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**Applications of Chaos Theory to History in the Novels of Michael Ondaatje:
Disorder Within Order in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, *Coming
Through Slaughter* and *In the Skin of a Lion***

A thesis presented to:

The Department of English, Lakehead University

Thunder Bay, Ontario

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Submitted by:

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January 7, 2001



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ABSTRACT

This is a thesis studying Literary Chaos Theory and its use in explicating the novels of Michael Ondaatje. The paper concentrates on elements of Chaos theory, such as 'strange attractors,' 'bifurcation points' and 'self-organizing systems.' These elements of Chaos theory help describe many dynamics in Ondaatje's writings which seem almost undecipherable without them. Chaos theory explains not only the mechanics of Ondaatje's complicated style but also Ondaatje's treatment of the chaos of history within The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, Coming Through Slaughter and In the Skin of a Lion. Ondaatje rewrites history in such a way that he almost completely excludes the voices of the dominant elements of our social superstructure. He ignores the voices of the privileged, particularly in In the Skin of a Lion, and instead uses a multi-layered narrative system which is accommodating due to its complexity. Ondaatje is able to tell the stories of the marginal people and groups in history who otherwise don't have a voice in the 'official' versions of history. He weaves the perspectives of many marginal characters together into one history. Ondaatje's stories are not only inclusive, but they also show the order in chaos in their complexity. This paper discusses how Ondaatje draws identities for his characters, out of the Chaotic narrative, by using machine imagery as synecdochal and metonymic identifying tropes to show his order within the Chaos.

Acknowledgements

I would like very much to thank my mother and father for their ongoing patience, as well as Mr. Al Jack for his ongoing discussions of literature long after I left his classroom. Most importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Judith Leggatt for her graciousness, encouragement and for having introduced me to Chaos Theory and the work of N. Katherine Hayles.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I examine the intersection of history, postmodernism and literary Chaos¹ theory in three of Michael Ondaatje's novels: The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, Coming Through Slaughter and In the Skin of a Lion. I also compare the dynamics of Chaos theory to the mechanics of Ondaatje's writing style. Ondaatje employs what Chaos theorists call 'self-organizing systems' and 'strange attractors' to bring his stories to closure and to develop emotional or mental profiles of his characters. The prevalence of these dynamics of Chaos in Ondaatje's work continually subverts what is traditionally recognized as 'order,' particularly that order which is customarily imposed on history. Whatever order there is to be found in these three novels is found within a fold of disorder.

Ondaatje, in the postmodern 'historiographic metafiction'² of Billy the Kid, Slaughter and Skin of a Lion, rewrites history incorporating all levels of narrative from all people involved in the events of which he writes. In the process, Ondaatje will include the voices of peripheral, minor characters and he will sometimes include his own voice, as performing narrator. In this fashion, he

¹ The terms Chaos and Chaotic, when referring specifically to Chaos theory, will be capitalized. Lower case spelling will be used when the word chaos is used in its common form as a word meaning disorder.

² The term 'historiographic metafiction' is contained in Linda Hutcheon's book The Canadian Postmodern. She states that this type of literature is, by definition, self-referential and that it does not have one overt narrating voice, but many. In addition, Hutcheon believes that the effects on a reader are that the reader is left to pull together the various fragmentary points of view (65). This differs greatly from the experience of reading historical textbooks which contain traditional linear, or 'official,' history rather than the more complex metafictional history.

shows the chaos which is inherent in the events which make up history. There is a complex order in Ondaatje's apparently chaotic narratives, which counteracts the simple, linear order of the cultural establishment represented by comfortable and traditional narrative structure and metanarratives. I discuss the implications of Ondaatje's treatment of history and how this Chaotic history differs from traditional, and artificially linear and causal, history. Ondaatje establishes a personal order for each of his main characters to match the deep systemic order within his narrative, and he signals this deeper order with each character's identification with the machines of their vocation. These machines symbolize recurring tendencies and cycles; a machine has the same essential tendencies or cycles when activated, but it is subject to the variations of the human operator. Likewise, Ondaatje's main characters all return to the same essential tendencies, but their cyclical returns are subject to the variations of the larger systems. Ondaatje's mechanical imagery illuminates his characters, and each of his main characters parallels the theoretical model of disorderly order in Chaos theory. Ondaatje establishes metonymic, and in some cases synecdochal, relationships between character and machine. Focusing on these intense relationships, I show how Ondaatje draws, out of chaos, identities for each of his main characters, using machinery as the ordering master trope.

CHAOS THEORY

As a scientific theory, Chaos theory has evolved from the need for scientists to describe systems which contain complex patterns inherent in apparent disorder. Simple systems are those which contain one or two variables and the

data of such systems are easily plotted on two-dimensional graphs for quick analysis. These are systems such as velocity and friction charts and sine-waves. The variables might differ on occasion, but because the system is simple, the results of the movement may be accurately predicted using previous data. The fundamental laws of physics are based on experimental outcomes of simple systems.

Complex systems, on the other hand, have many more variables which cause them to be virtually unpredictable. Some of the variables within a complex system may behave with consistency, but these systems are virtually unchartable and incapable of being accurately predicated. However, some underlying consistencies in movement can be observed. The overall movement of the system may be erratic or undescrivable, but there may be points of the movement to which the system returns again and again. Hence there may be a detectable and returning tendency within a complex system, but it is not as predictable or neat as the consistencies within a simple system. The places to which movements return are called 'strange attractors', but the fact that these patterns of return occur is what I call a 'deep order'. One example of a complex system system is the waterfall, wherein all water falls in the same direction and over the same surface, but each particle falls differently. In his article "A Story of Three Butterflies," Patrick Brady cites a different example of the 'complex system' or 'deep order' that typifies Chaos theory. He writes about scientist Benoit Mandelbrot who had studied several years of cotton price data, which was data that fluctuated randomly in the short term. He had discovered that "price movements for daily changes and those for monthly changes matched perfectly; they produced curves that were

symmetrical from scale to scale" (67). Hence, even in a market where the fluctuations appear to be random, there is a cycle or an order to be found. Both the market example and the example of the waterfall demonstrate the deeper, hidden order within chaotic systems. Over the years, science has evolved to the point where it can recognize and encapsulate much more than just linear and causal dynamics. At the forefront of this scientific revolution are Control theory and Chaos theory. Michael Gillespie writes in "(Meta) Physics and the Portals of Discovery" that scientists have "uncovered chaotic solutions hidden in nonlinear, deterministic equations, chaos that describes phenomena like the weather or the behaviour of neural nets" (601). Scientific Chaos theory offers a model flexible enough to allow for a relationship between complexity and teleology as elements which feed off one another. For the science of Chaos, a new set of tools has evolved which can be used to identify variation and evolution within such complex chaotic systems as weather or market cycles. Before moving into a detailed discussion of Ondaatje's texts, it is necessary for me to explain the most significant tools and devices of the science of Chaos. Understanding the main components of the scientific theory will lay the foundation for the discussion of a literary application of Chaos theory.

A chaotic system consists of at least one, but possibly many, 'self-organizing systems'³ which are seemingly random cycles that are able to conclude

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The working definitions which I have developed for the purposes of this thesis arise from having read several more formal and complicated definitions. The definitions from which I derive my own are contained in articles by Felicia Florine Campbell, Patrick Brady, Alex Argyros and David Porush. In addition, the introductory chapter in Chaos and Order by N. Katherine Hayles contains definitions of some of these dynamics.

or resolve themselves, or even connect themselves to other self-organizing systems. One example would be the movement within recurring traffic jams of any large city. These jams are made up of different vehicles and sequences daily, yet they always form similar patterns of appearance and movement.

A 'strange attractor,' is an activity or a physical quality to which a complex and otherwise disorderly system returns again and again. The strange attractor triggers the movement of a self-organizing system, or may help to link systems together. Perhaps the best known example of a strange attractor is a double pendulum, which returns to the same position many times in a cycle, but at irregular and unpredictable intervals. The single pendulum is not chaotic, as it will follow the same pattern at a steady rate of decline. However, fastening another pendulum to the bottom of the single pendulum will create unpredictable variations. Cycles may repeat themselves in a double pendulum, but never predictably. Therefore it exemplifies the strange attractor, which is a recurring tendency or a symbol in which the rate of recurrence is not predictable or precisely measurable. The return of a Chaotic complex system back to its strange attractor(s) over and over is a movement which I refer to as the 'deep order' within the

Another element of scientific Chaos theory is the 'bifurcation point'. Bifurcation points are random changes in direction where the path of a system divides and there is no imbalance of power between the two directions of diversion. For example, particles in a waterfall could easily vary their movements in any direction within the greater system or flow. They are all parts of a much larger movement, but none of the particles follow the larger movement in exactly

the same way. Felicia Florine Campbell refers to the bifurcation point as a "fork in the paths trod, and more alteration of the patterns in the complex web in which they and we exist" (3-4). The complex web is the chaotic system. Finally, the 'butterfly effect' is where very small initial conditions or variations may lead to disproportionately large results or effects. This phenomenon derives its name from the theory that a butterfly flapping its wings in China can give rise to atmospheric variations that would grow into a weather pattern over North America. Throughout Ondaatje's work we see many small actions leading to large consequential movements.

In my examination of Ondaatje, I will use the literary application of Chaos theory which was pioneered by N. Katherine Hayles about a decade ago, and which stems from the scientific theory. In Chaos and Disorder, Hayles writes that the theory is "akin to poststructuralism, where the structuralist penchant for replicating symmetries is modified by the postmodern turn toward fragmentation, rupture and discontinuity" (11). This fragmentation is shown in Ondaatje's tendency to defy genre and chronology, and to scramble and reassemble history. Ondaatje epitomizes these structural tendencies and he portrays characters whose lives symbolize disorder, 'rupture and discontinuity.' Literary Chaos theory helps to define order within disorderly narratives by providing theoretical tools necessary to recognize the deeper order which underscores all Chaotic systems.

CHAOS AND POSTMODERNISM

The critical background for this thesis lies in the interconnection of postmodernism and Chaos theory. Because of these critical parameters, the thesis

will focus primarily on Ondaatje's treatments of history and chronology. Jean-Francois Lyotard writes in The Postmodern Condition that "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). Metanarratives are well-known narratives that are rooted in history or in the mythology of heroic or historical people or events. I will study how Ondaatje takes such metanarratives and manipulates them, injecting an element of incredulity into them. The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, Coming through Slaughter and In the Skin of a Lion are part of this postmodern phenomenon of the faltering metanarrative. The lives that Ondaatje writes about in these three novels resist the classification of dominant metanarratives because Ondaatje fabricates and rearranges them. Kroetsch suggests that "Canadians cannot agree on what their metanarrative is" and that ". . . in some perverse way, this falling apart of our story is what holds our story together" (*DAU* 355). This observation may suggest a certain irreverence on the part of Canadian writers towards our own history or our own heroes. The lack of centre, and the peripheral styles of writing reflect Chaotic dynamics. Kroetsch goes on to claim that "all is periphery and margin, against the hole in the middle . . . There is no centre. This disunity is our unity" (*DAU* 363). All three of Ondaatje's books deal with this Chaotic paradox or strategy. In Slaughter, Skin of a Lion and Billy the Kid, there is only an end to each story once the fragments of plot finally and non-causally drift back together.

