

**PSYCHOLOGY OF DEFERRED ACTION AND
AFTERWARDSNESS: A CRITICAL READING OF THE
SELECTED NOVELS OF MICHAEL ONDAATJE**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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English

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “Psychology of Deferred Action and Afterwardsness: A Critical Reading of the Selected Novels of Michael Ondaatje” submitted for Ph.D. English, degree to the Department of English, Lovely Professional University is entirely original work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. The research work has not been formed the basis for the award of any other degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mrs. Harneet Kaur has completed the Ph.D. English titled “Psychology of Deferred Action and Afterwardsness: A Critical Reading of the Selected Novels of Michael Ondaatje” under my guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the present work is the result of her original investigation and study. No part of this thesis has ever been submitted for any other degree or diploma. The thesis is fit for the submission for the partial fulfilment of the condition for the award of degree of Ph.D. in English.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis entitled *Psychology of Deferred Action and Afterwardsness: A Critical Reading of Novels of Michael Ondaatje* imparts and expounds a well-reasoned analysis of Michael Ondaatje's four novels *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero* and *Warlight* in the light of Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' and Lacanian theory of 'Après coup' (Deferred Action). The psychological concepts 'Afterwardsness' and 'Deferred Action' are associated with trauma studies. Through the literature review on the novels of Michael Ondaatje, the study confirms that there are various issues in the selected novels of Michael Ondaatje which clearly indicate that the characters in all the selected novels undergo trauma of different kinds. However, no full-length study is found in the past or present on the psychology of 'Deferred Action' and 'Afterwardsness' especially in the case of novels of Michael Ondaatje. Through the present study, the researcher has tried to explore the covert factors and ramifications of trauma to contribute indirectly in alleviating the travails of the traumatised victims.

So far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, it has been divided into the following points:

The **Introduction** of the thesis offers a layout of the whole research plan that explains how the researcher has tried to analyse different points in it. Apart from it, Michael Ondaatje's life, works, achievements and his contribution to English Literature have been discussed succinctly. Further, it establishes the link between psychological theories and ramifications of trauma found in Ondaatje's novels.

Moreover, it explains how the applicability of these theories gives new dimensions to Ondaatje's works.

Chapter I, Brief Candle: A Conceptual Framework of 'Après Coup' (Deferred Action) and 'Afterwardsness' attempts to briefly trace the theoretical framework of the research which is related to the conceptual scaffold of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and 'Afterwardsness', its genesis, history, development and the focus on the related terms and concepts by different critics. The statement of the problem, the key-objectives, research methodology, the review of literature, the memory and trauma of the characters and the theories on the four novels are the main points of this chapter.

Chapter II, Identity and Testimony in *The English Patient*, focuses on Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*. Apart from giving the introductory note on the novel, major themes also have been analysed and it has further been attempted how the personal trauma of the four main characters acts as a dominant factor in the novel. The applicability and role of trauma theory '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and concept of 'Afterwardsness', its impacts and outcomes on the characters are the main points of emphasis.

Chapter III, Trauma and Identity Formation in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, offers an analysis of Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* from different angles. Along with the brief introduction to the novel, its plot, major themes and characters have been discussed in this chapter. The novel deals with the postcolonial trauma and the ravages of Sri Lankan Civil War. Anil Tissera, a forensic pathologist comes back to Sri Lanka after a gap of fifteen years so that she may

examine massacres and counter-massacres due to the long-running Civil War. Critics' critical notes have been added on the novel and Lacanian's '*Après coup*' and Jean Laplanche's concept 'Afterwardness' has been applied on it apart from mention of other peripheral theories.

Chapter IV, Fragmentation, Void and Loss in *Divisadero*, analyses with a focus on three points: fragmentation, void and loss. The summary, main themes, motifs and the trauma of the main protagonists have been examined in this novel. The novel delineates the tragic moments and the past memories of Anna. When she talks about her trip with Claire; she recollects how Coop helped her in the treatment of Claire's broken wrist. The story of the novel progresses with these flashbacks and the most important events of the novel have been depicted through these flashbacks. Anna and her adopting siblings Claire and Coop's problems and personal traumas are the main points of this study. Anna's affair with Coop brings a sea-change in her life just because the family disintegrates when her father brutally beats Coop. Having left home both by Anna and Coop, Claire tries to unite the family but her efforts remain futile. Anna feels the lack of parental care because her rancher father keeps drinking and does not pay much attention to his children. Her mother dies after the delivery. Anna has to face many traumas in her life. She keeps thinking of her past and her memories keep disturbing her. The theory of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and concept of 'Afterwardsness' have been applied to this novel.

Chapter V, Memory, Reality and Recovery in *Warlight*, delineates that Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight* is an atypical coming-of-age story which deals with many complex memories, realities, rediscoveries, emotions and adaptations that children experienced during World War II, showing how those adaptations left the

impact on their adulthood. It is narrated by a 28-year-old Nathaniel whose childhood and adolescence remains the main point of this novel. Nathaniel and her sister, Rachel are left behind at home when their father goes to Singapore to convene the Unilever office. Applying Lacanian's theory of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and concept of 'Afterwardsness', the traumata of the characters remain the main emphasis of this chapter.

The summing up of the thesis, **Conclusion**, summarises all the main points of the thesis. Michael Ondaatje's selected novels have been re-analysed and reassessed and it has been tried to conclude how the present study offers an original contribution in the existing research. Apart from it, the scope for further research is also the main point of this part.

At the end of the thesis, the bibliographic entries have been done. The primary and secondary sources have been taken for study. Books, anthologies, research papers, articles, interviews, book reviews, critical texts and web entries have been taken in this part.

Michael Ondaatje emphasises on the lives and actions of the main protagonists of his novels who have extraordinary and unique personality types, their mutual relationships, the dynamics of family life and the consequence of wars on the lives of individuals and nations. The present study explores the covert factors and ramifications of trauma to contribute indirectly in alleviating the travails of the traumatised victims. Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' has been applied on Michael Ondaatje's selected novels; we come to know that many characters in his novels deal with one or the other kind of trauma: existential, accidental, fatal or

coincidental. This traumatic experience drives them to look back at their past and feel that pain which they have undergone in their long past. Trauma emerges as a dominant theme in contemporary fiction. It covertly or overtly manifests those ramifications which are the dominant factors affecting the lives of Ondaatje's characters. Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' suits on his selected novels and that's why his selected novels have been analysed in the study. Through the implementation of the proposed concept, the literature has witnessed how the characters in the select novels undergo trauma. The reasons for trauma have also been examined. The immediate and delayed reactions of traumatised victims are studied so as to make 'Deferred Action' and 'Afterwardsness' the base in the critical appraisal of Michael Ondaatje's four novels *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero* and *Warlight*. The whole study encompasses all the relevant material in the systematic manner which makes this study a profound addition in the existing research work. Michael Ondaatje's selected novels have been re-analysed and reassessed and it has been tried to conclude how the present study offers an original contribution in the existing research.

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Harneet Kaur

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Title	Page No.
1	Introduction	1 – 10
2	Chapter I: Brief Candle: A Conceptual Framework of ‘ <i>Après Coup</i> ’ (Deferred Action) and ‘Afterwardsness’	11 – 38
3	Chapter II: Identity and Testimony in <i>The English Patient</i>	39 – 77
4	Chapter III: Trauma and Identity Formation in Michael Ondaatje’s <i>Anil’s Ghost</i>	78 – 110
5	Chapter IV: Fragmentation, Void and Loss in <i>Divisadero</i>	111 – 145
6	Chapter V: Memory, Reality and Recovery in <i>Warlight</i>	146 – 177
7	Conclusion	178 – 199
	Bibliography	200 – 223

INTRODUCTION

Phillip Michael Ondaatje's novels are the repercussions of the conundrum, memory, trauma, trouncing and infantile experiences or the juvenile ventures of the characters. Harrowing corollary of the past events in their lives make them mentally and psychologically unstable. Like Ondaatje, his characters live in a host country where they find a complete alien environment which gives an upshot of their mental wrench. The thesis entitled *Psychology of Deferred Action and Afterwardsness: A Critical Reading of Novels of Michael Ondaatje* imparts and expounds a well-reasoned analysis of his four novels *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero* and *Warlight* in the light of Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' and Lacanian theory of '*Après Coup*' ('Deferred Action'). The psychological concepts 'Afterwardsness' and 'Deferred Action' are associated with trauma studies. It has been observed that there are various issues in the selected novels of Michael Ondaatje which clearly indicate that the characters in all the selected novels undergo trauma of different kinds. If there is terror, fear and elusive reality in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (Amy Novak, 2004); *The English Patient* elucidates personal as well as cultural trauma (Margaret Scanlan, 2004). If name and identity is indivisible in *The English Patient* (Sharyn Emery, 2000) and memory is the main narrative device in this novel (Mirja Lobnik, 2007), reimagination of the past world can be seen in *Warlight*. *Warlight* is reviewed as a spy novel where menace and intrigue go side by side with revelation and catharsis (Vu Tran, 2018). Ethical examination of troubled identity and traumatic love can be seen in *The English Patient* on one hand (Kai-su Wu, 2020) and reprocessing of characters and events in

Divisadero on the other one (S. De Smyter, 2009). Michael Ondaatje is a novelist who transcends the boundaries of culture and nation which can be probed through transnational trauma in *The English Patient* which is an ethical examination of troubled identity and traumatic love (Kai-su Wu, 2020); Nomadism and cosmopolitanism in *Divisadero* (Carmelina Concilio, 2013); the protagonist's transnational and transcultural identity find place in *Anil's Ghost* (Victoria Cook, 2004), representation of violence in global terms in the same novel (Mrinalini Chakravorty, 2013); exploration of cosmopolitan reality and search for inner peace in *Divisadero* (Hsu Shounan, 2011); Trauma Healings in *Anil's Ghost* (Victoria Burrows, 2008); local as well as global melancholy and trauma of war in *Warlight* (Tuire Valkeakari, 2013).

Michael Ondaatje, a poet, editor, writer and filmmaker, was born on 12 September 1943 at Kegalle, Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka). He is a versatile writer having Tamil roots. He was born in the Burgher community belonging to Dutch parents; his family ancestry is a polyglot mixture of Dutch, Sinhalese, English, and Tamil. Michael Ondaatje's main works are *The Dainty Monsters* (1967), *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The Man with Seven Toes* (1969), *The Broken Ark: A Book of Beasts* (1970), *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), *Elimination Dance* (1978), *Claude Glass* (1979), *Rat Jelly* (1980), *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems* (1981), *Running in the Family* (1983), *Secular Love* (1984), *The English Patient* (1992), *The Brick Reader* (1991), *Anil's Ghost* (2000), *The Story* (2006), *Divisadero* (2007), *The Cat's Table* (2011), *Warlight* (2018), etc.

Michael Ondaatje devoted himself to his creative writing. Leah Hager Cohen applauds him with these words "Ondaatje's prose is luminous, his sense of character

acute, his moral compass unwavering” (*The Atlantic*, p. 121). He got many awards for his works such as the Ralph Gustafson Award in 1965, the Epstein Award in 1966, the E. J. Pratt Medal in 1966, the President’s Medal in 1967, the Governor General’s Literary Award for Fiction in 1971, 1980 and 1992, 2000; the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1992, the Prix Médicis in 2000, the Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize in 2000, the Giller Prize in 2000, the Scotiabank Giller Prize in 2007, etc. Ondaatje was nominated both for the Man Booker International Prize (2007) and the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize (2008). American writer Aleksandar Hemon hails Michael Ondaatje by designating him “the greatest living writer in the English language”.

Michael Ondaatje, a migrant from Sri Lanka went to London in 1954 and then settled in Canada in 1962. He is one of those writers who have made his mark in the corpus of Canadian English Literature. His literary oeuvre reflects the memory, trauma, predicaments of war, cultural clashes and identity crisis. John Wilson states, “Ondaatje’s novels are like dreams - rich, evocative, sometimes perplexing, often surreal” (*Christianity Today*, p. 70). In *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje weaves a story of four traumatic characters - Hana, the dutiful nurse, Kip, a sapper from India; Carvaggio, a thief; and Almásy, a badly burned Englishman - whose destiny draws them closer to put together an implausible family, and in concert discover the enigmas of their respective pasts, and share their emotive sores. The second novel for study *Anil’s Ghost* has also been examined from different angles; the novel deals with the postcolonial trauma and the ravages of Sri Lankan Civil War. Anil Tissera, a forensic pathologist comes back to Sri Lanka after fifteen years to examine massacres and counter-massacres due to the long-running civil war.

Michael Ondaatje's novel *Divisadero* delineates Anna and her adopted siblings Claire and Coop's problems and personal traumas. Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight* is an atypical coming-of-age story which deals with many complex memories, realities, rediscoveries, emotions and adaptations that children experienced during World War II, showing how those adaptations left an impact on the adulthood of Nathaniel and his sister Rachel. The trauma of the characters remains the main emphasis. Ondaatje's novels, as a whole, affirm him as the most innovative and celebrated novelist of our time. Milena Marinkova writes, "Ondaatje's literary camera draws attention away from the visual to focus on the somatic experiences of those involved in cultural production" (Marinkova 4).

Michael Ondaatje emphasises on the lives and actions of the main protagonists of his novels who have extraordinary and unique personality types, their mutual relationships, the dynamics of family life and how war affected to individuals and nations. The present study explores the covert factors and ramifications of trauma to contribute indirectly in alleviating the travails of the traumatised victims; we come to know that many characters in his novels deal with one or the other kind of trauma: existential, accidental, fatal or coincidental. This traumatic experience drives them to look back at their past and feel that pain which they have undergone in their long past. Trauma emerges as a dominant theme in contemporary fiction. It covertly or overtly manifests those ramifications which are the dominant factor affecting the lives of Ondaatje's characters.

Through a comprehensive review of the literature, it has been observed that Jean Laplanche's concept 'Afterwardsness' as well as Lacanian '*Après Coup*'

(Deferred Action) has not yet been applied on Michael Ondaatje's selected novels. It is quite clear that the research is relevant, meaningful and it contributes to the existing knowledge. Also, it is aligned with the research objectives and fills the gaps in the literature.

One research gap that can be explored is the theme of identity in Ondaatje's novels. Ondaatje's characters are often marginalized and caught between cultural identities, struggling to find their place in the world. However, the existing literature on Ondaatje's novels focuses primarily on the identity of the colonized and postcolonial subjects. Therefore, a research gap exists in exploring the identity of the colonizers and how they struggle to reconcile their identity in the postcolonial world. This research gap can be explored through a comparative analysis of the characters in *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, and *Warlight*, and how their identity is shaped by their cultural background and colonial history.

Another research gap that can be explored is the theme of memory in Ondaatje's novels. Memory is a central theme in Ondaatje's novels, and his characters are often haunted by their past. However, the existing literature on Ondaatje's novels has mainly focused on the themes of trauma and memory as it relates to the postcolonial experience. A research gap exists in exploring the role of memory in the lives of the colonizers and how it shapes their understanding of their cultural identity. This research gap can be explored through a close reading of the characters in *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, and *Warlight* and how their understanding of their past affects their present identity.

Moreover, another research gap that can be explored in Ondaatje's novels is the theme of space and place. Ondaatje's novels are often set in different parts of the world, and his characters are caught between multiple spaces and places. However, the existing literature on Ondaatje's novels has primarily focused on the postcolonial experience of space and place. Therefore, a research gap exists in exploring how the colonizers understand and navigate their space and place in the postcolonial world. This research gap can be explored through a comparative analysis of the characters in *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, and *Warlight* and how their understanding of space and place is shaped by their colonial history. Apart from it, writing style, language, setting, background of war, human predicaments, trauma, etc. themes also can be taken for further research on Michael Ondaatje's works. Michael Ondaatje's novels, *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, and *Warlight*, have been widely studied in the present study. Despite the extensive research on Ondaatje's works, there are still research gaps that can be explored in the context of these novels. It has been observed that the selected novels have not been analysed from the psychological perspective of 'Deferred Action' (*Après-coup*) and 'Afterwardsness'. The applicability of these theories gives new dimensions to Ondaatje's works. Through the concept of 'Afterwardsness' and related psychological theories, the present study further explains the findings of the past study which shows that traumatic events can sometimes distort even the present. Through the implementation of the proposed concept, the literature witnesses how the characters in Ondaatje's selected novels undergo trauma. The reasons for trauma through their past memories also have been examined. The immediate and delayed reactions of traumatised victims have been studied as well. Michael Ondaatje is the

most prolific novelist having great excellence and wonderful achievements in the literary field. American novelist Annie Proulx opines, “He [Ondaatje] is justly recognized as a master of literary craft”.

Various research papers and books on Michael Ondaatje establish him a distinguished and versatile Diasporic writer. Identity crisis, cultural conflicts, historicity, textuality etc. have already been explored. His works reflect the postcolonial power dynamics, existential dilemma, transnational aesthetic and postmodern self-reflectivity from different multicultural perspectives. His writing style exhibits imaginative turns; reality and imagery are seen coexisting in his works. The present study adds new depths to the exploration area; the primary purpose is to dig out the emotional charge of the characters that comes in the form of memory, after the aetiology of the trauma makes their life tragic. Moreover, Ondaatje’s novels have been written in the background of war which appears as an aetiological agent in their life. It is clear that it is the magnitude of the tragic events that appears as an effective weight. The present study is an attempt to take a deep dive in the trenches of characters’ minds. It is an attempt to explore the furtive points and upshots of trauma to provide obliquely in subduing the ordeals of the traumatised victims. The present study discovers and decodes the traumatic experiences of the characters from the perspective of ‘Afterwardsness’ in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), *Divisadero* (2007) and *Warlight* (2018). The present study attempts to develop the models of Lacanian theory of ‘*Après Coup*’ (Deferred Action) and Jean Laplanche’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ as frames of critical inquiry; ‘Deferred Action’ and ‘Afterwardsness’ have been applied in terms of their usability in literary criticism to understand the dynamics of the novels of Michael

Ondaatje. The factors working behind the trauma and its impact on the characters also have been analysed in the present study. Sometimes the things are so exacerbated by the situations that the characters feel broken. Carrie Dawson writes about *The English Patient*, “History, they acknowledge their own implication in the *grand récit* of their times; against the bigger historical catastrophes in the background, they place their own personal crises” (Dawson 53). It has been seen that Michael Ondaatje’s characters are influenced either by the war or by their personal trauma. More than that, alienation, emotional trauma, guilt conscious, venality, anxiety, agitation, intrusive memories etc. are also the recurring motifs in Ondaatje’s novels.

Michael Ondaatje’s characters face numerous problems in their host countries. They carry their deep-rooted notions, cultures and customs in their host countries. They try to assimilate in a new culture also that’s why their culture becomes a hybrid one. His characters like Kip, Anil Tissera, Anna and Nathaniel etc. are considered outsiders by the natives when they migrate from one country to another and become world citizens. They have to face the issues of language also. In the hope of realising their dreams, Ondaatje’s characters face the identity crisis and feel aloof and alienated at a new place. According to Salman Rushdie, “The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human beings: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things”. Michael Ondaatje has taken the issues of marginalisation and he gives importance to the marginalised people. The theme of gender discrimination, violence, selfishness, rootlessness, nostalgia, tragedies, war and death also remain major themes in Ondaatje’s novels. He has used simple language to depict major themes.

Milena Marinkova writes in his book *Michael Ondaatje Haptic Aesthetics and Micropolitical Writing*, “Ondaatje’s writing as a whole, is significantly more elusive and effective: the circuit of affects” (Marinkova 3).

Michael Ondaatje has written works related to the trauma of his characters. War can never bring peace, happiness and creation. It always causes pain, disappointment, miseries, wounds and scars not only on the body but also on the psyche and the same happens in Michael Ondaatje’s works. Such precipitated events do not give any chance to escape Michael Ondaatje’s characters and they become the quarry to different types of traumas in their life. Their past becomes explanatory over their present and it has therapeutic effect in the present. His works are replete with the human predicaments and different trials and tribulations of his characters. The catastrophic metamorphosis becomes the main reason for his characters to peep into their past and see how their life has been disastrous for them.

Furthermore, the study investigates in detail the reasons for traumatic experiences and their subsequent repercussions on the lives of traumatised victims. Lacanian ‘*Après Coup*’ and Jean Laplanche’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ suit on his selected novels and that’s why his selected novels have been analysed in the study. Through the implementation of the proposed concept, the literature has witnessed how the characters in the select novels undergo trauma. The reasons for trauma have also been examined. The immediate and delayed reactions of traumatised victims are studied so as to make ‘Deferred Action’ and ‘Afterwardsness’ the base in the critical appraisal of Michael Ondaatje’s four novels *The English Patient*, *Anil’s Ghost*, *Divisadero* and *Warlight*. Hitherto, the outline and the detailed introduction of the

present study are concerned; the whole study encompasses all the relevant material in the systematic manner which makes this study a profound addition in the existing research work. Michael's Ondaatje's selected novels have been re-analysed and reassessed and it has been tried to conclude how the present study offers an original contribution in the existing research.

Chapter I

Brief Candle: A Conceptual Framework of ‘Après Coup’ (Deferred Action) and ‘Afterwardsness’

Trauma deals with some unforgettable past incidents which are beyond human control; it is an outcome of a person’s inability to cope with the sentiments provoked by an appalling experience. “Trauma confronts us with the unimaginable and the uncontrollable” (Bisteoen et al. 682). Jean Laplanche writes in his book *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, “What defines psychical trauma is not any general quality of the psyche, but the fact that the psychical trauma comes from within” (42). He states in the same book:

Trauma is, in fact, an extremely old concept, present at the origins of medico surgical thought. The trauma, at the beginning, is a wound, conceived of as a “piercing” of the surface of the body. (129)

In “*Studies on Hysteria*” Freud postulates, “Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (7). Likewise, Slavoj Zizec writes in his book *Living in the End Times* about trauma:

If the Freudian name for the “unknown known” is the Unconscious, the Freudian name for the “unknown unknowns” is Trauma, the violent intrusion of something radically unexpected, something the subject was absolutely not ready for, something the subject cannot integrate in any way. (Zizec 292)

Trauma and Memory are integral parts of psychoanalysis and work as important ingredients in trauma studies. *Après Coup* (Deferred Action) and ‘Afterwardsness’ are the translations that have added new dimensions and meaning to the original concept *Nachträglichkeit* that traces the interrelation of memory and trauma. The term *Nachträglichkeit* came to limelight after its English translation. The German word *Nachträglichkeit* was translated into English as ‘Deferred Action’ by James Strachey. Freud himself looked at this concept of *Nachträglichkeit* as ‘Deferred Action’ in his paper published in 1898 that a traumatic event occurred in childhood manifests it retrospectively during later phase of sexual development.

Nachträglichkeit held prominence due to its publicity in France. Jacques Lacan was the first person who paid attention in 1953 in a restricted manner; he coined the term *après-coup* (literally ‘after the blow’). Before him, nobody worked on this concept so rigorously and devotedly. Lacan defines in *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*:

I think where I am not; therefore, I am where I do not think ...
 meaning flees from our grasp along the verbal thread...I am not
 wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am
 where I do not think to think.

The concept *Après-coup* clearly expresses, and defines different periods of human life both in present and past and deals with the human traumas. There were also certain limitations of the premises just because he did not find the broader implications of this concept. Even after its French translation, the need was also felt to translate the concept into English and give further elaboration on it. It was Jean

Laplanche who undertook this task and his contribution in that direction is extraordinary. Jonathan House and Julie Slotnick also observe in their paper entitled “*Après-Coup* in French Psychoanalysis: The Long Afterlife of *Nachträglichkeit*: The First Hundred Years, 1893 to 1993”:

We would argue that, both in French and in English, *après coup* can be—and has been—used to express bidirectional movement. Laplanche suggested using the neologism “afterwardsness” as the English translation of *Nachträglichkeit*, a suggestion that might have had advantages had it been widely adopted, but at this point *après-coup* as an English word has been well established in the Anglophone literature of psychoanalysis and of the human sciences more generally. (House and Slotnick 686)

Laplanche elaborated this concept in his book *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (1970), in the *Problématiques* (1980-87) and in *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (1989). Jean Laplanche worked extensively and developed his argument along with three main points: first, what happens to Freud’s concept; second, the issue of its translation; and finally, his own conception of ‘Afterwardsness’. It further elucidates how trauma needs two different moments. It is not only a shocking event which makes it traumatic; in fact, it has the echo of some past event also which makes this traumatic event a trauma. It is Lacan who further analyses it as ‘*Après-coup*’ - the result of an event which keeps sleeping for years and thus constitutes a form of present and past event that results in trauma. Laplanche also sheds light on trauma and how it moves forwards and backwards. As Freud states in his psychological unpublished work *A Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), that a memory is

repressed which generally becomes a trauma after the happening of the event. Jason Francisco remarks, “The emotional pain of severance from home, family and friendships is by its nature immeasurable” (Francisco 227).

So far as the history of the concept is concerned, the ‘*Après-coup*’ blossomed in French psychoanalytic discourse, becoming the subject of papers, monographs, and conferences. This concept has gained much momentum in the last two to three decades among English and German psychoanalysis. In recent Anglophone psychoanalytic writing, it means ‘retrospective modification’, which denotes the importance of memories or nostalgia or a kind of reversal in human life. ‘Deferred Action’ is another name for this term in which the past memory is revived. Jean Laplanche has used two models to differentiate between the two terms namely Freud’s *Nachträglichkeit* (‘Afterwardsness’) and Jung’s *Zurückphantasieren* (retroactive fantasising). If a heavy weight vehicle passes through the bridge and the bridge collapses after one minute, it will be called the example of the progressive signification. Likewise, when the engineer comes for the inspection to know what has actually happened and he finds fault with himself that perhaps there was any fault in the material or it is the case of carelessness, it will be case of regressive signification. Laplanche observes that these different temporal perspectives in Freud’s usage remain unrelated or unintegrated. ‘Deferred Action’ denotes the arrow of time while Laplanche brings out a third meaning that relates those two conflicting meanings, resolving them into a higher unity and demonstrating that *Après coup* is central to understanding the origin of mental structure, which Laplanche, following Freud, calls the apparatus of the soul. Different translators give various implications of this term and he calls it a ‘deferred action’ or ‘retrospective modification’.

Laplanche noted in 2006 and he remarked, “The *après-coup* of the history of *Nachträglichkeit* is inseparable from its translational destiny, not only the translation of the word, but the translation of the thought” (Laplanche 13).

This concept can be better understood as transcending and retaining the two meanings and showing distinctions. In fact, ‘Deferred Action’ can be called a mental process in which the memory of any past event casts an abiding impact on later thinking. It is based on the common understanding about the causes and the effects of an action or event. Here, the word ‘deferred’ refers to the cause and effect and works as an incubation period for any event. Thus, this term has been used both in English and French to express bidirectional movement. Laplanche proposes to use the neologism “afterwardsness” in the form of the English translation of *Nachträglichkeit*. *Après-coup* as an English word ‘Afterwardsness’ has got its place in the Anglophone literature of psychoanalysis and of the human sciences. There is a slight difference between the meanings of *après-coup* in French and afterwards in English. Laplanche makes this point clear through two illustrations. He gives an example of the bomb kept by the terrorists in a building that of course will be exploded afterwards, the direction of this action is described as ‘Deferred action’. He gives another example to make the concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ clear. He says that if an engineer, according to the direction of an architect, constructs a bridge and it collapses soon, the engineer starts thinking about his mistake. It is called “after the event understanding”. Thus, Laplanche’s use of ‘Afterwardsness’ marks a radical departure from the one-way temporal logic governing both ‘Deferred Action’ and ‘Retrospective modification’ Laplanche’s ‘Afterwardsness’ is as being at the heart of the mental process, which, in a single movement, forms both the primal unconscious

and the primal ego. Jacques Lacan emphasised that “the real implication of the ‘nachträglich’, for example, has been ignored, though it was there all the time and had only to be picked up” (Lacan 216). Lacan contributed immensely in rediscovering, clarifying and developing the Freudian concept. Laplanche continued that theoretical work, culminating in his seminars of 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 on ‘*Après-coup*’ and on Freud’s theories of sexuality respectively. He established ‘*Après-coup*’ as central to the mental process that takes place during the formative attachment relationship. ‘Afterwardsness’ becomes more important when the memory of any trauma becomes strong. James Strachey writes in this context:

We must presume rather that the psychical trauma or more precisely the memory of the trauma-acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work; and we find the evidence for this in a highly remarkable phenomenon- which at the same time lends an important *practical* interest to our findings. (Strachey 1955: 6)

Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst whose work focused on the interpretation of the unconscious mind. One of Lacan’s key concepts is ‘*Après coup*’, which is often translated as ‘Afterwardsness’ or ‘retroactivity’. In this concept, Lacan argues that the meaning of past events is not fixed but is rather determined by future events. According to Lacan, our understanding of the past is always influenced by our present circumstances and future expectations. Our memories of past events are not simply objective records of what happened but are shaped by the narrative we construct around them. In this sense, the meaning of a past event is not fixed but is constantly evolving as we reinterpret it in light of new experiences.

Lacan uses the example of the traumatic event to illustrate the concept of '*Après coup*'. He argues that a traumatic event is not traumatic in and of itself but rather becomes traumatic only in retrospect, as the subject begins to realize the full significance of what has happened. In this way, the traumatic event is not simply a product of the past but is also determined by the subject's present circumstances and future expectations.

Another example Lacan uses is that of the dream. In the dream, the subject experiences a series of seemingly random images and events. It is only in retrospect, upon waking and attempting to interpret the dream, that the subject begins to understand the significance of these images and events. The dream is thus not simply a product of the past but is also shaped by the subject's present circumstances and future expectations.

Lacan's concept of '*Après coup*' has important implications for psychoanalytic practice. It suggests that the meaning of a patient's past experiences is not fixed but is rather constantly evolving as the patient interprets them in light of new experiences. It also suggests that the interpretation of past events is always influenced by the analyst's present circumstances and future expectations.

Thus, Lacan's concept of '*Après coup*' highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of our understanding of the past. It suggests that the meaning of past events is not fixed but is rather determined by our present circumstances and future expectations. This concept has important implications for psychoanalytic practice and invites us to be mindful of the ways in which our interpretations of the past are shaped by our present and future experiences.

Jacques Lacan brought into notice the word *nachträglich* which he translated as *après-coup* and related it to psychosis temporality and it was further developed in the 1960s by Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pantalís who worked in tandem and “noted the centrality of *Nachträglichkeit* for Freud’s theories of repression and sexuality.... Still later, Laplanche explored the importance of the concept beyond the domain of psychoanalysis” (House and Slotnick 683). Laplanche made ‘Afterwardsness’ famous in English psychoanalysis:

If concepts can have a nationality, then *après-coup*, née *Nachträglichkeit*, is French. While *Nachträglichkeit* does not even appear in the index of the *Gesammelte Werke*, *après-coup* blossomed in French psychoanalytic discourse, becoming the subject of papers, monographs, and conferences. (House and Slotnick 684)

Laplanche objects to these translations, as according to him Strachey’s translation of the *Nachträglichkeit* or ‘Deferred Action’ is lopsided which is always from the past to the present. Similarly, Lacan’s translation of *Nachträglichkeit* is also one-sided as the term is generally used to mean ‘retrospective modification’ which is to say the resignification of memories, a kind of reversal of the arrow of time. (House and Slotnick 685)

Laplanche continued the theoretical work since the 1990s on *après-coup* in his seminars of 1989-90 and Freud’s theories of sexuality in his seminars of 1990-91. Thus, it is quite clear that the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* flourished during the last three decades under the French and English versions. *Nachträglichkeit* has been described as the relationship between an incident and its resurgence that is objected

by Laplanche as it does not preserve the full sense of the word *Nachträglichkeit* (Caruth *Listening to Trauma* 27)

Laplanche translated *Nachträglichkeit* as ‘Afterwardsness’ to find out the true meaning of the word. According to him, ‘Afterwardsness’ covers the full meaning of the word *Nachträglichkeit* that has two meanings: what happens after an incident occurs and its restoration in the aftermath of subsequent encounters. ‘Afterwardsness’ just like *Nachträglichkeit* provides both the directions: first one from the past to the present and the other from the present to the past (28). Based on his interview with Martin Stanton, Laplanche gives an excellent definition in his “Notes on Afterwardsness” (1992), which also throws light on his contribution to the Freudian concept:

Freud’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ contains both great richness and great ambiguity between retrogressive and progressive directions. I want to account for this problem of the directional to and fro by arguing that, right at the start, there is something that goes in the direction from the past to the future and in the direction from the adult to the baby, which I call the implantation of the enigmatic message, this message is then retranslated following a temporal direction which is sometimes progressive and sometimes retrogressive. (Laplanche 222)

Freud writes that a person who has undergone a trauma remembers the repercussions of the past when the time and circumstances revive the past incidents in the mind. This traumatic experience becomes fresh like a fresh wound and keeps afflicting the

person. Slavoz Zizak argues that trauma is a “violent intrusion of something radically unexpected” (Zizak 292). Abram writes that *Nachträglichkeit* remains inside the psychic system of a traumatised subject before it undergoes revivification of its harrowing past experiences (Singh 34). Jean Laplanche has taken this concept in broader details who describes that ‘Afterwardsness’ can be used in three particular situations: “The first one is ‘subsequently’ or ‘secondary’ as has been narrated above; secondly it denotes the direction of time how it goes from past to future, and the third usage inverts it from the future to the past” (Laplanche 199). Cathy Caruth has also written in her retelling of Torquato Tasso’s *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) that a traumatic experience “is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on” (Caruth 4). Linda Belau writes three components of analytic techniques of trauma “remembering, repeating and working through” (Belau xvii). Laplanche writes in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*:

If there is afterwards a cathexis of the *memory-trace* [i.e., if the painful memory is reactivated], the unpleasure is repeated; but the ego-facilitations are already present [the ego, more simply, is already accustomed], and experience shows that the second release of unpleasure is less—until, after further repetition, it is reduced to no more than a signal of an intensity acceptable to the ego [the crux is thus that starting with the first release of unpleasure, a process goes into effect resulting in a gradual attenuation]. (Laplanche 35)

Sigmund Freud has put these two meanings one. There may be slight chances that even Freud could not grasp these two distinct meanings properly and he might have put the fact that he put them in one. Jean Laplanche makes the point clear by illustrating a passage from the book *The Interpretation of Dreams* which is quite interesting and relevant because by that time Freud had abandoned the seduction theory and the idea of 'Afterwardsness' also. Here is that anecdote:

A young man who was a great admirer of feminine beauty was talking once--so the story went--of the good-looking wet-nurse who had suckled him when he was a baby: "I'm sorry," he remarked, "that I didn't make a better use of my opportunity." I was in the habit of quoting this anecdote to explain the factor of deferred action [or as I would say, 'Afterwardsness'] in the mechanism of the psychoneuroses. (4-5)

Here it is an important thing to note that there are different priorities in different age groups. Both the directions can be seen from this anecdote. Being a small child, there were no sexual desires in the small child but afterwards, the same child becomes a man and when he sees the same nurse's breasts, his priority becomes sex, not milk because the milk of the breasts is of no use to him. His priority changes now. But when he perceives himself as a small child, he gets excited. It may be called the direction of determinism: there is latent sexuality in the child due to deferred action that becomes evident when he becomes young. This statement can be said in different words: the action should be reinterpreted here. In fact, when he was a child, there was no carnal feelings, that's why he was sucking the milk but a young man, as a sexual being filled with carnal desires, sexualises that spectacle.

