

## Integrals Of Differance: A Derridean Critique Of The Selected Poems Of Ondaatje

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### Abstract

In the 1980s, postmodernism emerged as an academic area in literature, film, art, and other fields. It is a contradictory and dismantling phenomenon. Derrida's *différance* is a trait of postmodernism, but Ondaatje's poetry has not yet been used to investigate its integrals, "to differ" and "to defer." The study makes the case that Ondaatje's selected poems reflect integrals of *différance* since these integrals can be clearly observed in his poetry's theme and textual techniques, which rank him among other postmodern poets. The study investigated: i. how the first integral of *différance*, which is "to differ," is reflected in the study's eleven poems. ii. examining "to differ" or dissolving the boundaries between postmodernist textual techniques, such as intertextuality, non-linear structure, parody, pastiche, and multi-voiced narrative in Ondaatje's poems iii. And how these poems reflect the second component of *différance*, "to defer," postponement or open-endedness. In this qualitative study, these integrals have been investigated through

textual analysis from the perspective of *différance*. This study explores how Ondaatje's poetry reflects 'to differ' through blurring the boundaries between man and nature, present and primitivism, prose and poetry, husband, and wife, east (Ceylon) and U.S. (Connecticut) and through 'to defer' / postponement, open-endedness has been identified in Ondaatje's poetry in the form of rejection of authorial voice and heterodiegetic narrative.

Keywords: *Différance*, Heterodiegetic, Intertextuality, Narrative, Open-endedness, Pastiche.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s with the emergence of postmodernism, our ways of studying a piece of literature were drastically changed. In that era, the focus was shifted from fixity, certainty, and authority of the author to fluidity, skepticism, liberation of the reader, and open-endedness. According to Drolet (2004), postmodernism is a new series of circumstances and a new form of individual and human liberation.

Poetry of Michael Ondaatje needs to be analyzed in the frame of reference to Derrida's *différance* in order to rank him among other postmodern poets. It needs to bring Ondaatje under the umbrella of postmodern poets because his novels have already been studied with the perspective of post-colonialism and postmodernism but his poetry has not yet been analyzed in the light of postmodernism especially Derrida's *différance*.

Though several researchers i.e. Solecki (1978 & 2000); Heighton (1988); Varga (1995), Bremner (2004); Bezar et al., (2016); etc. have conducted their researches on Sri-Lankan born Canadian Pulitzer-Prize winner novelist and poet Michael Ondaatje in the perspective of post-colonialism and postmodernism but still a lot is required to be done with the perspective of the presence of Derrida's *différance* in Ondaatje's poetry.

While few research scholars might not think Ondaatje as a postmodern poet because his novels have

been studied from the perspective of post-colonialism. Ondaatje's poetry might bring under the umbrella of postmodernism, as Festino (2006) analyzed his poetic volume *Handwriting* in the paradigm of semiotics that might help the researchers analyzing his poetry in the frame of reference to *différance*.

The present study argues that integrals of *différance* i.e. 'to differ' and 'to defer' are reflected in the selected poems of Ondaatje. Ondaatje can be ranked among other postmodern poets because these integrals are vividly seen in the theme and postmodernist textual techniques i.e. intertextuality, non-linear structure, pastiche, parody, and multi-voiced narrative of his poetry.

The present qualitative study used the method of textual analysis and delimited to eleven poems extracted from Ondaatje's different poetic volumes. The purpose of this study is to highlight the integrals of Derrida's *différance* from Ondaatje's selected poems and to explore these integrals of *différance* from Ondaatje's poetry in order to bring his poetry under the umbrella of postmodernism especially *différance*.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

Q.1 How does integral of *différance*- 'to differ' function to show dissolving the boundaries in theme and textual techniques of the selected poems of Ondaatje?