In his discussions of postmodernism, Lyotard embraces the concept of multiple, incongruous language games--games of representation that flourish side by side without the need for consensus between them. He writes that "consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games . . . invention is always born

of dissention" (xxv). Frederick Jameson also acknowledges this "pure and random play of signifiers which we call postmodernism . . . metabooks which cannibalize other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts" (222). Chaos theory also describes a type of literature which has multi-layered plots and movements. Even within a single text, these movements, although occurring simultaneously, are quite different from one another. The 'books' and 'bits' which Ondaatje collates in his own books are the stories and figures of Canadian and American history (William Bonney in The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, Buddy Bolden in Coming Through Slaughter, and Patrick Lewis, Nicholas Temelcoff and other workers who built the Waterworks and Bloor Street Viaduct in In the Skin of a Lion).

Keeping in mind these ideological backgrounds, we may better understand what Linda Hutcheon refers to in The Canadian Postmodern as "historiographic metafiction" (61). She posits that "this kind of metafiction thematizes its own interaction both with the historical past and the historically conditioned expectations of its readers" (65). Hutcheon maintains that the retelling of history is, through selection, deletion and interpretation, a fictive performance. She writes, of history, that "it is one of the ways we impose meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events" (66). Hutcheon's notion of historiographic metafiction has roots in the metanarrative theories of Jameson and Lyotard. This is evident when reflecting on Lyotard's theory of invention being born of dissention and Jameson's concept of metanarrative collating bits of other texts.

In studying Ondaatje's work, we may appreciate the criticisms levelled at the traditional metanarrative by Jameson and Lyotard. Critic Alex Argyros notes

how both Jameson and Lyotard realize the confining nature of these traditional narratives. In "Narrative and Chaos," Argyros writes that "Fredric Jameson qualifies nineteenth-century narrative as linear and bourgeois" (659), while Lyotard tends to "see grand narrative as the imperialistic imposition of a rigid teleological scheme on a world which either is or should be a web of different textual energies" (661). Argyros, through recognition of these confinements and of the complexities of the contemporary mind and world, delineates a compromise which Chaos theory makes possible. To him, Chaos allows "for a relation between complexity and teleology that is best understood as a mutually enhancing feedback loop" (668). This compromise offers some validity to teleology without confining itself to the limitations of cartesian-style, linear 'cause and effect' thinking. This is a helpful compromise when studying the metahistorical style and narrative voices used by Ondaatje. In Ondaatje's histories and narratives, the connective theme is the quest for some sense of order. The order is necessary to create a history that can be understood *as well as* told by Ondaatje's different narrative voices. This search for order is a struggle because the lives Ondaatje has chosen to write about defy order. The chaos in the lives of his characters is reflected in the seemingly erratic, postmodern writing style he employs in all three novels.

The postmodern dynamics in his writing lend themselves to Chaos theory. Chaos theory, however, is more specifically applicable to Ondaatje's work than is postmodernism. Throughout this thesis, I will show how many postmodern critics describe literary dynamics which seem very similar to those of Chaos theory. I would argue that these critics may be pointing out stylistic phenomena which

predict chaotics, but that they are not actually engaging in discussions of Chaos theory. Chaos theory provides clearer terminology, such as that defined earlier this chapter, to explain the coexistence of order and disorder. Therefore, the facets of Ondaatje's style which I am discussing are much more specifically and accurately addressed by the later evolving language of Chaos theory than by the already existing language of Postmodernism. Using Chaos theory, I can analyze the emergence of order and meaning from indeterminate and destabilized narratives, as all three of Ondaatje's texts dismantle and distort the traditional authorized signifying processes. Then I can invoke Chaotic elements such as attractors, non-linear and non-causal temporal spaces to reveal the complex order in Ondaatje's multi-layered and protean writing style.

Another aspect of Ondaatje's writing that makes Chaos theory appropriate for defining it is his complex and multi-layered narrative performance. Ondaatje's own voice fades in and out of his works just as his main characters in the three books fade in and out of dreamscapes. The author and his characters seem to leave and re-enter the fictional world spontaneously; articles and photographs give the texts the appearance of historical authenticity, although they are all fictional reconstructions. Even Ondaatje's own authorial intrusions are part of the fiction. Ondaatje's tendency to play with chronology also contributes to the fluidity and apparent randomness of his books. In his article "The Chaos of Metafiction," Peter Stoicheff writes of Chaos literature that "To investigate its indeterminacy is akin to exploring the chaotic mannerisms of deterministic disorder; one witnesses both a bewildering randomness and an elusive order" (86). This is similar to what David Porush describes when he refers to a seemingly orderless narrative which

suddenly brings about a great epiphany. The result is a 'bifurcation point' which is where the epiphany may result in a direction-changing choice within the larger chaotic system--it is the culmination of a 'self-organizing system.'

As mentioned earlier, the characters in all three books are actually repelled by order at most levels, and in some cases are sickened by the restlessness which accompanies it. Order, other than chaotic order, is stasis for these characters--it doesn't exist in sexual promiscuity, explosions, balancing acts, or gunfights, which are the stuff of life for Buddy Bolden, Billy the Kid and Patrick Lewis. Ondaatje's treatment of history, his use of authorial intrusion, and his disregard for chronology work together to create a chaotic writing style which parallels the lifestyles and behaviours of his characters.

CHAOS AND HISTORY

Because I am focusing on Ondaatje's treatment of history and its connections to Chaos theory, I am interested in the tendency of Ondaatje's narrative to rewrite history. This rewriting of history may induce the feeling of a historic and metafictional scrap-book. This is the feeling to which Hutcheon refers when she writes that "readers become the actualizing links between history and fiction as well as between past and present" (*TCP* 65). Hutcheon also notes of Ondaatje's work that "it indeed does seek to represent a reality outside literature, and one of the major connections between life and art is the performing narrator, whose act of searching and ordering forms part of the narrative itself" (*TCP* 83). Ondaatje himself seems to recognize the challenge in ordering his historical fragments into the stories he writes. Ondaatje states that "Writing is

trying to make order, to understand something about yourself. Orderless situations are, for me, the most interesting things, and I tend to write about the finding out of order" (quoted in Bok 119). Billy, Patrick and Buddy all live lives which are antithetical to order.

The first stylistic method I will discuss for all three of these books is Ondaatje's treatment of history (particularly historiographical metafiction) and myth. The reader is brought into the chaos of the books as Ondaatje intersperses his own creations with stories and documents that have been passed down as 'real history.' We can see this chaotic process as we watch Ondaatje "use 'emplotting' strategies of exclusion, emphasis, and subordination of the elements of a story . . . [but he] must also deal with the veritable chaos of events already constituted" (Rooke 302). Historiographic metafiction allows Ondaatje to recreate American and Canadian history, and in his self-reflexive style, he employs authorial intrusions to remind us that, although some of his history may be traditional (or deemed authentic), he still has creative control. As a result, he shows us that both his history and traditional histories are fictional constructs. As Rochelle Simmons notes:

In the Skin of a Lion employs frame-breaking devices that likewise remind us of the text's status as a fictional construct. It is as if whenever we begin to immerse ourselves in the narrative, Ondaatje undercuts us with a comment that cannot quite be located, such as the inclusion of an authorial intrusion in a book from which the author is largely absent. (703)

Ondaatje's use of this technique in the fictional biographies of Buddy Bolden,

Billy the Kid and Patrick Lewis challenges traditional causal and linear historical perspectives. This challenge to the reader causes reading to become an act of philosophical puzzling. Argyros writes that, from a chaotic perspective, "A narrative is perhaps best conceptualized as a hypothesis about the nature of an existing slice of reality or about the potential consequences of certain variations on a model of the world" (667). The resulting models "if they are to be potent, should be, if anything, more dynamically flexible than their objects"(668).

Ondaatje recognizes our familiarity with already 'existing slices' of history, so he teases us with reminders of the precarious state of historical 'knowledge.'

Because he shows us that history is merely another fiction, we must recognize the collapse of our own linear systems of historical and narrative predictability. This lack of *real* history results in a feeling of lost control and acts as a reminder that there really is "no centre" (Kroetsh *DAU* 363). As Katherine Hayles reminds us "The world as chaotics envisions it is rich in unpredictable evolutions . . .

characterized by nonlinear relations between causes and effects, and fractured into multiple length scales that make globalization precarious" (8). This "fractured" world is the world that Ondaatje creates in the written metahistories of Billy, Buddy and Patrick.

Ondaatje's treatment of history is complex and this complexity lies in the fact that he creates Chaotic systems of history from metanarratives which have typically been ordered by an imposed causal reasoning and by chronological linearity. A simple and linear historical system might be a history written by one source whose input is accepted by the 'official' historians. Because this type of history is written by one source, it is traditionally neatly honed into a

chronological time-line and it includes the stories of recognized privileged-class people, politicians and heroes. A complex historical system, such as that employed by Ondaatje, invokes a sense of collapse upon these customary and comfortable narrative traditions. In his Chaotic history, Ondaatje uses a complex order in both narrative and chronology. His method is inclusive as he employs the voices of recognized historical characters in his stories, but also gives fair representation to the people who are marginalised and largely unheard in 'official' history. As a result, Ondaatje also strays away from the time-line to fit all of the voices into the story. His history is more inclusive, but becomes less chronologically accurate. He reconstructs new history, unfettered by old tradition, and in doing so, he imposes his own form of order to it--a deeper order.

Ondaatje's Chaotic history exemplifies the reality that historical narratives are constructed, and that the 'truth' of history is inaccessible. As we read Billy the Kid, Coming Through Slaughter and Skin of a Lion (books which Ondaatje wrote in this order), we can recognize that his treatment of these histories becomes more chaotic with each book. As his historical narratives become more complex, they also become more inclusive of narrative input by peripheral or obscure historical figures. This allows for the unification of sometimes contradictory narrative lines of the marginalised yet historical voices which are traditionally blotted out by the more privileged voices in 'official' history. Ondaatje's ability to mesh these seemingly incongruous narrative lines allows for a culturally inclusive and multi-layered historical narrative which exemplifies Chaos in its literary form. The sonograph which Ondaatje points out in the outset of Slaughter is an appropriate metaphor for this chaotic historical narrative since it exemplifies an almost

impossible interweaving of many different narrative patterns into one historical discourse.

