history? Arguably, *The English Patient* confronts the reader not just with the experience of personal trauma, but also with the trauma of European History- with the silenced voices erased from the narrative of the past, represented particularly in the character of Kip. Traumatized by the past, the characters of this novel seek to cope with their traumatic experience by drawing the event in to narrative space that will contain and position the past. In particular, it is the patient's conjuring of memory that organizes the narrative of the text as "he whispers again, dragging the listing heart of the young nurse beside him to wherever his mind is, into that well of memory he kept plunging into during those months before he died" (4). The patient's remembering propels the narrative and the other characters with him "into the well of memory." Hence, his remembering functions at two levels in the novel:

structuring his own discourse in the story, as well as the narrative as a whole. As the patient returns to the past to reveal the events that have led him to lie in this bed, each act of remembering instigates other revelations, creating a proliferation of memory which neither his narrative nor the text as whole can channel into any linear framework. Traumatized and hunted by the violence that they have lived through, the characters reside amongst dead cattle. "Horses shot dead, half eaten. People hanging upside down from bridges. The last vices of war" (29). Left behind at the end of the war, they feel the pull of the dead that surround them in the ruined of Italy. Ruins, shorn of the meaning that they once possessed for people now gone, continue to endure, hunting the present with reminders of past that has been forgotten. Lying just below the surface of the present are the ruins of the past. Ondaatje accounts ironically:

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

In the midst of the present, the failure of the past reappears. The relationship between past and present here is not that of a linear progression. Instead, through such fragments, the past is drawn into the space of the present. The movement of history is revealed as repetitive and contradictory; the feudal medieval past absorbed and erased by modernity and modern warfare returns with the emergence of "blood axe and spear."

In the novel, the protagonist 'Amalsy' keeps himself as a representative of 'world history' that is depicted through his traumatic narration. The reverse form of his action, tendency and narration, that leads him to this bed in a traumatic and paralyzed situation as a failure character at what he claims to attempt universality through individual perception, show the irony upon him. While the patient's approach to the past does challenge the metaphysical concept of history (described by Benjamin as historicist), he can not entirely shake the ideology that informs this paradigm. His narrative of memory conflicts with his desire to know, to map, and to control. The patient attempts to chart the past as he once mapped the desert. He works to fill in the gaps, moving back to material already mentioned in order to fill it out, to throw light upon corners still in shadows as he did with Herodotus's Histories, "when he discovered the truth to what had seemed a lie, he brought out his glue pot and pasted in a map or news clipping or used a blank space in the book to sketch men in skirts with faded unknown animals alongside them" (246). The process of exploring both the desert and the past is guided here by the longing for truth. In the patient's discourse, the two acts of mapping and remembering are linked together. Both projects are driven by the desire for order as he seeks to find patterns and connections out of the shifting landscapes of the desert and the past "where nothing was strapped down or permanent, everything drifted" (22). In those acts, there is the desire to chart the distance between the various parts,, whether geographical locations or past events, and to place them within a larger total framework.

Through these illustrations Almsy not only intends to have authority and power over the physical things but also over the natural things. (i.e. he

wants to create constant map of desert which is changeable). Almsy, appearantly for the question, "what do you hate most?", replies, "ownership" for the Katherine to what she replies, "[a] lie" (152). But both are incorrect in their actions and tendencies. Both betrayal characters in the sense Katherine lied and deceived to her formal husband Geoffrey Clifton and eloped with Almsy. And in the next Almsy desires to explore the desert and its surroundings with his name in the history. Almsy intends the imperial notion for authority and ownership that is contradictorly ridiculous. As a result gets the bed in Italian villa in world was second. Almsy wants to link himself with the ancient historical 'Almsy' and says, "I should like to add a few remarks [. . .] on the 'prehistoric Geography of Kharga Oasis.' By the mid- 1930s the lost oasis of Zerzura was found by Ladislous de Almsy and his companions" (134). To this the novelist remarks, "[i]n 1939 the great decade of Libyan Desert expeditions came to an end, and this vast and silent pocket of the earth became one of the theatres of war" (134). Almsy did that to identify the Europe in the history throughout the world but his goal is reversed and his actions invited the world war-II that transfigured himself as destroyed and unidentified.