There are some more aspects which require reinterpretation. Jean Laplanche says that if one tries to understand 'Afterwardsness' only from the young man's point of view who was first a small child and later an adult, it will not be possible to understand 'Afterwardsness'. For that purpose, one needs to start from the other and from the category of the message conveyed in the whole process, otherwise one cannot understand what 'Afterwardsness' is. It creates many dilemmas in the mind and this dilemma is not so easy to resolve because either the past determines the future, or it may be possible that the future may reinterpret the past.

According to Freud, there are two ways of explaining 'Afterwardsness', but there should be some synthesis of these two directions. Nonetheless, If the mediums are removed from these directions, there will be no outcome. The most possible synthesis here is to remove the wet nurse from the whole incident and her breast-feeding to a small child; it will leave a good impact on the whole incident. If the external person is also not kept in mind, one cannot grasp both the directions implicit in 'Afterwardsness'. Conclusively, it is imperative to comprehend the temporal aspect of *Nachträglichkeit*, or 'Afterwardsness', a person should take into account what is not known in the beginning of the incident and after the event also.

Conclusively, the term 'Afterwardsness' has broader implications than *Nachträglichkeit*, '*Après-coup*' or 'Deferred action'. The direction of the 'Deferred action' is judged after the happening of the incident when it is done intentionally and the 'Afterwardsness' denotes the result of an event or the memory of the past which happens unwillingly and its result remains in the form of understanding while the result of the first event is in the form of any shock or trauma. Jean Laplanche writes in his book *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* in this regard:

We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma *after the event* [here is the heart of the argument: we try to track down the trauma, but the traumatic memory was only secondarily traumatic: we never manage to fix the traumatic event historically. This fact might be illustrated by the image of a Heisenberg-like “relation of indeterminacy”: in situating the trauma, one cannot appreciate its traumatic impact, and vice versa.] (Laplanche 41)

Lacan’s concept of ‘*Après coup*’ or ‘retroactivity’ is particularly relevant to Michael Ondaatje’s novel *The English Patient*. The novel is set during the final days of World War II and explores the lives of four people who are brought together in an abandoned Italian villa.

‘Afterwardsness’ and ‘*Après coup*’ (Deferred action) are quite discernible in the novel *The English patient*. The meaning of the patient’s past experiences is constantly being reinterpreted in light of his present circumstances. As Hana cares for him and listens to his stories, she begins to develop a relationship with him that is shaped by her own experiences and expectations. Similarly, the patient’s memories of Katharine are colored by his present circumstances and his relationship with Hana. The novel suggests that the meaning of the patient’s past experiences is not fixed but is rather constantly evolving as he interprets them in light of his present circumstances.

Similarly, Kip’s experiences during the war have shaped his understanding of his own identity and his relationship with the other characters in the novel. As he

becomes involved with Hana and learns about the patient's past, his understanding of his own experiences and memories is constantly being reinterpreted. The novel's narrative is non-linear, and the characters' past experiences and memories are constantly being revisited and reinterpreted.

Overall, 'Afterwardsness' and 'Après coup' (Deferred action) are central to *The English Patient*. The novel's non-linear narrative and focus on memory and interpretation suggest that the meaning of past experiences is constantly evolving and being reinterpreted in light of present circumstances. The characters' relationships with one another are shaped by their own experiences and expectations, and the novel invites readers to consider the ways in which our understanding of the past is always influenced by our present and future experiences.

In Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost*, the psychological concepts 'Afterwardsness' and 'Après coup' (Deferred action) are relevant in understanding the protagonist's journey of uncovering the truth about the past events in Sri Lanka's civil war. Anil Tissera, a forensic pathologist of Sri Lankan origin, returns to her homeland to investigate human rights abuses during the conflict. Throughout the novel, Anil's understanding of the past events in Sri Lanka is constantly evolving as she uncovers new evidence and reinterprets her past experiences. For example, early in the novel, Anil visits the site of a mass grave and experiences a visceral reaction to the horror of what she sees. However, it is only later, after she has gathered more information and spoken with witnesses, that she begins to understand the full significance of the grave and the atrocities committed by the government forces. Moreover, Anil's relationship with Sarath Diyasena, a former soldier who becomes

her guide and companion. Anil's understanding of Sarath's past is constantly evolving as she learns more about his experiences during the war. Initially, she sees him as a victim of the conflict, but as she learns more about his role in the government's violence, she begins to question his motives and actions.

Finally, the novel's conclusion is a powerful example of '*Après coup*', Anil's understanding of the events she has investigated is upended by a revelation about the true identity of a key witness. This revelation forces her to reevaluate everything she thought she knew about the conflict and the people involved. The ending of the novel leaves the possibility that Anil's understanding of the past will continue to evolve as new information comes to light. Similarly, 'Afterwardsness' is relevant to *Anil's Ghost* because it highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of our understanding of the past. Anil's journey of investigation and discovery is a process of constantly reinterpreting her past experiences in light of new evidence and information. The novel invites the reader to consider the ways in which one's understanding of the past is shaped by one's present circumstances and future expectations.

In Michael Ondaatje's novel *Divisadero*, too, the characters interpret their past experiences and their present circumstances shape their understanding of the past. For example, Anna, one of the main characters in the novel, reflects on her childhood and it is narrated how her experiences have shaped her present life. She thinks about how her relationship with her sister, Claire, and their eventual separation have affected her understanding of family and intimacy. Anna's memories of her childhood are not simply objective records of what happened but are rather shaped by her present circumstances and future expectations. Similarly, Coop, another character

in the novel, reflects on his past experiences that influence his present life. In his state of amnesia, Claire took care of him and his past is helpful in improving his mental state. Claire's memories of her past are also not simply fixed but are rather constantly evolving as she interprets them in light of her present circumstances.

'Afterwardsness' and '*Après coup*' are also relevant in how the characters interpret traumatic events. For example, when Anna's father dies suddenly, she is forced to confront the trauma of her childhood and the pain of her separation from Claire. The traumatic event is not simply a product of the past but is also determined by Anna's present circumstances and future expectations. Similarly, Coop is traumatized by a violent encounter with a group of young men, which he later learns was orchestrated by Bridget. Overall, the psychology of 'Deferred Action' and 'Afterwardsness' is quite relevant in *Divisadero* where the characters interpret their past experiences that shape their present circumstances. The novel highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of our understanding of the past and invites us to be mindful of the ways in which our interpretations of the past are shaped by our present and future experiences.

Warlight is a novel that explores memory, identity, and trauma in the aftermath of World War II. The concept of '*Après coup*' is relevant in the novel, particularly in the way the protagonist, Nathaniel, interprets his memories and experiences. Throughout the novel, Nathaniel struggles to make sense of his past, which is characterized by secrecy, betrayal, and loss. His memories are fragmented and incomplete, and he is constantly reinterpreting them in light of new information. This process of reinterpretation is a manifestation of Lacan's '*Après coup*', which

suggests that the meaning of past events is constantly evolving as we reinterpret them in light of new experiences.

The impact of 'Afterwardsness' can be seen in Nathaniel's memories of his mother Rose Williams. At the beginning of the novel, Nathaniel believes that his mother abandoned him and his sister when they were children. However, as he uncovers more information about her life, he begins to realize that her departure was more complex than he initially thought. He learns that his mother was involved in espionage during the war and that her disappearance was part of a larger covert operation.

As Nathaniel uncovers these new details, his understanding of his mother's departure changes. What was once a simple act of abandonment, becomes a complex and strategic decision. This process of reinterpretation is a manifestation of 'Afterwardsness', as Nathaniel's understanding of his mother's past is shaped by his present circumstances and future expectations. Another example of '*Après coup*' in the novel can be seen in Nathaniel's memories of the war. Nathaniel's father was involved in espionage during the war, and Nathaniel himself becomes involved in smuggling operations as a young man. However, Nathaniel's memories of these events are incomplete and disjointed, and he struggles to make sense of his experiences. As Nathaniel uncovers more information about his father's work and his own involvement in smuggling, he begins to reinterpret his memories of the war. What was once a series of disconnected events, becomes a coherent narrative of espionage and betrayal. This process of reinterpretation is a manifestation of '*Après coup*', as Nathaniel's understanding of his past is constantly evolving in light of new information.

Thus, *Warlight* is a novel that explores the complex nature of memory and interpretation. The concept of ‘*Après coup*’ is relevant in the way Nathaniel interprets his memories and experiences, as he is constantly reinterpreting his past in light of new information. The novel thus demonstrates the dynamic and evolving nature of our understanding of the past, and the importance of being mindful of the ways in which our interpretations of the past are shaped by our present circumstances and future expectations, the gist of the ‘Afterwardsness’.

Objectives of the Research

In this thesis, the model of Lacanian theory of ‘*Après Coup*’ (Deferred Action) and Jean Laplanche’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ as frames of critical inquiry, have been discussed and developed. Then, the selected novels of Michael Ondaatje have been analysed from the psychological perspective of ‘Deferred Action’ (*Après-coup*) and ‘Afterwardsness’. The study investigates in detail the reasons for traumatic experiences and their subsequent repercussions on the lives of traumatised characters of the selected novels. Through the implementation of the proposed concept, it is clear that the characters in Ondaatje’s selected novels undergo trauma. The immediate and delayed reactions of traumatised victims have been studied as well.

Precisely, the following objectives have been kept in mind while carrying out the research:

1. To understand and develop the models of Lacanian theory of ‘*Après Coup*’ (Deferred Action) and Jean Laplanche’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ as frames of critical inquiry

2. To apply the concepts of 'Deferred Action' and 'Afterwardsness' in terms of their usability in literary criticism to understand the dynamics of the novels of Michael Ondaatje
3. To investigate and analyse the factors leading to trauma of the characters in the novels of Michael Ondaatje
4. To analyse war trauma and its aftermaths showcasing human predicaments and to examine peripheral themes which are related to different types of traumata

With the help of Lacanian theory of '*Après Coup*' (Deferred Action), Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' and the related psychological theories and concepts, the various traumas of the characters in the novels of Michael Ondaatje have been studied. With this theory, it has been explored how Michael Ondaatje has tried to analyse the deepest recesses of mind through different life experiences. Furthermore, the factors enabling the characters to cope up with their present are also investigated so as to relieve the human beings from traumata.

Review of Literature

Cathy Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience* (2014) is about the history of trauma, memory and the trauma theory. This theory is based on the two premises: suddenness and belatedness. The shock may lead to the pernicious trauma. In this book, Cathy Caruth draws a few instances from Sigmund Freud's books also. Audrey T. McCollum, in his book *The Trauma of Moving: Psychological Issues for Women* (1990), analyses the psychological factors, problems and issues of the women due to which they have to migrate from one place to another. The book further sheds light on the problems of adjustment at a new place and their challenges. The loss of the

identity, gender discrimination, male dominance, homesickness, nostalgia and the mental trauma of the women is the main concern of this book. Kali Tal's book *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996) deals with three traumatic events: the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the sexual exploitation of children and women. She focuses on the social, political and cultural aspects to examine the psychic trauma of the people who survived from any crisis. She uses three strategies of cultural coping: medicalization, mythologization, and disappearance. Sarah Anderson's book *Readings of Trauma, Madness, and the Body* (2012) deals with few Hemingway's novels such as *Across the River and into the Trees*, *The Garden of Eden* and *A Farewell to Arms*, H.D.'s autobiographical novel, *HERmione*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* and Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's *Save me the Waltz* so that the trauma of women may be understood properly. Jonathan Hart's book *The Poetics of Otherness: War, Trauma, and Literature* (2015) defines and describes trauma and how it is quite dominant and has been used in William Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists' plays. Further the book explores the war, violence, poetry and other works during the first and the second World War. This book was inspired from the background of war and poetry analysis was also a part of this book. This book offers a comprehensive study related to war, trauma and how it is reflected in English literature.

The book *Exploring Identities in the Novels of Michel Ondaatje* (2014) by Chitra Krishnan has been written into seven chapters out of which five chapters deal with different aspects of identity while the fourth and sixth chapters explore the theme of identity in the novels *In the Skin of the Lion* and *Anil's Ghost* respectively. The book further sheds light on the different implications, meanings and explanations

related to diaspora, its development and importance to those writers who emigrated from their country to another country for their personal motives. The book illuminates how migrants do not have fixed roots and how they are forced to live a nomadic life. The book entitled *Ragas of Longing: The Poetry of Michael Ondaatje* (2003), written by Sam Solecki, is a body of work which exclusively explores and analyses Ondaatje's poetry. Apart from poetry, Solecki has given references of the selected novels such as *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, *Running in the Family*, *Coming through Slaughter* and *In the Skin of a Lion*. Ondaatje's works form a canon and this critical book is a wonderful addendum in the literary oeuvre. Milena Marinkova's book *Michael Ondaatje: Haptic Aesthetics and Micropolitical Writing* (2011) deals with the haptic writings. The main novels which have been analysed in this book are *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, *Coming through Slaughter*, *Running in the Family*, *Anil's Ghost*, *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*. Amit Sarwal's book entitled *South Asian Diaspora Narratives: Roots and Routes* (2005) offers an analysis of the short stories written by the South Asian diaspora writers based in Australia. The second part of the title "Roots and Routes" reflects the processes of 'rooting into a culture' and 'routing out of a culture'. The book primarily defines racism, diaspora, social and theoretical identities. This book provides the history, research, and literary studies in Australia. The book offers the politics of spatial location and the acts of remembering and forgetting and the role of nostalgia in human life. The book *Modern South Asian Literature in English* by Paul Brians (2003) offers the critical study of fifteen modern South Indian texts and offers an exhaustive study of South Asian literature in English. Along with other notable works of the 20th century it also includes Michael

Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000). The anthology *Comparative Cultural Studies and Michael Ondaatje's Writing* (2000) edited by Steven Totosy de Zepetnek offers an exhaustive study of Michael Ondaatje's works from different themes and perspectives. Both the novels and poetry have been analysed in this anthology by different contributors. Cultural studies, transnational identities, representation of Buddhism, post-nationalism, the representation of race and other themes are the main focus of this anthology.

Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan describes Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992) as a journey for self-assertion and it further elucidates how the main characters of the novel strive for their self-discovery and identity during the Civil War. Beverley Curran's paper entitled "Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Altered States of Narrative" published in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* published by Purdue University Press attempts to analyse the "romantic" figure of the father/artist as a clandestine lover, an eccentric translator or a drug addict. Using sex, drugs, and translation, Ondaatje deranges altered states of a narrative in his paper. In the paper entitled "Personal Trauma in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*" Rijal has taken Sri Lanka's Civil War in the background of the novel and how the novel deals with the postcolonial trauma. The paper highlights that the characters are less traumatised by the war and they are more injured by their personal injuries and memories. It has been observed that Christopher Mcvey in his research paper entitled *Reclaiming the Past: Michael Ondaatje and the Body of History* defines the connection between body, history, and nation in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. He further examines his dual status as both a postmodern and postcolonial writer. In the article "Of 'Exotic' Eastern Lands: Reading Orientalism in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's*

Ghost”, Dr. Minu Susan Koshy analyzes how the book functions as an example of Orientalist discourse. This discourse involves depicting Sri Lanka as a primitive and backwards society in contrast to the sophisticated West. The protagonist, Anil, is both an insider and outsider in Sri Lanka due to her education and residence in America, and she embodies the Western perspective that objectifies and dehumanizes the East. Dr Minu’s article examines how the novel portrays the East as chaotic, uncivilized, and inferior to the West, and how this depiction reinforces Western hegemony while appearing to promote decolonization. Harlan Whatley in her paper entitled “Postnationalism and the Myth of England in Ondaatje’s *Warlight*” argues that the effects of World War II and the debunking of the myth of England remain the most recurring theme in Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Warlight*. Furthermore, this paper offers an analysis of the British bildungsroman and reviews the commonalities and differences between the British and the European novels of formation. In this paper the British identity, post national identity and the myth of England have been scrutinised through the protagonist Nathaniel Williams and other associated themes of the novel. Manouri K. Jayasinghe’s paper titled “The Pursuit of Truth in the Context of Post-Colonial Sri Lankan Conflicts through Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* and Gunadasa Amarasekara’s *Asathya Kathawak*” explores the theme of truth in the context of post-colonial Sri Lankan conflicts through an analysis of two literary works. The paper examines how Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* and Gunadasa Amarasekara’s *Asathya Kathawak* depict the pursuit of truth in the aftermath of colonialism and the impact of this pursuit on the society. Through a comparative analysis of the two works, the author sheds light on the challenges of seeking truth in a society marked by historical conflict and post-colonial tensions.

Elissa Marder's paper "Trauma and Literary Studies: Some Enabling Questions" is an attempt to analyse the role of trauma in literary studies. She has applied the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth in her paper. Likewise, Jefferey Prager in her paper entitled "Disrupting the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma, Recovering Humanity, and Repairing Generations" emphasises how the trauma transmits from one generation to the next generation. The people give tensions to others and become the cause of tensions for them. The victims can get rid of this trauma only after forgiving the people.

In his thesis, Dr Amrik Singh has given the introduction of the authors in the first chapters and then each writer's one novel has been explored in each chapter. *Train to Pakistan*, *Azadi* and *Ice-Candy Man* are the novels on which Sigmund Freud's Theory of *Nachträglichkeit* 'Deferred Action' has been applied and the fifth chapters offers a comparative study of these novels. Vijayalayan, V. in his thesis entitled "Transnational Aesthetic in the Selected Novels of Michael Ondaatje" describes how ties and affiliations spanning nation-states have emerged as the hallmark of the present world order. He has highlighted some seminal aspects concerning transnationalism, so as to impart an essential understanding of its conceptual frame. He has analysed three prose fictions by the Sri Lankan diaspora writer Michael Ondaatje: *In the Skin of a Lion*, *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*. The aim of the analysis is to set forth the transnational ideal as exemplified in their various aspects. He has also dedicated his thesis to fashion the envisaged transnational aesthetics. Angeline, M.'s thesis entitled "Postmodern Ideologies in Select Novels of Michael Ondaatje" analyses Ondaatje as a postmodern writer and examines various themes and techniques that are underpinned in his novels. It

attempts to explain how Post structuralist themes and Russian formalism have also contributed to Ondaatje's writings. Bhosale Madhuri Tukaram's thesis entitled "Cultural Conflict and Crisis for Identity in Michael Ondaatje's Fiction" sheds light on the issues related to cultural conflict and crisis for identity with special reference to selected novels of Michael Ondaatje. It attempts to interpret the novels from the cross-cultural point of view and traces the diasporic elements in Ondaatje's novels. Preetha, M.'s thesis "A Study on the Disoriented Postmodern World in Select Novels of Michael Ondaatje" emphasises that Ondaatje's novels have focused on the marginalised section of people like unrecorded musicians, immigrant workers, war victims, and colonised subjects. The researcher also explains how the novels of Ondaatje endow an insight into the social, cultural and political conditions of the postmodern world. Madeswaran, R.'s thesis entitled *Depiction of Characters with Post-traumatic stress disorder in the Select Novels of Toni Morrison and Michael Ondaatje: A Comparative Study* compares the selected novels of Toni Morrison and Michael Ondaatje in connection with post-traumatic stress disorder. It compares the psychological background of the victims. It also describes the significance of mental health and the inevitability of treating post-traumatic stress disorder. The researcher also attempts to analyse the characters of the novels to combat stress. Rajpal, Pradeep Kaur in her thesis entitled "Negotiating Transnational and Transcultural Identities in the Works of Michael Ondaatje", investigates multiculturalism and issues of migration implicit in the migrant experience. She focuses on 'in-between world' of migrants and negotiations of identity around the notions of alienation and belonging in the transcultural/transnational context. The study also examines how transnational and transcultural perspective affects the constitution of national, ethnic and cultural identity in relation to the fictional works of Michael Ondaatje.

Through the literature review on the novels of Michael Ondaatje, the study confirms that there are various issues in the selected novels of Michael Ondaatje which clearly indicate that the characters in all the selected novels undergo trauma of different kinds. However, no full-length study is found in the past or present on the psychology of 'Deferred Action' and 'Afterwardsness' especially in the case of novels of Michael Ondaatje. Through the present study, the researcher has tried to explore the covert factors and ramifications of trauma to contribute indirectly in alleviating the travails of the traumatised victims.

So far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, it has been divided into the following points:

The **Introduction** of the thesis offers a layout of the whole research plan that explains how the researcher has tried to analyse different points in it. Apart from it, Michael Ondaatje's life, works, achievements and his contribution to English Literature have been discussed succinctly. Further, it establishes the link between psychological theories and ramifications of trauma found in Ondaatje's novels. Moreover, it explains how the applicability of these theories gives new dimensions to Ondaatje's works.

Brief Candle: A Conceptual Framework of 'Après Coup' (Deferred Action) and 'Afterwardsness' attempts to briefly trace the theoretical framework of the research which is related to the conceptual scaffold of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and 'Afterwardsness', its genesis, history, development and the focus on the related terms and concepts by different critics. The statement of the problem, conceptual framework of '*Après Coup*' (Deferred Action) and 'Afterwardsness', the key-objectives, research methodology, the review of literature, the memory and

trauma of the characters and the theories in the four novels are the main points of this chapter.

Identity and Testimony in *The English Patient*, focuses on Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*. Apart from giving the introductory note on the novel, major themes also have been analysed and it has further been attempted how the personal trauma of the four main characters acts as a dominant factor in the novel. The role of trauma theory, its impacts and outcomes on the characters are also the main points of emphasis.

Trauma and Identity Formation in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, offers an analysis of Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* from different angles. Along with the brief introduction to the novel, its plot, major themes and characters have been discussed in this chapter. The novel deals with the postcolonial trauma and the ravages of Sri Lankan Civil War. Anil Tissera, a forensic pathologist comes back to Sri Lanka after a gap of fifteen years so that she may examine massacres and counter-massacres due to the long-running Civil War. Critics' critical notes have been added on the novel and Jean Laplanche's concept 'Afterwardsness' has been applied to it as a theory apart from mention of other peripheral theories.

Fragmentation, Void and Loss in *Divisadero*, analyses with a focus on three points: fragmentation, void and loss. The summary, main themes, motifs and the traumas of the main protagonists have been examined in this novel. The novel delineates the tragic moments and the past memories of Anna. When she talks about her trip with Claire; she recollects how Coop helped her in the treatment of Claire's broken wrist. The story of the novel progresses with these flashbacks and the most important events of the novel have been depicted through these flashbacks. Anna and

her adopting siblings Claire and Coop's problems and personal traumas are the main points of this study. Anna's affair with Coop brings a sea-change in her life just because the family disintegrates when her father brutally beats Coop. Having left home both by Anna and Coop, Claire tries to unite the family but her efforts remain futile. Anna feels the lack of parental care because her rancher father keeps drinking and does not pay much attention to his children. Her mother dies after the delivery. Anna has to face many traumas in her life. She keeps thinking of her past and her memories keep disturbing her. The theory of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and concept of 'Afterwardsness' have been applied to this novel.

Memory, Reality and Recovery in *Warlight*, delineates that Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight* is an atypical coming-of-age story which deals with many complex memories, realities, rediscoveries, emotions and adaptations that children experienced during World War II, showing how those adaptations left the impact on their adulthood. It is narrated by a 28-year-old Nathaniel whose childhood and adolescence remains the main point of this novel. Nathaniel and her sister, Rachel are left behind at home when their father goes to Singapore to convene the Unilever office. Applying Lacanian's theory of '*Après coup*' (Deferred action) and concept of 'Afterwardsness', the traumata of the characters remain the main emphasis of this chapter.

The summing up of the thesis, **Conclusion**, summarises all the main points of the thesis. Michael Ondaatje's selected novels have been re-analysed and reassessed and it has been tried to conclude how the present study offers an original contribution in the existing research. Apart from it, the scope for further research is also the main point of this part.

Chapter II

Identity and Testimony in *The English Patient*

The present chapter is a modest attempt to examine Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* through the critical camera keeping in view different critics' perception and the assertion of the identity of the four main characters of this novel. The background of the war adds the tinge of tragic moments in the novel. Further, the trial and tribulations, personal problems, and traumas of the characters are the distinguishable part of this novel. The chapter elucidates and explores the applicability of Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' and Jacques Lacan's 'Après coup' (Deferred action) on the lives of the characters and discusses the sort of changes that come in the characters' lives. The main point that leads to these concepts in this novel is trauma, and this trauma can be in any form: physical or mental or both. Trauma can be called a trace of the past memories which is characterized by involuntary flashbacks, by a "literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits" (Caruth: 1995). Memory of trauma has a unique place because it is quite different from other types of memories. According to Antze and Lambek the implicit understanding is that the only "memory worth talking about—worth remembering—is memory of trauma" (1996: xii). All the characters of the novel face physical or mental trauma, in one way or the other. Margaret Muckenhoupt writes in her book *Sigmund Freud: Explorer of the Unconscious*:

Freud was not sure about his own opinion and waffled for years on the matter. Charcot believed that the tendency toward hysteria was

hereditary and was activated by a trauma that shocked the nervous system. That idea led Freud to ask several questions about the relationship between physical and mental states. How did psychological trauma transform itself into physical illness? How could a person become ill from a memory? How could hysteria begin? (39)

Human mind consists of many memories of the past both good and bad, which affect our mind. There is always a flurry of thoughts running in our mind and the past events sometimes make our present miserable. William James holds the view that human mind can be called a stream of consciousness, “The passing thought then seems to be the Thinker; and though there may be another non-phenomenal Thinker behind that, so far we do not seem to need him to express the facts” (James 342). Luckhurst has a different opinion about trauma. He remarks, “Trauma ... issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge. In its shock impact trauma is anti-narrative” (79).

In the novel *The English Patient*, the main characters suffer from their traumatic experiences which leave a very bad impact on their minds. Lacan’s ‘Deferred Action’ and Laplanche’s ‘Afterwardsness’ both are quite suitable for this novel. The mental disorder of the characters like Kip and Geoffrey Clifton also gives a turning point in the novel. S.C. Dutt writes, “Psycho-analysis means both (Dutt 1) the technical method devised by Freud for investigating and treating neurosis or mental disorder and (Dutt 2) his theory of the structure of the mind” (Dutt 399). Sigmund Freud writes, “The theory of repression is the main pillar upon which rests the edifice of psycho-analysis” (Freud 939).

The English Patient by Michael Ondaatje can be called a historical fiction which was first published in 1993. In this novel, Jean Laplanche's 'Afterwardsness' is quite explicit because so many events of the novel give their outcomes later. Sergio Benvenuto writes about 'Afterwardsness':

Though Freud coined the term *Nachträglichkeit* starting from common terms such as *nachträglich*, *nachtragen* and similar ones, the official translation of Freud into English (The Standard Edition) does not use a single term to convey its various occurrences: "understood later", "understood subsequently", "deferred action", "after-effect", "subsequent", and so on. Whereas the translator could have remained faithful to a single term, afterwards, as Laplanche suggests. (Benvenuto 72-73)

The English patient, Almásy, has never thought that his illicit love affair will turn into the tragic death of his beloved Katherine. The main female character of this novel, Hana, has never thought that his father will die due to war and she will remain alone. Likewise, after-events make the lives of other characters also tragic and this is the main motif of this chapter.

The novel is set in 1945 at the time of the Second World War when America dropped bomb on two cities of Japan: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, many events of the novel have been narrated through the flashback technique and these are set in the 1930s and early 1940s. The setting of the novel is a small villa in the hills located nearby Florence, Italy and it is also set in Cairo, England and the Libyan Desert. Marinkova argues that "Ondaatje's works contest the violence of both

dominant and oppositional monologic discourses” (27). This novel has characters from different backgrounds. Cengiz Karagöz observes about this novel:

Ondaatje wants to underline the impossibility of associating people with certain national and cultural identities as they bear out their existence not within the bounds of peculiar norms but within a vacuum in which these bounds are merged with each other. (41)

In the opening scene of the novel, a girl is depicted gardening, “She stands up in the garden where she has been working and looks into the distance. She has sensed a shift in the weather” (*EP 3*). She feels that the rain has started falling so she goes inside the villa where she finds a man who is lying on a bed in one room. The man has been burnt badly and she washes his burnt body. She takes good care of this patient, tends his wounds so that her patient may feel comfortable in his painful time. She gives him the fruit of her garden. The depiction about the patient has been written in these words, “The man lies on the bed, his body exposed to the breeze, and he turns his head slowly towards her as she enters” (*EP 3*).

The nurse’s name is Hana and she asks her patient how he was burnt. He tells her that this mishap happened when he fell from the plane into the desert. In fact, he was burnt very badly, “Above the sins the burns are worst. Beyond purple. Bone” (*EP 3*). The Bedouin nomads saw him stand up, his body was still burning, and he was emerging from the crashed helicopter. The Nomads took him to their camp where they took care of him, “They found my body and made me a boat of sticks and dragged me across the desert.... Nomads, you see. Bedouin” (*EP 4-5*). They do primary treatment of the patient and try to cure him to the best of their knowledge.

He was a lucky man that he remained alive after this tragedy, “I was perhaps the first one to stand up alive out of a burning machine. A man whose head was on fire. They did not know my name. I did not know their tribe” (*EP 5*). He was burnt so badly that even his face was not recognizable and he looked like a ghost even then Hana continued doing her treatment. “Well, she’s got her own ghost, a burned patient. There is a face but it is unrecognizable. The nerves all gone” (*EP 30*). Thus, he had lost his identity as well as there was no evident to verify his identity.

Budoins put a mask of herbs on Almásy’s face. They show humanity towards him. He does not know who they were and they also do not know properly who he was. He could not see them properly because he was severely burnt and he could recognize them by their scent. They took pity on him. When they knew that he was unable to eat properly, they chewed food for him and then gave it to him so that he may survive. Hana removes all the mirrors, the testimony of their identity, from her room so that she and her patient may not see the reality of their life, “She has removed all mirrors and stacked them away into an empty room” (*EP 23*).

She reads books for him so that she may get diverted from the stark realities of this materialistic world. She reads for the English patient and does not care much whether he is listening to her or not. Her main motive was just her patient’s recovery that’s why, “She would care only for the burned patient. She would read to him, bathe him, and give him the doses of morpheme” (*EP 15*).

The nurse spends most of her time gardening and cultivating. She grows vegetables in the garden so that she may sell these vegetables and survive at the hour of crisis. Hana was living in a bombed-out villa which was occupied by the German

army and the soldiers have left mines throughout that area. Hana knows that it may be dangerous to her but she ignores this danger. She is a very bold girl because she is merely twenty years old and has so much courage in that age. She sleeps in the library so that she may enjoy the natural beauty of the night having a glance at the sky.