Ondaatje has a unique (even irreverent) historical performance, so to study his work we do well to utilize elements of Chaos theory such as those of which Dean Wilcox writes. Wilcox suggests that, although Chaos theory "may seem to indicate a search for total randomness, the study of various chaotic systems has revealed underlying patterns of an *unpredictable order*" (700 [my emphasis]). It is a "science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being" (700). Wilcox also notes how Chaos theory views the contexts of signifiers and images in literature, writing that "it is not possible to place a literal 'meaning' on the image, as any reading of it must focus not on what it *means*, but on what mood it helps to create" (705). These points describe a theoretical approach which is both emotional and independent of traditional *linear* expectations. Wilcox supports the notion that Chaos theory may expose the orderly aspects that lie within disorder, much as Ondaatje exposes the artifice of traditional historical order. The problem in recognizing this dynamic lies in the fact that the outward appearance of order or disorder will often conceal its opposite. Patrick Brady, however, offers some examples wherein we may see both sides of Chaos theory operating simultaneously. He writes that:

For some, chaos offers a way of seeing order and pattern where formerly only the random, the erratic, the unpredictable--in short, the chaotic--had been observed, as in the ordered pattern produced by random throwing of a die; for others, it emphasizes that behind hidden order there exists a state of disorder, as in the pathological

orderliness of certain emotionally disturbed families. (66)

Patterns of identity and systems of order must be exposed by recognizing patterns which lie beneath the overt disorder in a Chaotic system. Conversely, Ondaatje's historical perspective seeks to expose the chaos which lies beneath the overtly constructed order of 'official' history. Ultimately, Ondaatje retells the histories of William Bonney, Buddy Bolden and Patrick Lewis by using complex chaotic systems which return to their own 'deeper' orders.

MACHINE IMAGES - DEEPER ORDER

Though plot structures in Ondaatje's writing defy traditional linear narrative and form, he uses strange attractors to establish an underlying pattern of unpredictable order. Ondaatje uses machine references as strange attractors to symbolize the complex order which lies beneath the surface of his disjointed plot structures and beneath the surface of the outwardly chaotic behaviour of his characters, and to bring order and conclusion out of the chaos. Therefore, he creates a self-organizing system from what, without the attractors, would seem like an essentially random and unconnected array of dissociated episodes or events.

As we read Skin of a Lion, Slaughter and Billy the Kid, the importance of machine images as connective tissue becomes apparent. Critics Karen Overbye, George Elliott Clarke and Dennis Lee all recognize the prevalence of Ondaatje's use of machinery. Overbye, in her article "Re-Membering the Body," points out how Patrick's body is used and trained to be a machine of both destruction and precision. His and the other workers' bodies "are made to work like machines,

and are apparently considered mere means of production by the rich" (2). Furthermore, to Patrick's father, Hazen Lewis, "only the boy's [Patrick's] body is recognized, as a means to work, and not his emotional, intellectual self, which cries out for company, for 'conversation'" (6). Patrick essentially becomes a machine, much like his father had been--the two men are means of production.

In "Michael Ondaatje and the Production of Myth," Clarke points out how William Bonney is portrayed as mechanical, like a killing machine. Clarke discusses the "trigger" (6) allusions in Billy the Kid, in which Billy is personified as the trigger of his own gun. He also points out Ondaatje's other use of the 'trigger' image, which invokes a similarity between Billy's perspective and a camera. The camera, by recording the violence, keeps the killings fresh, symbolizing how they remain fresh in Billy's mind.

Dennis Lee, in Savage Fields, also recognizes the mechanical nature of the portrayals of Billy and Buddy and he describes the emotional coldness and seeming amorality in both characters. Furthermore, in a parallel to the dynamics of Chaos theory, Lee also discusses the volatility of these protagonists. He describes Ondaatje's depiction of Billy as "the animal which mechanizes itself--which becomes a killing machine" (18). The machine imagery works well for Ondaatje to describe amoral and violent characters. In this thesis, I will add to the discussion by arguing that the machine references are Ondaatje's strange attractors which activate and connect the 'self-organizing systems' of which his plots consist. I will also show how Ondaatje uses machinery as the master-trope of identity to help his characters achieve their ultimate apotheoses of self identity in Slaughter, Skin of a Lion and Billy the Kid. The three main characters have

metonymic relationships with machines which symbolically parallel their different behaviours.

The strongest connections between Ondaatje's characters and machines are those between the characters and the machines or tools of their vocation. With these specific machines, the connections are actually synecdochal as the machines become part of the character physically. These very close relationships are the ones wherein the machine becomes such a part of each person as to deliver him into his own place of final apotheosis or identity. For example, Billy the Kid's gun allows him to die doing what he loves to do most. Even when he is at peace he continues to practice his trigger finger, so it is suitable that he die killing rather than at peace or in a jail cell. Delivered by the gun, Billy the Kid is ". . . dead / with a fish stare, with a giggle / with blood planets in his head" (*BTK* 104). With Bolden, Webb's flailing magnets symbolize Buddy's aversion to order, but his cornet is the machine through which his true expressions are relayed. His cornet is also a tool to which he becomes joined by blood and lung, and through which he is delivered to his apotheosis of aphasia. Buddy's slide into silence is a fitting conclusion which does make 'sense' out of the chaos which preceded it. Patrick Lewis's deliverance does not take the form of death through violence or aphasia. Rather, his is an awakening into a state of peace after a lifetime of survival and explosions. He is delivered through the very machinery he helped to build--the Toronto waterworks. He swims all the way up the intake pipe, in a death-defying act, to reach the centre or womb of the waterworks. After realizing that he could avenge his lover's death by detonation of Harris and his waterworks, he is reborn and initiates peace with the enemy rather than using the power he wields.

Adopting survival (the skin of the lion), Patrick's final major bifurcation point leads to an extension of life rather than death. All three of Ondaatje's main characters are brought to a final destination which seems to coincide with the preceding chaos of their lives.

Each of the body chapters of this thesis consists of a close reading of one novel. For each novel, I discuss Ondaatje's recreation of an inclusive, non-linear history and defiance of chronology and how these treatments fall within Chaos theory. I address Ondaatje's method of developing identity out of chaos for his characters, whose behaviours continually undercut definition and order. Finally, I connect the discussion of historical chaos with Ondaatje's use of machine imagery, metonymy and synecdoche as postmodern master-tropes, and discuss how Ondaatje uses these devices as his 'strange attractors' to create conclusion and order from the chaos. The main characters of each story, and the three stories themselves, are quite different. However, Ondaatje's use of the machine as organizing master-trope links the three books and leads into the discussion in my concluding chapter.

In this conclusion, I discuss how Chaos theory, with its disorderly order, fits within the landscape of the Canadian Postmodern. I also describe how, through postmodern performance, we are able to see the chaotic vacillation between linear teleology and non-linear causal fluctuations which lie within a narrative system. Reaching outside of Ondaatje's work, I discuss how the performance of history itself is a chaotic system. It consists of a series of smaller, self-organizing systems connected by strange attractors and bifurcation points. This is so because history is created through choices of inclusion or omission

which have varying repercussions on the traditional causal and linear perceptions of historical metanarratives. The choices Ondaatje makes of inclusion and exclusion pertain to events but also to classes and peripheral historical voices.

CHAPTER II

Order from Chaos in *Billy the Kid* - Guns, Trains, Wheels and Cameras

In this chapter, I discuss The Collected Works of Billy the Kid and the chaotic effects of Ondaatje's postmodern treatment of history in the novel-- particularly the dynamic of historiographic metafiction. Billy the Kid is Ondaatje's retelling of the story of William Bonney, the famous American outlaw. In his treatment of this metanarrative, Ondaatje assigns thoughts and intimations to Billy, and he also gives voices to the peripheral characters who surround Billy but who have been neglected by 'official' history. His retelling of Billy's story involves many non-causal and non-linear episodes and bifurcations, but the events and images he uses always return to the mechanical images which are his strange attractors. In Billy the Kid, these mechanical images are trains, wheels, cameras and, most importantly, guns. After studying the chaotic performances in Billy the Kid, I discuss Ondaatje's machine imagery as the organizing trope which draws both order and identity out of the erratic structure and behaviours contained in Billy the Kid. I show how Billy is ultimately represented by metonymic connections with both the camera and the gun.

HISTORY

On the 'Credits' page of Billy the Kid, Michael Ondaatje makes a statement which downplays his creative role: "With these basic sources I have edited, rephrased, and slightly reworked the originals. But the emotions belong to

their authors." Here, Ondaatje is pointing out that there are several 'authors' who share the responsibility for his book. The statement he makes here though, seems quite different from the message at the front of the book where he creates an empty picture frame with the words of L.A. Huffman stating "please notice when you get the specimens that they were made with the lens wide open" (5). Huffman was a photographer in the late 1800's, and Ondaatje invokes his voice to describe what is merely an empty frame. Therefore, the statement contradicts Ondaatje's credit page statement since the photograph statement implies that Ondaatje himself will be exposing Billy the Kid by recreating the American hero's history for our reading. He will do this with his textual "lens wide open." Huffman also states that "many of the best [were] exposed when my horse was in motion"(5). This part of his statement symbolizes the fact that the end product of Huffman's photography may lack the accuracy of a tripod photograph. The notion of photography in motion implies a shifting landscape and a blurred representation of the subject. This is indicative of the representation which Ondaatje will use to tell the story of William Bonney and the fact that it is not apt to reflect the 'real' or 'official' history of the outlaw.

There is a great deal of creative latitude for Ondaatje in writing about the violent western folk-hero, both because life on the frontier was so unpredictable and because so little is known about the historical persona of William Bonney. As Robert Kroetsch notes: "The struggle with the concept of hero illuminates much about the faltering meta-narrative in Canadian life. The Western story, in Canada as in the U.S., seems to offer the best possibility for a fresh and genuine story. In the American west the 'free' or the criminal figure becomes heroic" (*DVU* 28).

The tendency to make the criminal figure heroic is one of the thematic phenomena which Ondaatje deconstructs by recreating the historical figure of Billy as a killing machine. Ondaatje gives very few heroic, or even human, attributes to Billy the Kid. At one point Ondaatje describes Billy's ability to kill and then "walk off see none of the thrashing . . . believing then the moral of newspapers or gun" (*BTK* 11). Ondaatje's rewriting of the story of Billy portrays him as thoughtless and repugnant, rather than the legendary, admirably tough young American western hero, Billy the Kid.

In her article "The Pastime of Past Time," Linda Hutcheon defines the activity of dismantling legend and deconstructing history. She explains that writings that incorporate the historiographic metafictional style are "intensely self-reflexive but [they] also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge" (55). The status of history as metafiction brings into question the truth-telling not only of authors but also of historians. Sometimes readers are more prepared to trust writings of historians than those of purely fictional writers, since historians are perceived to write based upon as much fact as possible. Hutcheon's theory and Ondaatje's practice demonstrate that historians and fiction writers are not much different. Each of them employs inclusion or exclusion in telling his or her stories. Both are writers of different narrative styles and only the historical community decides what 'official' history is. But history can be as creative as pure fiction.

George Elliott Clarke recognizes Ondaatje's tendency to emulate the writing style of an historian. In his article "Michael Ondaatje and the Production of Myth," he writes that Billy the Kid is a "fictional history which purports to tell

the true story of an event; in this case, the fatal interplay between the opposing myths represented by Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett" (5). This "fictional history" is exactly what Ondaatje is claiming to produce in his statement on the Credits page. Throughout the book, we are provided with clues which tell us that he is mixing his own thoughts with a documented history of the life of William Bonney.