In this context Almsy's failure in his claim shows an allegorical irony with the destruction of Europe in World War II. History, for the patient, is something to be devoured. He declares, "I am a person who if left alone in someone's home walks to the bookcase, pulls down a volume and inhales it. So history enters us" (18). The patient's understanding of history as an object that one "inhales" or consumes suggests that he believes the past is something that he can contain, catalogue, and possess. In spite of this, his statement

reveals that in this act of consumption the present is itself possessed as "history enters us." Turning now to the pages of his own past, the patient works to exhaust the past and to control the ghosts that make a claim on the present. By retelling the events that led him to lie dying in this bed, the patient attempts to order the past, to find links and connections that were not visible at the time of the events. However, as we've seen, his narrative memory resists such an organization.

In the novel the patient's stand is Eurocentric representation and his narrative is a colonial worldview, in his exploration, that sees the non-western world as empty and unexplored. As he explores the African deserts, the patient embodies this colonialist Eurocentric framework. The patient embodies the ideals of an aristocratic, cosmopolitan world, which has the ability and privilege to move itself beyond nationality and identification. Although he asserts that he desires to "walk upon such an earth that had no maps," he himself has been part of the effort to create the maps that have been then used in turning the desert into a battlefield (261). The language used to describe these exploitations discloses the colonial impulse of such work "the shades of yellowness that we invaded, tried to lose ourselves in" and "the several expeditions which have attacked the Gifl kebir" (145). Describing this work as a process of invasion and attack disproves the patient's claims that their work "had nothing to do with the world" (242). Exploring the desert so as to pin it down, paste it into a book, the patient's efforts, despite his claims to despise ownership and possession (39), have been part of a European endeavor to claim and mark the world.

'Almasy' the English patient, is very difficult to understand in a surface but finds as mysterious and evil in his tendency while going to critical evaluation. He is good for the westerner ness but evil to the non-Westerners. So, being frontier, he is getting curs in the bed and reveals the trauma of the past, even lingering the truth.

The patient's accounts of his desert explorations reveal this colonial approach to history. He wishes to see his attempts to explore and map as separate from the political world of public events. However, his accounts of these explorations are anything but apolitical and, instead, reveal the under working of European history, which includes in its narrative only those events that further its progress:

There is, after Herodotus, little interest by the Western world towards the desert for hundreds of years. From 425 B.C. to [. . .] in the 1920s there is a sweet postscript history on this pocket of earth, made mostly by privately funded expeditions and followed by modest lectures given at the Geographical Society in London at Kensington Gore. (133)

Places are rendered historical only through their significance to the Western World. It is this historical gaze that provides meaning and existence to people and events. In the absence of this gaze, there is only silence, a "vast and silent pocket of the earth" (134). These European explorations see the landscape of other countries as blank and set about displacing the history of their people as they remap the land and provide it with other names. This process of exploration, which the patient describes as "our slow unearthing of history in desert," claims the landscape and past of other cultures and marks it

as its own (241). The significance of the place for another culture is lost; the people who live there are relegated to a place of absence. Entering Africa, the patient finds only "the emptiness of deserts [where] you are always surrounded by lost history" (135). This history, however, is only lost to the totalizing narrative of western history, itself a gesture that creates a trauma that banishes the history of the desert to an unknowable space beyond the limits of (western) understanding. And as he explores the deserts, the patient has memories that provide us with an account of a past that continues to be informed by a Eurocentric and colonial logic. Taking a more comprehensive view of the patient and his past into consideration, we begin to see that the novel is drawing the reader's attention to the site of a historical trauma at the heart of western European history. The patient's narrative, while demonstrating the potential of memory, negates that potential and comes to represent the larger colonial process of erasing the presence of non-western people and denying the existence of alternative histories.

When the patient speaks of his explorations it is always in terms of this colonial "I" who encounters the world and possesses it, "[i]n Tassili I have seen rock engraving from a time when the Sahara people hunted [. . .]. In Wadi Sura, "I could draw [. . .]. I could lead them to its edge, six thousand years ago" (18). Here, the patient invokes the privilege of this western "I", who sees and marks the world as known. Exiled from the homogeneous space of the know and understandable, the people of the desert are refused the privilege of telling their own history.