This villa was situated in a town on an Italian hill and there was another villa and a monastery in the town. The names of these villas were the Villa Medici and the Villa San Girolamo. The second villa was under the hold of the German troops and nearly one hundred troops were living there. They had turned this building into a hospital. The doctors and nurses of the hospital were terrified and they moved to a safer place but Hana had to stay in the villa because the English patient was severely burnt and if she also leaves the place, he may die. There were no facilities of electricity and heater in the villa but still she had made up her mind to stay there and we can call it “the entire concept of mind or consciousness” (Murphy et al. 245).

She would clean the villa and was just waiting for the recovery of her patient. She knew it well that there are dangers of living there but she was forced by the circumstances. She took a crucifix from the church, made a scarecrow and put it in the garden so that her vegetable crop may remain safe. There was no means of entertainment in the villa, that’s why she would play hopscotch at night for her entertainment. Hana keeps remembering about her past life and tries to forget the bad experiences. Sigmund Freud writes in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*:

If anyone should be inclined to overrate the state of our present knowledge of mental life, all that would be needed to force him to

assume a modest attitude would be to remind him of the function of memory. (Freud 76)

Hana would pick up the English Patient's notebook, the copy of *The Histories* by Herodotus. He had written his own notes, had done his observations in it and memories were pasted into it. She would read about the desert winds which were the symbols of destruction. The patient also commented about his past life and he told the stories of his life, how he was saved by the Bedouins just because they had suspicion that he had a skill. He was familiar with maps and he remembered what he had read. He knew the location of the Indian civilizations, towns and lakes. He was familiar with North Africa. The Bedouins had brought him to a canyon and he immediately realised why he had been brought there by them. They requested him to identify different varieties of the guns which belonged to different time periods and countries. These guns gave the look of a museum in the desert. He displayed the Bedouins how to match shells to guns for firing.

The Bedouins became very happy when the English patient worked for them and the English patient did everything for them just as a gratitude because they had saved his life. However, the Bedouins blindfolded the English patient for the most of the time and they took him to various places. He noticed one more thing that there were no women in the Bedouin camps.

Through the novel, the after-events keep working in the background. Saving the English patient from the clutches of death by the Bedouins indicates the after-events how he will also help them in return. The crash of the plane is a past-event showing the anger of Katherine's husband. All these steps show that they try to find

out the solution of their problems which is also a key concept of Jean Laplanche's 'Afterwardsness' as Jonathan House and Julie Slotnick also observe:

Because "deferred action" follows the arrow of time, the meanings of deferred action and retrospective modification are clearly in considerable tension. Laplanche offers a third meaning that sublates those two conflicting meanings, re-solving them into a higher unity and demonstrating that *après-coup* is central to understanding the origin of mental structure, which Laplanche, following Freud, calls the apparatus of the soul. (House and Slotnick 685)

Caravaggio, the man with the bandaged hands, had to remain in the military hospital in Rome for over four months and his hands were badly wounded, "The man with bandaged hands had been in the military hospital in Rome for more than four months when by accident he heard about the burned patient and the nurse, heard her name" (*EP* 29). In fact, he becomes evasive and does not share his personal details with the nurses and doctors. He just tells his serial number. When he learns from the doctors that a burned patient is being taken care of by a nurse, he speaks with the doctors and they inform him about the nurse and the patient. These doctors tell him that the patient keeps talking most of the time but he does not know properly how all this happened to him so suddenly. This traumatic experience has a very bad impact on his life. Caruth speculates:

Perhaps it is not possible for the witnessing of trauma to occur within the individual at all, that it may only be in future generations that 'cure' or at least witnessing can take place. (Trauma, 137)

The first chapter of the novel tells the tragic life of the English patient while another tragic character Caravaggio, the man with bandaged hands, is introduced to the readers in the second chapter. He comes to the villa specially to meet Hana and the English patient. He knew her from her childhood when she was living in Toronto. The second chapter narrates some bad past memories. She remembers how Hana refused to have her tonsils taken out.

Hana is quite surprised to see Caravaggio in the villa after a long period. She feels happy to see him and makes the arrangement of a bed but she becomes worried because she has somehow arranged for the food for the two persons and now after the arrival of Caravaggio, she had to arrange food for three persons. She says, "If you are staying, we are going to need more food. I have planted vegetables, we have a sack of beans, but we need some chickens" (*EP* 35). Caravaggio tells Hana that he is not able to catch chickens like before just because he has lost his nerves after a tragedy that had happened to him. The Germans had seized him and they had made him crippled by nearly chopping off his hands.

'I lost my nerves,' he says.

'I'll come with you, then,' Hana offers. 'We'll do it together. You can teach me to steal, show me what to do.'

'You don't understand. I lost my nerve.'

'Why?'

'I was caught. They nearly chopped off my fucking hands.' (*EP* 36)

When Caravaggio looks at Hana, he is reminded of his wife. He feels a kind of attraction towards Hana but he knew it well that though he is romantically interested

in Hana, she is emotionally attached with the English patient and her primary motive is to look after her wounded patient.

Caravaggio tells Hana that he had not been a spy. He was a professional Italian thief and his allies had told him to steal some documents from a German room. In the party in a tuxedo, a woman takes his picture and Caravaggio suspects that this picture may put him behind the bars so he decides to steal the camera of that woman at night. He sneaks into her bedroom and remains successful in stealing the camera. Though the woman notices him stealing the camera, yet she does not talk about this incident to her German General boyfriend. She finds him stealing it, “I was caught in mid-step, the beginning of the shutter’s noise making me jerk my head towards it” (*EP 37*).

Jean Laplanche’s concept ‘Afterwardsness’ is quite applicable on Carravagio’s life. Though there is a little bit difference in the different words of three languages, yet most translators of ‘*Après-coup*’ use either “deferred action” or “retrospective modification” or their equivalents, at the expense of the flexibility of *Nachträglichkeit*. This irony was noted by Jean Laplanche for the first time who thinks differently. He writes in *Problématiques* (2006), “The après-coup of the history of *Nachträglichkeit* is inseparable from its translational destiny, not only the translation of the word, but the translation of the thought” (Laplanche 13). Jean Laplanche further writes in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*:

If there is afterwards a cathexis of the memory-trace [i.e., if the painful memory is reactivated], the unpleasure is repeated; but the

ego-facilitations are already present [the ego, more simply, is already accustomed], and experience shows that the second release of unpleasure is less—until, after further repetition, it is reduced to no more than a signal of an intensity acceptable to the ego [the crux is thus that starting with the first release of unpleasure, a process goes into effect resulting in a gradual attenuation]. (Laplanche 35)

Hana is an emotional nurse and the nurses become shocked when they witness so many deaths around them. Hana is also much grief-stricken at these deaths. She pinpoints her breakdown when she comes to know from an official who handed her over a letter regarding the death of her father. Hana's abortion also remains the main cause of her trauma. Hana has aborted her child, thinking that she will not be able to care of her son alone: "I lost the child. I mean I had to lose it. The father was already dead. There was a war" (82) Zainab Sameer Shakir's words are quoteworthy here:

Women are affected physically and morally by the chaos of war; they lose their dear ones, they are being injured, tortured, imprisoned, raped or even killed. However, these severe experiences will not stop women from being great mothers, wives, sisters or daughters. In fact, they become the best to identify the weaknesses of war and to tell how to overcome them. Hana is one of those women who live during wartimes. She is supposed to have a beautiful life at the age of twenty, but she leaves all the chances of a happy life behind and involves herself in war by becoming a nurse in *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael Ondaatje. (Shakir 322)

The English patient comes into the Villa and Hana, who has not fully emerged from the death of her father, finally decides that she will save the life of the English patient. Feeling remorseful of the guilt that she could not save the life of her father despite the fact that she was a nurse, Hana shows special care for her patient. Though she did not know much about him, even helping a stranger was giving her some solace to her trauma.

One night she was sobbing in the kitchen in the half-naked position and Caravaggio came there. He comes to know her feelings towards the English patient that day. She was not willing to make love to Caravaggio because she was in love with her English patient. She took her patient as a saint who was in acute need of her care and attention, “He is her despairing saint” (*EP 3*). Caravaggio tries to convince her that it is not right for a young girl to sacrifice her life for a person having ghost-like appearance but his words do not change Hana’s decision and she ignores his advice. He says:

You have to protect yourself from sadness. Sadness is very close to hate. Let me tell you this. This is the thing I learned. If you take in someone else’s poison—thinking you can cure them by sharing it—you will instead store it within you. (*EP 47*)

Hana recalls her childhood and youth in Toronto. She remembers that Caravaggio was her first teacher who would show her how to do somersaults in her childhood. Later she gets training to be a nurse. When Hana had been taking care of her English patient for three days, she cut off her hair and she did not look in the mirror. The war had made her very emotional and she would sometimes become so stone-hearted but

she was emotionally attached with those people who got wounded in the war. She had seen many people dying due to war and she wanted to save the lives of her patients. She talked to them with affection and would call her patients “Buddy”. She was emotionally attached with the English patient. So, when Caravaggio wanted to have physical relations with her, she says, “Don’t touch me if you’re going to try and fuck me” (*EP* 46). But he tries to convince her not to be so much involved with the English patient.

‘Hana.’

‘Do you understand?’

‘Why do you adore him so much?’

‘Go away, Caravaggio. Please.’

‘You’ve tied yourself to a corpse for some reason.’

‘He is a saint. I think. A despairing saint. Are there such things? Our desire is to protect them.’

‘He doesn’t even care!’

I can love him.’

‘A twenty-year-old who throws herself out of the world to love a ghost! (*EP* 47)

One night she goes on a troll with Caravaggio. Hana changes the bandages of his hands and she asks how this tragedy happened with him and how he was tortured. He tells about this whole incident in detail. He tells her that the Germans saw him when he was jumping from a woman’s window. They chased and caught him. They brought him in, handcuffed him to the table and then they cut off both of his thumbs.

The English Patient becomes stunned when he sees Hana with Caravaggio when they return that night. Thus, it shows that the English Patient also had some feelings for Hana. It may not be the sheer attraction and love; he might have been emotionally attached with her as it was a long time since she was attending him.

It is clear that the novel *The English Patient* is a good example of how war transforms human life into a hell and it can make some people's life a tragedy. Caravaggio was living his life as a thief. He was working for the British Intelligence Bureau. He had to lose her thumbs, youth, livelihood and identity due to war. The Germans cut his thumbs and he is not able to steal anything. It was a kind of punishment that was given to him. This incident snatched his happy life. He feels envious of the normal people who are living their life happily. He finds his life miserable and is filled with an inferiority complex.

Likewise, the life of the English patient was also much affected by the war. He had also lost his identity and was living his life like hell. Hana also feels much disappointed and bereaved when she comes to know about the news of her father's death. Thus, the war makes the lives of all the characters a tragedy. Zainab Sameer Shakir states, "At the beginning she thinks that she is too weak to face her trauma, so she tries to escape; she has had a nervous breakdown and a deep depression lead her to lose herself, her innocence, and her youth." (Shakir 323)

Michael Ondaatje has used villa as a symbol in this novel. The villa works here as a bridge between life and death. The war destroys this villa and makes some huge holes in the ceilings and walls. Nature replaces the holes but there is absence of life. The villa represents that war always becomes the cause of destruction.

Now the next character is introduced in the novel. While Hana was playing the piano, a young Sikh entered the library. He was an Indian officer who was working with the British forces to clear unexploded mines and bombs. He is sent on very sensitive missions. His duty is to protect the Italian people at their family ceremonies to honour the Virgin Mary and he thinks that he should try to find out if there is any bomb on the ceiling of Sistine Chapel. He came to library just because he had fear in his mind that the Germans were hiding the bombs even in the musical instruments. He finds the piano safe for this purpose. He thinks that it is his moral duty to clear the area so that it may become safe for other residents. Hana also finds that the Sikhs are always very polite, respectful and devoted to work. She also notices his muscular body.

Hana tells Caravaggio that when she was pregnant, she talked to her baby but unfortunately, she lost the baby in an abortion. He explains about death what she has observed as a nurse. She just did her duty as a nurse but sometimes she became emotional and was attached to them personally.

One day the Sikh Kip enters the English patient's room to talk to him. They develop a good affinity and keep talking about their experiences on bombs, weapons and guns. Hana also feels good to see that her English patient is feeling good in Kip's company.

The English Patient was saved by the Bedouin tribe and they brought him to the British base at Siwa oasis in 1944. He went from the western desert to Tunis and then came to Italy. He was in such a mental state that he was not able to recognize himself. Even the people were not able to recognize him whether he was their enemy

or not. He had an English accent and he bombarded them with so many details regarding Italy, its history and military.

One day Kip finds a bomb with wires running through the grass and it was attached to a tree in the garden. He wanted to seek Hana's help in the diffusing of this bomb because he wanted someone to hold one wire so that he may decide which wire he should cut to diffuse the bomb. Hana tells him that she has no fear of death now. She just wanted to curl up in his arms so that she may feel safe and secure in Kip's arms. Kip feels that his brown skin will keep him a foreigner.

The four characters of the novel have a party that night in Almásy's room. Caravaggio puts on music on a gramophone so that he may dance with Hana. When they were enjoying the party, Kip hears a bomb explosion and he goes to the site of explosion. The nature of his work is very dangerous. Das (2012) reflects:

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* recalls how people of different nations come together in adverse conditions by negating their individual identity and embracing a oneness of mind and spreading love that would make their lives liveable. (366)

One morning Kip, Caravaggio and Hana were talking on a matter. Caravaggio is surprised if it is possible for a person to be in love with someone who is not smarter than the other person. Caravaggio feels frustrated to know that Hana is in love with the English patient to the extent that she is ready to put her life at risk.

Caravaggio holds the views that Hana and Kip should get out of that place because there is danger to their lives. They should think about their family. Hana,

too, did not feel comfortable because she was living with three men in the same villa. That's why she prefers Kip's company for her safety. She silently goes into Kip's tent and makes love with him. She likes him so much especially due to his strong body and dark colour. The impact of war is quite discernible as it is the same Hana who did not respond Carvaggio due to her love towards the English patient; the sense of insecurity urges her to take shelter in the Kip's embrace. K. Gobinath and Dr. S. Alexander write:

Through her constant attention to her patient, Hana's character purposefully exposes the professional diversion because often the camp has been changed and each and every one of the patients has shifted from one location to another along with the Canadian nurse Hana in the midst of war, Ondaatje portrays geographical diversion as well as professional diversion that is caused through diaspora via Hana. (Gobinath and Alexander 2235)

Hana sits by the bed of the English patient, Almásy and Almásy tells him that he was part of an oasis society consisting of Europeans who mapped and explored the desert. The English patient keeps travelling across the desert throughout the 1930s. He hates the idea of nation and nationalities just because through his own experience he personally feels that such concepts are merely superficial and give no benefit to the people. Such concepts become the cause of destruction only. The desert does not accept such nationalities. Some European explorers write their names on some things they find on their way but the English apartment was just opposite. He was neutral and he did not want to relate himself to any nation. Kristina Kyser writes, "It is in the desert that Almásy becomes 'nationless'" (Kyser 4).

The English patient talks about the oasis. He had a woman who loved him and Hana also wanted to know about that woman. Then he tells her about his love affair. In 1936, Geoffrey Clifton, a young man, came to know about the expedition from his friend at Oxford. He gets married in two weeks with a woman named Katherine. He comes to Cairo with his wife. There were four people in the party—Prince Kemal el Dein, Almásy, Bell, and Madox. Clifton was very rich and he had his own plane and a convenience to make his search easier. The people in the party were surprised to see Clifton's wife also in this project. There was a huge cultural gap between the explorers and Clifton. Almásy fell in love with Catherine one night when they were sitting at the campfire and she recited poetry to them.

One thing is clear that Almásy was suffering from the identity crisis. When he was working with other explorers in the desert, he thought about it and shared his views with others, "We disappeared into the landscape. Fire and sand. ... I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from" (139). These people belonged to different places and had language barriers. It "could not be claimed or owned—it was a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names long before Canterbury existed" (138-39). Not only this, Almásy was feeling just like an outsider in Italy. He shares his views with Kip and Hana. In one conversation with Hana, he says, "Kip and I are both international bastards—born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere" (176). Gordon reinforces that "immigrants are denied equal rights and are subject to hostile feelings because they are different in skin color, religion, or country of origin" (3). Kip belongs to India and the natives do not want to accept him and treat him as a secondary object. Friedman (2008) also holds the view:

The re-establishment of Kip's Indian identity seems to undo the rest of the novel's postcolonial move towards a counter nationalism and a model of identity not based on the lethal category of the nation. (50)

Kip is ignored in the army due to his race or the colour of his skin, "But he knew he did not like it. He was accustomed to his invisibility. In England he was ignored in the various barracks, and he came to prefer that" (196). He has been recruited only for a specific purpose but he is treated as the "other" and is excluded from the mainstream and thus a blurred image of his personality is created. This ambivalence germinated the seeds of revolt, hatred and resistance in his mind. Bhabha (1994) writes that a coloniser tries to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerated types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70).

Kip is considered the other in a white nation. He decides to leave the country as soon as he comes to know from the radio about the dropping of atom bombs. His frustration is explicit when he blames Almásy who is considered an Englishman, "I grew up with traditions from my country, but later, more often, from your country. Your fragile white island that with customs and manners and books and prefects and reason somehow converted the rest of the world" (*EP* 283). At the end of *The English Patient*, Kip, who "looks condemned, separate from the world, his brown face weeping" (*EP* 283). Kip acknowledges the ability of white nations to impose their Eurocentrism upon the world. He was living peacefully with three other persons in the villa but the dropping of the atom bombs makes him completely disturbed. He could not bear the loss of approximately 140,000 people. He takes this bomb as a

metaphor of hatred and enmity, “People think a bomb is a mechanical object, a mechanical enemy. But you have to consider that somebody made it” (192). Impact of dropping of the bombs on Kip can be seen in the light of ‘Afterwardsness’ because these atom bombs show the forward movements. This incident not only brings the negative impact in Kip’s mind, but also it brings to the fore that these bombs will bring devastative result to the people belonging to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kip’s anger on the English patient indicates towards ‘Afterwardsness’. As the result of ‘Deferred Action’, he feels trapped by going there because his past memory is revived and he thinks about his brother who had already warned him about European countries:

My brother told me. Never turn your back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers. Never trust Europeans, he said. Never shake hands with them. [...]. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you’re an Englishman.
(284-6)

Katherine also had feelings for Almásy and he comes in her dream also. She wakes up from a nightmare one night and Geoffrey brings water for her. Katherine sees in her dream that the English patient was angry with her because she was a married woman. She wanted to make love with him. She studies him properly who had left his normal life years back and came into the world of desert.

Katherine sometimes becomes angry at Almásy’s over-politeness. They start a love affair and come to the stage that it becomes impossible for them to live

separately. They make love in the plum gardens, offices and even crowded places. She had fallen in love with Almásy blindly and she was in a big dilemma because being a married woman, she was doing this act against her conscience but she was silent because if Clifton comes to know about this affair, she knew it well that he would go mad and can take any step. She says, "I think he will go mad. Do you understand?" (167). She wants to pretend as a loyal wife even after having adulterous relationships with Almásy. She tells Almásy, "I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do! How can I be your lover? He will go mad." (163)

It is a strange thing in the novel that Katherine takes her frustration out by doing some awkward things which put the readers in doubt. She makes various bruises on Almásy's skin with the blows, stabs forks on his shoulders and hits plates at his head. Almásy was very disturbed from her silliness and he had to make silly excuses for the wounds and the people of his party start thinking that he is accident-prone.

A drastic change has come in Almásy's life due to this love affair. He would never feel alone in the desert but he was now in the position that he would not bear to be without Katherine. He wants to break all the barriers, social codes and courtesy to get her love. He knows it well that they are doing sin by this affair but he does not care anything to get Katherine.

Katherine had to show to others that she had no relationship with Almásy. She did not even look at him in the public but Almásy became mad with anger at Katherine's behaviour. She did all this for their protection but Almásy took it from a wrong perspective. He goes mad by her behaviour and he did not want to lose her at

any cost. On September 28, Katherine tells him that she has decided that she cannot cheat her husband like this anymore. They must not meet henceforth like this because she knew her husband's nature. Almásy brings her home and he does not notice that Geoffrey is inside the house. It was the occasion when they were thinking about the separation and Geoffrey notices them. The novel deals with so many flashbacks and memories. He remembers how he spent his time in Cairo when he was madly in Katherine's love. Freud and Breuer aptly write, 'Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences' (1895:58).

Caravaggio says to Hana that it is his personal assumption that the English patient is not really English. According to him, he was a Hungarian whose name was Almásy who worked for the Germans during the war. He was a desert explorer and that's why he knew a lot about the desert and its dialects. He becomes a guide for spies and he helps them reach Cairo. Caravaggio thinks that the patient is Almásy because he had the knowledge of some peculiar names for the dogs but Hana says that he is not Almásy but an Englishman.

After getting wounded, Caravaggio becomes Morpheme addicted. He wants to give Almásy a Brompton cocktail—morphine and alcohol—to get him talking. Hana also thinks that Caravaggio is much concerned with Almásy's past. Hana tells Almásy what Caravaggio thinks about him. She also tells him that Caravaggio has been an unsuccessful thief in Canada.

Almásy tells frankly about the plane crash after the Brompton cocktail. He says that he was in the desert. His truck exploded when he was driving through the desert. There may be chances that it had been sabotaged by Bedouins. After this

explosion, he heads towards the direction where his plane was buried in the desert. He walked for four nights and arrived at Ain Dua where his plane was buried. He was feeling extremely hot and the water of the well gave him a bit of solace from the heat. After that he enters the cave where he had left Katherine. He failed to help her on time and she died. He finds her dead wrapped in parachute material. He makes love to her dead body, brings her in the sun, dresses and brings her to the plane.

There are some incidents in the novel which are not possible. Here is a narration that Katherine was in the cave for the past three years and she might have died very soon without food and water and desert. Only a human skeleton is possible to find after three years and Almásy makes love to her dead body, all this does not seem to be real. The novel suggests that the meaning of the patient's past experiences is not fixed but is rather constantly evolving as he interprets them in light of his present circumstances, the very essence of '*Après-coup*'.

There is a background story in the novel. Kathrine got injured in 1939 when her husband Geoffrey came to know about her affair with Almásy and he decided to kill all three of them together in a plane crash. He had expected that he would pick up Almásy from a particular time at a specific place. Almásy reached there but Geoffrey could not kill him because he landed fifty yards away from the English patient. Only Katherine was injured in this crash.

She had been injured. In 1939. Her husband has crashed his plane. It had been planned as a suicide-murder by her husband that would involve all three of us. We were not even lovers at that time. I suppose information of the affair trickled down to him somehow. (182)

This act of Katherine's husband proves that he could take any step to take the revenge of his wife's betrayal. In fact, he turns mad, "A husband gone mad. Killing all of them. Killing himself and his wife— and him by the fact there was now no way out of the desert" (184). She was so weak that she was unable to walk in the desert. That's why Almásy tells her to wait in the cave. He will return soon and will come for her help. He leaves the copy of Herodotus with her.

Almásy goes back to his past and remembers how Catherine had told him that she would not be able to keep any relationship with him. Almásy could not bear this shocking statement of separation and he became bitter. He thought that she had got a new lover, that's why she did not want to meet him. He thinks that she is cheating him. In his copy of Herodotus, he writes all arguments against him. He wanted to record this statement so that he may remember it in the future also. Jean Laplanche writes in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, "Every internal excitation, every physiological augmentation of level of need, is translated as a revivification, in the memory systems, of traces of past experiences" (60). Silke Arnold-de Simine observes in his paper "Trauma and Memory", "Memory indicates a relationship to past events that is shaped by, and in turn profoundly impacts, how we think, feel, and live in the present" (140).

The English patient gives more description about the plane crash and how he travelled in the desert without food for three days and he used the stars and shadows to guide his way. When he reached El Taj, the English soldiers captured him and took him away without relying on his story about Katherine who was merely seventy miles away from him. They locked him without listening to his words.

When he was carrying Katherine from plane to cave, they talked for a few moments. Katherine tells him that he had killed everything in her during their separation. She said that she left him not only because of her husband's anger but because she knew it well that it was very difficult for her to change him and that's why she was feeling alienated.

Almásy comes after three years and he puts her dead body in the plane. He put fuel in the plane. He took off in the plane but the plane began to fall after some time. Oil poured over his knees and the plane touched a tree. The plane caught fire. Almásy jumped down parachuted but his entire body was burning.

Michael Ondaatje has written how his characters were suffering from one or the other type of traumatic experience and in foreign countries, they feel otherness as Kristina Kyser also asserts, "[Ondaatje's] characters [...] oscillate between this connection with others and a tendency to withdraw from the world" (Kyser 3). In his book *The Trauma Question*, Roger Luckhurst starts with the argument that there is a tight bond, an isomorphic link of sorts, between trauma and modernity. He quotes Micale and Lerner in noting how trauma is "responsive to and constitutive of modernity" (Luckhurst: 2008 20). The war remains in the background of his novels and it always leaves some tragic memories of the past. It has been aptly contended:

The novel follows the characters' traumatic accounts of their war experience, which left them either permanently maimed, shell-shocked, doomed to ghostly death, or simply no longer blindly in love with British ways, and their duplicitous staging of a civilized war in the name of entrenching racially violent and imperialistic partitioning of the world. (101)

The past memories are told by Kip also how he took his training of bomb squad in Westbury in 1940 under the guidance of his mentor Lord Suffolk. Kip was the second son of his family and his parents wanted him to become a doctor but the war changed the course of his life. He volunteered for his army and started working for the bomb unit but there was a big risk in this work and there was only ten weeks life expectancy. The Germans have started bombing Britain and it was an estimate that there were around 3700 unexploded bombs in the country and the people like Kip were working to clear away all these bombs so that the life of the people can be saved.

Kip had great regard for Lord Suffolk and he would tell Kip about English customs and cultures as if he were an Englishman himself. He would tell a lot about the Western life. Kip was afraid that he may be denied due to his race, Suffolk and his secretary Miss Morden were pleased with his work and they offered to give him a job. Kip was also happy to be a part of this family.

Kip tells about his past how Lord Suffolk, his secretary Miss Morden, and four other men in training were killed while they were trying to dismantle a 25-kilogram bomb. Kip became very shocked to hear this news but he somehow managed. One officer comes to give him a message that there was another bomb and it should be immediately attended. Kip was very serious and he did not waste his time. He leaves at midnight without paying attention to his tiredness. He knew it well that now Germans have changed their ways of putting the bombs. When he reaches there, he finds that the area was blazing with the officers' lights.

Kip examined the bomb and he realized that he could dismantle it from explosive material. Kip had already lost Lord Suffolk and his English friends. That's why he takes all the responsibility to diffuse all the bombs in the area so that people's lives may be saved and to teach other sappers also how to diffuse the bomb. He finds a new bomb also that night. He wrote out diagrams and explanation of this bomb and looked at the problem from another angle. He was not feeling much comfortable in England due to his race and that's why he decided to go to Italy with around one hundred other sappers. Kip remembers how his brother courted confrontation. He was put into prison for a long time. Kip admired his brother and he also joined the army at his brother's place. His brother was happy and confident to know that Kip possessed the trick of survival.

Kip remembers how he had to enter a pit to diffuse a giant Esau bomb in 1941. He had to go around twenty feet down in muddy water where he found very little sunlight to warm his body. His fingers were freezing and they were losing their agility and stopped working properly. He was very close to the bomb. He narrates how he made a mistake in diffusing the bomb and later neutralised it. When he came out of the pit after diffusing the bomb, his body was almost frozen. He feels happy at his success because he had saved the life of many people who were close to this bomb.

Kip and Hana were basking in the sun after Kip washes his long hair. She was feeling happy to see his strong body. Kip tells him how his brother advised him not to trust the English because he thinks that Asia is not a free continent and that's the reason that the English will never be obliged for his help in the war. However, Kip thinks that it is not so.

Kip observes the things and he keeps searching things for himself. He can describe Hana's clavicle and the shape of her shoulder but he finds it very difficult to identify the colour of Hana's eyes. He spends his time with Almásy because he thinks that he is a noble person and he has a sharp memory. Kip's experiences during the war have shaped his understanding of his own identity and his relationship with the other characters in the novel. As he becomes involved with Hana and learns about the patient's past, his understanding of his own experiences and memories is constantly being reinterpreted, another example of '*Après coup*'.

One night Hana and Kip sneak into the villa from two different doors so that they may make love. It was darkness around and Kip was waiting for Hana in a well. It was a safe place. Hana also enters the library. She lies on the couch to read a book. She heard Caravaggio sneeze who was lying on the floor at the other side of this library. Caravaggio thinks that he has fallen in love with her because she is a grown-up girl and she can take the decisions of her life. Kip was watching everything from the vantage point at the well. He notices that Caravaggio walks over to Hana's couch and he tries to touch Hana but he finds that Hana is not on the couch. Hana thinks that it is Kip and she says "got you, got you" and it was part of their game. Caravaggio leaves the room and Hana and Kip make love. They feel that there is something more than sex that is keeping them together.

The whole novel has been written in flashback. Almásy also tells his story of how he falls in love with Katherine. He remembers that he saw her for the first time when she was coming out of the plane. Her husband Geoffrey was praising her. After a month Catherine was reading constantly. Almásy was fifteen years older than Katherine. Katherine was looking for a change now.

I was a man fifteen years older than she, you understand. I had reached that stage in life where I identified with cynical villains in a book. I don't believe in permanence, in relationships that span ages. I was fifteen years older. But she was smarter, she was hungrier to change than I expected. (*EP* 244)

Katherine reads a story of a king and queen from Herodotus at the party. This story is about a very beautiful queen whose husband, the king, would praise his beauty all the time. The king talks about the beauty of his wife to a man named Gyges. The king tells Gyges to see her beauty himself. According to the King's plan, Gyges sneaks into the queen's room and watches her while undressing. The queen comes to know somehow about the king's plan. She calls Gyges the next day and she gives him two alternatives. She tells him that either he would have to kill the king, possess her and rule his kingdom or he must be ready to get slain. Gyges kills the king and reigns over the kingdom for twenty-eight years. After listening to this story, the English patient thinks that he is attracted towards Katherine.

Katherine comes to the English patient and says to him, "I want you to ravish me" and thus, it was a clear indication from her that she wanted the English patient to make love with her. She was annoyed with the English patient due to certain reasons. He would never tell her that she is important or special to him. That's why she thinks to leave him and go back to her husband.

Hana's twenty-first birthday is celebrated with all enthusiasm. Kip, Hana and Caravaggio enjoy singing, dancing and drinking wine. Caravaggio wants Hana and

Kip to get married. Kip remembers about his home and his family in India. He tells her about the temple, tree shine and a few other places. He also remembers how he arrived in Italy in October 1943. He remembers how the Germans have laid mines everywhere to terrorize Italian people.

There is a strange event in the tenth and the last chapter of this novel. In August, Hana notices Kip in the lower field of the villa. He was screaming and he goes to his tent, takes his rifle and goes to the English patient's room and wants to shoot the English patient with his gun just because he has come to know that the English have dropped the bomb at two cities of Japan. He is filled with ego which depends from one person to another, Koffka says, "The limits of the ego vary from case to case with the same person in different situations" (319).

He thinks that the English patient is representative of the English. Almásy also requests him to pull the trigger and kill him so that he may get rid of his life. This incident draws a wall between him and white people. He removes all the vestiges of military insignia from his clothes. He rides on an old motorbike without saying goodbye to Hana. Before he leaves, Caravaggio hugs him.

Hana has not written any letter to any of her family members after her father's death. She writes a letter to her step-mother, Clara. He feels remorseful that she could not save her father but she was a bit comforted because he died in a holy place. She says to her stepmother, Clara, "I wanted to go home and there was no one at home. And I was sick of Europe. Sick of being treated like gold because I was female" (85). This shows that the Western characters have neither existence nor power.

Kip also remembers the time he had spent with the English patient, Caravaggio and Hana in a small villa in Italy. He is working as a doctor and is living with his wife and two children. He remains busy taking care of his patients. His hands have turned all brown and is living an ordinary life with his family. He thinks about Hana and has curiosity about her life: how she is, with whom she is living and what she looks like etc. He sends a letter to her but he does not get any reply and ultimately gives up. John Fletcher writes in the “Introduction” of Jean Laplanche’s *Essays on Otherness*:

Although in some senses they function as alternatives—the unconscious consisting *either* of split-off representations of traumatic events *or* of ‘instinctual representatives’, representatives of somatic processes and their demands—they do so within the larger framework of a homogenising ‘Ptolemaic’ logic. (Fletcher 35)

The western world has used the power to dominate and rule the colonised. They violated the rules, flouted the basic principles and imposed a merciless dehumanisation. Fanon deliberates in this context:

Colonisation is not satisfied with merely holding a people in its grip and emptying the natives’ brain of all forms and contents. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (Fanon, 1986: 109).