Ondaatje wields his authorial power not only by invoking the empty frame on the first page of text, but also by imposing his own image into the supposedly historical photographs on pages 12, 31 and 107⁴. The page 107 photograph is on the last page of the book, and it is a reproduction of the large empty frame at the beginning of the book. This time, however, it is not completely empty as it was at the beginning; in the lower right corner is a small photograph of what I believe to be the young Ondaatje in a cowboy costume, which reminds readers of Ondaatje's authorial presence throughout his history of Billy the Kid. This is one point in the text where the lens captures the photographer himself rather than the subject, and the photographer is Ondaatje. The small photograph in the corner becomes Ondaatje's personal stamp on a life which can be viewed with the "lens wide open."

Steven Connor, in Postmodernist Culture, also writes about this type of manipulation of historical evidence, reaffirming that the truth of history is always obfuscated to some extent. He writes that "such texts expose the fictionality of history itself. These texts deny the possibility of a clearly sustainable distinction between history and fiction, by highlighting the fact that we can only ever know

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I know these to be photographs of Ondaatje from having seen various photographs of him in articles, books and on television interviews.

history through various forms of representation or narrative" (132). In this statement, Conner strengthens the notion that the power lies with the writer as the 'reality' of the past can only be accessed through text. Within history, Ondaatje shows us that there are no set calculations. There are just multiple layers of interwoven events, and from all of these random events, Ondaatje chooses a few, and creates some of his own to weave into the mixture. Hence, the reader experiences Chaos as levels of non-linear happenstance intertwine. However, the text remains a device for ordering chaotic episodes, despite the non-linear nature of their sequence.

In The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, Ondaatje capitalizes on our familiarity with the historic folk hero, Billy the Kid, in creating his own myth about the famous outlaw. We defy Ondaatje's own proclamation of editorship by recognizing that, in Ondaatje's novels, as Winfried Siemerling suggests, "the underlying historical model both offers a minimal historical guidance or factual temptation, *and* aids imaginative freedom by its 'unofficial', off-centre quality" (109). Ondaatje creates his own Billy the Kid based upon the historical persona known as William Bonney, and the historical and mythological events which are believed to have made up his life. Historical basis is always in question as Ondaatje seems much more interested in myth creation than in history. Myth creation empowers Ondaatje to create his own characteristics for Billy, and to exaggerate or downplay facets of Billy's historical persona. His story is a historically-based conjecture, or a blend of history, myth and fiction. In other words, although much more fiction than history, his work is a combination of both.

In Billy the Kid, there are several levels of Chaos. One is a Chaos of representation in which the traditional structural expectations of history are challenged; another is the chaos contained in the erratic and non-causal behaviour and thought patterns which Ondaatje creates for Billy. As Dennis Lee points out, "Ondaatje has completely invented many incidents (those with the Chisums, for instance), and he has assigned Billy meditations on nature and violence which are not even conjectural biography" (15). In one example of these meditations, Ondaatje creates a moment of introspection for Billy during one of his peaceful times: "I am here with the range for everything / corpuscle muscle hair / hands that need the rub of metal / those senses that / that want to crash things with an axe / that listen to deep buried veins in our palms" (*BTK* 72). This bizarre thought pattern comes shortly after a night of drinking and vomiting at Chisum's ranch. Because of our awareness of Billy's preoccupation with violence, the thought is typical for him, despite the fact that it comes during a peaceful time. It is a cold and descriptive meditation reaffirming his volatile personality and camera-like perception. These sudden and erratic thoughts usually indicate bifurcation points in the action. We can tell by this thought that it will not be long before he will need to kill again with his hands "that need the rub of metal."

Ondaatje captures the erratic and sometimes chaotic mood of his subject matter with his writing style, always moving from perspective to perspective as well as from media to media, using poems, interviews, newspaper articles, photographs and even comic books to support his story. In addition, many of his episodes begin and end very abruptly, and Ondaatje is always an imposing presence within the story. Of this presence, Smaro Kamboureli writes that "as

reader and writer, Ondaatje resides inside the referential system of the documents he employs. Billy the Kid is a collection, an accumulation of sources, including the textuality Ondaatje has woven in his own game with the reader" (186). His presence inside the referential system is not only that of an editor, but also that of the characters themselves as he creates intimations and thoughts for them, poems for Billy and words within 'historical' interviews. This game is the game of historical representation. Our discussion of Ondaatje's structural and historical abandon brings us back to the image of the empty frame. Smaro Kamboureli views the image as symbolic of how Ondaatje "plays with and against history" (185). Ondaatje decides what he will create as a mental image to fill in the void, and the intimations which he assigns to Billy are evidence of this.

Billy the Kid is a book about the chaos in Billy's mind and a description of how he copes with this chaos. Billy thinks to himself, as he rests at the Chisums' house, "There is nothing in my hands / though every move I would make / getting up slowly walking / on the periphery of black / to where weapons are / is planned by my eye" (75). This scene is typical of Billy's times of 'rest.' Even in moments of peace and quiet, Billy always reverts to thoughts of violence. Though this return to violence is a pattern, the returns to the pattern are not consistent, nor are they predictable in frequency. The unpredictable returns to his thoughts of violence are a strange attractor in Billy's thought pattern. Within his mental volatility and erratic thoughts, this is the hidden pattern. The pattern is unpredictable, as is any position to which the double pendulum will return, but it will return so long as the system continues.

Of the chaos contained in history and myth, George Elliott Clarke writes:

"myth is also characterized by ambiguity and amorality. It resists definition even as it defines . . . Its clarity is obfuscation and its obfuscation, clarity" (18-19).

This account of myth is similar to what we see revealed within the mind of Billy. Also, although Clarke is not referring exclusively to Billy the Kid, this quotation captures the dynamics of unpredictability and amorality which may affect the reader.

Related to this idea of history becoming a process rather than a static phenomenon is the idea of challenging the traditional causal and linear nature of narrative history. This point ties into Dean Wilcox's articulation of the differences between traditional and chaotic literature; the former is a "system governed by a predetermined dramatic structure," and the latter "follows an external pattern that exists independently of the work" (702). Once we begin to understand the unpredictable and non-linear elements of Ondaatje's fiction, we can begin to see these theoretical links between historiographic metafiction and literary Chaos theory. According to N. Katherine Hayles, "the science of chaos is like other postmodern theories in its recognition that unpredictability in complex systems is inevitable, because one can never specify the initial conditions accurately enough to prevent it" (11). The lack of apparent causal relationships between episodes in Billy the Kid represents one of its very few consistencies. Structural and causal inconsistencies are paradoxically consistent in this book.

At one point, Billy tells us a story about the murder of a man named Tunstall. A man named Hill shot him through the head with a rifle and then the "savages turned the murder of the defenceless man into an orgy" (*BTK* 54); they killed his horse and laid the two of them out side by side "So murdered man and

dead horse suggested they had crawled into bed and gone to sleep together" (54). Billy the Kid recounts this gruesome murder, and immediately afterward, we come across one of Billy's poems:

To be near flowers in the rain
 all that pollen stink buds
 bloated split
 leaves their juices
 bursting the white drop of spend
 out into the air at you
 the smell of things dying flamboyant
 smell stuffing up your nose
 and up like wet cotton in the brain
 can hardly breathe nothing
 nothing thick sugar death (55)

We can see the sheer unpredictability in the emotional thought patterns of Ondaatje's version of Billy. For Billy, even a poem about flowers is a place to shatter traditional poetic expectations. There is little we can rely on in Billy the Kid other than the consistent inconsistency and a chaotic lack of causal relationships, both emotionally and in plot. It is surprising enough to juxtapose a horrific scene such as Tunstall's murder with intimations on a Texas flower. Perhaps the more shocking effect stems from the peaceful and comical image of man and horse sleeping together mixed in with the story of the murder that Billy has witnessed. Equally shocking is the violent death imagery of the flower. These types of emotionless but visceral reflections become Billy's trademark.

This episode is an example of Billy's erratic and chaotic mind which seems to possess no detectable order--just paradoxical episodes linked together. The chaos of Billy's mind is symbolized by such episodes as the murder/sleep paradox in the story of Tunstall and his horse as well as in the violence/peace paradox contained within his poem about the flowers. Billy is consistently as indifferent towards beauty as he is towards murder and other forms of brutality. As a result, his methods of connecting or relating seem extremely illogical and strange. Although chaotic, his thought patterns are understandable when we remember one of the strongest attractors to which his mental process returns--violence.

Eventually, we may get used to these abnormal thought patterns and associations through repeated exposure to them. Because of this familiarization, we adopt them as part of a disorderly order that Felicia Campbell refers to when she writes that, in Chaos theory, we "see memory as the process of *iteration* in which events are continually reabsorbed or enfolded, only to return altered, yet the same, part of the flowing wholeness" (5). Perhaps the process is the same for Billy himself as he is developing his own sensitivities in a world of war. Because of an overexposure to violence and the need to be ever vigilant and transient, Billy's world is relayed to the reader as a discontinuous narrative composed of various images pasted together and replayed in his mind. Because he is always on the move and the violence represented in the text is so sensational, Billy's world never seems to be a stable, understandable world.

CHAOS

Having discussed the postmodern treatment of history and narrative

structure in Billy the Kid, I will now focus more directly on how Chaos theory helps to make sense of this book. Ondaatje is fascinated by orderless situations, but his 'finding out of order' is not apparent, aside from the abrupt divisions he makes between episodes and the imposition of his own self-image in the photographs throughout the book. However, he does apply devices, though submerged, which provide some order within the seeming chaos, and Chaos theory reveals these devices. Dennis Lee, pre-dating the articulation of literary Chaos theory, writes that "Learning to hear Billy the Kid on its own wavelength is a matter of recognizing [episodes and personal tendencies] as they recur, and seeing how they slide into, collide with, and pass through one another to create the texture of lived time in a planet at civil war" (16). Lee's description of the chaos of Billy's world anticipates some of the dynamics of literary Chaos theory. Thirteen years later, Hayles and others would write about chaotic phenomena such as the self-organizing systems and strange attractors, which are so closely related to what Lee describes in his quotation.

Dennis Lee notes that "the presence of the linear story of the chase, drifting up piecemeal in the midst of the book's non-linear structure, creates a secondary formal logic in the book which *is* sequential" (34). The image of the crooked movement back and forth across the Canada-United States border symbolizes the coexistence of non-linear movement and the ever-present direction of the chase. Billy recalls that "Charlie Bowdre and I criss-crossed the Canadian border. Our horses stepped from country to country, across low rivers, through different colours of tree green" (20). The squiggly line inscribed in this trek is indicative of the type of line which results from emplotting bifurcation points within a chaotic

system. It is the image of a general course followed but with unpredictable variation such as that of the particles in a waterfall. Billy and Charlie actually end up back in Texas, implying a cyclical element in the midst of their common flight. Dean Wilcox writes that "chaos theory removes the demand to know what a production ultimately 'means' by redirecting the focus to the overall pattern created by the interaction of individual elements as they move through space and time" (709). This reiterates the concept of Chaos theory being a theory of evolution or process, rather than one of structure. In Billy's own life, we can find process among hidden patterns, but we cannot attach a definition to it.