The denial of the position of knower to the colonial world is figured in the presence of kip within the narrative. With his arrival in the story, a tension

is crated between the colonial presence of the patient and the colonized subject, Kip. As a colonial subject, Kip resides in the margins between competing cultures and ways of knowing. Kip's Indian name is taken from him. Given, instead, the diminutive form of kipper, "the young Sikh had been thereby translated into a salty English fish" (87). It is not simply his name that is altered, but his colonial status as well as he is reduced from a person to a fish. When kip takes up residence at the villa, the other characters work to incorporate him and contain his shifting identity. Once again, he is forced to bear the identity provided him by western culture. Within this colonial framework, he has no stable "I". He does not know and name the world, but is rather marked and know by it. So the mystery of Western colonizers as deceptive way is somehow unmasked by the post-colonial revolution.

Kip however, penetrates the fixed boundaries of colonial identification. As an "anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world", he moves silently between radically different, but overlapping cultures (196). His positioning is fluid since he is not only "Kip", but also Kirpal Singh. In this process of naming, there remains an excess that cannot be incorporated within colonial classification, for to acknowledge Singh as a knowing subject, as an "I", would violate the stable perimeter of colonial epistemology. Instead, this remainder continues to circulate, threatening a rupture in the homogeneous fabric of colonial thought. Kip's movement within the world of the narrative introduces the unseen into the world of the visible. Occupying "the overlooked space open to those of us with a silent life", he sees himself as an absent presence at the heart of colonial self-presence (200). This ambiguous ontological status as colonial subject, though, disturbs the coherency of the

western world of the other characters. His ability to penetrate the borders of the colonial world disrupts the division between the western and non-western world, threatening the stability of colonial logic. Kip, therefore, finding himself unable to live among members of the nations that sanctioned the bombing, he flees San Girolamo on his motorbike concerning the Isaiah's prophecies.

The novelist ultimately exposes the irony to the western mysterious notion, to look over the others, after having failure in their (Eurocentric representations) goals and attempts for power and exploration, creating self-centered history as a whole and defining in their own, that destroyed themselves by the war and the protest and rejection by Kirpal Singhs husking their reality (manner of nature, thought and actions as evil) simultaneously with the dropping of bomb.

History and Story: Unconventional History in the Novel

The historiographer and the literary historian articulate the past; in the process, new facts, new patterns, and new understandings emerge. With changing times, human needs alter, and, naturally, the experiences of the past are perceived and interpreted a fresh. But it is fictionalized history that is perhaps the most effective tool with which the past can be understood and evaluated, for the distancing achieved by storytelling enables reader and writer alike to revisit history with a new and deeper awareness.

Events of war have always occupied a central position in the narration of history. The clashes between rival civilizations and rival egos have created the horrors of today and the anxieties of the future. The first World War, the second World War, the Vietnam War, and many such wars of one country or

the other have etched the brutalization, devastation, degradation, and alienation that is the result of war on this world of ours. Interestingly, history and fiction greatly involved with such happenings deal with these events differently.

Though history has to deal with the "Invisible facts" and "collect the fragments," yet its interest is rooted in hard truths. To this end, for the scientific historian empirical events of history dominate over all other considerations. Against this, unconventional history challenges the methods of traditional history-writing and seeks the truth in dimensions of human experience.

The restructuring exercise of the past is as much an act of imagination as it is of perception. Plausible documents need to be created to bridge evident gaps. This is not a rape of history, but a generous act to give credibility and continuity to it. The impact of history is ultimately through words. But words never present absolute meanings; words continue to change in relation to other words. A literary historian more than a scientific historian is convinced of the intractability and fragility of reality represented through words.

The scientific historian and the unconventional historian should rethink and re-project the past in terms of present needs. To this end this article revisits the history of 1942 through the binocular of literary historians.

A historiographer's search for the proverbial silver lining is modified by the political events of the past, and the literals' quest for the resurrection of humanity from the ashes of devastation is continued through ingenious compression and extension of available facts. The focus is shifted from the outcome of the actual events to the characters and their emotions at the center

of these events. The chronicle of the second World War written from the colonial view point alters dramatically when the narration is carried out through the subaltern's voice in *The English patient*.

Fiction, more than any other mode of revisiting, not only informs the reader of the survival of humans in the inanimate jungle of facts, but also frames the acts of real and imaginary characters to remind us of the role of central or peripheral human beings, with their emotion, visions, and relationships, who had made the devastating war bearable.

