



Epitome Journals

International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN : 2395-6968 | Impact Factor = 3.656

Postmodern Traits in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*



Dr. Ambreen Kharbe

Department of English, Assistant Professor

G. M. Momin Women's College

Rais High School Campus, Thane Road, Bhiwandi - 421302

Affiliated to University of Mumbai

E-mail : ambreenkharbe72@gmail.com

Abstract

Postmodernism is one of the most controversial and influential intellectual movements to appear in the last fifty years. Like modernist literature, postmodern literature is part of socio-cultural and historical development and can be seen as a specific way of a depiction of the postmodern life and culture. It shows a crisis of identity of human being (ethnic, sexual, social and cultural) and its struggle for legitimization in a hypocritical society. More importantly, postmodernism looks upon the “modern” world with increased cynicism and disappointment. Key themes in postmodern thought include irony, arbitrary actions, intertexture, surface and superficiality, self-consciousness, skepticism, multiple perspectives, meta-fiction, fragmentation and relativism.

Michael Ondaatje, the celebrated Canadian poet and novelist of Sri Lankan descent, writes works that ‘talk’ from transnational/trans-cultural locations. *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje is a work of historical fiction set in the hills of Tuscany during the Second World War. The paper discusses how Ondaatje frames the stories around actual historical events, yet

at the same time, his aim is to uncover the unwritten, hidden, ignored histories of the marginal characters. Ondaatje adds to the discourse as he challenges and revises the already narrated one to incorporate the other histories. The novel reveals the inner conflicts that the marginal characters experience as they journey through the external incidents of death, discrimination, domination and seclusion. Ondaatje becomes the voice of the ex-centric people attempting to come to terms with their cultural past, to negotiate identity through the complexities of the present and to secure a place for themselves in the cultural memory.

The English Patient will further convey the idea of disseminated identities of different characters through mini-narratives, intertextuality and rapid narrative shifts thus, giving the post-modernist view to the novel.

Keywords

Historiographic Metafiction, Inter-Textuality, Fragmented Identities, Trans-Cultural/Transnational, Postmodernism