With Billy the Kid, we become accustomed to abrupt juxtapositions of incongruent images, genres and mental states. Dean Wilcox writes that "while the tag 'chaos theory' may seem to indicate a search for total randomness, the study of various chaotic systems has revealed underlying patterns of an unpredictable order" (700). We have looked at some examples of these occurrences with the flower imagery and Billy's need to return to violence. Another episode showing a chaotic and unpredictable order is the section in which Billy remembers watching ants eating away the flesh of a dead man while Charlie Bowdre's wife prepares coffee for them. He thinks another poem:

Getting more difficult
 things all over crawling
 in the way
 gotta think through
 the wave of ants on him
 millions a moving vest up his neck

over his head and down his back
 leaving a bright skull white smirking
 to drop to ankles
 ribs blossoming out like springs
 the meat from his eyes (*BTK 40*)

Then there is a space, and the next lines on the page are: "Last night was dreamed
 into a bartender / with an axe I drove into glasses of gin lifted up to be tasted"
 (40). These passages are immediately followed by a meditation on the movement
 of stars which also turns into an image of a manic disposition. Again, there is no
 readily apparent causal relationship or logic in the thought patterns of Billy.
 Ondaatje intensifies the perspective of randomness by switching genres, subject
 matter and mood from episode to episode.

Eventually we are able to see a level of representation at which these
 devices, together with Billy's behaviours, develop into a chaotic system of
 consistencies within the book. The chaos somehow starts to make sense. Dennis
 Lee writes of Billy the Kid that:

The book juxtaposes poetry, fiction and documents in a form
 Ondaatje seems to have invented, deploying a variety of genres and
 orchestrating a wide range of voices. Rather than making it choppy
 or disjointed, however, this polyphony introduces an exuberant flow
 into the book's movement, which carries a reader with ease through
 the discontinuities of the plot. (15)

Though this observation long predates the conception of literary Chaos theory,
 there are again clear parallels to the performance of a chaotic self-organizing

system. In the literary Chaos model, each decision made by a character causes a "bifurcation, a fork in the paths trod, and more alteration of the patterns in the complex web in which they [the characters] and we exist, and in which the only constant is change" (Campbell 4). Each decision of Billy to kill, to look for his gun, or even to cross back over the border is an example of a bifurcation point. Although we never see his emotion being involved in any decision, we do see the results of the decisions and the directions in which these decisions cause the cycle to move.

Billy's life is a self-organizing system because, although its events are random, there are consistent behaviours or habits in his personality. We are able to understand the precarious and sometimes volatile balance in Billy's mental state through observation, though rarely through empathy. Billy's lack of emotion or remorse makes the scientific terminologies of Chaos theory even more appropriate when discussing Billy in relation to his surroundings.

The only places where we may gather clues to Billy's mental process are in his poems. In an ode to the hunter, he discusses the psychological dichotomy of men who are dedicated to the slaughter of the natural order: "They halt caterpillars / from path dangers / lift a drowning moth from a bowl / remarkable in peace / in the same way assassins / come to chaos neutral" (47). Billy's description of the psychological domain in which he also dwells is part of Ondaatje's plan, although it may appear coincidental. Billy is a violent assassin who is sometimes able to exist in a caring and peaceful manner, as we see when he is at peace with his friends, the Chisums. However, after he has remained peaceful for too long, Billy gets restless, and the return to violence and chaos

churns in his mind. Billy is obsessed with violence and finds balance only in extremes. If necessary, Billy will create chaos out of peace so that he may cope with the imbalance of peace through violence and obliteration, much as he will return to darkness and quiet after violence. Extremes are an addiction to him. Charles Taylor makes an observation about human nature which relates to this ongoing return to quiet from chaos "in the same way assassins come to chaos neutral" (*BTK* 47). He writes that "We have lost contact with ourselves, and our own natural being, and are driven by an imperative of domination that condemns us to ceaseless battle against nature both within and around us" (94). Billy exemplifies this human condition which describes the raw instinct of survival. Amoral like an animal, he will kill without a second thought rather than risk being killed due to not striking first.

Billy's ability to snap in and out of extreme behaviours is an excellent example of what Chaos theory describes as "the butterfly effect." N. Katherine Hayles describes this chaotic device: "the awareness that small fluctuations can lead to large-scale changes is a prominent feature of the science of chaos" (15). This dynamic is evident in the episode when Billy is relaxing while hiding out in a barn, seeming to enjoy his peace and quiet - or at least recognizing it. He thinks to himself: "When I walked I avoided the cobwebs who had places to grow to, who had stories to finish. The flies caught in those acrobat nets were the only murder I saw" (17). Moments later, he sees some rats kill a chipmunk and this small event is enough to cause a bifurcation point at which Billy turns immediately back into killer: "[I] filled my gun and fired again and again into their slow wheel across the room at each boomm, and reloaded and fired again and again till I went

through the whole bag of bullet supplies" (*BTK* 18); he continues, "Till my hand was black and the gun was hot and no other animal of any kind remained in that room but for the boy in the blue shirt" (18). We see here how, by referring to himself in the third person, Billy is able to disassociate his self from the killing machine that he has become. We also recognize Ondaatje's use of synecdoche in making Billy's hand smoking black as if his hand and gun are one and the same. The gun is the direct identifier of Billy, and its destructive power is the mechanical symbol of Billy's observable personality, but within Billy's chaotic system, he is always able to return to a state of self-control to avoid self-destruction.

A more severe example of the butterfly effect is the story about Livingstone, the dog breeder in *Billy the Kid*, who is able to create his own chaotic system. He creates monstrosities by making small breeding variations in his spaniels into large ones. The dogs are "bred and re-bred with their brothers and sisters and mothers and uncles and nephews" (60). Livingstone fences the dogs in so that they can only breed with the one gene pool of the two original dogs. The only variation on this breeding system is that he releases the most "sane-looking" (61) dogs, so that only the unhealthy can reproduce. Hence, although the upshot of the experiment is Chaos, there are underlying consistencies within the chaotic system. After all, according to Ondaatje, it is a "secret system and he [Livingstone] didn't want anyone looking in" (61). Although Livingstone's variations initially have very small consequences, the inbreeding causes a butterfly effect which leads to the final result--ultimate chaos and the death of Livingstone by his own system. The final products inside his fence are "heaps of bone and

hair and sexual organs and bulging eyes and minds which were chaotic half out of hunger out of liquor out of their minds being pressed out of shape by the new freakish bones that grew into their skulls" (62). The dogs have grown too "blood hungry" (62) and every dog has to be destroyed, which is a typical culmination to a chaotic system spinning out of control.

In Billy's system, there are fleeting moments of control which save him, for a time, from being swallowed by the chaos. These moments of control for Billy come while he is involved with the less aggressive of his two arts--his intimations, which Ondaatje represents as his poems. As we have seen, Billy seems more articulate and shows some tameness or control in these poems, so this is another counter-balance to the extreme violence in the chaos. However, these moments of thought are also used by Ondaatje to disrupt the continuity of genre. It seems that whenever Billy shows some self control, Ondaatje likes to assert his control as well. At one point Billy is "outside the door / mind clean, the heat / floating his brain in fantasy / I am here on the edge of sun / that would ignite me" (74). Here Billy intimates that his brain is afloat in fantasy, yet he seems to be anticipating the next bifurcation into violence, although he doesn't state what will trigger it. We see the dichotomy within his poems as he writes in a calm and controlled manner, while the words and images still contain the mood of volatility and danger. Through both genre and mood, Ondaatje demonstrates how he is able to manipulate form and content at the same time, and the bifurcations of his form are just as unpredictable as the bifurcations in Billy's mind.

Alice Van Wart writes that "the implication is that form itself offers a momentary control. In the 'left-handed poems,' form controls the energy which in

Billy's life is always threatening to erupt into violence" (Van Wart 14). In another one of his poems, Billy thinks about trains:

The beautiful machines pivoting on themselves
 sealing and fusing to others
 and men throwing levers like coins at them
 And there is there the same stress as with stars,
 the one altered move that will make them maniac. (41)

Here, within the deeper order of his mind, Billy is describing a delicate chaotic balance between order and disorder. He cannot observe the trains or allude to the stars without incorporating the idea of some an unknown stimulus which will "make them manic."

Billy often thinks deeply about machines and systems which are figurative representations of his own personal tendencies. As we see in his description of the trains, once in a while it is necessary for Billy himself to destroy whatever order there is surrounding him. His moments of peace and machine references, along with his erratic moments of violence, are strange attractors which, as Hayles writes, are "any points in a system's cycle that seem to attract the system to it" (8). His poems, then, are new uncoverings of a 'strange' design or an obfuscated symmetry or consistency. They become descriptions of Billy's own life and behaviour, associating him directly with dangerous and powerful machinery such as trains and guns. At other times they align him with the sun's light and formations of stars.

As an enemy to Billy, Pat Garrett symbolizes the antithesis of Chaos; he is dedicated to the sober pursuit of law enforcement and order. Garrett personifies

the "excessively modernist responses to life--the belief that the world is chaotic and that we'd better impose some order, some superstructure, on it" (Cooley 232). It is evident that the penchant to impose order resurfaces with and is personified by the character of Pat Garrett. He represents the modernist views which have always sought to define dynamics which defy definition. Chaos is what Garrett is trying to eradicate and it is represented by Billy who perpetuates Chaos and who defies definition. As we see, there is no sense of traditional order to be found, much less upheld, in the world of Billy the Kid. The only consistency is the disorderly order of Chaos theory, an order of continual process rather than form and parameter. Nell Waldman writes of Billy the Kid that "The tale is discursive, even disjointed, though it gradually focuses into an unconventional pattern in the same way that the mosaic pieces of a kaleidoscope eventually assume a discernable pattern" (378). Garrett's type of clear order will not dominate in the violent world in this book. What dominates is the barely discernable order of which Billy's mind is capable. Garrett, thinking he has brought an end to Billy's chaotic life, proclaims "Your last good bed Billy . . . pick your position" (79). While imprisoned, Billy refers to Pat Garrett very casually in a news interview: "He's got senile. He's getting a lot of money for cleaning the area up--of us supposedly" (84). Billy knows that it is not Pat Garrett or his imposition of order that is winning. Garrett may be expecting that Billy will be sleeping on prison beds for the rest of his life. However, Billy's system of disorder prevails and he escapes custody again, showing how Chaos cannot be contained despite the illusion of control. Garrett's rules and his attempts to contain or control Chaos only serve to perpetuate it by giving chase to it and challenging it.