Q.2 How is the second integral of *différance*- 'to defer'/ postponement reflected through open-endedness in Ondaatje's selected poems?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studying English literature especially poetry in the light of Derrida's *différance* has often been neglected or may be considered inconsequential because only a small number of researches have been conducted with the perspective of *différance* but studying Ondaatje's poetry in the frame of reference to the integrals of *différance*- 'to differ' and 'to

defer' has not yet been accomplished. In the present study, dissolving the boundaries in the frame of reference to 'to differ' and open-endedness in the light of 'to defer' have been explored from the postmodernist textual techniques and themes of the selected poems of Ondaatje. In this perspective, several previously published researches were reviewed in order to locate the gaps and lapses to be filled in this study. The precursory researchers explored different perspectives from Ondaatje's poetry. Solecki (2000) investigated the poetics of ambivalence from Ondaatje's poetry. Heighton (1988) explored the kinetic literary techniques from his selected poems. Varga (1995) sought out subjectivity and social relations from Ondaatje's poetry. Bremner (2004) did psychoanalytic study of Ondaatje's poetry in the panorama of Lacan's thought. Festino (2006) studied Ondaatje's poetic volume *Handwriting* with the perspective of semiotics. Bezar et al. (2016) explored the presence of the first integral of *différance* – 'to differ' from Ondaatje's poetry but this study will explore the reflection of both integrals of Derrida's *différance* – 'to differ' and 'to defer' / postponement in the selected poems of Ondaatje.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Postmodernism is a contradictory and denaturing phenomenon that shifts towards pluralism, open-endedness, and flux. Derrida concocted the term *différance* in order to discuss free play of the meaning, to disturb fixity, and to blur the boundaries between speech and writing. The theoretical framework of this study will provide a background into postmodernism and Derrida's *différance*, which will help to explain the presence of its integrals in the selected poems of Ondaatje.

#### **3.1. Conception of Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is marked breaking with modernism emerged in the last half of the twentieth century in art, literature, architecture, communications, technology, film and fashion. Huyssen (1984) seeks the origin of term 'postmodernism' in Irving Howe and Harry Levin used in literary criticism in late 1950s. According to Kamelia Sedehi (2013), literary critics i.e. Leslie Fielder and Ihab Hassan used first the term 'postmodernism' in 1960s in literature. It was

encompassing architecture, dance, painting, film, and music also in the mid-1970s. Different postmodernist theorists define it in different ways: 'the loss of the real' (Barry, 2009, p.84); the confusion between reality and illusion, 'hyperreality', simulacra— a copy without origin or a representation of a representation (Baudrillard, 1994); as unrepresentable by Lyotard "ideas of which no presentation is possible" (1984, p.74); "dedoxification" (Hutcheon, 1988); "decreation" and deconstruction by Derrida and Hassan respectively; and "denaturing" phenomenon by Hayles. Hutcheon takes postmodernism as "a contradictory phenomenon" (1988, p.3). For Jenks, it is a shift "towards pluralism and cultural eclecticism" (1986, p.50).

### 3.2. Understanding Différance

There are two integrals of Derrida's *différance* - 'to differ' / blurring the boundaries and 'to defer' or open-endedness. For playing with language and meaning, Derrida concocted a French term *différance* deliberately made homophonous with 'difference'. The graphic difference between 'difference' and '*différance*' i.e. (of 'e' and 'a' respectively) can be written but not heard. He pens in "*La Différance*": "The a of *différance*, then, is not heard, remains silent and discreet as the grave: oīkevis" (1982, p.4).

*Différance* has been defined by different critics in different ways. Sweetman (1999) mentions Derrida's essay "*Plato Pharmacy*". In order to discuss the ambiguity and free play of meaning in *différance*, Derrida uses the word *pharmakon*. As per Derrida, this word is ambiguous because it can mean either "cure" or "poison". In this essay, Derrida mentions a story from Plato's *Phaedrus*. In this story, Theuth (the god) came to sell his wares to Thamus (King of Egypt). Writing was one of the wares of Theuth which he promoted as a cure against loss of memory. The King was not impressed. He criticized writing because it will cut students off from their teachers and so from truth. Derrida pinpoints that Theuth and The King see writing as a *pharmakon*. Theuth takes it as a cure. On the other hand, the King (and Plato) regards it as a poison. Derrida asserts that meaning is uncertain or ambiguous. In this way, Sweetman makes a link of *pharmakon* with *différance*. Both are ambiguous. Both

contain plurality, openness, and free play of meaning.