Gramsci thinks that there are two types of societies in the world: political and civic. The former society is governed by the absolute power while the other is ruled by the constitution:

Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent. (Qtd. in Said, 2003, 6-7)

In the novel under discussion, Almásy is the representative of a blend of the East and the West. The West is a symbol of discipline, established identities, ideals of lucidity, nationalism, sophistication, civilization, and knowledge. On the other hand, the East symbolised poverty, chaos, oppression, mystery, hybridised identities, and primitiveness. Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan writes:

Kip represents the East while the other characters represent the West. In other words, Kip is portrayed as a mediator between the West and the East. The English patient's bed is located at the center of the villa: this refers to Euro-centralism. (Zidan 48)

Hall (1996) writes that the West has the supremacy over us as we underestimate ourselves and realize ourselves as the 'other' (Hall 225). This point is quite explicit from Kip's behaviour and relationships with the other characters of the novel. Edward Said also writes about it in *Orientalism*:

The two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West in this pair of plays will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography. A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant" (Said, 2003 57).

Almásy represents the West in this novel who has the postcolonial domination on others due to his vast knowledge. On the contrary, Kip is just looking for his identity

in a foreign world. He wants to look for his acculturation, assimilation and amalgamation in the Western civilization. In this novel Almásy, being a western character, has unlimited knowledge about the desert:

I have always had information like a sea in me. 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. I knew maps of the sea floor, maps that depict weaknesses in the shield of the earth, charts painted on skin that contain the various routes of the Crusades. (*EP* 19)

Almásy represents the Western society, and through his character the ugly face of Europe has been presented. He is blindfolded and burnt which means European civilization is about to diminish soon. It has been tried to emphasise that the disguised men remain as a recurring theme of the novel. The western people impose their culture on the east and they try to uproot others' culture so that they may feel selfless and rootless however strong the east may be, "This was a world [the East] that had been civilised for centuries, had a thousand paths and roads" (140). Lili Jana Burcar writes, "*The English Patient* problematizes national boundaries and illuminates the destructive nature of divisive nationalisms. However, in doing so, it fails to ask whose imagined communities nation-states really are" (109).

The English Patient epitomises voidness or absence. His physical appearance is distorted and he feels traumatic because of his past. He keeps thinking about his past as he knows that he has no future. His rumination about his past and his bleak future is the main point of Jean Laplanche's 'Afterwardsness'. The novel further tells

that the future of the world is Eastern, not Western. It is evident from the novel because all the English members of the Sand Club die while Kip remains alive and he has been depicted as healthy, affable, cooperative and intelligent. Another point to note is that The Bedouins cure the English patient while the western medicine fails to cure him. Hana pays no stone unturned to cure him. Beverley Curran writes that:

Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, saturated in sadness, guides the reader away from the containment of fidelity to authority and origin and the captivity of self-absorption to a narrative that admits its dependencies as a communal strategy for survival: the linguistic association of a needle under the skin, the guiding needle of a compass, and the needle skipping on the record of history are played out in narrative postures as troubling, irreconcilable and vital as the task of the translator. (Curran 8)

Both Kip and the English Patient have to undergo through the mental torture. The English Patient shares his mental agony with Hana. Both Kip and the English Patient personally feel that they are "othered" by race. The English Patient and Kip are a bit different from Hana and Caravaggio because these two characters have been accepted by the natives.

Hana's personal life is filled with many problems. She has done a lot for her patients but her work is different than that of men. Her abortion during the war breaks her and her unborn child is a huge loss to her, "I lost the child. I mean, I had to lose it. The father was already dead. There was a war" (*EP* 82). If Hana's child could take birth, perhaps she would not feel so lonely and alienated. This incident

reminds us about Lacan's 'Deferred Action'. She ruminates, "In my head. I was talking to him [the child] while I bathed and nursed patients. I was a little crazy" (*EP* 82).

When the war was at its peak and the wounded patients were coming into the hospital, she stopped talking with her unborn child. She has been criticised at few places in the novel. She closes the eyes of a dying soldier who is not dead and the soldier uses these words, "Can't wait to have me dead? You bitch!" (*EP* 83). She has been taken as a negative character due to her inhuman act. Hana is "sick of being treated like gold because [she is] female" (*EP* 81).

The *English Patient* sheds light on the "otherness" of the characters, "Ondaatje is Sri Lankan but Canadian; he then writes of a world in which Hungarians (the elusive patient himself) and Indians are central characters" (Maynard 68). Ondaatje's characters have to suffer due to several reasons. Kateryna Longley also writes:

Moving freely through familiar spaces (in narrative and in lived experience) is more than an expression of physical belonging—it also signifies the cultural belonging that is possible when one has absorbed the local webs of dominant rules, conventions, colloquialisms and gestures, and all the nuanced signposts which, when they are not understood or shared, turn social space into a minefield. (Longley 12)

Ondaatje's characters keep thinking about their past and their past memories make them sad. The *English Patient* is unable to forget the death of Catharine and likewise

Hana also keeps thinking about her unborn child, lover and father. It comes in the form of an unbearable loss to her that she tries to compensate by serving the English Patient and having affairs with other men. Kip and Caravaggio have their personal problems. In this way, these characters feel personally broken due to their own traumas and identity crisis. Elizabeth A. Waites writes in this context, “The individuals who repeatedly experience alterations in self-experience, for example, sometimes [they] begin constructing their identity over and over until the pattern of their life resembles a patchwork mosaic” (Waites 21). Roudinesco and Plon write in their 1997 book *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse* about the identity. They write:

[Deferred Action is a] word introduced by Sigmund Freud in 1896 to designate a process of reorganisation or reinscription by which traumatic events only take on significance for a subject in the après-coup, that is to say in a later historical and subjective con-text, which gives the events new significance. (Roudinesco and Plon 56)

War has made Caravaggio mentally and physically handicapped; his torment has spoilt his balance and he is frustrated so much that “he can return to no other world as he is, wearing these false limbs that morphine promises” (*EP* 116). Assimilation is a practice in which the people of any minority group have to adopt the customs and rituals of the dominant people. Berry aptly writes in this context that:

By assimilation we mean the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture...Assimilation refers thus to the fusion of cultural heritages, and must be distinguished from

amalgamation, which denotes the biological mixture of originally distinct racial strains. (Berry, 1974:21)

Wars have always brought destruction in the world and many innocent people have to die due to wars. In this novel also, war plays a crucial role due to which almost all the characters dive deep in their past and introspect what is happening to them and why. Kip also thinks about his past and his time spent with Hana, Caravaggio and the English patient but he becomes busy in his life. Their present lives are affected by the past activities and the four characters' personal traumas form their different perspectives. Babasaheb Ramdas Kangune observes:

World War-II provides the major historical and political background to the development of the plot of the novel *The English Patient*. The opening of the novel in flash-back creates a mental picture of war before the eyes of readers. That is the period between 1940s and 1950s. The happenings before and after World War-II provide background to the novel. While reading the novel, one gets acquainted with how each character in the novel is affected directly or indirectly by World War-II. World War-II connects major characters in the novel and that is the main cause behind important happenings in the novel *The English Patient*. (Kangune 196)

Trauma theory was coined and developed by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, the Yale University literary scholars. This trauma theory constitutes the paradoxical relationship between the precision of recall and elision of memory. Faimberg (1997) writes, "I have considered that the operation of 'Après coup' takes place in the

present time of the analytical sessions and gives retroactive significance to a previous experience. Moreover, the two points in time are linked by a relationship of meaning” (Faimberg 2).

It is very much clear that the lives of the four main characters of this novel by Michael Ondaatje are greatly affected by one or another kind of trauma. Trauma in one or the other form, associated with each character has made their lives miserable. After the blow of fate, Hana changes her attitude and decides to sacrifice her life in the service of the English patient. Kip also takes a bold step and returns to his country India and owns his new family forgetting about Hana and other members. Caravaggio’s profession of stealing leads him to lose his own hands and Almásy’s illicit relationship with a married woman becomes the cause of his major tragedy which makes him devoid of his identity. Sergio Benvenuto avers about this after the effect of the blow, “Laplanche recognizes that it was Jacques Lacan who put the concept of *après-coup* (literally ‘after the blow’) back into play. Before him no one had identified it as a unitary concept” (Benvenuto 72).

Lacan’s theory of ‘Deferred Action’ (*Après coup*) or ‘retroactivity’ is particularly relevant to Michael Ondaatje’s novel *The English Patient*. The novel is set during the final days of World War II and explores the lives of four people who are brought together in an abandoned Italian villa. The novel’s narrative is non-linear, and the characters’ past experiences and memories are constantly being revisited and reinterpreted.

The meaning of the English patient’s past experiences is constantly being reinterpreted in light of ‘Afterwardsness’. As Hana cares for him and listens to his

stories, she begins to develop a relationship with him that is shaped by her own experiences and expectations. Similarly, the patient's memories of Katharine are coloured by his present circumstances and his relationship with Hana. The novel suggests that the meaning of the patient's past experiences is not fixed but is rather constantly evolving as he interprets them in light of his present circumstances as well as future relationship.

'*Après coup*' in the novel is clearly indicated through the character of Kip, the Sikh sapper who has been assigned to clear unexploded bombs from the surrounding countryside. Kip's experiences during the war have shaped his understanding of his own identity and his relationship with the other characters in the novel. As he becomes involved with Hana and learns about the patient's past, his understanding of his own experiences and memories is constantly being reinterpreted.

Overall, '*Après coup*' and 'Afterwardsness' are central to *The English Patient*. The novel's non-linear narrative and focus on memory and interpretation suggest that the meaning of past experiences is constantly evolving and being reinterpreted in the light of present circumstances. The characters' relationships with one another are shaped by their own experiences and expectations, and the novel invites readers to consider the ways in which one's understanding of the past is always influenced by one's present and future experiences.

Chapter III

Trauma and Identity Formation in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*

Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* tells a tale of Sri Lanka caught up in the political turmoil from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. In this novel, the trauma of war and identity crisis are mirrored through the titular protagonist Anil Tissera's past memories. There are other minor characters whose personal tragedies and deaths in their families have made their life miserable. These characters peep into their past lives and see how tragic their lives have been. Many people died due to the Civil War in Sri Lanka and Anil thinks that she will help to get justice for them. Michael Ondaatje states that human beings fight wars for not solid reasons and they do so only for their personal motives. He writes that "The reason for war was war" (39). So many readers read this novel from a political point of view. Although it is not possible for the citizens of a country in war to remain untouched by it, the major characters of this novel: Anil, Sarath and Gamini are much more traumatised by their failed love relations than their country's internal conflict. They have their own sufferings to deal with, even in the midst of such uproar.

"You don't understand how bad things were. Whatever the government is probably doing now, it was worse when there was real chaos. You were not here for that—the law abandoned by everyone, save a few good lawyers. Terror everywhere from all sides. ...in nearly every house, in nearly every family, there was knowledge of

someone's murder of abduction by one side or another. I'll tell you a thing I saw...." (AG 150).

As far as the structure of *Anil's Ghost* is concerned, there are eight sections in the novel and the novelist narrates different characters through each section. There are some italicised sections also in the novel which have less connection with the plot of the novel. The novel presents some tragic moments in a scattered manner; the traumatic experiences of the characters have been explored on the basis of their past and future trauma as Schmidt also remarks, "The trauma claim is not in the past tense but instead in present and future tense" (Schmidt 241).

Anil Tissera is the main female protagonist of this novel. She is a Sri Lankan woman who works as a forensic pathologist first in the United Kingdom and then the United States. Her father Nelson K. Tissera worked in Spittel's Hospital. She left her country around fifteen years back. She returns after this long interval having new skills as a part of a Human Rights Investigation. The novel opens with the following words, "She arrived in early March, the plane landing at Katunayake airport before dawn" (AG 5). She had come for her personal work. "Anil Tissera was chosen as the Geneva Organization's forensic specialist, to be teamed with an archaeologist in Colombo. It was a seven-week project. Nobody at the Centre for Human Rights was very helpful about it" (12) because she does not have friends in Sri Lanka as is evident from the below discussion:

'You have friends here, No?'

'Not really.' (6)

Though Anil Tissera had some relatives in Sri Lanka yet she preferred to be alone there, “Anil was glad to be alone. There was a scattering of relatives in Colombo but she had not contacted them to let them know she was returning” (6). Anil was an introvert who would remain busy in her own work. She would love listening to songs, “She loved songs of anger and judgement” (66). She was noticing that certain changes have taken place in Sri Lanka during fifteen years. She felt that Sri Lanka had become a morally complicated world and thus compared Sri Lanka’s situation to Greek tragedies. She notices how the effect of the Civil War was clearly visible on the natives:

Anil had read documents and news reports, full of tragedy, and she had now lived abroad long enough to interpret Sri Lanka with a long-distance gaze. The streets were still streets, the citizens remained citizens. They shopped, changed jobs, laughed. (7)

Anil Tissera was working for the Human Right Investigations and her job was to send reports. She had also sent reports before leaving the United States. She would remain conscious in sending reports. She kept eyes on the documents and news reports, that’s why she says, “I couldn’t tell who was worst. The reports are terrible” (14). Anil has found that Sri Lanka’s environment has become very critical and she compares it with the Greek tragedies. She felt that Sri Lanka had become a morally complicated world and that’s why she compared Sri Lanka’s situation to Greek tragedies. She recalls the history of Matale which had been the epicentre of the late 1980s insurgency. This district was notorious for the insurgents during the failed Marxist revolution of 1987. In *Anil’s Ghost*, Anil Tissera received a vital report about

the discovery of a mass grave in Naipattimunai in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province in 1985. A. Kanimozhi remarks, "In this novel, *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje provides all the details of mass graves through the human rights report. Thus, his intention is not just unearthing the mass graves but unearthing the truth buried with bodies" (227). A blood-stained dead body was found with an identity card by a parent. These blood-stained clothes were worn by his son when he was arrested and later disappeared. Other people's identification in this mass grave was not done. Even the warden who reported about the annihilation was also jailed. Another human rights lawyer was also killed and was removed by the army to hide the truth. Through this novel, Michel Ondaatje has focused on the mass grave and the failure of the human rights commission in Sri Lanka.

Anil had to go to the Kynsey Road Hospital to meet forensic students where she got the first dead body which was recently dead. The bones of both the arms were broken. It was twenty-year characters remain united, facing all the problems and trauma caused by the Civil War. To quote Levina from "Is Ontology Fundamental?", we "exist in a circuit of understanding with reality" (5), we come to understand that human beings cannot escape from the reality and futility of human existence and have to bear the calamities done by men or nature. Ryan Mowat writes in his article:

Anil's Ghost is certainly a postcolonial comment on the crisis, but there is little to suggest that this is a novel concerned with the rights and wrongs of the war. (29)

The novel deals with the personal trauma of the main female character of this novel. At the very outset, when one looks at the title of the novel, one generally thinks that

the novel is about a male character Anil but when the novel is read, it is found that Anil is not a male character in this novel; instead, Anil is a female character. So, the trauma and tragedies are not only related with the person, but these are also related with the name of the character. Pier Paolo Piciuccio writes about this novel:

Anil's Ghost offers an outstanding behavioural example of the maelstrom of conflicting forces at drive in a postcolonial, transnational, diasporic, bisexual subject frantically trying to draw the contours of her own identity. (171)

One thing is absolutely clear in this novel that the war has the lesser effect on the lives of the characters, rather they are traumatised more by their own memories and the same happens in this novel also, just like the prior novel *The English Patient*. There are some dominating factors dealing with the trauma of the characters. There are three main characters in the novel Anil, Sarath and Gamini and it is clear that love- affair, and marriages remain the root cause of traumas. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as:

an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena (Caruth 2)

There are some past memories of Anil Tissera which keep her haunting and these memories obstruct the smooth plot of the novel when these memories appear in fragments like T.S. Eliot's *Kubla Khan*.

The government was not the only one doing the killing.... a couple of years ago people just started disappearing. Or bodies kept being found burned beyond recognition. There's no hope of affixing blame. And no one can tell who the victims are...Murders committed by all sides. I could not tell who was worst. The reports are terrible. (13-14)

It is interesting to note that the memories which have been discussed in the novel are not related to war. Instead, these memories are caused by some trauma which germinated from love or marriage. Government was involved in the activities of murders. However, outwardly it seemed that the government was protecting, there are different incidents which narrate the trauma and the problems of the characters. The novel describes how the trauma remains the part and parcel of this novel, "The warden of an orphanage who reported cases of annihilation was jailed. A human rights lawyer was shot and the body removed by army personnel" (AG 38). Not only this, Anil says to Sarath, "There are so many bodies in the ground now. That's what you said...murdered, anonymous. I mean, people don't even know if they are two hundred years old or two weeks old, they've all been through fire. Some people let their ghosts die, some don't" (49). Sarath's personal life was full of problems and after the death of his wife, he remains sad. Anil asks how Sarath's wife was:

'Did Mr Sarath ever come here with his wife?'

'Yes, Madame.'

'What was she like?'

'She's very nice, madame.... Even though she is dead.' (53)

The novel describes how the dead bodies were found at different places. These murders were done primarily by the government for its personal reason. Anil decides to know how much the government's role in these murders is:

I know that murders are sometimes committed during a war for personal reasons, but I don't think a murderer would have the luxury of buying a victim twice. The skeleton of this head is found by us in a cave in Bandarawela. We need to discover if we're talking about a murder committed by the government. (85)

The smell of mystery is identified when Anil and Sarath discover that a particular skeleton whom they give the name of the Sailor was killed, buried and reburied at a different place and it was the government behind everything. Michael Ondaatje writes:

Sailor is a name we have given the skeleton. The trace elements of soil in his bones do not match the soil where we found him. We don't necessarily agree about the exact bone age, but we are certain he was buried somewhere else first. That is, he was killed and then buried. Then he was dug up, moved to a new location and buried again. (85)

Anil was a very bold woman who takes decisions according to her wits. She adopts modern trends and techniques in the investigation. She is quite different from Palipana. Sarath and Palipana's conversation makes it clear:

Sir, you and I work on ancient rocks, fossils.... But Anil lives in contemporary times. She uses contemporary methods. She can cut a

cross section of bone with a fine saw and determine the skeleton's exact age of death that way. (91)

The Sailor's death remains a major mystery throughout the novel. The novel begins with Sailor and ends with Sailor. Many other incidents have been added in the novel which change the direction of the novel and prove it that it is a tragedy. Sailor's death also remains a mystery for Anil and Sarath as Sarath describes while talking to Palipana during their investigation of Sailor's body:

We don't know yet the year he was murdered. Ten years ago? Five years ago? More recently? We don't have the equipment to discover that. And given the circumstances of where he was buried, we can't ask for such assistance. (92)

The novel *Anil's Ghost* deals with the past whether it is repressed or forgotten. It is the past of the characters that deals with the creation of the identity of different characters. Several factors also help in the formation of identity of the characters. In her article "Exploring Transnational Identities in Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*", Victoria Cook postulates, "names are capable of providing verification; they have the power to distinguish, substantiate and confirm, and above all they confer identity and establish identification. (Cook 3)

Michael Ondaatje describes the history of Anil's name as well as about the change of name in the novel. The novelist does not talk much about her personal life in Sri Lanka but it is clear that she belonged to a well-to-do family. Michel Ondaatje has written about in the novel:

She knew herself to be, and was known to others as, a determined creature. Her name had not always been Anil. She had been given two entirely inappropriate names and very early began to desire 'Anil,' which was her brother's unused second name. (AG 63)

There were tensions in her home during that period, "Her campaign had caused anger and frustration within the household" (67). Anil has to sacrifice a lot for this name

which was her brother's unused name. She had tried to buy it from him.... She gave her brother one hundred saved rupees, a pen set he had been eyeing for some time, a tin of fifty Gold Leaf cigarettes she had found, and a sexual favour he had demanded in the last hours of the impasse. (63-64)

Anil knew it well that what she has acquired does not belong to her because this name belonged only to a boy and being a girl, it was giving her a dubious identity. Her name was creating doubt regarding her gender also. But she was feeling happy to acquire this name because she was getting a name which gender was not a barrier to her any more. She had indirectly become her brother's brother but inwardly she knew it well that she was a submissive woman. Her brother's demand of sexual fervour also reveals her submissive nature

Cook comments that Anil's new identity deprives her of her original identity, "Anil takes on a new identity; she becomes a 'stranger' to her past 'self'—to the person she was before she was Anil" (4). She adopts this new name because it has some connection with her. She thinks that her name will give her an opportunity of equality and liberty which in fact, does not happen with her. Cook holds the view that

it is a “liberating and self-creating action that affirms her identification with her ancestry, and assimilates her origins into her new persona” (4). One can feel the pain and trauma lead by the male-dominated colonial imperialism.

Michael Ondaatje writes how her name affects Anil’s personal and professional life. After three years of the change of her name, there was a strange and outrageous kind of environment in the family:

Her campaign had caused anger and frustration within the household.... In the end her parents relented but then they had to persuade her irritable brother to forfeit his second name. He, at fourteen, claimed he might need it someday. (63)

Anil’s parents, along with her, went to an astrologer to mollify her tautness and fury. The astrologer checked her birth date, time, hours and see the positioning of the stars and comes to the conclusion that her name is creating problems to her and he decides that “her tempestuousness could be harnessed with a name change” (132) and he finally decided that her name should be Anile.

Anil’s name—the one she’d bought from her brother at the age of thirteen—had another stage to go through before it settled.... The astrologer Soothsayer had eventually compromised his solution down to a simple appendage—the addition of an e, so she would become Anile. It would make her and her name more feminine, the e would allow the fury to curve away. But she refused even this. (133)

‘Afterwardsness’ is quite implicit as many a times she remembered the incidents related to her name and “it was the hunger of not having that name and joy of getting

it that she remembered most.... Twenty years later she felt the same about it.” (64) But it’s not traumatic recalling about these incidents as “Everything about the name pleased her, its slim, stripped-down quality, its feminine air, even though it was considered a male name.” (64)

Anil’s memory lane was occupied as she “found herself in the smoke of one bad marriage. She was in her early twenties and was to hide this episode from everyone she met later in her life. Even now she would not replay it and consider the level of damage.” (137) Devoid of her friends and family in London while studying at Guy’s Hospital she felt herself an outsider as nobody was close to her. She felt homesickness as well as loneliness. In that state of mind, she fell in love with the boy from Sri Lanka itself and easily got emotionally attached with him and soon got married with her boyfriend.

He was also a medical student there but he was not as shy as Anil. He was fully focused on Anil and Anil takes it as love, “Within days of their meeting he focused his wits entirely on Anil—a many armed seducer and note writer and flower bringer and telephone message leaver” (142). Anil enhances her friendship circle with his help and they are married quickly. It was an excuse of having a party together, “These private acts in an almost public sphere echoed his social nature. There seemed to be no difference for him between privacy and friendship and acquaintances. Later she would read that this was the central quality of a monster” (143). Anil comes to know very soon that she should not skip her studies and she should come back to earth and should focus on her studies.

The problems started appearing in their relationships when her father-in-law came to England and took them out for dinner. Anil came to know that her husband was not shy and he remained quiet during dinner and his father “attempted to persuade them to return to Colombo and have his grandchildren” (143). Further “He kept referring to himself as a philanthropist (143). During the dinner Anil came to know how he “objected to her having a full-time career, keeping her own name, [and] was annoyed at her talking back” (143). The very next day the son and father had had their lunch together and his father returned to Sri Lanka by his flight. They discussed something more but Anil did not know what they discussed. It was quite sure that Anil was the topic of their negotiation and after his father’s departure; Anil’s husband started quarrelling with her. Anil was “suspicious of his [new] insights and understanding” and that “During this time of claustrophobia and marital warfare, sex was the only mutual constant. [Where] She insisted on it as much as he. She assumed it gave the relationship some normality. Days of battle and fuck” (143-44).

Anil’s husband was jealous of her just because she was living an independent life while working in the lab and would return by evening. Her professional life became a stumbling block in her career and it “presented itself as sexual jealousy, then [became]...an attempt to limit her research and studies. It was the first handcuff of marriage, and it almost buried her” (144). Anil’s venture of marriage ultimately failed due to several reasons. She was not a woman who could remain under somebody’s control. When she felt that she was facing an identity crisis, she dared to take her brother’s name breaking the barriers of gender. Her new identity with her new name pleased her:

Later when she recalled her childhood, it was the hunger of not having that name and the joy of getting it that she remembered most. Everything about the name pleased her, its slim, stripped-down quality, its feminine air, even though it was considered a male name. Twenty years later she felt the same about it. (64)

She went to the United Kingdom to study medicine. She took this field not only for higher education, in fact she took this profession because she was thinking that this career will be more promising to her. She started feeling homesick in England and finally she got involved with a Sri Lankan boy. Over sexuality of her husband and his lack of differentiation between private and public spheres make her a submissive woman. When Anil looks back at her personal life, she feels that “there was considerable pleasure on both their parts during this early period. Though she realised it was going to be crucial for her to come back to earth, to continue her academic studies” (143).

She is unable to forget the words of her father-in-law who wanted to convey to her that her role was already decided at the moment when she married. She must know that she will have to return to Colombo and will have to bear children. It was clear from her father-in-law's views that it is very difficult for a woman to live an independent life in a man-made society. Anil realises the true role of a woman to please her husband, family members, to give birth to children and follow the advice of the elders of the family. A woman does not have the right to think and act independently just because she is dependent on others for everything. There are few important things which have been narrated in this novel. It is expected from Anil that

she must be known by her husband's name after her marriage and she cannot work without her husband's permission. She has no right to talk back. When they go to Colombo, her husband would be criticised for everything and it will be considered that he has no control over his wife. Her father-in-law "objected to her having a full-time career, keeping her own name, was annoyed at her talking back" (139)

It is evident from the lunch and dinner incident that her father-in-law sowed the seeds of doubts in her husband's mind. There may be chances that he might have been scolded by his father for having such a wife who is not under his full control. She must not be given such liberty that her husband may be under her control, "When she wept, he would weep" (139). It is also noteworthy that their marriage has been described as claustrophobic and like a warfare where two opposite genders and two opposite forces were working. It is also noteworthy that Anil is taking a masculine role and her husband is taking a feminine role with his constant weeping and Anil is doing her role boldly doing her duty in the library and attending her school regularly. On her part now, "there was no curfew or compromise with a lover anymore. She got home at midnight...every casebook and experiment and investigation alive in her head and reachable" (141).

Ultimately it was Anil who decided to leave her husband. She waits for the end of her term to leave her failing marriage so that she could "avoid the harassment he was fully capable of; [because] he was one of those men with time on his hands" (145). This moment was giving her joy and jubilation but at the same time it was "treated as something illicit that deeply embarrassed her" (144). It is also a strange thing that during her recollections, Anil does not mention the name of her husband. Without taking his name, she decides to erase him from her memory.

Anil starts getting solace after this break up and pays her full attention towards her studies. Resultantly she gets a scholarship to study in the United States and does her further studies in forensic science in Human Rights Investigations. After two years she found herself studying in Arizona where she was studying the chemical and physical changes taking place in bones during life and even after death.

While working as a forensic scientist, Anil Tissera became more explicit in the differentiation between men and women and she came to know that it is much easier to differentiate male and female traits. She “made it a point to distinguish female and male traits as clearly as possible” (137). Though Anil does not feel like that, she should feel like a submissive gender while working in the laboratory. She further realises that she is in a profession where only men dominate and it is Anil herself who sees the differences between two sexes. She had “witnessed how women were much more easily discombobulated by the personal insights of a lover or husband; but they were better at dealing with calamity in professional work than men” and that, “They were geared to giving birth, protecting children, steering them through crisis”. While men play a different role. They “needed to pause and dress themselves in coldness in order to deal with a savaged body” (137). During her trainings at different places, Anil found that women were more befitting in the profession of Forensic Science. She saw that “Women doctors were more confident in chaos and accident, calmer in dealing with the fresh corpse of an old woman, a young beautiful man, [and] small children” (137). She would enjoy the environment created by other fellow forensic scientists. Anil Tissera sometimes feels nostalgic. She personally feels that women are more adept in dealing with the calamity in professional work.

Anil and Sarath want to solve the mystery of Sailor's death and for that purpose they go to the Grove of Ascetics which is a 6th century monastery which is now occupied by Palipana, Sarath's former teacher. Palipana has been a well-known archeologist of his time. His fame dwindled just because he failed to prove that the ancient texts on which he had done his experiments really existed or not. Though his work was applauded in the local and foreign journals, it was stated about his texts that "They were fiction" (81). After his fall from the academic world, he decided to live as an ascetic. He was then fully dependent on his niece Lakma who looked after him at his old age.

Lakma was a twenty-year-old girl who had decided to devote her life for the service of her uncle. She was a true witness. Her parents were killed in front of her eyes that's why she would remain much terrified and woe-begotten:

The shock of the murder of the girl's parents, however, had touched everything within her, driving both her verbal and her motor ability into infancy....The nightmares continued for Lakma, who was unable to deal with the possible danger around her...any sudden sound was danger to her...[she] would not sleep in the safety of her bed but hidden underneath it. (42)

Lakma is suffering more due to her parents' loss in her life because they did not die a natural death, instead they were murdered. Thus, it is absolutely clear that two characters Anand and Lakma become the direct victims of the Civil War.

My parents died in a car accident after I left Sri Lanka. I never got a chance to see them again.

I know. I heard your father was a good doctor.

I should have been a doctor, but I swerved off into forensics. Didn't want to be him at that time in my life, I guess. Then I didn't want to come back here after my parents died. (43)

Lakma did not speak even to her uncle for whom she has devoted her life. Lakma had seen the murder of both of her parents and after that she was taken by nun in a government run ward for children whose parents were killed in the Civil War:

A few years before, the girl Lakma had seen her parents killed. A week after their murder, the twelve-year-old child was taken to a government ward run by nuns, North of Colombo, that looked after children whose parents had been killed in the Civil War. The shock of the murder of girl's parents, however, had touched everything within her, driving both her verbal and her motor ability into infancy...she wanted nothing more to invade her. (99)

The girl remained silent for more than a month. She would take less interest in other activities and would come outside only to do exercises in the sunlight. She would remain under constant fear.

“A child who knew the falseness of the supposed religious security around her...she was immune to any help in this place. Any sudden sound was danger to her” and “She would finger through every meal looking for insects or glass [and] would not sleep in the safety of her bed but hidden underneath it” (99).

Palipana was her only relative and he decided to bring her back from the government ward and took her to the Grove of Aesthetics. She was an intelligent girl, “Whatever skills she learned from her parents had been abandoned too deep within her” (104). Palipana decides to teach her everything he knows about history. He would travel with her across the countryside and would explore historical sites. Palipana would share her personal experiences with her and she would listen to everything silently. She would not speak and would remain, “a silent amanuensis for his whispered histories” where he “blended fragments of stories so that they became a landscape” (105).

This type of trauma breaks people inwardly and they feel unable to recover from their loss and so it happens with these characters. Jeffery C. Alexander holds the views that “the cultural construction of collective trauma is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering, but it is the threat to collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake (81). His concern is with “traumas that become collective. They can become so if they are conceived as wounds to social identity” (81). One thing that is quite important in this novel is that these two persons are suffering from their individual loss which does not matter to other people. Their personal comfort, happiness and peace are at stake due to these deaths. Though there are other characters such as Anil, Sarath, Gemini etc. who are suffering from trauma but their heartbreak is quite different from the first two characters because the last three characters are feeling depressed due to their amorous activities. The personal traumas of Lakma and Palipana affect their lives to a great extent. Alexander speaks of a cultural trauma that it occurs:

...when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever, and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (Alexander 1)

Palipana's life was not less than a tragedy as he had seen many failures in his life. It has been aptly narrated in the novel about him:

The man I mentioned, the artist, there was tragedy in his life. Now he works in the gem pits, goes down into them four or five days a week. An arrack drinker, I've heard. It is not safe to be with him underground." (104)

Before his death, Palipana helps Anil and Sarath in solving the Sailor's identity. Anil Tissera says to Palipana:

This is Anil Tissera...We're working together analysing some skeletons that were found near Bandarawela.'

'Yes.'

'How do you do, sir?'

'A most beautiful voice.'

'And Anil suddenly realized he was blind.' (81)

Palipana tells them of an artist named Ananda who could rebuild the head of the skeleton. Anil wanted to prove that the sailor was killed at the hands of the government officials and wanted to prove it. In the course of events, she comes to

know about heartless killings and “many heads stuck on the poles” taken away by the family members early morning. “There were blows to the heart. There was only one thing worse. That was when a family member simply disappeared and there was no sighting or evidence of his existence or his death.” (181) Ananda’s attempt of stabbing himself was a bolt from the blue for Anil. “If he died in the night, she could not face going in there” (195).

And the night, of course, was a hell for Anil. “She felt manically awake, shivering, she wanted to talk.... And tried to disappear in sleep” (196). As the night passes, Anil is woken by Sarath and he says, “He’ll be alright...You saved him. Getting to him so quickly, then the bandage, the epinephrine. The doctor said he didn’t know too many who would know to do that in a crisis” (196). “It was lucky” Anil replies, to which Sarath asserts, “You should live here. Not be here for just another job”. Sarath’s statement lights a fire within Anil, “This isn’t just ‘another job’! I decided to come back. I wanted to come back” (196).

