



The Economy As An Ideology In Framing Identity In Michael Ondaatje's In The Skin Of A Lion "Theories Do Not Just Explain (Or Predict Or Describe) A Reality Out There, But Discursively Produce Mediated Accounts Of Reality." (Kaul, 2002, 717)

Kavitha.M

Co-Author (Research Guide): Dr.Brinda Veerappa Research Scholar, Department of English
Tumkur University, Tumkur. E.mail.: kavithaarunodaya@gmail.com

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Abstract:

In my write-up, I have focused on the Economy as an ideology in framing the identity of the postcolonial diaspora. These include capitalism, Marxism, and the politics behind the expansion of imperialism and maintaining the prevailed partied. Since the late 1970s, the post-colonial theory has waved across various disciplines and also has germinated into an institutionalized force in academic life. although at the beginning perceived postcolonial studies were associated with literary and cultural studies, later its gravity swept through the arena of social science and humanities. Economics turned out to be the subject most resistant to change during this time of considerable intellectual shift. The discipline's history, and its role in the development and spread of capitalism through colonialism and imperialism, without a doubt, need to be comprehended and theorized. I have selected Sri Lankan Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje's novel In the Skin of a Lion to emphasize the argument.

Keywords: Diaspora, imperialism, Ideology, Economy, Capitalism, Marxism.

Introduction

My write-up fiercely defends this ideology, I.e., the Economy as a political tool in framing the identity of the diaspora in Michael Ondaatje's work. In Ondaatje's In The Skin Of A Lion (2017) the character Patrick says, 'The trouble with ideology . . . , is that it hates the private. You must make it human.' (xi)

Ondaatje is the author of a large number of books of poetry, plays, and literary critique. Michael Ondaatje left clues about his ancestry in the majority of his publications. Michael Ondaatje frequently blends and contrasts the real and the fantastical in his work as a poet, novelist, and filmmaker. His longer narrative works, frequently based on real individuals' eccentric lives, may include fictitious and factual accounts.

Despite being Canadian, he rarely has his stories take place there. Through creative fiction, Ondaatje has made significant contributions to his country and gained prominence around the world.

E.mail.: kavithaarunodaya@gmail.com

Michael Ondaatje embodies the dominant ideology of the time. Terry Eagleton defines that in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (2006), “ideology signifies the way men live out their roles in class society, the values, ideas, and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole” (8).

Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* (2007) reflects the history of its particular position and its role within the class structure of society. Economics demonstrates the fluidity of identity implicit in post-colonial diaspora identity, as it supplements the stigmatized categorical social identity stratification. Economics tends to employ race as a convenient clique for stratifying economic inequalities (Arestis et al., 2014. 131-153).

Considered identity as constitutive of social discord and contention becomes the ground of social economic hierarchies in the contour of wealth and income differences. These differences were upheld by the advantaged social categories which positioned in the dominant place. Postcolonialism uncovers the connection with economics as one of the prime foundations in the context of colonial expansion in the 19th century. But these motives were disguised and established by enlightenment ideas of progress and rationality.

This (economics) reflects on the fact colonial narration wrote from the sites of power even when they address the silenced class. Multiple social identities are stigmatized, so in the diaspora context stigmatization of double identity is based on diaspora. The wages and conditions were deteriorating compared to local. Diaspora distancing themselves from these roots to take advantage of economic opportunities. Patrick Lewis, the main character in, *In The Skin Of A Lion* (2007) and his fellow working-class co-workers, such as Macedonian immigrant Nicholas Temelcoff, put their lives and health in peril every day by undertaking hard manual labor on risky bridges, subterranean tunnels, and tanneries. The wealthy, on the other hand, lead a life that appears carefree and is based on consumerism and luxury. “by his expensive tweed coat that cost more than the combined week’s salaries of five bridge workers” (Ondaatje, 43). Examples of these people include Commissioner Harris, a guy indifferently in charge of enormous construction projects, and Ambrose Small, a millionaire who only thinks about collecting fortune. The story emphasizes the brutality of this class-based injustice by demonstrating how the wealthy keep workers in poverty and powerless in order to take advantage of them for their own gain.

Ondaatje focusing untold stories of the immigrants at least partially if not in whole, who had to give up their languages and their ethnicities, also their identities and histories were broken down by the core of the economic aspects. I.e., industrial capitalism. Immigration is a result of a variety of events, such as political, economic, or familial motives, natural calamities, or the desire to willingly relocate. In addition to legal or political factors, natural disasters and economic factors (improvement) can also be significant contributors to immigration. When immigrants depart their home country, they also leave behind everything familiar, including their social network, family, and culture. Along with shifting costs, they frequently have to liquidate their goods at a loss. Many uncertainties await them when they move to a new country, such as work, space to be placed, adapting new culture, the difference from locals, and language.

Ondaatje examines how industrial capitalism destroyed the physical and psychological barriers that separated new Canadians from the mode of production they deliberately and unknowingly joined, robbing them of their identities. There seem to be numerous injured bodies. Many have lost their arms, dislocated shoulders, broken bones and tar burns many more.

Immigrants who come to North America could give their labor and bodies in exchange for employment without any language abilities. Colonialism other than exerting as Kohn and Reddy put it in ‘Colonialism’ (2017) “political domination and economic exploitation” (03).