As per Desilet, Derrida uses *différance* for playfully emphasizing a difference between speech and writing, and understanding the relationship between opposites. *Différance* “has neither existence nor essence” (Desilet, p.6). For Lucy, *différance* disturbs fixity and fixed difference. According to Lucy (2004), Derrida’s term *différance* refers to “the systematic play of the differences, of traces of differences, of spacing by means of which elements are related to each other” (p.27).

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is qualitative in nature and used the research method of textual analysis because ‘words and phrases of the selected poems of Ondaatje have been analyzed in the light of *différance*. The present study was accomplished in the paradigm of Derrida’s *différance* and postmodernism. Eclectic approach was used for collecting primary data because different poems of Ondaatje collected from his distinct poetic volumes. Secondary data were collected from different published books and research articles. Procedure of data analysis was divided into different steps. In the first step, Ondaatje’s selected poems were read and marked out the words, phrases, and lines in which first integral of *différance*— ‘to differ’ or dissolving the boundaries was reflected. In the second step, the presence of dissolving the boundaries was explored from postmodernist textual techniques used in Ondaatje’s poetry. In the third step, with the help of second integral of *différance* ‘to defer’, open-endedness was explored from Ondaatje’s selected poems.

#### **5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings of this study were: i. exploring the reflection of first integral of *différance* i.e. ‘to differ’/ dissolving the boundaries in the selected poems of Ondaatje ii. investigating ‘to differ’/ blurring the boundaries from the postmodernist textual techniques such as intertextuality, pastiche, non-linear structure, parody, and multi-voiced narrative from Ondaatje’s selected poems iii. exploring the

second integral of *différance*- 'to defer'- postponement or open-endedness through heterodiegetic narrative and rejection of authorial voice from the selected poems of Ondaatje.

Derrida analyzed the notions of *différance* in the frame of reference to postmodern reasoning. His coined term *différance* combines 'to differ'—separation, distinction, diastem, spacing (dissolving the boundaries) and 'to defer'—delay, detour, temporization (open-endedness). Cooper (1990) defines *différance* as ever-active play that cannot be situated in any given place. It shows difference contains open-endedness.

### **5.1 *Différance*—'To Differ': Dissolving the Boundaries in Ondaatje's Selected Poems**

Dissolving the boundaries and open-endedness are sought out from the selected poems of Ondaatje in the paradigm of Derrida's *différance* -'to differ' and 'to defer'. In the poem "The Republic", Ondaatje blurs the boundaries between the divergent kinds of reality i.e. Dionysian passion and Apollonian reason. Solecki (1978) notes that Ondaatje has demonstrated the "description of internal and external reality as dynamic, chaotic, and ambiguous" (p.24).

Employing the research method of textual analysis, 'violent hierarchies' are investigated from "The Republic". Dissolving the boundaries between reason and passion in through the Apollonian order and reason and Dionysian vitality and energy is reflected in this poem. Here, the house is a symbol of distinctive modes: "A different heaven here" (p.20). Contrastive positions and movements of the plants at day and night represent Apollonian reason in the plants at day time: "no dancing with the wind here" (p.20) and Dionysian frenzy at night: "the plants in frenzy heave floors apart" (ibid.). Hence, Ondaatje's blurring the boundaries is reflected in this poem also.

In the poem "Notes for the Legend of Salad Woman", Ondaatje blurs the boundaries between art of legend and real world, the present and Eden. Ondaatje, playfully, says that since his wife was born, she must have

swallowed the salad equal to two-thirds of Eden. She would have been wiped out whole gardens of salad of Eden. All the herbs are churning in her mouth. The speaker saw his wife sucking spongy tissues of grass and flowers. She made the garden a dust bowl by sucking its plants. She bit the leaves on her breast during their walk in Eden.