Michael Ondaatje writes how two characters Linus Corea and Gemini are doctors by profession but they know the human predicaments of the war. Both the characters have their different problems. Linus Corea was kidnapped and taken to the insurgent camp while Gemini’s life becomes a tragedy for him and he seems to be taking less interest in the research activities: He says:

“My marriage disappeared. All that ceremony—and then it evaporated in a couple of months. I was too intense then. I am probably another example of trauma, you see. That happens when there is no other life. What the fuck do my marriage and your damn research mean” (128).

Linus Corea was a Colombo based neurosurgeon who worked in the private sector. He belonged to the family of doctors for three generations. He was in his late forties when the war broke out. His work was being done smoothly and many reputed personalities were his patients. Ten years have passed since he married and he had two sons also. He was liked by all just because he was very kind. He was interested in photography and he printed his own pictures in the evenings.

His bodyguard was shot dead in 1987 and he was kidnapped while he was playing golf. The people who kidnapped him came from the woods and they shot his bodyguard directly at head from forty yards. They behaved with him calmly but they broke one of his ribs and then took him in a car. Nobody could know about his kidnapping, "For months no one knew where he had got to" (117). The kidnappers did not ask for any ransom money. After eight months of his kidnapping, Linus's wife was alone in her house with her two children, then a man came to the door and handed her over a letter written by her husband. He came inside. There was a note written on the letter, "*If you wish to see me again, come with the children. if you don't wish to, I will understand*" (117). Linus' wife wanted to telephone the police but she was warned. She knew that their marriage had not been much happier, "It had not been a joyous marriage. Comfortable but not happy. Affections on the thin scale of things" (117). Her husband has written to bring eight books. He has written the place where these could be found. She packed a few extra clothes for her children but she packed nothing for herself.

Linus Corea instructed his kidnappers that he needed some smocks, rubber gloves and morphemes. He would give them the list of the things he needed so he would get these things on time. They kidnapped a nurse for him. The nurse also did

not complain about her fate. Linus Corea also did not want anything for him and he was living a complacent life, “He thanked people for nothing much and he didn’t ask for anything unless it was badly needed. He became accustomed to this lack of need, was rather proud of it. If he wanted something—syringes, bandages and a book—he would write out a list and give it to them. Maybe a week later, maybe six weeks, he’d get them” (119).

Linus Corea’s wife and children wanted to meet him and when they come to meet him, he confesses that he is feeling happy in serving the people who get wounded in the war, “it’s [his] life; all that blood and patients” (52). Though he knows it well that this job is quite challenging but he accepts it happily. He does not prefer to avoid doing his service of patients, rather he avoids his family. His wife and children went, met him and there is no emotional breakthrough in their get together.

Linus Corea did not know up to when he would be kept there by his kidnappers. So, he starts teaching the nurse everything about surgery. The nurse, Rosalyn, was forty years old. He did not miss his family after the first month just because he would remain busy. “After the first month he admitted to himself that he didn’t miss his wife or children anymore, even that much of Colombo. Not that he was happy there, but being busy he was preoccupied” (119).

They feel more satisfied at this place and live for more than the desired level. They feel happy and satisfied to work in the war affected regions. When they are kidnapped and are taken to the insurgent camps, they feel content with their jobs. They prefer to live there more than the time required for their kidnapping and they personally feel that “It was the best place” (96) to serve the society. Being in their

profession, it was the best platform from where they were doing their duty according to their satisfaction level, “They all knew it was about the sense of self-worth that during those days in that place had overcome them” (96).

There is an incident of an explosion of a bomb on a public place. The novelist describes the tragedies of common people in this novel how the general masses become the target of the terrorists. Ondaatje writes, “Everyone was emotionally shattered by a public bomb. Months later survivors would come into the ward saying they feared they might still die.... But what did harm was an emotional shock” (122). Likewise, Gemini also does not wake up from his sleep when he is thinking or dreaming about the war. He was in love with his sister-in-law with whom he had fallen in love but unfortunately, he could not save her and she died in his arms despite his all efforts. He was feeling remorseful for his selfishness just because she was a married woman.

I needed to reach her. I didn't want her to feel alone, in this last stage. I overloaded her with painkillers but I didn't want her to sleep. I should have just knocked her out, let her go. But I wanted her to be comforted by me being there. That it was me, not him, not her husband. (104).

Thus, in this novel also Michael Ondaatje writes about the love affair with a married woman like we see in *The English Patient* in which Almásy is in love with Katharine, a married woman. Ondaatje has taken death as a motif that revives the tragic moments of the characters. Sarath's academic life was very difficult, “The three years Sarath spent as a student of Palipana's were the most difficult of his

academic life” (75). We see that Sarath’s wife also commits suicide and the readers come to know about it when he remembers her. He sees her in the rocks, “The rock hand could have been his wife’s hand” (115).

Sarath’s life becomes empty and hollow after the death of his wife. He feels broken and sometimes he remains lost in the memories of his wife. He starts taking less interest in the worldly activities, “Sarath had never found the old road back into the world” (115).

The main female protagonist, Anil Tissera, remains haunted by the memories of her boyfriend Cullis. “Anil was standing on the wood ledge that she would later sleep on, thinking of Cullis. Where he might be. No doubt in the arms of his busy marriage. She would avoid thinking of him there. He had now allowed her much room in the world, and her views of him had always been a partially blindfolded one” (96). She is so obsessed with her that he comes in her dreams also. “When Anil was working with the forensic team in Guatemala, she’d flown into Miami to meet Cullis. She arrived exhausted, her face and body drawn out” (29).

Sigmund Freud aptly writes about the psychoanalysis on the basis of illnesses of his patients. He has done his observations on the basis of his treatment of his patients. Comparing him with Jung, Brierley has significantly remarked, “Freudian patients dream Freudian dreams and Jungian patients dream Jungian dreams” (25). In this context, Anil also keeps dreaming and thinking about her past life. When she is with Palipana, even then she keeps thinking about Cullis and how she has left him wounded in Borrego. She was not happy in her married life and would remain unhappy and distressed. Her ex-husband would make her feel “fear and

claustrophobia arising within her” (AG 60). That was one of the reasons that she could not sustain her faith in Sarath also.

There may be another reason for it and she feels it much awkward when her brother asks for the sexual favour from her which “her brother had asked for when she insisted on changing her name” (27). Anil fails to have faith in men just because she had found that men are treacherous and cruel. She feels about it, “What were the missing organs in men that made them stroll through life as courteously unfaithful, nonverbal creatures?” (84) and all this makes her life traumatic because a man is needed for a woman who can respect her and give her identity but Anil Tissera finds that the men with whom she remained in contact, did not prove faithful and reliable to her.

Another death that appears in the novel is that of Sirissa, Anand’s wife. Anand feels that his wife had the trait of remaining calm, “a calm [he] had known in his wife, a peacefulness he wanted for any victim” (78) and that’s why he remains much emotionally attached with her. He thinks about the stories of the way she had died and how brave she was, “the way Sirissa had died ...in the vacuum of her disappearance. A small brave heart in the heights she loved and in the dark she feared” (127). Anand gets so attached with his wife that he is unable to forget her and he starts drinking so that he may forget her. Not only this, he attempts to commit suicide also.

Michael Ondaatje relates their love affairs and mishaps with the Civil War. When Anil and Cullis are separated, Anil Tissera thinks that “like him she would continue the war” (110). The same happens in Gemini’s case also. Ondaatje writes

that he “was a perfect participant in the war” (93). Moreover, Gemini loves a woman he was not married to, “He had been in love with just one woman and she was not the one he married” (220). Gemini was also suffering from his own personal tragedy, “Two months after his wife left him, Gemini collapsed from exhaustion, and the administration ordered a leave. He had nowhere to go, his home abandoned” (211). Gemini also shares with Anil Tissera his relationships with his sister-in-law too. He just tries to relieve himself from the guilty consciousness that he kept giving her pain even in the last moments of her life and failed to save her. He speaks about it to a girl also whom he meets.

It is nil Tissera who tells Sarath about her relationships with Cullis and his girlfriend Leef. Though she knows that Sarath is not a man on whom she can trust, she still shares her feelings with him just because she comforts hers by sharing Cullis and Leef’s failed relationships.

Thus, these characters try to comfort themselves by getting someone who can listen to them and feel sympathy for them. Though Anil is only professionally linked with Sarath, but when Sarath is brutally murdered by the Sri Lankan government, it was Gemini who feels shocked and heartbroken. It was a personal loss to him. Though when Sarath was alive, Gemini also had a kind of cold war with him but as and when he comes to know that Sarath is murdered, he is grief-stricken. He feels that “if he did not talk to him in this moment, admit himself, his brother would disappear from his life” (119). He becomes emotional to see his dead body and he starts nursing his dead body and dressing his wounds “as if treating the hundred small traumas would eventually bring him back into his life” (119). Susannah

Radstone in her essay regarding trauma theory concludes that “it is not an event, which is by its nature ‘toxic’ to the mind, but what the mind later does to memory” (22).

It is a strange thing to note that the characters have to suffer just because they think about their past. It is also interesting that their memories or worries are not about the Sri Lankan Civil War. Here also the woe begotten faces are seen like *The English Patient*. The following lines of the novel *Anil's Ghost* aptly describe the personal traumas and agonies, “One can die from private woes as easily as from public ones” (Ondaatje 84).

Thus, personal trauma emerges as a dominant theme in this novel. The characters are not afflicted with the war memories rather they suffer from some personal mental shocks and injuries which keep striking in their minds.

Anil and Sarath go to the local mines of that area because they came to know that Sailor worked in a mine there. Sarath had a hunch that Sailor worked in a plumbago-graphite mine. That's why they go to the village with Sailor's reconstructed head. Anil knew it well that it would be very difficult to identify Sailor based on Ananda's instruction just because there were many incidents of disappearance in the village, “There had been so many disappearances” (205). They were trying hard to do their search in the proper direction. It was the third plumbago village where they identified Sailor as Ruwan Kumara. He was a former toddy tapper, who after falling from a tree and breaking his leg, was able to get work in a local mine. The “outsiders” brought a billa, “someone from the community with a gunny sack over his head, slits cut out for his eyes—to anonymously identify the

rebel sympathizer” (265). Ondaatje writes that, “A billa was a monster, a ghost, to scare children in games, and it had picked out Ruwan Kumara and he had been taken away” (265). Sarath leaves for Colombo so that he may find Ruwan Kumara’s name in the government list of undesirables. Anil waits for his return. Sarath predicts that it may take only two days but he was wrong. He leaves his phone also with Anil but she could get no information from his side for five days, “All her fears about him rose again—the relative who was a minister, his views on the danger of truth” (269) began to take shape in her mind. It was the sixth day and Anil was getting furious. Anil makes a call to her father’s friend, Dr Perera and tells him that she needs his help. She tells him, “I have to make a report and I need help...You knew my father. You worked with him. I need someone I can trust. There is maybe a political murder” (270). Dr. Perera relies on her, “You are speaking on a cell phone. Don’t say my name...I can try to arrange something. Where are you?” (270).

After one day, Anil finds herself in the Armory Auditorium, which was the p[art of the anti-terrorist unit building in Colombo where “She no longer had possession of Sailor’s skeleton” (271).

One day Anil meets many army and police personnel in an auditorium who were trained in counter-insurgency methods. The auditorium was “half filled with various officials, among them military and police personnel trained in counter-insurgency methods” (271). Anil stands alone with a skeleton that was not Sailor and she starts explaining the methods of bone analysis and skeletal identification. She blames that the government officials have killed many people, “I think you murdered hundreds of us”. (272). Sarath was also listening to her and he also thinks that Anil

was still with the Sri Lankan people, “*Hundreds of us*. Sarath thought to himself. Fifteen years away and she is finally *us*” (272). It was a revolting speech and Sarath sensed the danger behind this speech. There was an outburst in the room and “he sensed the hostility in the room” (272). He makes a plan so that he may save Anil and their mission. He starts questioning her in a patronising tone of voice. He tells her that this skeleton may be hundred years old, “The skeleton you have here is likely to be a hundred years old—in spite of your fine social work about its career and habits and diet” (274). In her defence Anil says that she could have proved it if the skeleton would not have been confiscated.

Sarath deliberately takes the blame that she was negligent and she lost it. Anil tells her that she is an international authority working for the human rights investigation and she has been invited. Sarath says, “To *us*. To the government *here*. That means you work for the government here” (274). There is a debate between Sarath and Anil. Anil wants to blame the government for the killings of people, “What I wish to report is that some government forces have possibly murdered innocent people” (274). Sarath tries to convince her that whatever she is saying “could result in chaos” and he asks her to investigate and find out who is responsible for all this killing, “Why do you not investigate the killings of government officers?” (275). Sarath’s statement gets a scattered applause from the auditorium.

Sarath challenges Anil and he tells her to do another forensic study on another skeleton. He says that his archaeological team has “A two-hundred-year-old corpse” and he wants to get it proved that the government is responsible for it. Anil accepts this challenge and she is given forty-eight hours to prove her study. Sarath tells her

that she should leave all her research, tape recorder and tells her to leave the building. He also tells her that she will get the new corpse outside.

When Sarath brings out the corpse and loads it into a van for Anil, he imagines what Anil will be doing. He thinks that she will be angrily walking and slamming each door and they would be halting her and would be checking her papers to irritate and humiliate her, “she would be searched, vials and slides removed from her briefcase or pockets, made to undress and dress again...”. (277).

When she came back after one and a half hours, her reports and papers were confiscated. Sarath warns her about the present situation. He tells her to sit in the van and should start working on the skeleton. He says that she should forget about her papers and information which have been confiscated. She comes to the ground of reality from Sarath’s bizarre behaviour Sarath says, “Go with the skeleton and work on it. You don’t have long. Don’t call me. Get it done overnight. They want a report in two days. But get it done tonight” (282).

Anil seems to be taking less interest in the report. She is drunk with “no wish in her to be here anymore”; speaking aloud, “just to hear the echo in the dim light so she would not feel alone with the ancient skeleton she had been given” (283). She decides to work on the skeleton half-heartedly. She slowly cuts away the plastic wrapping. She finds that it was not a new skeleton; rather it was Sailor’s skeleton. She finds her tape-recorder in the skeleton's chest cavity. When she turns on the recorder “voices began filling the room around her” (284). She finds all the information in the tape recorder. She had not turned off the tape recorder, then Sarath's voice came very clear.

I'm in the tunnel of the Armory Building. I have just a moment. As you can tell, this is not any skeleton but Sailor. It's your twentieth-century evidence, five years old in death. Erase this tape. Erase my words here. Complete the report and be ready to leave at five tomorrow morning. There's a seven o'clock plane. Someone will drive you to the airport. I would like it to be me but it will probably be Gunesena. Do not leave the lab or call me. (284)

In the end, Anil is able to recover the remains of Ruwan Kumara and the pertinent information regarding her investigation. She thinks about the two brothers Sarath and Gamini how they loved their country. "They spoke of how much they loved their country. In spite of everything". And how "No Westerner would understand the love they had for the place" (285). The novel ends on an open ending and readers are not able to know what happens with Anil and her investigations. It is assumed that she might have followed Sarath's instructions and boarded the plane taking her research report with her. Michael Ondaatje's protagonist Anil has to flee from the island and Gamini says that Anil is "the tired hero.... going home."

Thus, Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* tells a tale of Sri Lanka caught up in the political turmoil from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. So many readers read this novel from a political point of view. Although it is not possible for the citizens of a country in war to remain untouched by it, the major characters of this novel: Anil, Sarath and Gamini are much more traumatised by their failed love relations than their country's internal conflict. They have their own suffering to deal with, even in the midst of such uproar. (5)

Anil's Ghost “resists rendering historical trauma in a narrative that is any way teleological or redemptive” (Siddiqi 205). At one-point Sarath tells Anil that he has seen “real chaos...Terror everywhere, from all sides. We wouldn't have survived with your rules of Westminster then” (AG153-54). The war remains in the background of the characters and that's why many people's lives got affected by war:

Ah—a secret against the government. Or perhaps a government secret. We are in the Grove of Ascetics. We are safe here. And I am the safest secret-holder. Besides, it makes no difference to me whose secret it is. You already know that, don't you, Sarath? Otherwise, you would not have come all this way for help. Is that not correct?’ (82).

The whole novel has been analysed through two main aspects of *Nachträglichkeit* i.e., ‘deferred action’ and ‘retrospective attribution’. “Most translators of *Après-coup* use either “deferred action” or “retrospective modification” or their equivalents, at the expense of the flexibility of *Nachträglichkeit*” (House and Slotnick 685). Deferred action means an action that has been delayed due to one or another traumatic event. The second here refers to memorising, reviving and recollecting any past event that becomes the cause of disappointment. Sigmund Freud had an experience how the hysteria or trauma occurs with those children who repress their tragic memories of sexual exploitation in their childhood and the same children reinterpret and explore their experiences after attaining puberty because by then they create their identity also. All this has been explored in Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* in which trauma of different characters has been described who talk about their personal traumas. Jonathan House and Julie Slotnick write:

In recent Anglophone psychoanalytic writing, the term is generally used to mean “retrospective modification,” which is to say the resignification of memories, a kind of reversal of “the arrow of time.” (685)

Thus, Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* is all about various themes related to the trauma and identity crisis of different characters of the novel. Anil’s change of name leads to the conflicts in her identity and she further fails to decide whether she belongs to the east or the west. The dichotomy of the East and the deaths and departures also lead to traumatic shocks to characters such as Sarath, Palipana, Lakma, Gamini, Linus Corea etc. These characters peep into their past life and are uncertain about their future because they seem to have lost the charm of life due to personal traumas in their lives. Thus, *Anil’s Ghost* can be called a series of tragedies of different characters. V. Pandimeena and J. Keerthana remark about this novel:

Anil’s Ghost can produce a treatment of trauma that is deeply rooted in human perception, understanding and experience allows for new way of attempting to understand trauma and new paths for empathy, and enables personal and communal regeneration. (146)

Chapter IV

Fragmentation, Void and Loss in *Divisadero*

Michael Ondaatje has portrayed different themes in his novels and in this series, his novel *Divisadero* focuses on the themes of fragmentation and disintegration of a family due to incestuous relationship between a brother and sister. Apart from it, the themes of alienation, void, loss, memory, diaspora, intertextuality, multiculturalism, and identity crisis also can be found in this novel. Carmen Concilio aptly observes about the main characters in his paper:

They write about what they have lost, or what they have left behind, their homelands/ mother-lands, they write elegies of homecoming with the voice of orphans not only of an almost--mother, but of history itself. (Concilio 26)

The present chapter attempts to underscore the issues of fragmentation, void and loss in Michel Ondaatje's fifth novel *Divisadero* from different perspectives particularly applying the theory of 'Deferred Action' and concept of 'Afterwardsness' and all this is possible through the memory lane which is the most spectacular quality of Ondaatje's novels because many events in his novels have been depicted through flashback technique. The chapter analyses the representations of violence and psychic trauma of Anna, Coop and their father provoked by sexual fervour done between the siblings of a family. Thus, memory plays an integral role in Ondaatje's novels and the present novel *Divisadero* is also not an exception.

Thus, this novel deals with many things altogether and Michael Ondaatje also makes it clear in an interview with Waddell, “*Divisadero* is about many things, but especially about identity and the mysteries of who exactly we are” (Waddell n.pag.). This novel was first published in 2007 by Bloomsbury Publishing, London. Ondaatje has written this novel in three parts: i) “Anna, Claire, and Coop” ii) “The Family in the Cart” and iii) “The house in Demu”. Ondaatje was awarded the Governor General’s Literary Award for this novel. Sofie De Smyter writes that “*Divisadero* can be called Michael Ondaatje’s most fictional novel so far” (Smyter 100).

The novel narrates an interesting story of a rancher’s daughter, Anna, his adopted daughter, Claire and his hired hand, Coop whom he takes to bring up and work for him. The novel has a bucolic setting of around 1970 and then it shifts to rural France between the First World War and today. The rancher’s daughter Anna is the narrator of the novel who belongs to “Divisadero Street”. However, there are other narrators also in different sections of the novel. The novel is all about an unlucky father whose son and daughter have semi-incestuous relationship and it becomes the reason of unhappiness and fragmentation in this family. Leo Tolstoy aptly writes in *Anna Karenina* “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” (Tolstoy 3) how this family becomes an unhappy family. Dr. Josephena John writes about a family that “Family is fundamentally considered as people who are connected by relationship or love” (John 1349).

The word “Divisadero,” has been derived from the Spanish word which means division or fragmentation. This Spanish root verb means to divide or to gaze from the distance and this is the main theme of this novel. *Divisadero* here refers to

Anna's address in San Francisco. Anna also personally feels, "I look into the distance for the people I have lost so I see them everywhere". Anna tells about this street:

What was the fictional street's name? In a longer memory. I come from 'Divisadero' Street. Divisadero, from the Spanish word for 'division', the street that at one time was the dividing line between San Francisco and the fields of the Presidio. Or it might derive from the word 'divisar', meaning 'to gaze at something from a distance.' (There is a 'height' nearby called El Divisadero.) Thus, a point from which you can look far into the distance. (142-143)

Thus, the novel is all about fragmentation, estrangement and violence in the modern world. As stated by Dr Aseda Fatima R., "The novel *Divisadero*, depicts varied layers of family, rewriting the basic concepts of family and by defining it as those individuals who stay in your life and let you grow in spite of differences such as biological bond, foster care and family that one sets up as they form their own spaces." (Fatima R 643) The division of a happy family due to petty issues is possible and all this has been narrated in this novel. This division of family brings a metamorphosis in the atmosphere of the family which leaves a very bad impact on the rancher's psyche. Jean Laplanche writes in *Essays on Otherness* that, "External alterity refers back to internal alterity" (Laplanche 124). The novel opens with Claire's horse riding and her grandfather's details of arrival to their country:

By our grandfather's cabin, on the high ridge, opposite a slope of buckeye trees, Claire sits on her horse, wrapped in a thick blanket. She has camped all night and lit a fire in the hearth of that small structure

our ancestor built more than a generation ago, and which he lived in like a hermit, or some creature, when he first came to this country.

(*Divisadero* 7)

This novel has been written initially in the first-person narrative from Anna's point of view and few sections are written in the third person from the other two main protagonists, Claire and Coop's perspectives. The last section of the novel is a third person rendering of a writer Lucien Segura. The novel has so many paradigms shifts from past to present and present to past. John Fletcher writes in the "Introduction" of Laplanche's book *Essays on Otherness* that "the past is simply the creation of the present" (Fletcher 39). The structure of the novel is quite fragmented due to different stories of characters. Some critics find that it is a collection of novellas. In the whole, the novel has been keenly written and it is more tightly woven than any collection of interrelated stories.

Claire starts working as a lawyer in the Public Defender's Office in San Francisco. She is a responsible girl and she does not forget to meet her father on weekends. "She would drive out of the city to the farm south of Petaluma and spend an hour or two of Friday night with her father" (*DD* 103). She talks about the disintegration of the family but Claire does not want to talk on this matter. Claire's horse-riding on the wild landscape has been mentioned in this novel in a few places. and Coop chooses to become a professional gambler. This novel has been written in three parts in order to make the plot easy and straightforward. The first part of the novel is set in the 1970s in Northern California. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes how Anna used to live with her father who used to drink. Ondaatje writes:

Most mornings we used to come into the dark kitchen and silently cut thick slices of cheese for ourselves. My father drinks a cup of red wine. Then we walk to the barn. Coop is already there, raking the soiled straw, and soon we are milking the cows, our heads resting against their flanks. (*DD 8*)

Anna and her widowed father live on a remote farm in Gold Rush country. She has two adopted siblings. Among them Coop was hired by her father to do domestic chores. Ondaatje writes, “A father, his two eleven-year-old-daughters, and Coop, the hired hand, a few years older than us” (*DD 8*). Coop would speak less to his siblings just because they were of opposite sex. His language was also uncertain but he was an open soul for everybody. He has some strong and weak points like a human being. He had a better understanding of the world but he could not speak well, “We realised his taciturn manner was not a wish for separateness but tentativeness about words. He was adept in the physical world where he protected us. But in the world of language, he was our student” (*DD 9*). Being a single parent, their father could not pay much attention to these two girls and it was Coop who would listen to them:

Our father had brought us up single-handed and was too busy to be conscious of intricacies. He was satisfied when we worked at our chores and easily belligerent when it became difficult to find us. Since the death of my mother, it was Coop who listened to us complain and worry and he allowed us the stage when he thought we wished for it. (*DD 9*)

Their father wanted Coop to become a rancher and nothing else. Coop was being trained for it by his father. He had to work in the farm being a man, “Only Coop, among the three of us, who’d worked on the farm since he was a boy, had known her as someone alive” (*DD* 10). There was a story of violence behind Coop’s background. Michael Ondaatje narrates about this violence:

There was terrible violence on the farm next to ours. The Cooper family was killed by a hired hand who beat them to death with a wooden board. At first no one knew who had committed such an act, but their son had hidden in the crawl space under the floorboards of the house for several days. He was four-years old and he came out eventually and told who had done it. We took the boy in, to stay and work on the farm. (*DD* 11)

Anna’s mother, Lydia Mendez died in childbirth when she was merely twenty-three. There were some memories associated with their mother. Lydia had spoken of the events that stumbled against her, she had affection for the goat man, she would enjoy dancing and it was her kindness that brought Coop in their house. There were some uncertain things also about her, “there is nothing revealed about her pleasure, or her intelligence or her compassion” (*DD* 11). Her rancher father’s kindness is reflected from his act of bringing another infant Claire at his home from the same hospital in which her mother was giving birth. Claire was also a motherless girl and Anna’s father took pity on her helplessness and he brought both the girls from the hospital so that other people may think that both are his daughters. Ondaatje writes in this context:

... when he took on informally the adoption of a child from the same hospital where his wife was giving birth—the daughter of another mother, who had also died...bringing both children's home and raising the other child, who had been named Claire, as his own. So, there would be two girls Anna and Claire, born the same week. (*DD* 11)

In this way, the narrator provides full details of the hospital's location, "It was a field hospital on the outskirts of Santa Rosa, and to put it brutally, they owed him a wife, they owed him something" (*DD* 11-12). Their father had traditional mindset and he was not much modern, "He was not a modern parent, he had been raised with a few male rules, and he no longer had a wife to qualify or compromise his beliefs.... A father who allows you that should protect you all of your days, I think" (*DD* 12). The rancher would remain busy in his work. He does not talk much about Coop that's why Anna and Claire did not know much about Coop. They did not know what he thought about them and their family properly.

It must still have felt to him that he came from nowhere, the horror of his parents' murder never spoken of by us. He had been handed the habits and duties that came with farm life. So by now he could ride up to our grandfather's cabin on the ridge with his eyes closed, knowing by the sound of the bridge in a tree exactly where he was and what direction he faced. (*DD* 14)

The anti-sex attraction is generally seen on the pages of many novels. Likewise, the romance between Coop and Anna was quite fated just because the atmosphere of the house was quite suitable for it. When Coop becomes twenty years old, he moves to

the cabin which is more than a mile away from their main house. Anna's used to go to this cabin frequently and this environment provided them ample opportunities of love-making.

He came home at the end of week with a twisted back. He remained wordless in front of us, these two girls, his curious listens, as to where he had been. Wherever he had gone, we could see, he had been somewhere altered, been part of a dangerous thing. (*DD* 15)

Coop would talk less with his sisters. It was Anna who would keep an eye on his activities. She was curious to know where he is and with whom. All this has been written through her memory in this novel.

Coop sat in a small, dark farmhouse kitchen with us and attempted to talk of this, but he could barely take even one step into telling us of the absurdity and danger of what he had allowed himself to do. So, we did not know what had occurred. I remember we sat there and chanted, "Coop's lost week, Coop's lost week. Where did he go? Who was he with? Who was the woman who must have so exhausted him?" (*DD* 15)

The novel describes many past events through memory and it affects the present and reshapes the future. Laplanche writes that "time's arrows" are "past, present, future" (Laplanche 239). The character's displacement, rootlessness, loss and alienation become a basis for assuming the new self in the future.

Who was Coop, really? We never knew what his parents were like. We were never sure what he felt about our family, which had

harboured him and handed him another life. He was the endangered heir of a murder. As a teenager he was hesitant, taking no more than he was given. (*DD* 17)

Coop was living in the grandfather's cabin from where he would enjoy watching black oaks and buckeye trees. Anna and Claire knew that they can talk to Coop only on intervals. They knew that Coop was not a good dancer, "He was not a good dancer, quite bad in fact, but girls buried their faces into his neck, their pretty heels next to his cow-shit boots" (*DD* 23). They did not mind his bad dancing just because they knew that he was a cowboy.

Michael Ondaatje has written about the incestuous relationships between brothers and sisters. There is incestuous relationship between Roman and Marie-Neige. Anna and Coop's relationship can be put in this category. In fact, Anna and Coop were siblings and their physical relationship was an immoral act because Coop was brought up like a son by Anna's father. Dr. Josepheena John writes, "In the novel *Divisadero*, the main characters reflect attachment disorders with their father for similar reasons, the characters Anna and Coop, are carried away by the frail infatuations of teenage and they do not accept the silent strict and stern ways of father" (John 1349). It is true that Anna's infatuation towards Coop was immoral:

Some days she would come up to the cabin and just watch him work. She would offer to hammer planks alongside him, but he did not want that. Sometimes she brought a library book... (*DD* 29)

There was much nebulous relation between Coop and Anna. Anna keeps thinking about Coop, his activities and his relationships with other women. She thinks herself

a competitor with other girls with whom Coop had relationships. She remains curious to know about his relationships.

Had Coop loved anyone else? Did you love anyone else? She asked. He was shy at first. Then he said, “A woman in Tulare.’ Tell me about her. ‘No.’ Tell—. ‘No.’ What am I like compared to her. ‘It was just one night I slept with her.’ Ah good, you *slept*. She kissed him on his doubtful face, then dressed and walked down the hill alone. (DD 31)

In fact, Anna falls in love with Coop and Claire is also fascinated towards him almost to the level of a strange obsession. It was Anna who was more active in this act. Like other teenager girls of her age, she too thinks of having sexual affair with someone. Fortunately, Coop was close to her. Her pent-up emotions in an immature age drive her crazy for Coop. Ondaatje writes in this regard, “She tried to imagine sleeping with anybody else. No one would ever know her as well as Coop did. No one knew Coop as well as she did.... She was sixteen years old. Almost nothing” (DD 32). She wants to enjoy her moments spent with Coop with music. She becomes so crazy in love that she forgets to lock the room and enjoys his company. “Anna remembers every detail. She wound up the gramophone for music. They waited to make love. All that colourless wood in the cabin had driven her mad and this blue was a gift for Coop” (DD 32). It is generally seen that lovers forget the whole world and immerse themselves in their love making. The fierce storm was raging outside which was giving an inkling of a new storm in their life. All of a sudden, they get disturbed by a thunder sound:

Thunder exploded over the deck while they were lying there, holding on to each other, as if it had come down a funnel onto their nakedness. They didn't dare let go. It felt to Anna that whatever was in each of them had leapt out into the body of the other. That she'd replaced her heart with Coop's. (DD 32)

Anna and Coop's love affair does not remain a secret for a long time. He comes suddenly and catches both the love buds *in flagrante delicto*. He comes so silently that none of them could understand what is happening with them. When she saw her father in front of her, she started trembling because she was naked at that moment. Her father grabs Coop by his hair and separates him from Anna:

She was trembling in his arms. Then she saw a hand come forward out of nowhere and grip the hair of Coop's head and pull it back, pull him off her, so that she saw the sky for a moment and then her father's head looking down at her. (DD 32)

Anna's father was very angry at that moment and he does not think that Anna is merely sixteen years old and she is not quite mature. He shows his violent attitude and threw her on the deck like a doll:

He picked up his daughter, naked as an infant, by her shoulders and flung her off the deck onto the slope of wet earth. Coop stood there not moving. Her father walked towards him, with a three-legged stool, and swung it into his face. The boy fell back through the collapsing wall of glass into the cabin. (DD 33)

Her father knocks Coop down and he hits him with the stool again and again. Blood comes from Coop's mouth and Anna gets frightened that her father will kill her lover. This scene of the novel gives a look of a romantic movie having the scene of violence. Ondaatje writes in this context:

Another blow on his chest knocked him onto his back. Anna began screaming. She saw Coop's strange submissiveness, saw her father attack Coop's beautiful strong face as if that were the cause, as if in this way he could remove what had happened. Then her father was kneeling above Coop, reaching for the stool again and smashing it down, until the body was completely still. (*DD* 33)

This is the main incident of this novel which brings a turning point in Anna and Coop's life. Their love affair could not be tolerated by her father. He hits Coop mercilessly. Anna gets frightened to see all this. She tries to stop her father because her father was going to kill Coop. Anna ran onto the deck but she could not separate them. She knew that things were going out of her control because "Coop looked unconscious, was not moving. The stool came down hard on his chest once more, and blood came out of his mouth" (*DD* 33). Anna was trying her best to somehow handle this serious event which she had never expected that their love affair may be fatal for Coop. Women have to face domestic violence directly or indirectly in their homes. Herman also contends that "violence is a routine part of women's sexual and domestic lives" (Herman 28). She tries to embrace her father and pull him away from Coop's body. In spite of all her efforts, she is not able to remove her father from Coop because her father was comparatively much stronger than her. She lifts a large

shard and pierces it into his shoulder pushing it deeper into his flesh. Her father turns and strikes Anna. Her father notices that the shard of glass is still in his shoulder which has done his strength half by now.