Daniel Stoyanoff, Ondaatje’s character met with an accident in a meat factory and lost his arm. But as a payment returned with enough capital to a small village Oshima. After coming to his place, he was

physically and mentally inscribed with his capital power and tempting fellow villagers as in *The Skin of the Lion* (2007):

“Daniel Stoynaoff had tempted them all. In North America, everything was rich and dangerous. You went in as a sojourner and came back wealthy-Daniel buying a farm with the compensation he had received for losing an arm during an accident in a meat factory. Laughing about it! Banging his other hand down hard onto the table and wheezing with laughter, calling them all fools, sheep! As if his arm had been a dry cow he had fooled the Canadians with.” (46)

It is Amrose small, a capitalist tycoon and a millionaire. He had also a rapacious attitude towards life as well as business. He is the epitome of the capitalist system and a materialistic person who believes that everything can be bought and disposed of never mind his romantic relationships in *The Skin of the Lion* (2007).

“He was a spinner. He was bare-knuckle capitalism. He was a hawk who hovered over the whole province, swooping down for the kill, buying up every field of wealth, and eating the profit in mid-air. He was a jackal. This is what the press called him and he laughed at them, spun a thread around his critics, and bought them up.” (ISL 60)

Marxist philosophy held that the ideal man, ideally white, would use his might to expand his horizons, amass wealth, and bring culture and civilization to the barbarians. Just a front for their capitalist ethos, civilization.

It has been well established that economics is a colonial discourse that is shaped by the erasure and elision of peculiar but exploitable subjectivities and social practices in *The Skin Of the Lion* (2007).

For structuralist Marxists in *Identity as Ideology* (2006), human beings are constituted by ideology while ideology itself originates from the particular type of production in society – capitalism. In other words, “the capitalist state hegemony is maintained through ideological state apparatuses, which are themselves tied to the dominant modes of production in a particular capitalist society” (60).

The dominant ideology of a capitalist society is beneficial to the ruling class. Through the dominant ideology, subordinating classes have ingested and the setup of ideology never discommodates the contradictions and disparities laid around in capitalism. Temelcoff knows Harris, the commissioner, “by his expensive tweed coat that cost more than the combined week’s salaries of five bridge workers” (Ondaatje, 43).

Even The Frankfurt School adopted the criticism of political economics as its foundation and stuck to the parameters of the ideology criticism. The idea of “instrumental reason” no longer relates to the realm of ideological criticism; rather, it denotes a mindset that not only functions as a mindset about social dominance but also as the basic basis of dominance relationships.

In the novel, though the bridge was constructed by the immigrant laborers, their hard work was just buried under the ashes, as their caps and gloves are buried. but not allowed to walk and their participation is overlooked. As Nichols Abercrombie (1990) in *Popular Culture and Ideological Effects* “production oriented and focuses predominantly on work and class structure (1990: 199), and their analysis ‘implies an economic theory of social and cultural relations’ where ‘social solidarity is explained by economic constraint” (Turner, 1990: 231)

Harris, the city commissioner more concerned with the beauty of the Bridge and its benefit for the city as a whole, bringing more efficiency in transportation services to the public. But never

acknowledge the lives of workers. He buys the services by paying additional charges, never mind night or day. Money has importance and meaning; it is more than just a convenient medium of transaction. In other words, money talks, and it speaks an ideology-based language.

Acculturation is only an ideological justification for oppression and inhumanity. This serves as imperial capitalism's defence. During the postcolonial era, colonizers were dispatched on reverse trips as a result of imperial profit expansion. The white class is the one that received the most on missions with a goal. The realist novel "in the skin of a lion" exposes European capitalists' mentality to subjugate them as low while presenting the colonialist experience most appropriately. The former sector is modern because of its exposure to the outside capitalist world.

A G Frank (1969) stated that imperialism is primarily the appropriation of an 'economic surplus', Frank argues that, on the contrary, 'underdevelopment is not due to the survival of archaic institutions and the existence of capital shortage ... [but] is generated by the very same historical process which also [generates] economic development: the development of capitalism itself. (9)

The Commissioner takes a personal but distant interest in Nicholas since he has a vision for his project and his city. Harris sees Nicholas as a great tool for realizing his goals, and Nicholas' linguistic limitations will serve Harris' legacy. He is dependent on those who can't work elsewhere because of their differences. Immigrants like Nicholas were only encouraged in the latter when Ondaatje made the comparison between building a city and building one's language. In addition to the inherent limits of learning a second language, immigrant voices have historically been silenced in Toronto due to administrative restrictions. In the 1930s, a policy that forbade using any language other than English in public gatherings in Toronto was implemented due to fears of foreigners; violators faced the prospect of imprisonment. Ondaatje is meticulous in her study of the linguistic practices of the era. This causes the immigrants' interactions to be forced behind closed doors and into underground meetings in the novel (as was undoubtedly the case historically), further preventing outsiders from participating in public culture.

Ondaatje hopes to expose European power and draw attention to those who are marginalized, such as immigrants and outsiders who feel lost and without identities in their surroundings. To retell and illuminate the story of the disadvantaged Toronto characters who were exploited and manipulated by the colonizers to build Toronto but who continued to be outsiders, in *In the Skin of a Lion*. The author attempts to centre the narrative around people like Caravaggio the thief, Nicholas Temelcoff, Patrick, a tunnel worker, and Alice, a nun, to highlight how the colonial forces oppressed, excluded, and alienated them in the city where they sought refuge.

Conclusion:

Exploitation relationships exist between opposing classes in a class society's production relationships. Therefore, training and distributing people for the various positions in the "technical division" of labor cannot be reduced to a purely technical operation outside of the ideology of the ruling class because every "technical" division and every "technical" organization of labor is merely the form and mask of a social (class) division and organization of labor. Therefore, only a class may undertake the reproduction of the relations of production. It is achieved by a class conflict that pits the exploitation class against the governing class.

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