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), an antiwar novel, opens in 1944 in an isolated Tuscan villa in central Italy devastated by the war. Initially, the villa had served as a military hospital for the Allied forces, but with the shifting of the war to the north, it had been evacuated. Now it was inhabited by Hana, burnt-beyond-recognition patient, Carravaggio and Kirpal Sing (Kip). Apparently, the second World War has ceased in the physical arena, but in this lonely, isolated villa the human face of war, its victims, carry on the human drama of pain and shattered lives that the war has created. In their memory they recreate the political and military events of 1942 and the years before and after. The novel projects the history of imperial powers as colonizers, and also the blurring of human boundaries and human identities. The war for political supremacy may be etched by the historians, but the death of human values and lives is consigned to oblivion because of their penchant for an "objective" kind of truth. Novelists like Ondaatje open up other narratives especially those of history. The fiction writer becomes the new historical agent to rewrite history.

In the fiction, Almasy's discovery of Zarzura in the Libyan desert, and his travels, discoveries, and experiences in the second World War on assignment with General Romel as desert expert, are true with scientific history. The fictional characters of Geoffrey Clifton and Katherine Clifton are definitely fashioned after sir Robert Clayton and Lady Clayton. But since The English Patient speaks from memory in his delirium or full consciousness, there is an air of elusiveness and indefiniteness in what he says. The patient's history is difficult to chart from 1931 forward. So, the writer, in contrary to patient's narration, to convey the readers fulfills the gaps by true history through fiction.

The futility of war is also projected through Kip's characters. His presence in Italy as a sapper, jeopardizing his life for the British and the Americans, is an example of how colonial powers used those they colonized. The voice of the "other" (Carravaggio) rightly exclaims, "you are being used boyo [. . .] we are where we should not be. What are we doing in Africa, in Italy? What is Kip doing dismantling bombs in orchards, for God's sake ? What is he doing fighting English wars?" (122). Carravaggio's inconvenient question raises the problem of natural justice, and in so doing he subvert the mainstream history of English- Canadian- Indian involvement in the second World War. The trails and the tribulations of the colonized have rarely penetrated into the traditional, scientific history; they have been conveniently obliterated. But in this novel, Kip rages after the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima:

You and then the Americans converted us with your missionary rules. And the Indian soldiers wasted their lives as heroes so that

they could be *Pukkah*. Americans, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you are an English man [. . .]. They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation. (283)

Through Kip's growing awareness, Ondaatje dares to re-examine colonial history from the viewpoint of post-colonial surroundings. Unconventional perception in conventional history are introduced to subvert it and to turn it inside out. Ondaatje's text amplifies the newly awakened, awkward voice that has been left out of the dominant inscriptions of history. His unconventional history frames and highlights the roles of the colonized world.

The lives of these four characters, isolated and away from real action, reflect the tragedy, horror, terror, and brutalization carried out during the second World War "for this cause or that greed" (18). Often, confused minds ask telling questions, "but who was the enemy ? Who were the allies?" (19). The blurring of boundaries and causes underlines the futility of wars.

Ambivalence of the Shell-shocked Characters

The concept of ambivalence highlights cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity. Culturally ambivalent people destabilize and blur cultural boundaries. Cultural and national identities form and uniform over time and across a variety of spaces. Cultures are trans-local and involve global flows. After the disintegration of empire, before, during and after the second World War, globalization has provide the context of identity crisis. Globalization also has increased the range of sources and resources available for identity construction. Patterns of population movement and settlement

established during colonialism and its aftermath. Combined with the more recent acceleration of globalization, particularly of electronic communications, have enabled to increase cultural juxtaposing, meeting and mixing. A reader can witness some images in the novel *The English Patient* which signify ambivalence of Kirpal Singh, a young Sikh who works with the British forces to clear unexploded bombs and mines. Kirpal is culturally divided. "He sleeps half in and half out of the tent" (76). This sleeping position is symbolic to his ambivalent nature. The Britishers in their symbolic system produce a kind of subject to the Indian sapper. His identity is transformed from one category to another. But, the transformation is not a finished project. His identity swings between past and present. The most important thing is that identity can never be fully totalized by the symbolic. He shows ambivalent attitude to English system. English system basically tries to hegemonize others cultures to their own. The novelist presents an image that touches reader's sensibility reminding Kirpal's ambivalence. "The sapper has told her about statues he came across during the fighting, how he had slept beside one who was a grieving angel, half male, half female, that he had found beautiful. He had lain back, looking at the body, and for the first time during the war felt at peace" (90).