In this poem, Ondaatje yokes his wife's eating salad with Eden. The boundaries between the present (this world) and Eden are dissolved. In the last stanza, a couple of this world is seen wandering in the Eden. In this way, the cut-off points between high and low, legend and real are dissolved in a schizophrenic way: "On our last day in Eden as we walked out/ she nibbled the leaves at her breasts and crotch" (p.18).

Ondaatje in his poem, "Elizabeth" dissolves the boundaries between poetry and prose, fact and fiction, and 'significant art' and 'amusement art'. He blurs the boundaries between different 'art forms' i.e. 'significant art' and 'amusement art'. As per Leslie (1985), poetry that amuses is 'amusement art' and 'significant art' deals with the poetry that keeps deeper meaning. Ondaatje combines both art forms in this poem. In this stanza, the image of an apple's turning into a grotesque face is an instance of 'amusement art'. Glimpses of 'amusement art' are reflected in the image of Elizabeth's daddy's laughing at the snake saying it a "smart snake" (p.20). Hence, Ondaatje dissolves the boundaries between these 'art forms' in this poem.

Using the textual analysis as a method, dissolving the boundaries between fact and fiction is explored from "Elizabeth". Ondaatje has tendency for dissolving the cut-off points between different genres and re-reading history. In this poem, he re-read the history of Elizabeth with the combination of fact and myth.

In "Elizabeth", Ondaatje's blurring the cut-off points between primitivism and history is reflected in the image of Philip's eating uncooked fish that shows primitivism. Philip who is a symbol of civilization eats uncooked fish that presents his uncivilized aspects of life. Hence, Ondaatje dissolves the boundaries between primitivism and history.



In the poem “The Cinnamon Peeler”, employing the method of textual analysis, distortion of hierarchization is explored through blurring the cut-off points between husband and wife. Derrida is in favour of distorting hierarchization and yoking binaries. Butler (2002) writes on Derrida’s dissolving the boundaries: “the conceptual oppositions we tend to employ to do this organization for us- speech versus writing, soul versus body, literal versus metaphysical, natural versus cultural, masculine versus feminine- make us get lots of fundamental relationships wrong, or at least too rigidly fixed” (p.20). Différance’s first integral ‘to differ’ blurs the boundaries between the binaries. In this poem, binaries between husband and wife are deconstructed: “You will be known among strangers/ as the cinnamon peeler’s wife” (Ondaatjepp.16-17).

Ondaatje in his poem “Dates”, blurs the boundaries between Ceylon (East) and Connecticut (U.S.), tradition and creativity, inner and outer. This poem deals with two different conditions i.e. Ondaatje’s mother’s being pregnant with him in Ceylon (East) and Stevens Wallace’s writing a poem in Connecticut (U.S.). Here, Ondaatje blurs the boundaries through postmodernist synthesis and recombination. McCorkle (1997) defines recombination and synthesis: “working through such modes as appropriation, synthesis, recombination, mutation, and generation, postmodern poetics expresses a commitment to dialogical, social world” (p. 44). Recombination and synthesis are reflected through blurring the boundaries between Ceylon (East) and Connecticut (U.S.), and inner and outer. Structuralist notions of difference create boundaries while différance blurs them. Here, Ondaatje unites Ceylon with Connecticut. In this poem, the poet yokes the binary oppositions i.e. Ceylon and Connecticut and inner and outer in these lines: “and I in my mother’s stomach was growing/ as were the flowers outside the Connecticut windows” (p.22).

“Dates” deals with dissolving the boundaries between creativity and tradition. Ambivalent attitude of Ondaatje towards tradition is seen. He does not take orthodox standards or beliefs as they are but being a young

original poet tightens his innovative and creative muscles against major traditional figures. Solecki (2000) states that Ondaatje is not in favour of rewriting Stevens Wallace but he misquotes him. He notes: “the last line of “The Well Dressed Man with a Beard” is “It can never be satisfied, the mind, never” which is not quite synonymous with “the mind is never finished, no, never” (p.22).