Anna tries to remove her father again but her father removes her when she comes between her father and Coop. By now her father had become furious and he tried to remove Anna from his path:

His strong left arm came up slowly and clutched her neck and began to crush her windpipe. Then everything began darkening and she dropped to her knees and went limp. She was near to Coop, she brought her face beside him and listened for the sound of his breath beneath that of her own frantic breathing, and finally heard a whimper of it. (*DD* 34)

The rancher leaves Coop half dead. Anna was very serious about him and she nudged Coop to bring him to his senses but there was no response. Anna noticed that Coop's one eye was badly injured and was smeared in blood. She stays beside him putting her arms on her chest if she was protecting Coop's heart safe within her. Her father was noticing all this and he walked slowly over to the bed, picked up her sheepskin and covered her body. He carries his daughter over the broken glass and comes out of the cabin and puts her down on the earth. He took her by her hand and goes to the farmhouse by walking for twenty minutes. Anna was still very serious about Coop whose life was in danger. In fact, Coop's condition was very serious at that time, "Only the cuts of his face felt sharp and alive. The rest of his body was numb and cold" (*DD* 35).

The frank and abrupt violence shatters the breach of trust, love and unity of this family. Coop had nobody to take care in this condition because his family members had already been murdered when he was a child. This incident gives a complete turning point in the characters' lives also because Anna and Coop flee from each other and the rancher's family and farm. Not only this, but they change their names also so that other people may not be able to trace them out. This is the journey of making them a new identity. This traumatic incident of violence leaves a scar not only Coop's body but, on his psyche, also as Caruth writes in *Unclaimed Experience*, "the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" and "is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event" (Caruth 3). Margaret Muckenhoupt writes about the mental state of a person:

That idea led Freud to ask several questions about the relationship between physical and mental states. How did psychological trauma transform itself into physical illness? How could a person become ill from a memory? How could hysteria begin? (Caruth 39)

When Coop was in his teens, he allied himself to the histories of the gold rush. He would dive and tend huge pneumatic hoses desperately sifting river mud for gold. But now as he was indirectly expelled from home, he tries his hand at poker thinking that such opportunities are not available in Lake Tahoe and Vegas.

Claire also vanishes and she takes a pill in a nightclub. One day she stumbles upon Coop coincidentally. Coop was on the run with the profit he got from his poker sting. He becomes highly ambitious and his ambitions again give him punishment as Coop becomes a con artist i.e., a professional gambler and his sting operations have

been mentioned in this novel. His poker junky Bridget comes in huge debt. Bridget is unable to pay his debt to the group of professional gamblers who were looking for him. Bridget asks Coop to re perform his sting for them and when Coop does not do it, he is brutally assaulted. He is beaten to the extent that he sinks into a state of amnesia. Claire again proves a helping hand to him and she intervenes. After that they go to the farm to reconcile with their rancher father and hope that in this way, they will be able to assert Coop's imploded identity.

The next part finds the adult Anna living under an assumed name in a farmhouse in France, where she is researching the life of the French poet Lucien Segura. She does the translation work in the morning, "Anna wakes early in the morning to begin translating the sparse texts by Lucien Segura that she has on her desk" (*DD* 90). Thus, the narrative of the novel takes a shift to the future where Anna is now thirty-four years old. She is an archivist and historian, as the omniscient narrator shows, "She herself works in archives and discovers every past but her own, again and again, because it will always be there" (*DD* 76). Jean Laplanche writes that "any past is determined from ... present, or even from... future, ..." (Laplanche 142).

Anna uses a pseudonym and this name is not disclosed in the novel. She uses different names which show her split identity. She is a scholar and writer who is doing research on the life and works of a twentieth century French writer Lucien Segura. He was a renowned poet and a diphtheria survivor of the frontline hospitals of 1917. He had published some bestselling books, deeply loved semi-potboilers, featuring a cult character named Claudile who is an attractive caught in dashing

adventures. This modest contrapuntal dance of the writer seems to be a tango for Anna. She writes about this writer:

For much of his life the man was unknown, says that he was the poet and later the author of jeremiad about the Great War. And in the years since his death, knowledge of him has sunk into the fabric and soil of this region, so he is almost forgotten by his countrymen. (85)

To do her research, she goes to the same house wherein Segura was brought up by his parents. She meets Rafael there who was a gypsy. He was a professional thief but he had a friendship with Segura. Rafael's temperament matches with Coop as he is an introvert who prefers to be aloof and quiet. She starts her relationship with Rafael who is Caravaggio's son and, when he was a child, he knew Segura personally. In doing research, she forgets about her tragic past:

This smallest possible space is where Anna wishes to be now. The truth of her life comes out only in places like this.... Anna, who keeps herself at a distance from those who show anger or violence, just as she is still fearful of true intimacy. Her past is hidden from everyone. She has never turned to a lover or friends when they speak about families. (75)

The next half of this novel plumbs Lucien Segura's creation of the fictional character Claudile and gives the impression that the novel is much affected by the First World War. Michael Ondaatje has taken the life and art of Segura's life and his love for a woman whom he models Claudile. Marie-Neige was an illiterate child bride who lived on the farm just opposite Segura's residence.

The author would read aloud for her and when he becomes blind in one eye when a dog bursts through a pane of glass in front of him. She learns reading so that she may read to him. In this way, they become more intimate. She becomes more entangled with him than her older husband, Roman. Shalini Dube and Preeti Vishwakarma has rightly said, "In his work, Ondaatje creates a vivid and unique portrayal of life's estuaries." (Dube and Vishwakarma 174)

The novel also brings out the negative images of modern society. This union of Marie-Neige and Segura does not remain successful. Even the literary achievements of the writer do not come as salve to him and it was just like a mistaken garden of publicity and familiarity. He also wants to seek refuge like Anna and Coop to reclaim his rights. His career as a respected poet was just like a respite to him.

The consummation of Marie-Neige and Segura comes as a furlough from the war. The writer's return to her is quite disappointing and heart-breaking and it can be compared with Almásy and Katherine Clifton's unfruitful and unconsummated love in *The English Patient*.

Now Lucien goes away and he gets married with another woman and he becomes the most celebrated poet. He is unable to tolerate the loss of Marie-Neige, to the point that he starts taking less interest in his career and finally bids adieu to it. After that he starts writing about a fictional character and his lost love. When war breaks out there, it is Lucien who is sent to fight. He comes to know that Roman has left Marie-Neige and he comes to her on a furlough and they enjoy their most intimate moments.

He comes to know later that he has got infected from diphtheria and he hurries across the broken ruins of northern France so that he may see her. It is quite unfortunate that when he goes to meet her, she does not recognise that he is her husband. Thus, the barriers between nations also play an important role in this context. Negi writes in this regard that, “Ondaatje who wish to erase all boundaries between nations by erasing the identities of nation, ethnicity or any concept of division to make the world a global village” (Negi 88).

Another theme is migration in this novel because both Coop and Anna migrate to Tahoe and France respectively where they face the identity crisis. Anna starts reading books and journals written on the life and works of Lucien Segura. She also meets a man who plays guitar. Her alienation makes her disappointed on a foreign land. Michel Ondaatje writes in this context:

If Anna came any closer to the man with the guitar, she would be encroaching on his territory. If she remained more than four paces away, it would signal fear, though there was none. He seemed a contained man, and he had one arm over his guitar as if it were a favourite hound. (*DD* 72)

Nostalgia and homesickness keep on haunting her all the time in France. She keeps thinking about her native place and family members. She does not reveal her past to anybody in France. She would remain in inner conflict because her past would keep tormenting her all the time and she cherishes the past memories deliberately she says:

There are times when she needs to hide in a stranger's landscape, so that she can look back at the tumult of her youth, to the still undiminished violence of her bloodied naked self between her father and Coop, the moment of violence that deformed her, all of them. Anna, who keeps herself at a distance from those who show anger or violence, just as she is still fearful of true intimacy. (*DD* 75)

Other characters of the novel also face the same problem of alienation, nostalgia and rootlessness and selflessness. Anna feels isolated and uprooted in France. She kept travelling from one place to another. When she came to France, she was thirty-four years old. She is not certain why and how she developed her interest in Lucien Segura. After that she goes to Orly where she meets her friend Branka, "Divisadero is filled with the echoes across time and place, and gives an impression to transnational literature related to the cinemating art of editing" (Georgia 208).

The novel takes its readers to different scenes and places whenever the characters cross the border and they establish their contact with their home countries. This thinking leads to their psychology of Afterwardsness and nostalgia and indicates how fragmentation, void and loss remain at the core level in this novel. Avinash Jodha observes how different characters have to disperse from the Farm, "Anna, Coop and Claire after that violent incident disperse into different directions and spaces; first as a compulsion and later as an escape" (Jodha 176). The characters feel so because they have to face numerous problems in their host country.

The setting of the novel is at the time of the California Gold rush in August 1849. At that time, there were many people who would come to California to try their

luck. They would live in hotels, “More than a century before us, in August 1849, a group of men set up camp in a valley more than a hundred miles north of Petaluma. They built cabins at a place they called Badger Hill and began to search for gold” (*DD* 12). In this way, California becomes a hybrid culture. They would live in the mountains sometimes and would hunt wild animals such as bears, rabbits and other cattle for their survival.

And many headed civilizations arrived. Gamblers, water entrepreneurs, professional shootouts, prostitutes, diarists, coffee drinkers, whisky merchants, poets, heroic dogs, mail order brides, women falling in love with boys... old men swallowing gold to conceal it on their return journeys to the coast balloonists, mystics, Lola Montez, opera singers, good ones, bad ones, those who fornicated their way across the territory. (*DD* 13)

People from all round the world would migrate to Petaluma so that they may live a better life. Coop was one of those people who had come there to try his luck. Anna was the real daughter of her rancher father while Claire and Coop were adopted and made part of his family after the death of his wife. Both the girls Anna and Claire grew like sisters but after some years when they came to understand the things of life, the distances grew between them. Their crush for Coop was also one of those reasons. After the incident of violence, the three characters leave their home and loose contact from one another. Brain Short writes in the book review:

Coop flees to the Tahoe area, where he transforms himself into a successful poker player and card sharp. Anna runs away to France, where she settles in the house of Lucien Segura, a minor poet from the

early 20th century. Claire lands in San Francisco, working for the public defender's office; she lives on Divisadero Street, formerly the border between the old city and the fields of the Presidio. ([http://fiction writer'sreview.com](http://fictionwriter'sreview.com))

All this clearly indicates that these three characters cross the border of their native country and they have to live in different countries for their personal reasons. This indicates a clear image of fragmentation of the family. Though Anna and Coop were so intimate that they were in physical relationships also but after the incident of violence, they also break their relationships and plan to live life according to their decisions. In their host countries, they do not get a family environment because they find everyone stranger there. That's why they keep thinking about their family. Carmen Concilio also observes in his paper entitled *Michael Ondaatje's Divisadero and Photography*:

Many immigrants don't write about their arrival in the new world, but rather of their departure from the world. It is as if they reached their future, the host country, through looking back to their past, the lost paradise of their homelands and of their childhood. (Concilio 26)

On the other hand, Coop also faces numerous problems since his childhood. His fate strikes a blow when his parents are killed when he was a child. After that his rancher father's violence forces him to leave that place. He makes the decision to become a professional gambler which also shakes and breaks him from within because of the same kind of violence he had to face in the profession also due to his mastery in this profession.

In fact, after the incident of violence at the farm, Coop migrates to Tahoe and starts playing cards there. He comes in contact with Dorn, a notorious gambler who invites him to Nevada City.

The people involved in this profession are generally stone-hearted and they grind their own axes. When Coop does not do what they want from him, he is badly beaten. His group in Tahoe was anti-social. Michael Ondaatje writes:

There was Dorn, Mancini, and 'The Dauphin', so named because he had been seen reading a European novel. They would enter gambling halls like royalty from Wyoming- save for Dorn, in sandals and beads, flash frozen in the sixties. (*DD* 43)

Coop faces the problem of selflessness there and when he starts living in Santa Maria, the people belong to different communities. In that condition, Coop prefers to live alone and the people also did not have a relationship with him. He feels marginalised and alienated there and faces language barriers also. Michel Ondaatje writes about the migrated population:

A generation back, Santa Barbara country was populated mostly by migrant labourers, Mexican, Colombian, Vietnamese, Italian-America, who worked on the ranches and vegetables farms that spread over the landscape beyond the highway. (*DD* 111)

The characters have to establish their relationships with the transnational characters. Coop develops his relationship with a drug addicted lady Bridget who was in the singing profession. Coop tries to comfort himself by sharing his dilemma with

Bridget so that he may feel a bit light weighted. Likewise, Bridget also shares the experiences of her countries. It was Bridget who helps Coop forget his traumatic past, “Bridget helps Coop forget Anna and his traumatic past. Bridget, who is a broken woman, belongs to an unscrupulous gang of gamblers. She is described as a blond; a tall ripple of energy linked to gold” (*DD* 112). In fact, Coop’s relationship with Bridget brings downfall in his life.

Coop becomes obsessed with Bridget to the extent of a romantic affair. In fact, he has replaced the loss of Anna in his life. When Bridget disappears for some time, he becomes crazy for her. He gets a postcard from her in which she tells him that she lives in Tahoe. He makes up his mind to search for her. But when he finds her, he gets shocked to learn that she is in debt.

Coop’s relationship with Bridget becomes lethal to him because she did not belong to a good society. Her relationship with other gamblers was responsible for her debt. She betrays him later when she stabs a syringe on his neck and other gamblers beat Coop mercilessly.

Another aspect also emerges in Coop’s life. He loved Anna so much that he would call Claire by Anna’s name by mistake. His relationship with Bridget, a jazz vocalist remains a tragedy to him. Both these relationships end with violence abruptly. He keeps thinking about his tragic past and remains conscious of his future. Jean Laplanche writes, “The second usage follows the direction of time from the past to the future, and the third usage inverts it from the future towards the past” (Laplanche 265). David Jonathan Amid observes in his paper on *Divisadero*, “it is a relationship between the text and lives and also between structure and themes”

(Amid 91). The characters of this novel suffer from a strange kind of relationship. Sometimes they seem to be very close and sometimes they break all the relationships. But it is true that these characters are emotionally wounded as Amid also writes that "... all the characters are emotionally wounded and enigmatic, their intimacy – often enabled through self-expression or storytelling – is especially important and revealing" (Amid 94).

Coop remains the most tragic character of this novel because a series of tragedies keep following him. He is mentally shattered due to tragic incidents in his life. He is so obsessed with his past that he calls Claire by the name of Anna, "*Thank you Anna*" (DD 158). It was the reason Claire decided to take him to her father's farmhouse in Petaluma so that he may feel a bit better. When they went to the farmhouse, Coop was still in amnesia. This brings a change in his life. He becomes devoid of any identity and memory now. Likewise, other characters also face the same problems. All the major characters establish their relationships with other people who belong to different nationalities and are fighting their own battle with themselves because of their obsession and homesickness for their native country. Dr Aseda Fatima R. states, "Michael Ondaatje has experienced quite a lot of familial bonds and familial situations. He has voiced out his views through characters and how they grow with familial relationships and how it helps them realise their own selves." (Fatima R 640)

Michael Ondaatje has taken the theme of fragmentation, void and loss in this novel. Their memories of the past indicate that they miss their home country. Anna is an American but she crosses the borders of her country and goes to France. She

meets a postman, Monsieur Q and his wife, Madam Q there. They guide Anna about France and its culture. They guide her about visiting places in France. They give her a map which she keeps with her whenever she travels. Michael Ondaatje has written about it:

Anna carried the map with her as she walked. Since the day she had met the four hunters, she wore jeans instead of a skirt and shaved ten minutes off the ninety-minute walk. But where she was now, alongside the gorse hedges, the path was uneven, broken with stones, and she needed to slow down. (*DD* 66)

Rafael and his father migrate to France. His father meets Raphael's mother in France and marries her. He assimilates himself in French culture. Likewise, Anna also has to adjust to a new culture. She comes to France for her personal reasons:

She came to France, in the thirty fourth year of my life, to research the life and the work of Lucien Segura" and says that "her real world is not France and she says she will not stay permanently here. In France, she got estranged from her family, ran away, studied French at university and eventually became a professor of French Literature. (*DD* 88)

After coming to France, Anna tries to acclimatise and assimilate into her host culture. She tries to project herself like a French girl. She starts wearing jeans instead of skirts. She enjoys her culture in France. She finds nothing in Segura's house which may remind her about North America. She faces cultural clashes in France. The people walking with dogs consider her as an outsider. She does not talk to the man

who gives her lift in his car. She thinks about her own culture, rituals and language which indicate her love for the native country. She tries to assimilate in a new culture and starts giving references from French Literature. She opines that people live in their past and their past works as a guiding principle for them. Michael Ondaatje has used the flashback technique in this novel and all this has been done through the memory lane. She thinks about her childhood:

For we live with those retrievals from childhood that coalesce and echo throughout our lives, the way shattered pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope reappear in new forms and are songlike in their refrains and rhymes, making up a single monologue. We live permanently in the recurrence of our own stories, whatever story we tell.... We were alone in the world, in nameless and an unseen country. (*DD* 136)

Michael Ondaatje writes how memory plays a vital role in a person's life. He emphasises the significance of memory which affects the present and to some extent, the future of the characters. Anna imagines that her father may come to her threshold in his old shirt with his taciturn manners and share his feelings with her. She reads a monograph also in which there is the description of a missing father which she relates with her own father. This is how she thinks about it:

And so, I hoped that someone would come, a man, why not my father, at nightfall. He would stand in front of the door, or on the path leading from the forest, with his old white shirt, the everyday one, in shreds, dirtied by mud and his blood. He would not speak in order to preserve what he can be but he would not know what I do not. (*DD* 273)

Though Anna goes to France by her choice and she assimilates in the host culture also, yet she is unable to forget the loss of her lost relationships and the void she feels from within. France provides her with other materialistic things but the fragmentation of her family makes her sad. She is unable to forget her relationship with Coop and her father's brutal attack on Coop. Then, after reaching her destination, she feels that it is not a destination. She feels something lacking there which keeps her moving. David Jonathan Amid writes about it, "Her journey is not a destination it is only a journey, the humour and the philosophical excursion with the people she met in her journey" (Amid 19). Likewise, Coop also thinks of his past and he remembers how his bygone days have been so good for him when he was in his family. Michael Ondaatje writes about it, "In her memory later, in her unforgetfulness of that day, she sensed she had been present everywhere. With Claire by the stove in the farmhouse, saying, 'Oh, I got caught in the rain. And Claire coming forward to help her, to (again!) undress'" (DD 28).

Moreover, alienation also remains one of the core themes of the novel. Anna immigrated to San Francisco to do research on the life of Lucien Segura. But she finds that this place was quite different from his native land. She does not find people close to her and she feels lonely there. Like Anna, Claire was also living alone in her farm at Petaluma where she felt alienated from other people. Anna considers Segura his family members and does her research on him. Dr Josephina John writes about Anna:

She finds her family through her research on the life of Lucien Segura.

She finds comfort in the words of Rafael, whom she befriends in the

new place, where she resides after her escape from the clasp of the father's palm. She finds her space in a new land. This character reflects how many living souls find strangers turn family, friends who become family, breaking the basic concepts and synonyms of family. (John 1348)

The initial setting of the novel is at Petaluma farm and all the main characters of this novel have their roots from this farm but due to some circumstances, they live lonely at different places. The novel beautifully depicts the theme of isolation. The main characters hail from Petaluma farm but now they are living a lonely life at different places. Claire, Anna, Coop and Lucien Segura suffer from isolation. Lucien Segura was living his life in acute desperation just because he was orphaned and could not meet his daughter. Avinash Jodha observes in his book *Poetics of Exile*:

Divisadero, in many ways, is home to orphans. Anna loses her mother at her birth; Claire is also a child of a mother who died giving birth to her and Coop too is orphaned at an early age. (Jodha 176)

From the tragic incident at the age of sixteen, Anna moves to San Francisco. She lives there in isolation in Divisadero Street in San Francisco. She devotes her time in doing research on Lucien Segura. She holds the view that "if you do not plunder the past, the absence feeds on you" (DD 141). She does not like anybody's company and lives alone. She remains frightened all the time that her father will come at any time and how she will face him. Her memory goes back to her childhood and Petaluma farm where she lived with her parents and siblings. She remembers about Coop, Claire and her father. She wonders whether Coop and Claire would become the real

heroes of their life. To recall the memory of the past remains one of the characteristics of 'Afterwardsness'. It denotes that the past plays an important role in this novel. Coop, an orphan child's isolation has been depicted in this novel:

He was nineteen now, in a desired solitude. He was building the cabin, working alone. He bathed in the cold water of a hill pond. In the evenings he slipped past the farmhouse and ended up in Nicasio or Glen Ellen, listening to music. (*DD* 21)

Coop remains busy learning music. He listens to music most of the time. He remains gregarious in his solitude. His constant work makes him hungry. He remains hungry and remains away from the farm. He speaks less, laughs at himself and maintains distance from Anna and Claire while they like his company.

The French writer Lucien Segura prefers to live alone. He makes a plan to leave his solitude and shift to a different plea so that he may have a fresh start of his life. Michael Ondaatje writes how he goes to the Gers in the search of a new house for him, "Lucien Segura in old age, was traversing the region of the Gers in a horse drawn cart, in search of a new home. Now and then he gave travellers a ride in order to escape the strictness of this new solitude" (*DD* 172). He goes there with the thief, his young wife and a son Raphael. He does not mention any fixed names for his wife and thief. Michael Ondaatje frankly writes about her name:

She is Romani, they have so many names. The secret name, which is never used but is her truest name, which only her mother knows, is hidden to confuse supernatural spirits-it keeps the true identity of the

child from them. And the second name, which is a Roma name, is usually used only by them. And that one is Aria. (*DD* 175)

Thus, it was isolation which was an important factor in thinking about their past events. Lucien Segura's mother, Odlic, was a French woman. She married a clockmaker when her son Segura was four years old. He starts having an affair with his childhood friend Marie-Neige. Lucien Segura makes a new identity and he adopts a pseudonym 'La Garonne' and he devotes himself for his writing work. Consequently, he publishes several adventure romances in the Dumas. After coming to a new place, he also faces the problem of identity crisis.

Claire also faces the identity crisis in this novel. She takes life from a different perspective after the incident of violence at desk. She was a horse woman and she loses her limp and feels that "someday she will meet and marry a centaur" (*DD* 8). She lives two lives just because she has to travel between San Francisco and Petaluma. Through this, she also plans to cross the borders of her country. She does not seem to settle at two places in her life. She works at the Public Defender's Office in San Francisco. Thus, her connections with these two worlds reveal her transnational identity. Though she comes to her father at weekends but she is not close to him, "In *Divisadero*, the father and Claire are too close to the scene of family tragedy to be able to make the past resonate. Indeed, the emotional impact can be too strong for them even to look at the past" (Shounan 187). Michael Ondaatje also writes in this context, "there was no closeness between him and Claire" (*DD* 104). Claire's relationship with Coop is very close. When she meets Coop in Tahoe, she embraces him. Coop taught him so many things, "She was a girl he had taught to

fish, ride a horse, and drive a car” (*DD* 108). Coop is unable to recognize her at Tahoe because he was badly beaten. She helps Coop and similarly she does not leave her step-father alone which denotes that she is a good cultured girl.

The fragmentation is also explicit in the novel because we see that all the characters are busy migrating to different places or countries. The young characters Anna, Claire and Coop plan about their life and think to adopt different names and identities so that they may forget their past days. Even Coop also faces the problem of language at the farm which is clear from Claire’s statement, “He was adept in the physical world where he protected us. But in the world of language, he was our student” (*DD* 9).

When Coop was twenty-three years old, he migrated to Nevada and began his life as a professional gambler. He “fell into the company of Dorn and his compatriots” (*DD* 44). Coop has the ability to observe things minutely and he develops his skills as a gambler. He gets associated with Dorn, Mancini and the Dauphin but this relationship does not last for a long time. Ondaatje writes, “The Dauphin is the nickname because the person was reading a European novel and a few months later Dauphin dies. They all would enter the gambling hall like “royalty from Wyoming” (*DD* 43). His gambling group finds him as a risk taker because he was the youngest of all. Coop comes in contact with his old master “The Gentile” and he learns art for three weeks. When he is badly hit by the gamblers, Claire saves his life. Claire knows that his love for Claire is deeply embedded in his subconscious mind. Jean Laplanche writes that “the unconscious has a close link with the past of the individual” (Laplanche 71). Claire does not feel good when she notices how the things are going wrong with Coop.

Claire takes advantage of Coop's amnesia and she takes him to the Petaluma farm when she comes to know that his entire memory of childhood has been erased. He was in a state of oblivion and Claire was also quite apprehensive whether her melancholic father would accept this reunion or not. Claire takes this risk and ignoring the consequences, she goes there.

The novel deals with the issue of marginalisation. A Cooper family lived with hundred goats in Petaluma and these goats would sometimes graze in Anna's fields. This family of shepherds belongs to a marginalised community. Hsu Shounan writes:

I argue that in *Divisadero* Ondaatje presents his ethics of coexistence through his characters' search for inner peace. Along with focusing on the characters' attempts to understand their intentionally or unintentionally suppressed pasts, he draws his readers' attention to the injustices done to socially marginalised people as well as to the neglected natural world. (Shounan 182)

When Cooper migrated to Tahoe, he was called a 'hippie' i.e., as an inferior being. The thief also has been introduced as a marginal character in the novel. Raphael is the thief's son. Michael Ondaatje writes about him, "My father was known by some as a thief, he said, as though he had read her mind about how he was looking around the room. But he never stole from houses he was invited into" (*DD* 70). Thus, the thief has been described as a civilised person.

Michael Ondaatje has written that women also have been considered marginalised and inferior in this novel. They are considered just a commodity. Coop

is its burning example who thinks that women are made only to be exploited.

Ondaatje pens down in this regard:

The woman, in her black and white checked woollen shirt, and with legs that barely seemed to fit under the table, was almost six feet, tall as Cooper anyway, and she was a ripple of energy. She would leap up and talk to the staff, or check a name or a date on one of the posters tacked to the wall and come back with information for her partner.

(DD 112)

Men use women only for their selfish motives. Coop does not have any relationship with Anna after violence and he starts having relationships with a woman named Bridget. The next character is Raphael who also considers Anna inferior to her. Anna starts talking with him like an old friend. Ondaatje narrates it thus, “Anna was talking with him as if he were an old friend from childhood who had changed shape into this thickset man. His musical fingers were now dicing tomatoes” *(DD 72)*. He was a singer and he travelled from one village to another singing songs. Ondaatje writes in this context:

The fingers of his right hand swept over the strings, six notes spreading towards her like a fan. He smiled briefly at her, then fell into a melody and seemed to be playing everything-bells drums, a missing voice. *(DD 68)*

The novel describes how the tunnels are burned. The incidents of violence are quite common in this novel. Ondaatje has deliberately written how the immigrants are prone to sufferings. These people are humiliated and insulted and it is a common

practice in western countries. The tunnels are burnt and blasted so that these people may suffer. This place is for five thousand miners who live at the banks of the rivers Yuba and Russian:

Dynamiters blasted steep grades and the land under your feet. There were seventeen miles of tunnels beneath the town of Iowa Hill. Sonora burned. Weaverville burned, Shasta and Columbia burned. Were rebuilt and burned again and rebuilt again. Sacramento flooded.
(DD 13)

The migrants have to bear humiliation and exploitation in the western countries. The migrants also become frustrated and they also try to humiliate others whenever they get chances. Cooper also insults card players in Tahoe whenever he gets chances. Michael Ondaatje writes in this context:

Cooper had spoken to almost no one since he had arrived. Now, in thirty seconds, he realised he had managed to insult one of the smartest and most anarchic players in Tahoe, who, the rumour went, had twice skunked David Mamet in a game. (DD 42)

In Michel Ondaatje's novels the events are connected from the past which shape the future of his characters. The characters live in their present but they are haunted by their past which makes Ondaatje's novels a unique touch. Laplanche writes in *Essays on Otherness* that "the reality of the primal scene, which Freud sought to defend against Jung's notion of a retrospective fantasy that gives priority to the present over the past" (Laplanche 15). Nandish V. Patel writes that "Deferred action explains natural design in context of rational design" (Patel 38). Pamela Thurschwell writes in

her book *Sigmund Freud* that “Three key concepts are helpful to keep in mind when beginning to read Freud: sexuality, memory and interpretation” (Thurschwell 2).

To sum up, it can be stated that Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Divisadero* is all about Anna’s autobiography and Lucien Segura’s biography. All the events of the novel have been described through the flashback technique and Anna’s memory about her childhood and time spent at Petaluma farm where she makes love with Coop. these semi-incestuous relationships become a cause of fragmentation, void and loss in the members of this family. Joanne Saul also points out in this context that, “exile from family, father, culture” creates “the dominant figure in the carpet” in Ondaatje’s writings (Saul 237).

Chapter V

Memory, Reality and Recovery in *Warlight*

This chapter attempts to briefly trace the themes of memory, reality and recovery in Michael Ondaatje's novel *Warlight* (2018). Michael Ondaatje comes in the category of "both a postmodern and postcolonial writer" (McVey 141), as well as "one of the best known and most highly praised Canadian writers" (Barbour 5). He focuses on how Nathaniel, the main protagonist of the novel, trails the track of memory which brings him near the real ground of trauma thereby recovering those events which have taken place in his life in the past. The chapter highlights how the trauma, tragedy and memory affect the characters' lives on the personal front in the novel *Warlight*. Michael Ondaatje has mastery of descent traumatic characters in his novels which are, more or less, affected by their personal tragedies being war in their background. Nathaniel's words "I hate my mother" (WL 147) vividly gesticulate how he has been emotionally cut off from his mother, Rose Williams. Lee Hyer argues in *Trauma Victim* (1994), that "when the trauma network is activated, powerful emotions, similar to the ones that occurred during the trauma, are primed, making experiencing and expressing other types of emotions difficult" (Hyer 439). The novel under study uses flashback technique in it to depict the memory trace and it has been further attempted to explore the above-mentioned themes by applying Sigmund Freud's theory of 'Deferred Action' and Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness'.

As far as Sigmund Freud's 'Deferred Action' is concerned, it shows direction while in the word 'Afterwardsness', past action is denoted or it indicates after the

event action. Sigmund Freud is a very authoritative name in psychoanalysis theory. Crichton-Miller compares Freud to Newton (Miller 7). He puts forward many such ideas which lead to trauma and memory. Sigmund Freud writes in his book that “the memory of the trauma-acts like a foreign body” (Freud 6) and Nathaniel also feels aloof and alienated due to these memories. Through different illustrations, Jean Laplanche’s ‘Afterwardsness’ is applicable at different situations in the novel.