MACHINE IMAGERY AS ORGANIZER

I now discuss the use of machine imagery as an organizing and identifying trope in Billy the Kid. As we have seen throughout this chapter, there are hidden orders within the book, many of which are the behavioral cycles of Billy himself. Many of Billy's behaviours are metonymically represented by mechanical allusions. Furthermore, mechanical images such as the camera and the gun have very close synecdochal relationships with Billy. George Elliott Clarke writes that "The word *trigger*, applied to rifle and camera, reflects a correspondence which does not stop at the purely mechanical. The image seized by the camera is doubly violent and both violences reinforce the same contrast: the contrast between the photographed moment and all others"(6). This statement captures two levels of violence within Billy the Kid: the violence of death and the gun, and the violence of representation. The violence of the gun is self-explanatory. The photographs which Ondaatje uses in this book are not what they seem, but his own impositions on our visual image of history.

The book not only contains machine images that symbolize the behaviours of its characters, but it also portrays Billy as a machine of death. In his article "Ondaatje's Mechanical Boy," T.D. MacLulich writes that "In effect, Billy has striven to establish a rigid, machine-like control over his inner self, so that he will not be affected by what he perceives as the arbitrary violence of the external world" (109). As mentioned in the previous section, Billy seems unable to reflect with emotion. He seems only able to observe or recall images of events rather than accumulating wisdom, grace or insight from these events. This ongoing pattern of Billy's behaviour is symbolized by the metonymic connections Ondaatje

draws between him and the camera. In addition, Billy's destructive identity is symbolized by the synecdochal relationship created between him and his gun. "In The Collected Works, Ondaatje has transformed Billy from a legendary Western gunfighter into a representative modern figure--an emotionless automation" (MacLulich 117). Billy is the symbol of the postmodern world now, fitting into the new mechanized world despite his existence more than one hundred and twenty years ago. He also embodies Chaos and exemplifies its characteristics through his violence and his undefinable lifestyle. Billy is able to walk away, unaffected, after his murders and conflicts. He walks away casually by adapting "the moral of newspapers or gun" (11). His lack of concern or emotion indicates his amoral and seemingly mechanized state. It appears that, in the world which evolves around Billy, adopting the morals of a machine is the only way for him to survive as long as he does.

Billy himself shows some awareness of the fact that he uses mechanization to minimize the emotional consequences of his murders. In a sense, he has evolved into a self-mechanized and unfeeling entity: "I can watch the stomach of clocks / shift their wheels and pins into each other / and emerge living, for hours" (11). Billy has been hardened by exposure to violence, and turned into an amoral killing machine. Billy's left hand is almost inseparable from his gun. Each is always associated with the other, and sometimes the two are blurred together: "he never used his left hand for anything except of course to shoot" (43). Even while he was not actively killing, "He said he did finger exercises subconsciously, on the average 12 hours a day ... From then on I noticed his left hand churning within itself, each finger circling alternately like a train wheel. Curling into balls,

pouring like waves across the table cloth" (43). The cyclical tendency to return to violence is in his blood even while he is at peace. This is symbolized by the circular imagery which is used to describe his trigger practice.

Other circle imagery such as Billy's firing into the "slow wheel" of drunken rats is reminiscent of the trains in his earlier poem. These trains are in a precarious state of balance or organization. Perceived by Billy as "beautiful machines" pivoting on themselves, the trains are a metonymic symbol of Billy's simultaneously erratic and cyclical behaviour. The cyclical image of circular motion is also invoked in the images of wheels as he fires into the rats and of the circular motion of his finger as he 'practices' with his trigger-finger at the table. The wheels and other mechanical circle images are all strange attractors. They symbolize the behavioral consistencies in Billy to which the story always returns--the moments of unpredictable shifts, or those peaceful moments that quickly erupt into violence. These ongoing wheel-like tendencies combine to represent Billy's own chaotic self-organizing system. According to David Porush, a self-organizing system is a "set of phenomena that represents the spontaneous emergence of order out of disorder" (56). Ondaatje's story of Billy contains behavioural patterns, but it contains no structural or predictable pattern for Billy's conflicting behaviours.

Another use of mechanical imagery, which is not necessarily an image of impending bifurcation, is the image of Billy portrayed as a camera. This machine image breaks away from the category of the other machine images in that it enhances the idea of Billy's unemotional perspective of the world which surrounds him. One direct comparison is when he is "watching the white landscape in its

frame," seeing "flies in their black path / like inverted stars" (74) and when he is "looking out into pitch white / sky and grass overdeveloped into meaninglessness" (74). Billy seems to perceive the world around him as an inconsequential and inert white mass "overdeveloped into meaninglessness." The ability to see the whole picture is not what Billy symbolizes. Billy does not seem to comprehend his place as an organism in a living world in which he is fallible. He has mechanized himself. As Dennis Lee observes:

This internal division [between organic human status and status as amoral machine]--which is not a personal quirk, but a manifestation of world's whole schizophrenia--accounts for an odd detail in the scene where he is outside at the Chisum's, retching "The machinery in me that organizes my throwing up" begins to function; "Put my fingers into the mushrooms of my throat and up it comes again and flies out like a pack of miniature canaries" (70). Billy finds the familiar separation--into 'mushrooms' and 'canaries,' on the one hand, and 'machinery' on the other--inside himself; it is the organic, of course, which must be expelled. (22)

Billy doesn't like to acknowledge his own organic state. However, once in a while it exerts itself within him when he suffers from intense pain. By the end of Billy's life, however, he shows that he is able to deny the organic part of his self-awareness.

Billy's denial of his own organic state is where the machine becomes the synecdochal identifying trope. In his death, Billy is able to prove that he can remain mechanized as he is destroyed by a gun, the machine with which he

exacted his destruction upon his world. In other words, he becomes the destroyed rather than the destroyer. In the moments before his death, his synecdochal connection is no longer with the gun. The identifying mechanical image is now the camera exclusively. Dennis Lee writes that "The only way to survive . . . has been to convert himself into a living trigger-finger, which obeys its own reason for being at all times and never reflects" (23). Although he cannot 'convert' himself in his final battle, the gun is the machine which would end the chaotic system which Billy used it to create.

In his final conflict with Garrett, Billy converts himself into a living camera rather than a living gun since he has no gun with him. His death experience is mechanized as his own perceptions become "lovely perfect sun balls / breaking at each other click / click click click" (95). His angle of perception changes as his camera-eye lies on its back and Garrett stands above him ready to finish him off. "Garrett's jaw and stomach" (95) are the impersonal and typically unemotional perceptions of his camera-eye. He "clicks" away his final breath as he is dying. The gun has delivered him to his mechanized death as a camera. While he lies dying, Billy's camera perception symbolizes how even his own death is an empty and unemotional event for him. There are no words or groans of pain as Ondaatje depicts his shooting. Billy is represented only by the clicking noises of a camera.

Appropriately, as Ondaatje invokes the image of William Bonney's decayed skeleton, there is very little of Billy's body contained in the image. Instead, Billy is posthumously represented by those things which he had spent most of his life eluding--cuffs and bullets. Ondaatje writes about what is left of Billy: "There'd be

the buck teeth. Perhaps Garrett's bullet no longer in thick wet flesh would roll in the skull like a marble . . . and a pair of hand-cuffs holding ridiculously the fine ankle bones. (Even though dead they buried him in leg irons). There would be the silver from the toe of each boot" (97). In death, Billy the Kid remains what he was in life—a symbol of crime and death, with two bits of silver representing his boots that could never stay still for very long. He was always using them to flee the cuffs and bullets of the law. The bullet that would roll inside his skull symbolizes the violence which was always inside his head in life. This is the end of Billy's Chaos and Garrett's imposition of order has finally prevailed. However, like other Chaotic systems, one never knows where the system might turn, so Garrett places cuffs on Billy's ankles even in death to make sure he has brought his order to Billy.

CHAPTER III

Order from Chaos in *Coming Through Slaughter* - Magnets, Fans and Cornets

In this chapter, I discuss Coming Through Slaughter and how, as in Billy the Kid, Ondaatje defies traditional constructions of history, simultaneously creating and dismantling the life of Buddy Bolden. In his chaotic style of retelling history, Ondaatje tells his version of the story of an American musical hero who is much less famous than Billy the Kid. Again, he assigns voices to those who have not been heard through traditional or 'official' history. The Chaos of history allows these different levels of discourse to be heard, since they are levels of a complex system. The phenomenon of disordered or multi-levelled unity found in complex systems is symbolized in Slaughter by Ondaatje's dolphin sonographs at the beginning of the book. He writes in the caption that "The middle sonograph shows a dolphin making two kinds of signals simultaneously. The vertical stripes are echolocation clicks and the dark mountain-like bumps are the signature whistles. No one knows how a dolphin makes both whistles and echolocation clicks simultaneously" (*CTS* introduction). This phenomenon also symbolizes the multi-layered and seemingly unordered nature of Ondaatje's own narrative structure. In this chapter, I examine these unordered characteristics using the dynamics of Chaos theory. Then I explain the associations which Ondaatje creates between Buddy Bolden and machines, using them as his strange attractor, connecting various elements of his wandering system to create some sense of continuity. Finally, I describe how Ondaatje draws a metonymic, and ultimately

synecdochal, connection between the horn and Buddy, as Buddy *becomes* the instrument through which he gains his deliverance into aphasia, and away from his manic compulsion to play.

HISTORY

As is the case in Billy the Kid, Ondaatje upsets history in writing about the erratic behaviour of Bolden. Ondaatje invites the reader to ponder not only the historical factuality of the events in his rewriting of history, but also their positions in relation to one another. Ondaatje undermines the received historical record by rewriting it and uncovering new patterns for it. Robert Kroetsch writes that "uncovering, for Ondaatje, involves the acceptance of the discontinuity of form. The continuity asserted by history is beyond, lies beyond the truth of fiction" (*LTOW* 112). Ondaatje himself refers to his manipulation of history in the 'Credits' section of Coming Through Slaughter: "While I have used real names and characters and historical situations I have also used more personal pieces of friends and fathers. There have been some date changes, some characters brought together, and some facts have been expanded or polished to suit the *truth of fiction*" (*CTS* notes [emphasis added]). Ondaatje's reference to "the truth of fiction" puts what we recognize as history into perspective as another narrative creation. Ondaatje's declaration comes at the end of the book, and it adds to the feeling of uncertainty by alluding to the lack of closure that his myth-making creates. The statement implies that we have not been reading Bolden's history at all, right after we may feel some type of closure. This reminds us of Hutcheon's observation that history is "a process, not a product. It is a lived experience for

both reader and writer" (*TCP* 86). Ondaatje's writings, therefore, allow us to see how elusive truth is within history.