## **5.2. ‘To Differ’ — Dissolving the Boundaries through Postmodernist Textual Techniques**

In a postmodernist text, blurring the boundaries is also reflected in postmodernist textual techniques i.e. intertextuality, pastiche, non-linear structure, parody, and multi-voiced narrative. If structuralism makes binary oppositions whereas, deconstruction dissolves them. Art does not remain self-sufficient and closed in a postmodernist view. Lyotard (1984) describes the postmodernist notion of the writer and the text:

“A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre- established rules, and they can’t be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work” (p.81).

Postmodernist textual techniques also are not devoid of dissolving the boundaries. Blurring the boundaries is reflected in intertextuality through one text’s gliding towards another text. Likewise intertextuality, boundaries are blurred in parody and pastiche also because a text does not remain fixed but one writer or the text is seen in another writer or the text mockingly and respectfully respectively. Boundaries are blurred in poly-temporal time structure also. Different temporal times are found in this type of time structure not one temporal period. Times dissolving their boundaries glide towards another time.

Ondaatje dissolves the boundaries through intertextuality. Fixity is not reflected in this postmodernist textual technique also. Kristeva (1980) used the term intertextuality for the first time and defines it as “a

permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text," in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and naturalize one another" (p.36). She argues "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p.66). In intertextuality, one text is studied in the light of another text. The meaning of one text is shaped by another text.

Intertextuality is seen in Ondaatje's poem, "The Republic" because of reflection of Dionysian passion and Apollonian reason of Greek tragedy. In "The Diverse Causes", intertextuality is reflected through pastiche. Pastiche is a collage. Intertextuality blurs the boundaries among texts. In this poem glimpses of the Greek chorus are seen in the phrases i.e. 'winter hunters', 'window hangs', etc.

Another postmodernist textual technique i.e. parody also is reflected in Ondaatje's poetry. It is one of the particular genres of comedy used to mock at or satirize a work. Parody also falls into the category of blurring the boundaries. Hutcheon (1988) defines: "parody is perfect postmodern form" and "it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (p.11). Korkut (2009) presents parody in the frame of reference to poststructuralist tenet: it "rejects the notion of a single, autonomous work defined by well-drawn boundaries. It proposes instead each work is a 'text' that 'overflows' into other texts and enter into endless intertextual relations with them. Such a theory also plays a significant role in blurring the boundaries" (p.128).

Ondaatje uses parody as a weapon to combat the modernists' supremacy. In "Dates", Ondaatje parodies Wallace Stevens through misquoting his line "It can never be satisfied, the mind, never" as "the mind is never finished, no, never" (p.22). He does so in order to describe past in his own way instead of taking it as it is. Boundaries are dissolved through the weapon of parody.

Ondaatje in his poem "The Cinnamon Peeler", parodies himself in a positive but a hypothetical way. He

desires to imitate the activities of the cinnamon peelers that he missed being a son of colonial white parents in Ceylon.

Another postmodernist textual technique is pastiche which deals with an imitation of a popular literary oeuvre. It is different from parody because it does not mock at any piece of literature but honours it by imitating. It imitates in a light-hearted but respectful manner. Its aim is to imitate the other writers' style and content for showing it that their work is landmark of their age. Eclecticism is reflected in it because it borrows from styles from different sources. Hence, like other postmodernist textual techniques, pastiche also contains dissolving the boundaries.

Pastiche is reflected in Ondaatje's poem, "Dates". Jewinski (1996) explores pastiche from this poem. He mentions Auden's influence on Ondaatje in the light of Ondaatje's interview with Solecki. In that interview Ondaatje confesses: "everybody talks about Auden's influence on me but I've never read much of his work" (p.36). As per Jewinski, Ondaatje admits the line "no instruments/ agreed on a specific weather" (from the poem "Dates") is his "most conscious borrowing from anyone" (ibid.).

In "The Diverse Causes", pastiche is reflected in the form of the poet's imitating the chorus of the classical drama in the phrases like "winter hunters". The poet reminds us Aeschylus and Sophocles for two reasons: a) he shows his respect for classical dramatists, b) he shows the significance of myth in our daily life.