Michael Ondaatje is a versatile writer whose novels have been written using memory-trace and applying stream of consciousness; that’s why memory plays an important role in his novels. His novel *Warlight* also has been written on such quintessential themes which brings this novel close to “a memoir” (Sawhney 5). Harlan Whatley also writes that this novel is about the Myth of England, “Postnationalism and the Myth of England [can be noticed] in Ondaatje’s *Warlight*” (Whatley 5). It is an atypical coming-of-age novel which encapsulates many incidents of the post-World War II which move the readers. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis write in their book, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* that “The persistence of the effect attached to a memory depends on several factors (Laplanche and Pontalis 1). In general, the novel begins with Nathaniel and his sister, Rachel Williams as teenagers and later depicts them as adults facing many incidents in their lives which leave an impact on their psyche. Thus, it comes in the category of a bildungsroman i.e., “a novel of development.” Šarka Bubikova writes that the bildungsroman:

... has the inherent potential for depicting the individual’s coming-of-age as interconnected with the development of a community or society. Thus, the emerging protagonist’s selfhood is not only

interesting in and of itself but gains importance as a representation and personification of the emergence of a particular group. (Bubikova 20)

This novel has its setting in London after the end of World War II. The main protagonist of this novel is Nathaniel Williams. The novel deals with his experience as a teenager and then after ten years. Hannah Story-Brown also remarks in this context, “*Warlight* is temporally split between Nathaniel’s teenage years and a period, over a decade later, when he returns to reflect on and investigate the seminal events of his youth” (Brown n.pag.). Nathaniel belongs to an upper middle-class family. His grandfather was a British Naval Admiral and his father is an international businessman. Thus, Nathaniel belongs to a well-to-do family that’s why his parents afford to admit him and his sister in a boarding school. They have a three-storey house in Ruvigny Gardens in London. His unnamed father gets an assignment to operate his business in Singapore. The opening sentence, in fact, narrated by the brother, Nathaniel, is a real hook:

In 1945 our parents went away and left us in the care of two men who may have been criminals. We were living on a street in London called Ruvigny Gardens, ... they told us that they would be leaving us and going to Singapore for a year (WL 5)

It was assured that Nathaniel and his sister will be well cared for in their absence. Their father tells this news to them when he was sitting on the uncomfortable iron garden chair and their mother was behind his shoulders. In fact, they wanted to know how the children would respond to hear this news. Nathaniel remembers all this experience. The children did not say anything even at this shocking news, “Neither

Rachel nor I said a word. We stared at our father, who was expanding on the details of their flight on the new Avro Tudor” (WL 5). The children were not happy at this decision as it is not so easy for children to live without parents. This event leaves a permanent impact on their future. This is an instance of “Deferred Action” in this novel. Bistoen, Vanheule, and Craps remark that “the subjective impact of an event is not given once and for all but is malleable by subsequent experiences” (Bistoen et al. 668). Freud also writes in *Freud: Complete Works* about this kind of stressful psychic condition of children:

Children’s neuroses are very common, much more common than supposed. They are often overlooked, regarded as signs of a bad or naughty child, often, too, kept under by the nursery authorities; but they can always be easily recognized in retrospect. They usually appear in the form of anxiety hysteria. (Freud 3421)

There was no direct flight available so their parents had to change their plane once to reach their destination. Mr. Williams was ostensibly promoted and he had to take over the charge of the Unilever office in Asia, “He explained he had been promoted to take over the Unilever office in Asia, a step up in his career. It would be good for us all” (WL 5-6). At that time Nathaniel was fourteen years old and his sister was nearly sixteen. They have a habit of using nicknames for people. When they leave Nathaniel and his sister Rachel with their mysterious housemate named Walter whom they call “The Moth”. Nathaniel’s mother tells the children that he was her colleague, “She referred to him as a colleague.... Rachel had already told me she suspected he worked as a criminal” (WL 6).

This arrangement of leaving children with a stranger was quite strange and even life was quite haphazard after World War II. The children accept this decision thinking that it is their fate and accept Walter as a guardian:

We accepted the decision, as children do, and The Moth, who had recently become our third-floor lodger, a humble man, large but moth-like in his shy movements, was to be the solution. Our parents must have assumed he was reliable. (WL 6)

Thus, the novel has been written in the form of a narrative based on Nathaniel's memory. Reflecting his past, he thinks of how his father would let him go to his Unilever offices on weekends and bank holidays. This memory shapes Nathaniel's identity in the future. J. Roger Kurtz writes, "Like trauma, memory is inevitably connected with identity" (Kurtz 9).

The novel recapitulates the strong memories of childhood in the background of post-war tensions. Harneet Kaur postulates, "Many of the memories revived throughout the novel are traumatic. While living in the house he used to share with his mother, Nathaniel feels the silence and invisibility that becomes a part of his later life too" (Kaur 41). The background of the post-war environment triggers the memories associated with the children. Thus, the cases of *Nachträglichkeit* or "Deferred Action" can be observed through a different flurry of memories of Nathaniel in this novel.

It is explicit from the opening of the novel that the events are related with the post-World War II in 1945. Nathaniel's father has been stationed at Singapore and both the parents are just to say goodbye to their children before their departure. It was decided earlier that children remain under the care of The Moth but later it was

decided that Nathaniel's father would go alone and his mother will go later so that she may just notice how their children are being taken care of in their absence, "At the last moment it was decided our mother would remain behind for the final weeks of the summer to oversee the arrangements for the lodger's care over us, and ready us for our new boarding school" (WL 7). Before his father's departure, Nathaniel accompanies his father again in his Unilever office near Curzon Street on Saturday. Nathaniel remembers how his parents did not talk much about their personal lives and would sometimes feel like strangers in their home. This is one of the dominant themes of Michael Ondaatje's novels and *Warlight* also is not an exception. He writes about the parents' selfishness through the following lines:

They had rarely spoken to us about their lives. We were used to partial stories. Our father had been involved in the last stages of the earlier war, and I don't think he felt he really belonged to us. (WL 8)

Children accept it that their mother, Rose Williams also will have to go to their father later as she was his wife and children are in their teen age and can take care of them in this age. Finally, their father leaves and they embrace him before his departure, "Before his departure we all embraced our father in a huddle, The Moth having tactfully disappeared for the weekend" (WL 8). In this way, a new life begins for them. Nathaniel could not believe it. He feels sad to think that they will have to live under the care of a stranger. Even after growing young when he recalls this scene, he feels very sad. Michael Ondaatje writes about Nathaniel's mental state, "In any case, I am now at an age where I can talk about it, of how we grew up protected by the arms of strangers" (WL 8). Caruth writes in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*,

“Traumatized individuals . . . develop difficulties in assimilating subsequent experiences as well. . .” (Caruth 164). Ian Parker also remarks that trauma is the “breaches of the body and by implication also of the mind . . .” (Parker 29).

It was a good thing for the children for a few more days that their mother was available to give more time to children after the departure of Nathaniel’s father. She tries to give them more time so that her children may not feel that their mother is ignoring them. That’s why now children are also happy in her company. Earlier she had her responsibilities to take care of the needs of her husband but now she was free to devote her time for her children:

With the departure of our father, our mother’s presence grew larger. The conversations we used to overhear between our parents had always been about adult matters. But now she began telling us stories about herself, about growing up in the Suffolk countryside. (WL 9)

She tells them that her grandparents would live in Suffolk in the area known as The Saints. It was a very peaceful place and there was a river and church near their residence. The children would listen to these stories with much interest and would insist on their mother to tell them more stories.

The moth, our third-floor lodger, was absent from the house most of the time, though sometimes he arrived early enough to be there for dinner. He was encouraged now to join us, and only after much waving of his arms in unconvincing protest would he sit down and eat at our table. (WL 10)

The children were not quite sure why The Moth would behave like this whether it was his shyness or listlessness. After some time, a change came in his behaviour and he was seen talking quietly with their mother in the dark garden and he would take tea with her. Their mother persuades the Moth to teach Mathematics to the children before the starting of their school because Nathaniel would fail in this subject. The children would listen to stories from the Moth and would enjoy it, “It was the time of true and false recollections, and Rachel and I were curious” (*WL* 11). Justy Joseph and Dr. Nirmala Menon, “Recollection is a gangplank between an obsolete past, indisputable present and an unidentified future, but human memory is convoluted as the compendium of a landscape” (Joseph and Menon 1). Nathaniel was a quite person and his presence in the house was felt from the piano music from his radio, “He was never “war-like” in his demeanour” (*WL* 11).

Nathaniel’s mother, Rose Williams entrusts Walter with her children, citing that they worked closely during the war as firewatchers at the Grosvenor House Hotel. Nathaniel and Rachel have doubts that Walter and their mother have worked on more covert jobs together. She gives sufficient time to her children which makes them happy. The children were feeling better after their father’s departure, “With our father’s absence our house began to feel freer and more spacious, and we spent as much as tom with her as we could. (*WL* 12-13).

She takes her children on a train from Liverpool Street to her childhood home in Suffolk. She tells children that her grandparents had died in a car accident. She feels that void and glumness when she enters the house. She was quite silent when she visited the house, “...we watched our mother roaming their house silently” (*WL* 13). The children got a chance to visit different places in her mother’s company.

They feel jubilant and enthusiastic to see more and more places. They personally feel that their mother has changed a lot after their father's departure:

But we were happiest with our mother on our own in London. We wanted her casual and sleepy affection, more than what we had been given before. It was as if she had returned to an earlier version of herself. (*WL* 13-14)

Their mother helped them in different activities. She helped Nathaniel in learning French. She has a wonderful command in Latin and French. She had to do so much work related to their children and even children suspect lest she should feel bored of doing so many things for them, "Was she bored with looking after us on a daily basis?" (*WL* 14). During that time, the children were feeling really blessed to have her company, "I suspect that was the time Rachel and I felt we had a real mother" (*WL* 14). Finally, the day came when their mother was to leave sooner than their expectations. She had arranged the mood of her children in this way so that they may not feel gloomy. "It was as if our mother had arranged things so there would be no tearful goodbyes" (*WL* 16).

Nathaniel's parents decide that they should admit their children in a boarding school so that they may not face much difficulty. In mid-September Nathaniel and Rachel started going to their schools. As they had been in day boarding schools by now, living in a boarding school was a bit of a gawky experience for them. That's why they immediately write a letter to their parents to relieve them from this boarding school but unfortunately, they do not get any reply from their parents. Both the children had their different schools and their schools were around half a mile

away from each other so they had to borrow a bicycle if they wanted to meet each other. Finally, they plan to escape from their respective schools:

Rachel and I decided that whatever we did we would do together. So in the midst of the second week, before our pleading letters had even reached Europe, we slipped away with the day students after the last class. (WL 18)

They find that the Moth was at the home but the children get shocked to know that The Moth had invited strangers into their home without their permission. They had never thought about that. They were much concerned over their escape from the school and they had fear in mind that their guardian The Moth may not get angry with them at their decision but fortunately, he was not much concerned about it. They tell The Moth that it would be better if they remain at home instead of a boarding school. The Moth thinks that the children may be hungry so he does the arrangement for food for them.

“You must be hungry. I’ll warm up some baked beans, how did you get here?”

“The train, then by bus.”

“Good.” (WL 19)

The Moth convinces them that he would make a call to the school authorities so that they may not worry about them. After that, they start having their dinner from the local street barrows. The children had never eaten their food from the barrows but now it has become a compulsion to them just because their guardian The Moth did not have any interest in cooking food. He preferred “a hasty life” (WL 21). The

children were feeling a bit nervous also, “my sister and I felt we were trespassers” (WL 21).

After that The Moth starts inviting his friends in the house and the life of these people becomes quite interesting. Norman Marshan or The Pimlico Darter does the smuggling of greyhounds and explosives to London. He is quite a supporting character of this novel. He is very handsome and remains active in supporting events at Wembley, and Whitechapel. He detests theatre but enjoys cinema (WL 18). He is a Morris automobile driver and lives in “a disorganized flat at The Pelican Stairs” (WL 56). Though he has a rough face and cockney tastes, yet he has the ability to attract women.

One night The Moth returns late and he asks about Rachel’s whereabouts. Nathaniel had no idea where she had been at such late night. They find her trunk in the basement. Nathaniel was much worried about his sister, “There was more silence, my ears may have been deaf to any sound, even if it existed. I remained hunched over...Everything had a purpose and a usefulness. And everything had been left behind” (WL 27). There is a conversation between Nathaniel and The Moth:

“If she’s not there, is he not there too?”

“He is there.”

“Why is he there if she isn’t?”

Silence.

“Where is she?”

“I don’t know”. You must know. You worked out the things with the school.”

“I did that on my own.”

“You are in touch with her. You said.”

“Yes. I said that. But I don’t know where she is right now.” (*WL 27*)

This is how a tense atmosphere develops in the home. Rachel’s sudden disappearance makes Nathaniel disappointed and unsafe. He gets another shock that his mother has not gone to his father which creates another tension in his mind. He knows that The Moth was in touch with his mother and father and he bombards the questions to The Moth:

“Where is my father?”

“I’ve had no communications with him.”

“But my mother was joining him.”

“No.”

...

“Is she dead?”

“No.”

“Is she in danger? Where’s Rachel gone?”

“I’ll find Rachel. Let her be for a moment.”

“I don’t feel safe.” (*WL 28*)

The novel depicts the past memories of Nathaniel with regard to his father but Nathaniel feels so sad that he refuses to tell anything, “I don’t know. I don’t know. What does a boy know?” (WL 59). Harneet Kaur writes about this novel, “*Warlight* manifests fragmented memories of its narrator, Nathaniel” (Kaur 39). Jean Laplanche remarks in his book *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, “The six essays presented in this volume are a series of fragments or stages in a meditation on Freud’s thought, undertaken in an effort to evolve through a historico-structural approach to Freud’s work—a problematic of the object of psychoanalysis” (Laplanche 1). The readers can peep through the past of Nathaniel as well as other characters from the narrator’s point of view (Kaur 39). Nathaniel writes, “Our family, already splintered, was splintered again” (WL 148).

Another swing comes in the novel when Rachel comes back inebriated and she does not show any concern what her brother and guardian, Walter will think about her. She appeared unconcerned with her absence, “My sister did not return until late that night, long past-midnight. She appeared unconcerned, barely speaking to us. The Moth did not argue with her about her absence, only asked if she had been drinking. She shrugged. She looked exhausted, her arms and her legs were filthy” (WL 31). This time Nathaniel comes to know that a different phase has started between him and his sister. He understands that it will be quite difficult to maintain a healthy relationship with her. “But it felt to me that she had crossed a river and was now further from me, elsewhere” (WL 31). There are other instances in the novel in which Rachel does not show any feelings towards her brother, “But she had no desire to re-enter our youth. Rachel in her own way had abandoned us, did not wish to go

back to what was for her a dangerous and unreliable time” (WL 147). It is one more instance of “Afterwardsness” in the novel.

The novel has the perspective of Laplanche’s ‘Afterwardsness’ since its beginning. The past memory of his father’s departure to Singapore reminds the readers how *Nachträglichkeit* works behind this incident. Justy Joseph and Dr. Nirmala Menon argue, “Reminiscence is a parlance between an obsolete past, irrefutable present and an anonymous future” (Joseph and Menon 1). The departure of both the parents leaves a very bad impact on Rachel and she goes into trauma and starts drinking to defer her tensions. Freud holds the views in *The Standard Edition* that he and his friend Josef Breuer “invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by deferred action” (Freud 356).

The Moth warns Nathaniel that they must be prepared for their difficult time. He uses a word “schwer” (WL 32) for it which means a tough phase. After her sister’s step, Nathaniel feels absolutely alone and the stress creates varying degrees of intensity of trauma for the victims. Anne T. Romano opines that trauma differs from person to person, “Because of varying degrees of stress precipitated by the different types of incidents, the intensity of the trauma will vary from incident to incident, as well as from person to person” (Romano 70). Ondaatje has written his novel *Divisadero* about the fragmentation of a family, likewise the novel *Warlight* also prepares the fertile land of fragmentation of family with the message that Nathaniel’s father is going to Singapore for one year which in the long run because a trauma for Nathaniel and his sister. Bloom and Reichert also opine that “the functioning of the brain becomes life-threatening when the internal fragmentation

that is a normal response to overwhelming trauma, is not healed” (Bloom and Reichert 119).

Nathaniel wants to know about his mother also. He starts missing her more passionately. Thus, the novel has so many flashbacks at different places which give the indication of the past experiences. Moreover, Cathy Caruth observes in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* that the “flashback or traumatic re-enactment conveys, that is, both the truth of an event and the truth of its incomprehensibility” (Caruth 153). Nathaniel was very much curious to know where his mother was and he could remember how his eyes went on rolling in the empty streets. His traumatic memories take him into his past. He keeps on thinking, “But where was my mother” (WL 34). Lacan writes in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* that trauma is “the divided kingdom, that any conception of the unity of the psyche, of the supposed totalizing, synthesizing psyche, ascending towards consciousness, perishes there” (Lacan 51).

Nathaniel has come to know more about The Moth. Nathaniel would sometimes think that “The Moth was dangerous” (WL 34). He was unkind to children just because being single; he did not speak truth to children. Earlier Nathaniel thought that The Moth was silent but now he changes his views, “This man we had thought of as being quiet and shy now seemed dangerous with secrets” (WL 34). His disappearance was quite embarrassing for the children but they ignored it because now they had the company of their mother, “The Moth was sometimes gone for two or three days, often without warning. We ate our dinners alone and trudged off to school the next morning” (WL 47). It did not matter much to the children as they would manage the thing themselves. Nathaniel recollects about it, “The Moth was often away, but his absence, like his presence, rarely mattered” (WL 67).

After the departure of Nathaniel's mother, only two visitors would come in the house: The Darter and the opera singer from Bogg's Row. Gradually, during the Christmas holidays, they come to know that the house was filled with The Moth's acquaintances and most of them would stay at night. Their activities and conversations were not usual.

After their parents' departure of Nathaniel's parents, "the house felt more like a night zoo, with moles and jackdaws and shambling beasts who happened to be chess players, a gardener, a possible greyhound thief, a slow-moving opera singer" (WL 46). Most of these people were a hybrid bunch of criminals, intellectuals or spies. The house which was earlier an urban villa now becomes them were an eclectic group of people who were a strange hybrid of criminals, spies, schemers or idealists, "The Williams home was no longer an urban family villa now, it becomes a resting place for the outsiders, "the house seemed to have collided with the outside world" (WL 36). Justy Joseph and Dr. Nirmala Menon remark in this context:

Throughout the novel, Nathaniel's yearning to cast light on his family's secrets is allied with spaces which they once ingrained. His exalted aspiration to fudge together his own past identity is affirmed by the melancholic tang of the old house and the memories it aroused.
(Joseph and Menon 4)

The Darter helps Nathaniel in getting a job in a restaurant. He recalls those days when he started working in a restaurant, "That summer I found a job in a fast-paced restaurant in World's End" (WL 64). He finds Agnes Street in that restaurant and they get close to each other. Agnes Street was apprehensive about Nathaniel just because she had never met his parents.

“I’m a working girl. I got an accent. You probably don’t want me meeting your parents.”

“You don’t understand, it’s a strange household now. Really strange.”

“Why?”

“There are always these people there. Strange people.”

“So I’ll fit in. Will you come over to my flat? Meet my parents?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?”

“Yes. I’d like that.”

“That’s surprising. You don’t want me in your house, but you’ll come to mine.” (WL 106)

Nathaniel was interested in Agnes Street. He was not much concerned about what they were. He had dinner at Agnes Street’s home with her parents. Nathaniel shows his cleverness and he asks The Darter to pose himself as Nathaniel’s father. One day he introduces The Darter as his father. Agnes does not doubt Nathaniel, “Then one day she ran into me with The Darter and so I introduced him to her as my father” (WL 108). In fact, The Darter helps Nathaniel a lot. He also joins the lie that he is Nathaniel’s father. Agnes Street’s innocence is explicit from this incident. She accepts him easily, “The Darter was enough for Agnes to feel accepted” (WL 108). They have a better understanding of each other. The Darter also takes an avuncular and protective air with her. He invites her to a dog track on one Saturday. She feels very happy in his company that night. She says that it was “the greatest night” (WL

108) of her life. She loved arguing with the Darter on some occasions. Thus, they develop a good relationship.

Contract of Nathaniel's father was only for one year but even after one year, neither his father nor mother returned. They did not send any message of the delay in their arrival. Nathaniel becomes worried to think all about it and he thinks that perhaps he has been stalked. He thinks that his mother will be in London.

After some time, they happen to meet their mother also but she tells them that she cannot live with them due to some unavoidable reasons and she is taking this step for their safety only. She leaves them again. This time Nathaniel gets admission in a boarding school and her sister Rachel is sent to another school in rural England.

The Darter shows his compassion and he helps Rachel emerge symptoms of epilepsy. After that he helps her in getting a job in a local theatre. In this way, The Darter proves very helpful for both the siblings in getting jobs.

The second section of the novel is set in Suffolk in 1959. Nathaniel is now 28-years old and he has bought a cottage from the elderly Linette Malakite. He likes his new house very much, "I bought a home for myself in a Suffolk village that could be reached by a few hours' train ride from London. It was a modest house with a walled garden... It was a house I loved" (*WL* 123). Linette does not have much of a sound mind and Sam is dead now, now Nathaniel tries to take some steps regarding his mother's disappearance. He thinks about his past memories and his affable chess games and childhood experiences. Sometimes he thinks that his mother is in danger but why it is so is beyond his ken.

Nathaniel is hired by the London's Foreign Office to work for a counterintelligence operation known as The Silent Correction, which seeks to squelch espionage efforts in England. By that time, Nathaniel had become financially independent. He has now bought a house near the place The Saints where his mother lived in her childhood. Nathaniel makes his relationships with those people with whom he became friends due to The Moth. He could not contact all of them. By that time, both Nathaniel and Rachel were living separately and their relationship was also so strong due to distances. Rachel was a married woman now and she has put the name of her son Walter in the honour of their childhood guardian The Moth.

Nathaniel had his personal motive to work in The Silent Correction just because he wanted to get all the data so that he may be able to know what has happened with his mother. He becomes very desperate and one day he dares to break into the office to continue his research. He comes to know that a senior officer whose name was Marsh Felon, has attended his mother's funeral. In fact, Felon knew Nathaniel's mother from his childhood. When Nathaniel probes into the matter further he comes to know that they have worked together in Yugoslavia and there was a time when they were probably in love.

A tragedy happens with Nathaniel, Rachel and The Moth as they are assaulted by some men who were following Nathaniel. When Nathaniel is knocked out, he becomes unconscious. When he comes to his senses, he finds that he and his sister are safe but The Moth is dead. Jenny Edkins aptly notes, "Since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with other places and in another time. . . . The traumatic experience/memory is in a sense timeless. . . . If

it can be told at all . . . it is still a re-experience” (Edkins 40). This tragedy is aptly related with Freud’s Deferred Action. This is how the readers come to know about The Moth’s death:

“I bury things. What exactly happened to Walter?”

“He died protecting you both that night, at the Bark. The way he protected you when you were small...”

“Why were we not told he was protecting us?”

“Your sister realized. This is why she will never forgive me for his death. I suppose he was the true father to her. And he loved her.”

“Do you mean he was in love with her?”

“No. He was just a man without children, who loved children. He wanted you safe.” (WL 258)

At the end of this novel, the readers find that Nathaniel is looking for The Darter. He feels alienated which is so common in Ondaatje’s characters. “I was living a solitary life, so I recognize solitary as well as the small dimensions of order that come with that. The Darter was not solitary. He had a family now: a wife named Sophie, he said and a daughter. This surprised me” (WL 270).

Nathaniel comes to know that Agnes Street is undergoing a tough time. He himself narrates about it, “I heard from someone that Agnes had a difficult time. I tried to find her but couldn’t” (WL 271). In fact, Agnes had an affair with Nathaniel and she became pregnant. She tries to find Nathaniel:

After a few weeks after Agnes discovered she was pregnant, and with no one else she felt able to speak to about it, she had taken one bus, then another, and got off near The Pelican Stairs where The Darter lived. She had not seen me for over a month and assumed that was where I was. (*WL 276-77*)

In the absence of Nathaniel, The Darter gives emotional support to Agnes. He tells her how he had to tell a lie to her that he is Nathaniel's father. Agnes was very helpless as she was pregnant and Nathaniel's absence made her disappointed. Agnes has never thought that she will have to marry The Darter whom she would consider her father-in-law. It was The Darter who reveals her so many things and finally suggests her that she can marry him if she wishes as it will be a safe path to her:

So now, as he simultaneously attempted to calm her, to make her understand the less incidental, less truthful world, he needed in some way to bring her out from her focused self-defeating self. Were there many conversations before he suggested marriage?... He was offering a safe path out of the closing world she was in. (*WL 279*)

Nathaniel also learns that The Darter has been married to Agnes and they have a daughter also. It may be possible that she may be Nathaniel's biological daughter. Nathaniel thinks that if time allows, he will see his daughter one day. Gradually he decides to relinquish his past memories. The novel leaves a message that now the protagonist's difficult situations have made him bold and he is strong enough to face any situation as he is not much involved in the past activities.

An immigrant also feels alienated during his stay in the host country and has a special kind of attachment with the native country. His displacement makes him feel about his home and other people of his country. It is generally seen that such a person is torn between roots and uprootedness, assimilation and extrication, the flux of two opposite cultures and the different lifestyles of the people. This condition of doubleness makes him think of his ethnic identity which remains quite fragmented in a different country because he is always considered an outsider at a new place. Sunil Bhatia succinctly opines that a migrants' journey is, "... a movement away from one's culture and customs and a step toward a new ethnic identity and then an eventual assimilation into the "melting pot" of the majority culture" (Bhatia 221-222).

This aloofness and severance lead to the frustration of an immigrant. The new language also becomes a major hindrance to him because all the channels and programs in the TV are set keeping in view the interest of the native people. Thus, a person personally feels cut from his native country and it takes years to adjust in a new country. He feels dejection and displacement. But after some time, he does not feel like returning to his native country because he personally feels attached with this country. Avinash Jodha writes about the condition of an expatriate writer:

Looking back, and to search for one's roots is not a leisurely act of romancing with nostalgia but it reflects an essential stage in the politics of exile. It is a politically potent move, by reclaiming an overlooked past, the expatriate stakes his claim to be considered beyond the constraints of existing frameworks. However, an

exploration of the past ties, reassuring as it might seem at a personal level, has its significance in the sense of group solidarity, an anchorage that it offers to the expatriate in both the spaces. (Jodha 134)

The novel describes the myth of England through the background of the post-World War II. The theme of postnationalism appears in this novel also which is quite different from other European coming-of-age novels. Marianna Nunn argues, “postnational discourse takes culture, society, government, politics, and the economics of an individual nation and inserts these components into an increased regional, continental, hemispheric, and global perspective narrative” (Nunn 10). It is Nathaniel’s father who gets ready to leave his children behind for the sake of his job in Unilever office. Leaving children behind without the care of family members is a very risky decision but in the most-modern world, it is considered a requirement to earn money and people leave their countries easily. William A. Darity, Jr. writes in this context, “in a postnational context it becomes necessary to move beyond the idea that a homogeneous national identity is the natural integrating factor of the modern political community” (Darity 397).

It is generally seen that Nathaniel is seen progressing in his life gradually. He began his education from Dulwich College which provides boarding facilities to its students. It is quite interesting that Michael Ondaatje attended this college from the same college. Nathaniel does not want to remain like a boarder there and he decides to become a day student. He does not take much interest in his studies and he remains weak in Mathematics. Nathaniel and his sister Rachel Williams plan to come back

and one day they reach their home. Michael Ondaatje writes, “We were also nervous about our escape from the school and how it would be taken by our untested guardian” (WL 18).

Memories play an important role in Ondaatje’s *Warlight*. It is clear that Nathaniel’s British perspective in London is an important element in this novel. Aarthi Vadde writes that, “The globalist sutures collective memory to the universal category of the human, while the localist brings it back into an enclosed narrative of the nation” (Vadde 267). Michael Ondaatje has used memories in his previous novels and these memories help the narrator in narrating their stories of childhood and adulthood. Stephen Porter writes:

According to one widespread perspective known as the traumatic memory argument, stressful and traumatic experiences lead to memory impairment because they are processed by cognitive mechanisms that render them difficult to retrieve as coherent verbal narratives. (Porter 101)

Michael Ondaatje has used young protagonists in his novels and their stories have been told from different perspectives. Nathaniel feels very bad when his father abandons him and his sister Rachel and goes to Singapore alone. He feels resented with his mother also because she told a lie to them that she is going to Singapore to her husband but she does not go there, “The arrangement appeared strange, but life still was haphazard and confusing during that period after the war, so what had been suggested did not feel unusual” (WL 6).

This is how Michel Ondaatje gradually develops his characters in bildungsroman style and through them; he has brought out the frailty of contemporary Britain. Nathaniel's parents represent the British Government in the Foreign Service Office but how they tell lies to their children represent other Britishers' attitude and behaviour towards other people. Nathaniel's tumultuous adolescence is indicative of his tragic past experiences. It indicates how parents are shown irresponsibility towards their children leaving them behind at their fate and they want to live their life according to their own choice.

Nathaniel meets many people in his life which also leaves an impact on his life. Among them one is Harry Nkoma who emigrated from St. Lucia, a commonwealth nation. He had worked with him at the Criterion Banquet Halls as, "The drawn-out careful lessons of intercourse in all its varieties, described by Mr. Nkoma, a remarkable man who had a scar on his cheek, took the whole lunch break, and I would end up washing dishes and pots for the rest of the afternoon, barely recovering from what I heard" (WL 41). When Nkoma shares his memories with Nathaniel, it leaves a significant impact on his life. There are other issues such as job, sex and politics which also affect his psyche.

Nathaniel listens to Harry Nkoma who is forty-six years old now and he knows many things about sex when he tells how he had an affair with his piano teacher, Mrs. Rafferty who was a very beautiful woman. Her piano teacher's son also studied in the same school in which Harry Nkoma would study. When his piano teacher asks him what he wants to become, he tells her that he wants to join the band by becoming a drum player, she suggests to him, "Oh, anybody can play the drums.

No, you should learn the piano” (WL 42). Their student-teacher relationship turns into physical relationships soon. Harry Nkoma narrates that memory:

He said her hands felt like leaves on him. After he had come to her—this curious and startling act of magic—her palms had brushed her hair back from his face until his heart stopped speeding.... Then she slowly undressed, then bent sideways so she could lick the last drop from him. (WL 43)

Nathaniel also tried to find a love partner with him and he finds a waitress from the Criterion with whom he tries to develop intimacy. Nathaniel starts having affair with Agnes Street and it turns into a physical relationship very soon. They often make love on the hardwood floors in empty London houses. It is also noticeable that Agnes Street has more experience of sex than Nathaniel, but “something else made Agnes different from others” (WL 72). The love affair plays an important role in this novel, “Banging into a wall. It’s as if neither of us thinks of anything except to escape this closeness, and it is only closeness that will help us escape. We are on the floor kissing whatever we reach. Her hands beating my shoulders as we fuck. It isn’t lovemaking” (WL 66). This kind of “aesthetic sensibility” is generally seen in the bildungsroman heroes (Buckley 208).

Alden argues that “by making the sexual experience the avenue to true selfhood, he ignores the trauma of upward mobility; sex affords his characters a way of attaining a full experience of individuality without costly estrangement, guilt, self-betrayal, or disillusionment,” making Nathaniel’s sexual experiences in *Warlight* an integral part of his identity (Alden 99). As Nathaniel heads towards maturity, his identity is immersed more into the growing.

Nathaniel is a British citizen but his race is Caucasian. Michael Ondaatje has used his characters who do not fit into the British identity. While Nathaniel's identity is British, in the traditional sense, and his race is Caucasian. There are other characters also in this novel who belong to different countries and their languages, customs; rituals are quite different from the Britishers. Nathaniel also thinks about his past memories how his bonding with the Criterion workers was memorable to him. He ruminates:

Why do I still remember those days and nights at the Criterion—that springtime fragment of a boy's youth, a seemingly unimportant time? The men and women I would meet at Ruvigny Gardens were more incendiary, became more significant in the path of my life" (WL 44)

The Darter is a very romantic and shady character who has relationships with women and he is known to be a "boulevardier," with many girlfriends. When he brings Olive Lawrence in the house for the first time, he is asked by them who she is, "The Darter arrived too late to explain who she was" (WL 51). These women who would get easily entangled with him were not humble so far, "Yet the women he was attracted to seemed to be in no way humble or easily persuaded maidens who would happily exist under his rules" (WL 52). Olive Lawrence, who is an ethnographer and geographer, had travelled to several foreign countries for her work. She holds the views, "Half the life of cities occurs at night. There's more uncertain morality then. At night there are those who eat flesh by necessity—they might eat a bird, a small dog" (WL 56). Nathaniel tells about her, "I had benefited from the clarity of female opinion from this person who had no close connection to me. In the brief time I knew

her; I believed Olive Lawrence was on my side” (WL 264). She inspires him to become a part of the Foreign Office. Her cosmopolitan experience of various countries leaves a lasting impact on Nathaniel to make better decisions in his life.

The Darter also had a relationship with another woman Aramaic who is Russian and she paints murals. The Darter does not conceal his relationships with these women and he introduces these women to Nathaniel also. This was the experience which brought him close to other women except his mother and sister. “The presence of The Darter’s various partners meant I was suddenly closer to women than I had even been, apart from my mother or sister” (WL 62-63)

The Darter takes Nathaniel and Rachel to navigate the Thames River. Nathaniel and Rachel do not know much about the boats and the smuggling through the Thames River. “On the first day on the Thames, Rachel and I and the Darter travelled west until we were almost free of the city” (WL 74). In this way, The Darter remains close to Nathaniel and his sister and he becomes like a father figure. Nathaniel feels good in his company, “So when I was with my sister and this supposed father floating up the River Lee in the borrowed barge, I almost began to see the three of us as a believable family unit” (WL 110). He can be compared with Magwitch of Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* as he becomes like a surrogate father but like Pip, he trains him in criminal activities also so that he may have a better life. This is how his journey of breaking the rules continues. Nathaniel, as an adolescent, looks back at his criminal activities with The Darter and reflects that “most of the laws I broke during that period were small” and “the illegal world felt more magical than dangerous to me” (WL 98-99). The Darter involves Nathaniel in

his night time criminal activities of smuggling of greyhounds. The Darter gives Nathaniel different lessons of life.

The Moth is another surrogate father for Nathaniel who is introduced in the first few pages of the novel, as a lodger to the Williams' house in London. When Nathaniel's parents allegedly go to Singapore for a year, The Moth becomes their guardian. Their mother calls him a colleague but Rachel suspects that he is a criminal. The Moth remains with the children according to his responsibility. He leaves them at night after the arrival of their mother. He had promised Nathaniel that he would live with them until their mother returns and he leaves them the same night when their mother arrives.