The Kirpal shows craving to the statue of a grieving angel in the church. The statue is half male and half female. The statue "whose thigh was a woman's perfect thigh, whose line and shadow appeared so soft. He would place his hand on the lap of such creatures and release himself into sleep" (104). He shuttles to and fro between English and Indian culture, unable to find a sense of wholly belonging in either culture. So his identity is ambivalent.

The main character Almasy is almost completely burned away out of recognition. His face is severely disfigured by burns. Readers are not given any glorious account of war. The atomic bomb is depicted as a tragedy, an act of cruelty-Europeans flaunting their power over all of Asia and Africa. Almasy does not tell his name. He constantly retells portions of his story. Portions just like the desert oases appear disappear and reappear. Almasy intends to write history of Middle East in his won (European) notion of observation and exploration. So he is ambivalent in his traumatic narration.

Kirpal is from India, a British colony. He has worked for the English government as a sapper. His job is to search for mines and disables them risking his life for the safety of European soldiers involved in a war completely unrelated to his homeland. He is sent on very dangerous and sensitive missions. He admires the efficiency of the English. He learns to understand the way that bombs are built, enemy bombs that pose a threat to those around him. He seems not to think about the destructive power of the bombs the Allies build. Finally, he becomes disillusioned after the atomic bomb is dropped in Japan. At that time, he feels more kinship with the Japanese opponents than with the English he works for. He comes to realize that his people have been exploited for their mechanical skill. He grows to despise the English colonization of India. Kirpal Singh, with his anti-colonial attitude says, "[y]ou and then the Americans converted us.[. . .]. How did you fool us into this ? Here . . . listen to what you people have done" (283).

The young Canadian nurse, Hana serving the allies in the second World War is another shell-shocked characters. She is also facing the same problem of cultural identity. Her identity bears a contradiction. In the villa San

Giralamo, she loves Kirpal. She says, "kiss me, it's your mouth I am most purely in love with your teeth" (128).

She also "holds an Indian goddess in her arms" (218). Hana has not only fascination to foreign culture, she also understands the East with paralyzing stereotypes such as lazy. The novelist accounts her vision, "she imagines all of Asia through the gestures of this one man. The way he lazily moves, his quiet civilization" (217).

Hana's father forsook her step-mother Clara for a war. Hana and Clara, they are the lost ones in the family. Hana also has a certain sense of European superiority. The novelist on behalf of the nurse writes about Caravaggio as an immature and uncivilized man in order to denounce the people of Eastern world:

He sits with his hands below the table, watching the girl eat. He still prefers to eat alone, though he always sits with Hana during meals...not a fork or a knife insight, as if he were learning to eat like someone from the east. (39-40)

Hana denounces Carravaggio as a barbarian who does not know even the way of eating. At this particular point, Hana is showing her imperial burden to civilize the colonized subjects. Hana's character is too complex to analyze. She says, "I was almost going to have a baby a year ago . . . I lost the child. I mean I had to use it. The father was already dead. There was a war" (82). She is very kind to the patients as Florence Nightingale. Contrary to it, she took no more hesitation to murder her baby. The cause of such contradiction is her ambivalent attitude not only in the relationship with people

but in psyche also. Ambivalent is the basic cause of war and colonization in this context.

She loves Almásy and Kirpal at different times. On the one hand, Hana does not want to leave the villa, on the other, she says, "I wanted to go home and there was no one at home. And I was sick of Europe" (85). It shows her ambivalent nature longing for both sides. Sometimes, she hugs the image of an Indian goddess and sometimes sees her English patient as a "despairing saint" with "hipbones like Christ" (3).

Love and hatred, the both phenomena operate on her part regarding her relation with people, nationality and culture. Therefore war is in no way good. The attempt of war, colonizing undermining the others values, power seeking and self superiority history production ruins itself in an ironic expose.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Ondaatje's main focus in *The English Patient* has been to express the basic relationship between historical actuality and fiction and to show how realities are constructed. So as to expose the contradiction in the European claim to world history. European involvement in exploration is not to discover the new thing beyond the world reorganization but with the evil tendency of colonization through power and Eurocentric historical production. They want to rule over the world so they tend to create history for superiority with the means of exploration. Consciously they keep the non-western values and existences in silence so that they could feel easy in their destination. Europe or west has the conscious of ever being in super power position through out the past and this concept lingers up to this time. Now, after challenged by the world wars, that trauma of past being superiority has been haunting to them. For that hunt, hidden in the psyche, they define the history of the world values in a conjuring specters of narration.