In the last chapter, I discussed how Ondaatje enters the world of Billy the Kid by injecting a picture of his young self in a cowboy costume into Billy's empty frame. There is a similar synthesis between Ondaatje and Bolden as Ondaatje's authorial voice "enters Bolden's New Orleans to interview those who had known the musician and to photograph the places where he had been. Here, the processes of recording and narrating history become part of the text itself" (Hutcheon, *TCP* 86). In Slaughter, we read a story which is part history and part autobiography as Ondaatje blends his own reflections and thoughts with those of Bolden to fill in a framework created by photographs and brief interviews. The blending of fiction, history and autobiography reinforces the notion that there is no such thing as 'pure' history; there will always be part of the author in any biography or history. Hence, everything is fiction to a degree, and history becomes less causal, less linear, and more chaotic.

As George Elliott Clarke points out, Ondaatje's "mythicizing of Bolden is appropriate for he is an inveterate myth-maker, who employs the same techniques and practices the same philosophy as Ondaatje [while editing *The Cricket*]" (10). Bolden, like Ondaatje, includes the unedited words of real people in his stories to add a sense of authenticity to their content. Ondaatje's creation of the *Cricket* as part of Bolden's creativity actually mimics Ondaatje's own authorial technique of writing: "It [*The Cricket*] respected stray facts, manic theories, and well-told lies . . . Bolden took all the thick facts and dropped them into his pail of sub-history" (*CTS* 24). As he describes *The Cricket*, Ondaatje differentiates between what

Bolden writes and what history is with the word 'sub-history.' This word is appropriate for describing the styles of both Ondaatje and Bolden as it invokes the chaotic notion of a deeper order, implying a narrative level which lies beneath 'official' history. This is what Ondaatje represents with his writing. He represents the narrative voices which underlie glossy mythical history of Buddy Bolden. It describes a chaotic history which is much more organic than it is fact-based or causal because he goes into the minds and emotions of his characters which unfold in various directions but cannot be proven or denied. On the level of plot, the word infers that Bolden's writing is only part history because *The Cricket* is a tabloid. Ironically, it is Ondaatje's own manipulation of history which creates Bolden's tabloid, so Ondaatje's rewriting of history remains true to his chaotic style.

Ondaatje invites his readers to feel as though they are learning about Bolden, but he simultaneously defies conventional notions of both order and truth. Ondaatje liberally violates chronology and moves, unannounced, back and forth through time without respecting the temporal boundaries between thoughts or episodes. Often a shift in chronology cannot be detected until two or three lines into the new time frame. This is a device Ondaatje uses often and, as a result, the reader may feel the close connections between the written past and the present. In one passage, Ondaatje mixes a brief historical testimony of a jazz hero named Keppard directly into the current haze of Buddy Bolden's alcoholic hallucination. The vignette seems to be told by some disembodied recollective voice as it is in quotations and no speaker is identified: "When Keppard was on tour with the Creole Band, the patrons in the front rows of the theatres always got up after the

first number and moved back.' [Bolden] found himself on the Brewitt's lawn. She opened the door. For a moment he looked right through her" (45). This type of jumping back and forth in time is consistent with the chaotic perspective and orderless lifestyle of Buddy Bolden.

Linda Hutcheon writes that "Ondaatje's work . . . is both historical and performative. It indeed does seek to represent a reality outside literature, and one of the major connections between life and art is the performing narrator, whose act of searching and ordering forms part of the narrative itself" (*TCP* 83). This postmodern performance is part of what makes his work so appropriate for viewing through the lens of Chaos theory, since the reader quickly realizes that this journey through time defies time itself. Ondaatje's authorial intrusions bring us from Bolden's world back into the present. The effect is immediate as Ondaatje suddenly speaks directly to us in the present, and these incidents are also completely unpredictable. Throughout the book, there is no feeling of continuity of time, or of causal relationships or links between episodes.

Another effect of Ondaatje's authorial intrusions is that he shows his close relationship with Bolden through the narrative voice. Ondaatje writes that ". . . when he went mad he was the same age as I am now . . . The photograph moves and becomes a mirror. When I read he stood in front of mirrors and attacked himself, there was a shock of memory. For I had done that" (133). Not only are we pushed into the present here, but the statement also invites us to realize that we may be reading something which is part autobiography. However, we also have to remember that Ondaatje's "I" is just as much a construction as is his depiction of Bolden. Noting this, we reveal another deeper order within Ondaatje's own

chaotic writing system at the narrative level. The deeper order introduced here is that Ondaatje reveals that there is direct conversation from his own voice rather than only between his characters.

Ondaatje's narrative voice addresses the spirit of Buddy Bolden directly, stating that "There was the climax of the parade and then you removed yourself from the 20th century game of fame, the rest of your life a desert of facts" (133). Here, we see that there is no distance between Ondaatje and his subject, as he now seems to converse directly with Bolden. Sam Solecki writes of Ondaatje's contradictory relationship with Buddy Bolden, that "The deliberate merging of past and present, while preserving an ostensible historical distance, is his means of freeing his vision from time and history in order to ground it more definitely in psychology and myth" (255). This quotation shows the complexity in Ondaatje's relationship with his character—his ability to remain separate from Bolden while being so intimate with him. The authorial intrusions cause a level of bifurcation within Ondaatje's chaotic narrative system, and they recur throughout Slaughter adding another dimension to the book itself. Sudden changes of voice fit in with Chaos theory, in which there need be no describable process, but rather a recognition of changing moods which are caused by the non-linear system.

Ondaatje not only neglects history but is actually an anti-historian. He takes control of the historical process by creating history while destroying it, and this is the same process through which he decides upon the 'truth of fiction.' Critic Nell Waldman points out another anti-historical tendency of Ondaatje: his casual scattering of anachronism throughout the text of Slaughter. She notes that there are "strange flaws in the narrative . . . there are careless anachronisms: cars,

buses, phones in places and a time where these would be unlikely or impossible, a reference to Isadora Duncan's death" (389). These historical misrepresentations only add to the continually disjointed nature of the book, and show how one can manipulate historical perceptions with text. It also causes us to realize how history is a process of exclusion and emphasis, and is therefore almost inseparable from fiction.

Comparing Ondaatje's treatment of history and his fictional style to the music of jazz, Linda Hutcheon cites Roland Barthes:

“When one places fragments in succession, is no organization possible? Yes, the fragment is like the musical idea of the song cycle: each piece is self-sufficient, but it is never more than the interstice of its neighbours.” Billy is more overtly a poetic song cycle, Slaughter (in which unwritten and unrecorded music lives on ironically in Ondaatje's printed fragments) is also appropriately structured in this musical way. (TCP 84)

We see here how critics like Hutcheon and Roland Barthes were recognizing elements of Chaos theory before the application and the language of literary Chaos theory were developed. This is because there are characteristics within the jazz music of Bolden's day which are very similar to some of the dynamics which we now recognize as characteristics of a chaotic system. As H. Wiley Hitchcock writes in Music in the United States:

The ensemble style, as heard typically in the first chorus and the last “rideout” chorus(es) of a piece, was a roughly contrapuntal music with the powerful cornet projecting the main melodic voice . . .

Between the first and last choruses, individual musicians would play one or more improvisatory solo choruses in succession. (193)

We see here a description of a musical piece performed by a typical early twentieth century jazz combo from New Orleans. We can not only see Bolden's place within his combo as the "powerful cornet," but also understand how the typical jazz piece opens and closes in a contrapuntal style. Hence these first and last choruses, which adhere more to the melody of the original piece, would serve as the strange attractors which bring the chaotic system back to order after having broken off into different improvised solo choruses, as Bolden so often would do. The end of the opening chorus, then, would serve typically as the bifurcation point at which the chaotic, random play would commence. The connection between the musical performances of jazz and Ondaatje's own performance as historian is that, similar to Bolden or other creole cornet players, Ondaatje returns to the 'official' history, but he also improvises considerably between returns to this state of historical purity.

CHAOS

Having discussed Ondaatje's postmodern treatment of history, I will now discuss, more specifically, the application of Chaos theory to Slaughter. As mentioned previously, many facets of postmodern performance fit easily into the criteria of Chaos theory. Winfried Siemerling, before the advent of Chaos theory, describes Ondaatje's work in terms that we now see as being consistent with Chaos theory. He writes "Ondaatje's refusal of any predetermined path laid out by genre, rhythm, or metre [or chronology]--which usually allow the writer to travel

more easily along predictable lines--parallels his protagonist's revolt against predictability in Coming Through Slaughter" (108). Ondaatje's unique writing style may cause critics to think in such ways as to prefigure the language of Chaos as literary criticism. This is an important realization when recognizing the applicability of Chaos theory to Ondaatje's work.

Buddy Bolden constantly moves outside of order in both music and life, embracing the vitality of chaos as the quick of his musical life. John Kertzer, in "The Blurred Photo," makes reference to the protean style of Ondaatje's writing in a description remarkably close to what would later be referred to as self-organizing systems and strange attractors. He writes:

Ondaatje works his way, fit by fit, around the vicious circle of Bolden's sensibility. He presents a series of illuminating fragments which, while never entirely chaotic, are an apt expression of Bolden's temperament. They are organized, however, by continual reference and cross-reference, by repetition and analogy, by recurring images which grow in density and meaning, and by time shifts which eventually fall into place within the whole chronology. (299)

This description of what happens within the pages of Ondaatje's text is indicative of the order within disorder to which proponents of Chaos theory so often refer. The strange attractor in the book to which the system most often returns is Bolden's music and his identification with the cornet. However, there exist strange attractors within the disorderly order of his music as well. Though the patterns of his music are never predictable, there is a consistent return to his quest

for those paradoxical "right accidental notes" (CTS 99). V.M. Verhoeven states that Bolden has "desperately tried to avoid freezing his music into the kind of ordered art that would belie the emotions that feed it" (190). Perhaps this is why Bolden never recorded his music, because it would freeze musical moments and make them easily repeated and linear. In Slaughter, there is a moment where Bolden remembers listening to composer John Robichaux play his waltzes, which were so ordered and predictable. The predictability of this music drove Bolden to the point where "for the first time [he] appreciated the possibilities of a mind moving ahead of the instruments in time" (CTS 93). Bolden refused to follow the types of sheet music that Robichaux wrote and followed. Bolden "loathed everything he stood for . . . He put his emotions into patterns which a listening crowd had to follow" (CTS 93). To Bolden, Robichaux's style was a form of musical dictatorship, an imprisonment or domination of music and the listener.

Buddy's music is dominated by a compulsion to find what is outside order. Alice Van Wart notes of Bolden's musical compulsion that "to play this music, a music that never repeats itself, 'every note new and raw and chance', demands that the artist not stand still in his playing" (Van Wart 12). For Buddy, the movement is not only a musical journey but a physical one as well. As he moves outside of conventional musical limitations, he also moves towards the end of his own physical and emotional limitations. His musical form is dictated only by his emotional state or the moods within his anxiety-ridden compulsion to play. About his formative years learning jazz, Bolden states that "Galloway taught me not craft but to play a mood of sound" (95). Here we see the beginnings of the chaotic elements of Bolden's own musical style which stem from the creation of mood.