Blurring the boundaries is reflected in "The Republic" also through recombination, disjunction, and aleatory in structure of the poem. Disjunction dissolves the cut-off points. Two distinct alternatives are yoked together. In this poem, passion at night and reasoning at day are united with the link of aleatory and disjunction. Even a single line reflects disjunction: "air even is remade in the basement" (p.20). High (air) is united with low (basement). Hence, binaries are blurred.

Ondaatje's intermingling the discourses also blurs the boundaries in "The Diverse Causes". Run-on-images or building images connects this poem with myth-making. Ondaatje does not believe in fixity because he has inclination to building images and repetition that dissolve the boundaries. Ondaatje blurs the boundaries between past and present, reality and fiction through the glimpses of the past in the phrases such as 'winter hunters' and 'window hangs'. In an interview, Ondaatje elucidates myth as: "repeating and building images and so making them more potent". Ondaatje (1974) defines myth as, "myth is....achieved by a very careful use of echoes.... of phrases and images" (p.25).

In "The Cinnamon Peeler", blurring the boundaries is found through intermingling of discourses. This poem reflects centrifugal blends, polyphonic world of discourse, and heteroglossia. Mchale (1989) writes, "instead of resisting centrifugal tendencies, postmodernist fiction seeks to enhance them. Heteroglossia is used here as an opening wedge, a means of breaking up the unified projected world into a polyphony of worlds of discourse" (p.167). In this poem, centrifugal blends are reflected because the husband is for wife and wife is for husband; none of both is in the centre or on the margin: "You will be known among strangers/ as the cinnamon peeler's wife" (Ondaatje, pp.16-17). Salient feature of heteroglossia is encompassing different discourses that are reflected in this poem through the discourses of the narrator, the wife, and the husband.

### **5.3 Différance- 'To Defer': Open-endedness in Ondaatje's Selected Poems**

'To defer' is one of the integrals of Derrida's *différance*. It contains 'postponement' through an infinite chain of signifiers. This integral of *différance* produces open-endedness in the text. Ondaatje is not a supporter of fixity of meaning both in poetry and novels. On an occasion, he vocalizes that he does not see novels and poems ending with any real sense of closure. For him, poem is a motion and flux in which reader is the king. Readers in some cases step forward and dress the poem themselves. He is in favour of developing a relationship of interactivity between the poem

and reader. A poem should not convey a message but it should be a process. 'Master code' is not important for him but 'idiolect' because it dissolves the cut-off points between the poem and the reader. It makes a text opened rather closed. Ondaatje's reader is not a passive consumer but producer of meaning. His reader shares the action of creation. Solecki writes about Ondaatje's poetry, "the poem must deal with motion, flux and formlessness within the confines of poetic forms" (1978, p.47). The meaning of his poems unfolds after time. Ondaatje believes in openness because he believes that poetry and life go together.

Through the second integral of *différance* 'to defer' / postponement, open-endedness has been identified from Ondaatje's selected poems i.e. "Proust in the Waters", "Inner Tube", "The Republic", "King Kong meets Wallace Stevens", "Elizabeth", and "Light". Ondaatje's poetry reflects open-endedness because his narration rejects authorization. He is in favour of a counter-narrative which is not based on central position but multiple positions. According to Vigurs "resisting the one authoritative voice, Ondaatje's text presents a range of voices" (2001, p.3). He has no authorial voice. For example, in his poem "Last Ink" he is addressing an audience: "in certain countries aromas pierce the heart and one dies/ half waking in the night as an owl and a murderer's cart go by./ the way someone in your life will talk out love and grief/ then leave your company laughing". Heterodiegetic narrative is reflected in Ondaatje's poem "The Cinnamon Peeler". The narrator of this poem slips into the cinnamon peeler from the first line. The authorial self or 'I' is diffused in the cinnamon peeler. "If I were a cinnamon peeler/ I would ride your bed/ and leave the yellow bark dust/ on your pillow" (Ondaatje 1-4).