It is their evil nature, in psyche and tendency, happened the world wars. But irony lies on what they attempt to mask to hide, the reality is some what unmasked by the wars and post-colony, that destructed to themselves. The title of the novel itself focuses the irony to the whole west that war made the "English" patient. War made them patient not because they are innocent but because they are evil for others. They are evil in the sense they lack the consciousness of equal respect to all the worldly exiting values.

In the course of history, Herodotus wrote the history in western mentality (slopping towards Greek) and Almasy did next mistake, trying to

map the desert which is unmapped, and creating history in his own observation keeping in silence the privilege of Nomadic tribes telling their own history in themselves. After the fall (burning from plane) as he lies in the bed, he narrates his past, hiding the true purpose of his exploration of desert (i.e. colonization) in a fragmented way. Traumatized with the ego of fulfilling the European superiority in the history, he narrates only the memory of European merits. That shows their mysterious nature in their evil heart.

So the novelist in this novel does not take as its focus the rewriting of what we know about history; it does not clarify the events of the past or make them less strange. Instead, it investigates how we know history, how we approach the past. The fragmentary memories that populate the narrative resist the novel's attempt at constructing a cohesive singular narrative of the past. It is through the disjunctive and heterogeneous remains of memory that the narrative investigates the past, providing a new vision of what it means to think historically. It does so not by collapsing the distinctions between fiction and history, but by interrogating the ideological assumptions of historical discourse and suggestion alternative methods of organizing historical narratives.

Populated with ghost and ruins, *The English Patient* asks both the characters and the reader to reconsider history, the events of the past, from this position of the specters. In the process of remembering, the patient puts forth important politics of memory, one that his own conscious narrative does not fully grasp. The novel stages the tension between the desire to create a totalizing narrative of the past and the disruption of that order due to the shifting ontology of the specter memory invokes. With this textual hunting, the

narrative reveals a deeper, more hidden trauma. To understand the apocalyptic moment that ruptures the narrative at the end of the novel it is necessary to look closely at what is revealed behind the shifting fragments of the text.

Drawing our attention to the struggle between the western and the colonized world, what this narrative tension points to is the very trauma of history itself: the totalizing gesture of history that constructs itself as a self-present totality through a process of erasure and closure. In the attempt to contain the past and close down the play of meaning, this totalizing movement erases certain past, renders them invisible and unknowable. Through the text's fragments of memories, the specters of past and present are conjured forth. A tension is created within the narrative economy of the text between a western world that consolidates its authority through the erasure of antagonistic and contradictory histories and the memories of these whose pasts have been forgotten and obliterated. It is the hunting of these spirits, coming forth from the hidden margins of western history that draws us back to this site of trauma in the final scene of the novel.

Throughout this study, our main concern has been to show how Ondaatje questions 'official' history in order to confute the linearity of progress and how he examines westerners' presence in World War II as it polities for 'westernization'. Ondaatje fictionalizes the history of Second World War in the form of a scandalous and frightening account of a war and colonizing expedition.

Ondaatje, finally reminds subversion of Eurocentrism through post-colonialism in the history. The erased, forgotten, and unspeakable events of the past such as the dropping of the atomic bomb or the colonizing of non-

western people-continue to circulate within the present as historical specters. Already ejected from or resistant to the knowable space of western historical signification, they can't be represented within a singular, linear narrative without a repetition of the original forgetting. Still, the commitment to narrating the trauma of history asks us to not only risk what we know about the past, but also to be willing to embrace not knowing or partial knowing. These specters propel a continued act of memory, which while unable to bring forth the unreachable past, nonetheless draw our attention to it, ask us to listen for what we cannot see or fully comprehend. Cathy crutch asserts, "The attempt to gain access to a traumatic history, then, is also the project of listening beyond the pathology of individual suffering, to the reality of a history that in its crises can only be perceived in inassimilable forms" (150). To think history according to a spectral narrative economy then allows us to comprehend both the effect of the past on us and our responsibility to it, to that which perhaps we cannot understand but must nevertheless endeavor to know.

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