The death of Nathaniel's mother, Rose Williams also remains a part of the novel and it has also been depicted through memories. She was buried around fifteen miles away in the parish of Benacre in the Waveney district. His mother was not a religious woman. Nathaniel sends a telegram to Rachel but he does not get any response. So, she could not attend her funeral. Her death acts like a catalyst of "Afterwardsness" in the novel.

Rose dies early in the early evening and Mr. Malakite finds her the next day at noon. He carried her to the living room. The news of the death of Nathaniel's mother was published in *The Mint Light*. This news was "there was no coverage of my mother's death in the newspapers. The death of Rose Williams caused little public response in the larger world she had once belonged in. Her small obituary identified her only as the daughter of an admiral, and did not mention a location for her funeral" (WL 181). After around ten years, Nathaniel gets an offer to work in the

Foreign Office. He narrates, “A decade after my mother’s death, I received an invitation to apply to the Foreign Office” (WL 130). It was quite a strange experience for Nathaniel. In this job, his duty was to review various files in the archives covering the war and post-war years.

Telling lies remains an important part in Ondaatje’s novel. In his novel *The English Patient*, Katharine tells Almásy, “If you make love to me, I won’t lie about it. If I make love to you won’t lie about it.” when Almásy asks Katharine what she hates the most, she replies, “A lie. And you?” (EP 152). To tell a lie remains an important part in *Warlight* also as it is very important to be an expert in telling lies to become a spy. Nathaniel’s parents tell lies and never return. Likewise, Nathaniel also tells a lie to his teacher to skip his school so that he may spend his time with The Darter on the waterways. Further, he tells another lie to Agnes Street telling her that The Darter is his father. “I had become a liar not so much to confuse her as to remove the hurt she felt because I kept the inexplicable situation in my life from her—and perhaps from myself as well” (WL 108). Agnes Street also wants to know about Nathaniel’s past. She says, “You can tell me in French if you want?” to which Nathaniel replies, “‘I failed French,’ I lie” (WL 71-72). Thus, telling a lie seems to be a part of urban culture of the post war British espionage. After shifting to Suffolk, Nathaniel narrates how The Darter was an expert in telling a lie:

What led me to understand what had taken place in his flat was remembering what a great liar The Darter was, “How, when surprised by a policeman or security guard at a warehouse or museum, he would improvise an unplanned lie that was so intricate and even so ridiculous

that he would be laughing at it himself. People did not usually lie and find it funny at the same time that was his disguise. “Never plan a lie,” he told me during one of those night journeys. “Invent as you go along. It’s more believable.” (*WL* 273)

In this way, this novel reveals so many things about the reality of human life. Though human life seems to be very smooth, there are so many setbacks and curves in it. Michael Ondaatje writes, “So much left unburied at the end of a war” (*WL* 253). Nathaniel as an abandoned adolescent protagonist has been depicted as an anti-hero who gets derailed in his life. He gets guidance and support from strangers and his own father becomes a stranger to him. His jeremiad also comes to an end. Like his father, he feels selfless, rootless and placeless. He is seen lamenting when he contemplates, “I felt I too had disappeared. I had lost my youth” (*WL* 145).

So far as the term “Deferred Action” (in French *après-coup*) is concerned on this novel, Nathaniel’s father knew it well though he is going to Singapore for one year contract, yet he knew that he will not return, this event can be called in context of Sigmund Freud’s “Deferred Action” as it was an intentional act which brings result later.

Nathaniel’s mother also tells lies to her children that she is going to Singapore to her father but she also does not go there. Nathaniel comes to know after a decade that she has been dead. His mother’s statement can be seen as a Deferred Action.

So far as Laplanche’s ‘Afterwardsness’ is concerned, the children were under the impression that her parents will return to them after one year but to their great

dismay, they do not return and it is like a shock to them. Laplanche's 'Afterwardsness' can be applied in this situation.

Thus, the novel *Warlight* projects the prosaic, cruel and materialistic world. It can be called a part memoir and a "Romance of Disillusionment". This term was coined by George Lukacs in the opposition of a bildungsroman (Lukacs qtd. in Boes, "Modernist Studies" 239). The memories turn Nathaniel into a sentimental person. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis write in *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* that the "emergence of a memory brings on an emotional reaction" (Laplanche and Pontalis 7). The novel projects the colonialism and imperialism of a nation to provide a facade of being a global superpower and the post-war tensions of the novel challenge nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism.

All this has been depicted through memories, recoveries and recollections which give the illusion of a memoir to its readers. In this novel, Ondaatje has successfully projected the images of the reality of the post-modern British world like Ondaatje's earlier novels. The whole novel has been written using memories and it is based on Nathaniel's own contemplations, recoveries and revelations. Christopher McVey also has the same opinion about the continuity among his earlier novels. He rightly argues, "Ondaatje's work frequently incorporates a countervailing desire to return, to reclaim, and to bear witness to the historical and national worlds from which his characters emerge" (McVey 142).

Conclusion

Michael Ondaatje is a diasporic writer and his works present the pictures of migration and diasporic sensibility. Transnational migration brings an identity crisis to his characters in Michael Ondaatje's novels just because they have to encounter unexpected cultural clashes and language barriers in their host countries. The background of war also adds problems in their personal traumas. Postcolonial themes can be easily found in his writing. Frank Davey writes in *Canadian Literary Power* that "postmodernism's struggle against hegemonies has been taken up within Canadian literature by various constituencies under specialized banners" (Davey 285). Ondaatje's novels deal with the psychological issues of his characters. C. G. Jung also illustrates that it is quite relevant to study psychological issues in literature "for the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts" (507).

Michael Ondaatje was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada. That's why either he belongs to both of the countries or none of the countries just because the natives do not accept the outsiders as citizens so easily. Even after decades, they remain only outsiders to them. Among many other themes, the pathos of diaspora, memory and war makes his characters miserable.

Memory and Trauma

To begin with, Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992) is a story of a badly burned man Almásy and his enigmatic identity. The novel questions Eurocentrism, ethnicity and postcolonialism. The novel's four main characters: the English Patient, Hana, Caravaggio and Kip are seen struggling with their own problems.

Hana is the main female protagonist of this novel who is a twenty-year-old Canadian woman. She is a nurse who saves the lives of many patients during World War II. She lives at the Villa San Girolamo. His villa was damaged due to the Mortar attack and it was in a quite dilapidated condition. In the opening scene of the novel, a girl Hana is depicted gardening, “She stands up in the garden where she has been working and looks into the distance. She has sensed a shift in the weather” (*EP* 3). She is an alienated girl who suffers from her personal traumas of her life. Her biggest trauma is that being a nurse, she could not save the life of her father. She spends most of her time alone and does what gives her pleasure. She is a realistic girl who knows about the futility of human life and she thinks that every good thing is doomed to its end. She doesn't love her life so much and she thinks that has nothing to lose or gain in her life. She does not have over-attachment with her patients but she nurses them whole-heartedly.

Later it is seen that she is emotionally attached with the English Patient. His name was Almásy who was burnt beyond recognition, “Well, she's got her own ghost, a burned patient. There is a face but unrecognisable. The nerves all gone” (*EP* 30). He had become like a scary ghost but Hana tends his wound. She takes care of him so devotedly that the English Patient also gets emotionally attached with her. She does so because she took pity at his condition, “Above the sins the burns are worst. Beyond purple. Bone” (*EP* 3). Not only this, she gives him fruit of her garden. She wants to save his life at any cost and does so many things for him so that she may keep him happy and content.

Though Hana is unable to recover from the loss of her father, she cannot be called only the tragic character of this novel. In fact, it is the English Patient, Almásy,

who is the most tragic character of this novel. He tells his whole story to Hana how she got burnt. He is the most pathetic character just because after the crash of the helicopter, he is unable to eat and the Budoins take pity on him. When he is unable to eat, they chew food for him and give him to eat. Hana also reads books to him to divert his mind from his pathetic condition. She does not pay much attention to him whether he is listening to her or not, she thinks it her duty to pay attention to what he needs. She does to him all which only a family member can do for someone, “She would read to him, bathe him, and give him the doses of morpheme” (*EP* 15).

The novel has been written on two major concepts. The first one is how the past memories of the character share their present. The second one is how the present of the characters gives an indication of their future. The English Patient is saved even after so much burning which gives him a hope that he will be able to live his life soon. Jonathan House and Julie Slotnick also write, “Because “deferred action” follows the arrow of time, the meanings of deferred action and retrospective modification are clearly in considerable tension” (House and Slotnick 685).

The next tragic character of this novel is Caravaggio who had to stay in the military hospital in Rome for four months for the treatment of his hands, “The man with bandaged hands had been in the military hospital in Rome for more than four months when by accident he heard about the burned patient and the nurse, heard her name” (*EP* 29). Hana tells him that they may face the problem of food after his arrival. Caravaggio tells Hana that he is unable to catch chickens just because he has lost his nerves after a tragedy. He tells her that he was caught by the Germans when he was stealing something from a German woman.

‘You don’t understand. I lost my nerve.’

‘Why?’

‘I was caught. They nearly chopped off my fucking hands.’ (EP 36)

Caravaggio tells her that he was a professional Italian thief and he was given the task of stealing some documents from a German room. When a woman takes his picture in a party, he suspects that this picture may send him behind the bars. So, he decides to steal the video camera of that woman. She notices him stealing, “I was caught in mid-step, the beginning of the shutter’s noise making me jerk my head towards it” (EP 37).

The novel has been written in the flashback technique and most of the events of the novel have been depicted through his traumatic memories. Elizabeth A. Waites states that “[...] when a danger is commonly shared, those who share it sometimes escape the devastating sense of social isolation that so often magnifies trauma” (Waites 31).

Kip’s hybrid identity also remains the focal point of this novel. Cathy Caruth writes in her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* that “in a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures” (Caruth 11). Homi K. Bhabha coins the term ‘colonial hybrid’ in *The Location of Culture* (1994) to depict the hybridization of cultures in different countries. Bhabha avers:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of

discriminatory identities that secure the pure and original identity of authority. (Bhabha 159)

Kip, the sapper works for the British army and he is considered as a colonised native of India and he is an outsider there, “Kip is a foreigner to English culture when he first arrives in India. Singh had arrived in England knowing no one, distanced from his family in the Punjab. He was twenty-one years old. He had met no one but soldiers” (*EP* 187). He does not feel good there just because he thinks that the natives do not accept him as a colleague, “The English! They expect you to fight for them but won’t talk to you” (*EP* 188). Edward Said also writes in this context, “the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action” (Said 1993).

Kip has left India without his family members’ wishes. It was Lord Suffolk who educates him as a sapper and welcomes him, “He stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were the prodigal returned, offered a chair at the table, embraced with conversations” (*EP* 201).

Kirpal Singh is a Punjabi name but the name Kip has been used after the hybridization process. Arathi Babu writes about it, “His maiden name Kirpal Singh indicative of the community and caste of Singhs he belongs to is no longer mentioned in the novel after he is nicknamed as “kip” by members of his bomb disposal unit” (Babu 5). This new name was given to him coincidentally. At the time of his first bomb disposal report, the officer asks, “What’s this? Kipper grease” (*EP* 45). In this way, everyone laughs on hearing this joke. In fact, Kip did not know that he was being called a kipper, a salty English fish. This incident changes his name and he is so accustomed to his new name that within a week, he forgets that his real name

is Kirpal Singh. Kip acclimated himself in British culture but his hybrid identity denies him to belong to India and England also that's why he becomes like a pendulum belonging to none of these countries. He questions himself, "His name is Kirpal Singh and he does not know what he is doing here" (*EP* 287). Babasaheb Ramdas Kangune writes about the main characters of this novel:

All the major characters in the novel possess their own secrets. Everybody in the novel shares their own past experiences, and everyone tries to unfold his/ her previous life in flashback. (Kangune 197)

The novel *Anil's Ghost* also has so many elements of memory, tragedy and reminiscence. As Lorna Irvine notes, the novel, set at the end of the Second World War, "illustrates, by its very imagery and content, the breakdown of Empires" (Irvine 144), demonstrating "crisis of legitimation, not only for the dispossessed characters whose fiction this is, but also in terms of the institutions of western culture" (Irvine 140). It has been narrated as a story of a forensic anthropologist, Anil Tissera who comes to Sri Lanka after fifteen years when the atmosphere of Sri Lanka was torn by tensions of war, turmoil and ethnic strife. In such an environment, Anil tries to assert her identity. The whole play has been written imbued with memory and violence in the air as Shweta Antony also argues:

In *Anil's Ghost* the roles of memory, history and violence play with each other on many planes. At times, it is not just the memory of violence, but also holding onto a memory itself turns into violence so much so that even holding onto it becomes impossible. (Antony 91)

Though she comes there on a mission to send reports for the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, yet her purpose of coming to Sri Lanka was to settle there again as she admits towards the end of the novel, “This isn’t just another job! I decided to come back. I wanted to come back” (AG 196). She gets shocked to see that she is unable to do what she wants there and she faces protest and even the danger of her life. She finds the reports very terrible here, that’s why she says, “I couldn’t tell who was worst. The reports are terrible” (14). Anil Tissera understands it well that she is being considered an outsider, that’s why she faces many problems and even Sarath has to sacrifice his life in order to save her life. Ondaatje justifiably states about his mental condition in an interview that

There are a lot of international bastards roaming around the world today. That’s one of the book’s main stories. Those migrants don’t belong here but want to belong here. (Wachtel 257)

Another trauma that is associated with Anil is about her name. She had to borrow her name from her brother and she had to pay a high price for it. The astrologer tells her parents that her name is creating problem to her so she had to take the name of her brother:

Anil’s name—the one she’d bought from her brother at the age of thirteen—had another stage to go through before it settled....The astrologer soothsayer had eventually compromised his solution down to a simple appendage—the addition of an e, so she would become Anile. (AG 133)

Anil's marriage also remains a tragedy to her. The boy was from Sri Lanka and she fell in love with him just because she was feeling lonely. When her father-in-law comes to visit them in London, bitterness comes in their relationship. Her father-in-law tells his son to come back to Colombo. He finds fault in Anil's frankness and her independence, and after his departure, Anil's husband starts quarrelling with her. Her professional life became her enemy just because her husband was feeling jealous of her good status. He was told by his father that she was a woman who could not be controlled and due to some other reasons, ultimately this marriage failed. Anil Tissera is seen lost in the memory of her boyfriend Cullis, "Anil was standing on the wood ledge that she would later sleep on, thinking of Cullis. Where he might be" (AG 96).

Another shocking thing to her is that she finds that the government was also involved in the murders but outwardly government was pretending to protect people. She reveals it to Sarath, "There are so many bodies in the ground now. That's what you said...murdered, anonymous" (AG 49). Sarath's own life was full of trauma. After the death of his wife, he always remains sad. Anil comes to know that she was a very nice woman.

Sarath's teacher Palipana was a very reputed archaeologist but his fame dwindles in his old age and he becomes dependent on her niece Lakma. She was a twenty-year-old girl whose parents were brutally murdered. She was sent to a government run ward for children. All the children in this ward were those whose parents were killed in the Civil War. She does not speak to her uncle due to depression. The shock of the murder of girl's parents, "however, had touched

everything within her, driving both her verbal and her motor ability into infancy...she wanted nothing more to invade her” (AG 99).

Linus Corea was a Colombo based neurosurgeon who was kidnapped and taken to the insurgent camp. His bodyguard was killed and thus, he was kept away from his family and had to work for the kidnapers.

Anand’s life also becomes lacklustre after the death of his wife, Sirissa. She was a very silent and good-natured woman. Anand was emotionally attached with her and he is unable to forget her. He starts drinking and even attempts to commit suicide also. In this way, *Anil’s Ghost* is all about the trauma of several characters and they keep thinking about their lost ones. *Anil’s Ghost* remains a bucket of tragedies. Ondaatje tells about this book, that “it is a book about very tentative healing among a group of people. I think it is that most of all” (Wachtel 254).

Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Divisadero* (2007) also deals with many traumatic elements in it and the novel has been written on the basis of memory of the main protagonists of the novel. There are three main characters in this novel: Anna, his sister Claire and Coop. In fact, Anna was the rancher’s real daughter living at Divisadero Street. Even the title of the novel indicates a trauma due to fragmentation of a family. Judith Herman observes:

Fragmentation in consciousness prevents the ordinary integration of knowledge, memory, emotional states, and bodily experience. Fragmentation in the inner representations of the self prevents the integration of identity. Fragmentation in the inner representations of

others prevents the development of a reliable sense of independence within connection. (Herman 78)

The widowed rancher was a traditional man who used to drink red wine. He would remain busy with his cattle and could not give much time to his children. It was Coop who would take care of the interests of the both sisters. “Since the death of my mother it was Coop who listened to our complaints and worries and he allowed us the stage when he thought we wished for it” (*DD* 9).

The novel had incidents of violence in their neighbourhood. The Cooper family was murdered by a hired hand and only Coop survived because he crawled under the floorboards of the house for several days. He was merely four-years-old at that time. Anna’s father adopts this boy taking pity on him, “The Cooper family was killed by a hired hand who beat them to death with a wooden board..... He was four-years old and he came out eventually and told who had done it. We took the boy in, to stay and work on the farm” (*DD* 11). Anna’s mother, Lydia Mendez also passed away at the age of twenty-three during her delivery. Claire was also found in the same hospital without her mother, “So there would be two girls Anna and Claire, born the same week” (*DD* 11). That’s why Anna’s father brings both the girls at his home and other people think that both are his daughters.

A twist comes in the story when Anna and coop start having an affair in their teen age. Then Wilson’s statement becomes quite pertinent in this context that, “Traumatic stressors exist on a continuum” (Wilson 8). Their life becomes tragic when Anna’s father catches them there and then. He becomes so violent that he beats Coop so badly that Anna has to put a piece of glass on his shoulder otherwise he

could kill Coop. “Coop looked unconscious, was not moving. The stool came down hard on his chest once more, and blood came out of his mouth” (*DD* 33). All this has been depicted through different memories. Such kinds of events are generally seen in Ondaatje’s novels. A traumatic event is the one which, “for a particular individual, breaks through or overrides the discriminatory, filtering process, and overrides any temporary denial or patch-up of the damage.” (Garland 10). Judith Herman, in her seminal work *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992) writes, “Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life” (Caruth 33).

After this incident, the family disintegrates. Anna’s father is mentally broken because he would consider Coop as his son and his relationship with Anna was like a brother-sister relationship which unfortunately, turns into a physical relationship. Anna and Coop also understand all this and perhaps this is the reason that both the love buds prefer to take a different route in their life after this mishap. Perhaps they have also realised that it is not fair. Generally, it is seen that lovers flee together to live their life happily but, in this case, it does not happen and Anna goes to France to do her research on a French writer, Lucien Segura and Coop becomes a professional gambler.

Anna does not use her name and she uses different names in France which indicates her split identity. Her past was changing her present. Jean Laplanche writes that “any past is determined from ... present, or even from... future, ...” (Laplanche 142). Anna keeps thinking about her past but she keeps it a secret for others. She was unable to come out of her nostalgia and homesickness. When others ask about her

past or family, she puts off the topic, “She has never turned to a lover or friends when they speak about families and spoken of her childhood” (*DD* 75).

Though Anna tries to assimilate in her host culture, she is unable to forget the loss of her relationships and that’s why she feels solitary and alienated. Though she has other materialistic things to please her, she takes all these things for granted and keeps thinking about her loved-ones. She thinks about Coop and her father. In this way, her objective to become a researcher is fulfilled but still she feels disappointed. David Jonathan Amid writes about it, “Her journey is not a destination it is only a journey, the humour and the philosophical excursion with the people she met in her journey” (Amid 19). In this way, Anna remains very sad due to her past which disturbs her all the time.

Coop remains the most tragic character of this novel. He becomes an orphan at the age of four. After that the Rancher father’s violence breaks him completely. He migrates to Tahoe and becomes a card player. After meeting Dorn, he goes to Nevada City. He feels lonely and marginalised, “I was living a solitary life, so I recognize solitary as well as the small dimensions of order that come with that.” (*DD* 270). He is considered as an outsider and his relationship with a drug addicted woman Bridget also brings a traumatic experience to her. Though she gives him emotional relief and forgets his traumatic past, “Bridget helps Coop forget Anna and his traumatic past. Bridget, who is a broken woman, belongs to an unscrupulous gang of gamblers. She is described as a blond; a tall ripple of energy linked to gold” (*DD* 112), yet she brings other problems coupled with a shock that she is in huge debt.

Coop's professionalism also became his enemy in Nevada. He becomes an expert in card playing and being young, he has better chances to take risks. That's why his associates Dorn, Mancini and the Dauphin start taking undue advantage of him and his gambling group recognizes him as a risk-taker and tells him to play from their side. When he denies, he is badly beaten by them. It is Claire who saves his life again. Thus, Coop's whole life remains full of tragedies and his tragedies have been projected through memories.

Michael Ondaatje's novel *Warlight* (2018) also narrates the traumas, memories and alienation of two main characters of this novel: Nathaniel and his sister, Rachel. The novel depicts the events of the post-World War II. The novel narrates the painful memories of his teenage years. Nathaniel belongs to an aristocratic family. One day their father tells them the shocking news that he is going to Singapore to operate his Unilever office there. It was decided earlier that both father and mother will go there but later it was decided that only father will go and mother will join him later.

The children spend some time in the company of their mother and they enjoy the moments spent with their mother. After that she also departs. When children are admitted in their boarding school, they prefer to leave their boarding school. They write a letter to their parents and when they do not get any reply, they escape from their school and plan to live with The Moth. It is a shocking thing for them that they are left to live with a stranger. Their mother and father do not return even after one year and the children are seen disappointed. Their father does not show any fatherly concerns towards his children, "Our father had been involved in the last stages of the earlier war, and I don't think he felt he really belonged to us" (WL 8).

Nathaniel gets frightened to see the activities of strangers in his house. He has come to know that their guardian, The Moth, is a criminal and could be dangerous. The lines of the novel, "The Moth was dangerous" (WL 34) show Nathaniel's fear. He does not do the arrangement of any cook at home and the children have to eat food from outside which is not healthy for them. Moreover, he remains away from home for a few days. "The Moth was sometimes gone for two or three days, often without warning" (WL 47). After some time, Nathaniel and his sister adjust themselves in a new environment and they adopt this new atmosphere of their house.

Nathaniel starts working in a restaurant and he meets a girl, Agnes Street there who falls in love with him. Nathaniel tells her a lie that The Darter is his father and he conceals how his parents have told them that they are going to Singapore for one year and did not return. When she says that she wants to see his parents, Nathaniel tries to put off the matter:

"I'm a working girl. I got an accent. You probably don't want me meeting your parents."

"You don't understand, it's a strange household now. Really strange."

"Why?"

"There are always these people there. Strange people." (WL 106)

When Agnes tells him to come to her house to meet her parents, Nathaniel goes to her house and meets her parents. Everything goes fine for some time and Nathaniel gets distanced from Agnes Street after impregnating her. This is how the novel is a tragic story of different characters. This story has been told through different incidents.

Nathaniel, Rachel and The Moth are chased and assaulted by some hooligans and this tragedy breaks them. Nathaniel becomes unconscious and The Moth could not survive. In fact, he died protecting both Nathaniel and Rachel which is a great sacrifice by him:

“I bury things. What exactly happened to Walter?”

“He died protecting you both that night, at the Bark. The way he protected you when you were small...”

“Why were we not told he was protecting us?”

“Your sister realized. This is why she will never forgive me his death.

I suppose he was the true father to her. And he loved her.” (WL 258)

Agnes feels very bad when she could not find Nathaniel anywhere. She decides to go to The Darter thinking that he may be there. When she goes there, she comes to know from The Darter that Nathaniel is not there. The Darter also gets shocked to know what had happened to Agnes Street. He gives her emotional support. He advises her that she can marry him if she wants and Agnes also accepts this proposal. Agnes gives birth to a daughter later whom The Darter accepts as his daughter though that was Nathaniel’s biological daughter. In this way, it can be stated that Agnes also remains a traumatic character.

Objectives Achieved

It is explicit from the study that the present research appropriately and extensively explored all the issues to the optimum level and the theory of ‘Deferred Action’ and Jean Laplanche’s concept of ‘Afterwardsness’ have been aptly and justifiably applied

on the select novels of Michael Ondaatje. While doing the research, it has been tried to achieve the following objectives in Michael Ondaatje's novels:

1. To understand and develop the models of Lacanian theory of '*Après Coup*' (Deferred Action) and Jean Laplanche's concept of 'Afterwardsness' as frames of critical inquiry
2. To apply the concepts of Deferred Action and Afterwardsness in terms of their usability in literary criticism to understand the dynamics of the novels of Michael Ondaatje
3. To investigate and analyze the factors leading to trauma of the characters in the novels of Michael Ondaatje
4. To analyse war trauma and its aftermaths showcasing human predicaments and to examine peripheral themes which are related to different types of traumas

Every research work is done keeping in mind certain objectives so that researchers may get the desired outcomes and, in the study, undertaken for the present proposal, Michael Ondaatje's four novels have been taken for a close and rigorous textual analysis of an acclaimed Sri Lankan novelist Michael Ondaatje. His novels project a clear picture of the trauma, alienation, identity, melancholy and neurosis. His novels entail a whole range of memory through different characters and make them peep into their past. The theory of 'Deferred Action' and concept of 'Afterwardsness' has appropriately been applied to Ondaatje's selected novels. How the past memory makes the characters miserable through their personal trauma has been extensively examined in the previous chapters. It has been attempted to follow Clifford Geertz's

method of research that “is not a search for facts but a search for meanings” (Tyson 285) so that some positive may come out of this study and make human life more comfortable and convenient.

Human Predicaments and War

The present study further sheds light on the havoc of war and how war affects all walks of human life. It, directly or indirectly, leaves a deep impact on the economic, social, familial and even personal life of the populace. It also leaves mammoth harm to the human psyche also. It is generally seen that the war remains in the background of Michael Ondaatje’s many novels and prepares the ground of traumatic memories of the past and the characters’ future-preparedness also can be seen in his novels.

The four novels taken up for the present study effectively snapshot the aftermaths of war on the characters. The novels are generally seen as strong commentaries on the trauma, post-national consciousness and the diasporic concerns. The horrors and the devastating consequences of the war bring bad memories to the characters’ minds. In *The English Patient*, the war affects the life of a nurse to this extent that she is unable to take her meals on time. She remains so engrossed in attending her patients that her personal life is disturbed to this extent that she is unable to pay attention to her father which compensation she pays by losing her father forever.

War compels nations to hire more and more manpower to prepare the war strategies. Kip is the sapper in this novel who also goes to diffuse the bombs so that he may save the life of people. Like Hana he also wants to save the lives of people. When the atom bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Caravaggio also

argues and war infects their personal lives and he is on the verge of killing the English Patient whom he considers responsible for it.

In *Anil's Ghost* also, the devastating consequences of the Civil War have been projected through Anil Tissera's past memories. There are other characters like Sarath, Anand, Lakma and Palipana, Gamini, Linus Corea etc. who lose their near and dear ones in the novel. The war does not require any reason, it happens over trifles but takes the toll of human life, "The reason for war was war" (AG 39). The government was also involved in the murders of the masses as Ondaatje writes in this novel, "The government was not the only one doing the killing" (AG 13). Anil Tissera and Sarath discover that the skeleton of the Sailor was found buried at a different place which show that he was first killed and murdered and none except the government can do it, "That is, he was killed and then buried. Then he was dug up, moved to a new location and buried again" (AG 85). The novel *Divisadero* is set in the 1970s and then its setting shifts to rural France between the First World War and today. Lucien Segura's life is much affected by the First World War in this novel. When the war breaks out, he is sent to fight with other soldiers. The novel *Warlight* also narrates the horrendous aftermaths of the post-World War II.

Modern Relevance of the Study

The fact cannot be denied that the present study concentrates on the trauma and memories of the characters in Michael Ondaatje's novels. It is quite pertinent to note that Michael Ondaatje's novels have been written in the stream of consciousness and some novels begin from the middle and then readers come to know about their traumatic past. For an illustration, the novel *The English Patient* encapsulates the

traumatic memories of the English Patient, Almásy who was burnt beyond recognition in a helicopter crash. The death of Hana's father, Kip's identity as an outsider and the wounds of Caravaggio keeps all these characters in traumatic situations. Other characters like Anil Tissera, Coop and Nathaniel also think about their traumatic past. Some characters are prone to drinking just because they could not bear their present condition. Anna's Rancher father drinks because being a widower, he feels alienated. Likewise, Rachel also starts drinking and breaks her emotional attachment with her brother just because she feels broken when her parents do not return. Anand in *Anil's Ghost* also drinks in order to put back his tensions after the death of his beloved wife. He even attempts to commit suicide also. From the in-depth analysis of such traumatic situations in the novels, the researcher has tried to assess how we can deal with the trauma in our lives. Trauma can break a person inwardly but if a person is mentally prepared, he/she can cope up with it efficiently and can easily recover.

Michael Ondaatje's novels, *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, and *Warlight*, have been widely studied in the present study. Despite the extensive research on Ondaatje's works, there are still research gaps that can be explored in the context of these novels. Through a comprehensive review of the literature, it has been observed that Jean Laplanche's concept 'Afterwardsness' as well as Lacanian 'Après Coup' (Deferred Action) has not yet been applied on Michael Ondaatje's selected novels. It is quite clear that the research is relevant, meaningful and it contributes to the existing knowledge. Also, it is aligned with the research objectives and fills the gaps in the literature.

Scope for the Further Research

The novels written by Michael Ondaatje, including *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero*, *The English Patient*, and *Warlight*, offer a rich and diverse scope for future research and analysis. Ondaatje's unique writing style, themes, and storytelling techniques provide ample opportunities for scholars to delve deeper into these works and uncover new insights.

One potential area for future research is Ondaatje's exploration of identity and the concept of the self. In *Anil's Ghost*, the protagonist Anil Tissera, a forensic anthropologist, grapples with questions of identity as she investigates the disappearance of the war victims in Sri Lanka. Ondaatje's portrayal of Anil's internal struggles with her cultural and personal identity, as well as her interactions with other characters, opens avenues for analysing how Ondaatje represents the complexity of identity in a post-colonial context.

Another potential research focus could be the use of narrative structure and fragmented storytelling in Ondaatje's novels. In *Divisadero*, for instance, Ondaatje weaves together multiple storylines and perspectives, creating a fragmented narrative that challenges traditional linear storytelling. Exploring Ondaatje's narrative techniques and their impact on the reader's experience could shed light on how he employs literary devices to convey meaning and evoke emotions in his works.

Ondaatje's portrayal of memory and trauma is another significant theme that could be explored in future research. In *The English Patient*, the characters' memories and traumatic pasts are intricately interwoven, revealing the complexities

of memory, healing, and reconciliation. Analysing Ondaatje's treatment of memory and trauma in his works could provide insights into how he depicts the human psyche and the effects of past events on the present.

Furthermore, Ondaatje's use of historical contexts and settings in his novels presents a rich area for exploration. In *Warlight*, for instance, Ondaatje portrays the aftermath of World War II in London and its impact on the characters' lives. Investigating how Ondaatje employs historical contexts and settings in his works, and the implications of these representations, could offer valuable insights into his literary approach and the significance of history in his narratives.

Additionally, Ondaatje's language and writing style warrant further analysis. His poetic prose and evocative imagery are notable features of his writing, and delving into his language choices, metaphors, and symbolism could uncover deeper meanings and interpretations in his works. Furthermore, Ondaatje's exploration of cultural, social, and political themes in his novels, such as colonialism, war, and diaspora, provides a rich landscape for interdisciplinary research that could draw on fields such as postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and political science.

Thus, these four novels under study offer a wide range of potential research avenues. From exploring themes of identity, memory, and trauma, to analysing his narrative structure, historical contexts, and language use, there are ample opportunities for scholars to delve deeper into Ondaatje's works and uncover new insights. Further research in these areas could contribute to a deeper understanding of Ondaatje's literary style, themes, and the broader implications of his works in the fields of literature, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and beyond.

The present study has provided the ample scope and area for the research in its field but no research can be limited only in its particular field. The roles of memory, trauma and war have been in the centrality of the present thesis. Undoubtedly, Michael's Ondaatje's other works which are not part of the present study can be further utilized from different perspectives. Here are some key areas where researchers have scopes to do further research in this area. The research includes but is not limited to the following topics:

- The study can be done to understand different diasporic strands with respect to Sri Lankan diaspora.
- Interdisciplinary research can be done on different aspects of migration and migration policies.
- Michael Ondaatje's female characters can be analysed from feminist perspectives.
- Transnational identities and cultural-clash can be further examined in his works.
- Political, sociological, geographical and economic aspects of the study can be further analysed
- Different diaspora related studies can be done on different aspects
- A comparative study of Sri Lankan and Canadian diaspora can be done
- Theme of hybridity in Ondaatje's novels can be further analysed

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