Ondaatje's poem "Proust in the Waters" reflected open-endedness. It has different meaning for different readers. For some readers, it deals with futility of discourse. They investigate this meaning from the fragmental part of loon's syllables: "To know the syllables/ in a loon's sentence/ intricate/ shift of preposition" (p.122). For some readers, this poem deals with surrealistic elements because

of having distorted fragments i.e. “sleeping/ arm of moon” (ibid.). It is a dreamy poem for some readers.

The poem “Inner Tube” has different meaning for different readers. For some readers, the line “one of us is wrong” (p.22) does not give answer to the events described in this poem. For some readers, the speaker may be wrong, for some the heron and for some readers the dog may be wrong. Polydimensionality leads it towards open-endedness and open-readings. Ondaatje’s poem “The Republic” also keeps open-endedness. Solecki notes that in the final couplet of this poem, Ondaatje makes a relationship between two worlds (the world of frenzy and world of reason). He writes: “it implies a deliberate thematic irresolution which gives the poem open-endedness characteristic of Ondaatje’s best work”(1978, p.6).

Ondaatje’s poem “King Kong meets Wallace Stevens” deals with open-endedness. Openness is a salient integral of *différance* and indeterminacy. It is found in postmodern photography- re-photography. This poem is on the interpretation of two photographs- King Kong and Wallace Stevens. Here, the speaker interprets the two photographs in his own way. In this sense, this poem contains openness. In fact, in the world of free-floating of images, it is impossible to take pictures with an innocent eye. All pictures are caught glimpse of only through other pictures- pictorial intertextuality. The openness of this poem makes it a process or a poem with motion rather than fixity. This poem starts with the speaker’s interpretation of two photographs: “Take two photographs- / Wallace Stevens and King Kong/ Is it significant that I eat bananas as I write this?” (p.61)

Open-endedness is one of the traits of Ondaatje’s poem “Elizabeth”. This poem forces the reader to change his or her perception of Elizabeth. The reader’s attitude towards Elizabeth changes continuously as the poem progresses. In this poem, Ondaatje is seen like an absorbing story-teller because he alters readers’ viewpoint of Elizabeth. Postmodernist openness forces the readers to reconsider this poem in which the thunderous and disorderly life of the Queen of England is represented.

Ondaatje does not impose single meaning of this poem on the readers because he does not advocate the fixity of meaning. He believes in open-endedness. That's why, he leaves it on the readers to explicate and interpret this poem also according to their own way.

Ondaatje's poem "Light" is an autobiographical poem in which openness is found. This poem deals with members of his family and some events of his family in past. Run-on-images is found in it because it is a fusion of fragments of the events of his family. Ondaatje makes an effort to explore the past of his family in Ceylon through some photographs of the members of his family. He writes in this poem: "These are the fragments, all I remember, / wanting more knowledge of them" (p.4). He does not know the fixed facts of his family. Here, he wants to explore through photographs. It makes this poem open-ended like open-ended past of his family which he interprets through myth. The history of his family is open-ended for him because he does not know everything about his family. He knows its history only through fragments collected from different people or other resources i.e. photographs.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The present study was the sequel because the last study of the researchers was only on the first integral of Derrida's *différance*- 'to differ' or dissolving the boundaries but the present study explored both integrals of Derrida's *différance*- 'to differ' and 'to defer' from the themes and postmodernist textual techniques of the selected poems of Ondaatje. In this qualitative study in the light of *différance*- 'to defer', open-endedness through polydimensionality, heterodiegetic narrative, and rejection of authorial voice was explored from the selected poems of Ondaatje. With the help of 'to differ', dissolving the boundaries between passion and reason, fact and fiction, present and primitivism, husband and wife, man and nature, east (Ceylon) and U.S. (Connecticut), prose and poetry were sought out from Ondaatje's selected poems.

This study was an initiative for opening the new horizons of research in the realm of Derrida's *différance*. This research might open new realms of research for the



students and research scholars. Future researchers might work on Margret Atwood from the perspective of Derrida's *différance*.

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