Dean Wilcox writes that "Chaos theory demands that the focus be on the system in which the elements take shape . . . as any reading of it must focus not on what it *means*, but on what mood it helps to create" (705). Bolden's music cannot be read or recorded like that of Robichaux, because Bolden's music is created from transitory mood, or from the emotions he perceives from the crowds. From the crowds' emotions, musical bifurcations result, causing an energy change in the crowd, affecting Bolden's music again, and so the cycle repeats itself--unpredictable, but a system nonetheless.

Though he eventually falls into the refuge of aphasia, Bolden seeks continual evolution while in the act of music-making and he abhors convention in life as much as he does in music. This resistance to order in Bolden's life is also demonstrated by his antithetical relationship with Webb, a friend and detective who is always trying to piece Bolden's life together into some type of order. Just as Pat Garrett tries to contain Billy's chaos, so Webb continually tries to contain Bolden's. When Bolden disappears, Webb pursues him patiently and relentlessly: "Webb circled, trying to understand not where Buddy was but what he was doing, . . . taking almost two years, entering the character of Bolden through every voice he spoke to" (63). Webb is always interviewing Bolden's associates, trying to investigate Bolden so that he can put his life into some kind of order. As part of this ongoing task, Webb constantly pressures Bolden to play publicly again. In trying to bring order to Bolden's life and define who he is, Webb unwittingly forces Bolden back into chaos by pushing him back into his musical performances.

The paradox of Webb is that he thinks that Bolden is in a state of madness

while he is in flight from his musical world. When he finds Bolden, Webb brings him back to the music because that is what he perceives as Bolden's stability.

Bolden reflects on his flight: "I sped away happy and alone in a new town away from you, and now you produce a leash, curl the leather round and round your fist . . . and you pull me home" (89). Bolden is afraid to confront the compulsions of the music again, but Webb is going to take him home. About playing his music, Bolden confesses that: "All the time I hate what I'm doing and want the other. In a roomful of people I get frantic in their air and their shout . . . I'm scared Webb" (89). It is as though Bolden here is foreseeing what will happen in the Storyville parade, when the chaos of his music sends him into madness. Essentially, Webb's fight for what he views as Bolden's order perpetuates Bolden's chaos, returning him to the music again and again--back to the strange attractor of the cornet.

It is not at all surprising that Ondaatje would portray such a propensity for chaos in Bolden's psychology since the two of them are so closely linked in artistic style. Each of them follows an indeterminate pattern which is full of bifurcation points and abrupt tempo variations. Both artists achieve the stimulation of their audiences through the excitement of spontaneity and chance. Bolden, while playing, wants his audience "to be able to come in where they pleased and leave when they pleased and somehow hear the germs of the start and all the possible endings at whatever point of the music I had reached" (94). Ondaatje's writing style is almost conducive to a similar style of reading. Bolden's music frees them but, unlike Ondaatje, sometimes Bolden is overwhelmed by his audiences, and they tell him what to do, as the does girl fan in his final performance. Bolden describes her, powerfully, as "this hearer who can throw me in the direction and

the speed she wishes like an angry shadow" (130). This is the point where Bolden realizes the power his audience has over him, seeing it personified by a beautiful yet dangerously alluring form. In this episode, he sees the power that he usually wields over his audience relayed back to him and the power of her movement overwhelms him. As his music would hypnotise his audiences, her movement has hypnotized Bolden.

Although Ondaatje shares with Bolden the same means of freeing his audiences from convention, he maintains control of his art. Because Ondaatje's work is recorded, it is static and therefore cannot be changed or retracted. Steven Scobie, in his article "A Conversation with Michael Ondaatje," quotes Ondaatje as saying "you have to lead the audience into your own perpetual sense, [while] having a responsibility to lead them out again" (12). Ondaatje here describes the chaotic systems in his art form, as Bolden describes his music in relation to his audience. One thing we must remember, though, is that both of these perspectives are owned by Ondaatje himself. He recognizes that these artistic systems may be entered and left at any point since there is little or no causal linearity to them.

Not only is the structural element of Ondaatje's work chaotic, but so too is the psychological dimension of his characters. In his article "Making and Destroying: Michael Ondaatje's *Coming through Slaughter* and Extremist Art," Sam Solecki writes about Ondaatje's fascination with characters whose "continuance and value of life are repeatedly confronted with chaos, madness and suicide, and art with its negation, silence" (247). He further states that Slaughter is a "compelling study of the compulsively destructive nature of the creative impulse" (247). This paradox of the destruction inherent in Bolden's creativity is

an extreme characteristic of the coexistence of disorder and order in Chaos theory.

To write about Bolden, Ondaatje has chosen a style for his own art that reflects the style of Bolden's art. It may also be true that Ondaatje chose Bolden as a subject because he sees, in Bolden's life and art, the mirror of his own narrative style. This mirror effect creates another level of disorder, structurally, while paradoxically serving as a unifying symbol. Because of its multi-layered complexity, many critics have referred to Bolden's jazz music as a prevalent symbol of disorder in Slaughter, and have also referred to Ondaatje's writing as jazz. Wolfgang Hochbruck writes that "it is not difficult to see the reoccurring patterns of images as representing the themes of an actual jazz piece, the kind of music Bolden played and tried to grasp into his understanding ... Coming Through Slaughter takes on qualities of the 'jazz novel'" (458). We are able, from the viewpoint of Chaos theory, to understand this use of 'jazz' as a stylistic tool in Ondaatje's writing. Hochbruck cites John Gennari's article "Jazz Criticism," pointing out dynamics of the jazz motif which reflect the chaotic systems throughout this study: "Indeed, jazz's emphasis on the process of its own creation, the reciprocity of its means and its ends, epitomizes one of the dominant achievements of modernism. Jazz improvisation *is*, virtually, a state of 'continuous becoming', more authentically a processual art" (459). This description echoes the characteristics earlier attributed to jazz by Bolden. These descriptions of jazz are similar to the description of Chaos by Dean Wilcox, that it "does not yield law-like necessity but *reveals patterns* . . . Chaos is a science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being" (700). We can see how this relates to jazz, which follows a melodic pattern which is surrounded by

unpredictable instrumental variations. The instrumental variations are always following or surrounding the melody itself and underlying patterns are always detectable.

Once one recognizes jazz as a chaotic system, one gets a sense that it must be impossible to maintain that constant of innovation. A jazz musician must always play something or write something which contains new variations. It is not difficult to see where a love for such an art could drive one into a life like that of Bolden. Sam Solecki writes of the strain this places on Bolden that:

the inexplicable nature of his particular type of genius in which creativity depends to a great extent upon the artist's ability to give expression to the chaos within and outside the self. As I wrote earlier Bolden's mode of being and creating involves a complete "submission to chance" (Charles Simic's term), and his music seems to be an expression of whatever atmosphere he played in. (260)

However, I would add that his music is not only an expression of the atmosphere in which he plays, but also a cause of both the atmosphere around him as he plays, and the atmosphere he creates for himself every day. Bolden continually submits to chance, and is only still and peaceful when he is away from the world of his music and those involved with the music. Thomas P. Weissert writes of the chaotic system that "when [the system] gets to a bifurcation point, it randomly decides which branch to take. Once it chooses, its path is completely ordered until it reaches the next bifurcation. In this way, chaos is integrally embedded within a completely deterministic system" (238). The connections between this observation and Bolden's life and art are clear: he resides in two separate worlds

in which his activities are random while his volatile personality remains consistent. As the melody remains somewhat disguised by constant deviation in jazz, so Bolden's erratic behaviour remains strong beneath his constantly changing company and location. In other words, though both jazz and Buddy Bolden mask their consistencies well, there are consistencies to be found in both. These consistencies lie within all chaotic systems, which contain order that is deep, complex and often well hidden.

Coming through Slaughter pulls seemingly random or disorganized phenomena into a noticeable relation. Patterns that repeat across music or events and patterns of imagery resurface throughout the erratic plot structure. This multi-layered model of identifying consistencies within disorder encapsulates Ondaatje's style in Slaughter, just as it describes Bolden's life and the jazz he plays. Bolden's music, which is symbolic of his life, is described by his old friend Frank Lewis in Slaughter. Reading Lewis's description, we may see how parts of it might also describe Ondaatje's textual style:

But there was a discipline, it was just that we didn't understand. We thought he was formless, but I think now he was tormented by order, what was outside it. He tore apart the plot--see his music was immediately on top of his own life. Echoing. As if, when he was playing he was lost and hunting for the right accidental notes . . . He would be describing something 27 ways. There was pain and gentleness everything jammed into each number. (CTS 37)

The "discipline" which Lewis thought "was formless" is exactly what Chaos theory refers to as the deeper order or meaning, or the phenomenon of disorderly

order.

Bolden consistently proves himself to be a living manifestation of Chaos, a symbol of it, even after the music dies. He stays in his room and is viewed by the nurses as a mentally inert mute who never expresses himself to the outside world. Ondaatje lets us into his head to show us that Bolden is still spinning thoughts, including sexual fantasies, as the nurse gives him his sponge baths. Even near the end of his life, Bolden remains sitting in his bed and realizes his own power as an enigma, proclaiming (only to himself) that "Laughing in my room. As you try to explain me, I will spit you, yellow out of my mouth" (140). He, chaotic, defies traditional definitions of a person, an artist or a patient. Bolden is the embodiment of defiance. All through his life, and even in the sanatorium, he continues to defy all attempts at integration.

MACHINE IMAGERY AS ORGANIZER

Having examined the chaotic elements of Slaughter, I will now discuss Ondaatje's use of machine imagery as attractors. In Slaughter, Ondaatje again demonstrates the Chaos of history as he creates only a deep order within his chaotic narrative. The characters possess parallel deep personal orders that match the narrative, and Ondaatje uses machines to symbolize this chaotic order. Here, as in Billy the Kid, the system loops itself back to the images of machinery, so the machines are the strange attractors, symbolic of consistent but erratic facets of Bolden's personality, reminding us of the consistencies found within Chaos. The three images I will focus on are Webb's magnets, the electric fan and the cornet.

Webb's magnets allude to Bolden's own volatility and the influences in the

world around him. Their pushing and pulling in contradictory directions correspond to the many antithetical influences on Bolden's life. Webb's magnets, which are closely linked to Bolden's behaviour, are a complex system, similar to the example of the double pendulum. While the performances of two magnets may be very easy to predict, add a third magnet, or eight more (Webb has ten) and the interactions between them become unpredictable. Although similar types of movement may be observed over and over, the movements are in no way cyclical. Bolden sees something attractive in Webb's complex system and he says to him "Tell me about magnets, Webb" (35). Webb is able to make the magnets behave as if they are alive because what propels them is invisible, just as the energy which makes Bolden "frantic" is also invisible. This familiar volatility of the magnets may be one reason for Bolden's fascination with them. "And Webb who had ten of them hanging on strings from the ceiling would explain the precision of the forces in the air and hold a giant magnet in his hands towards them so they would go frantic and twist magically with their own power and twitch and thrust up and swirl as if being thrashed . . ." (CTS 35). This image symbolizes not only Bolden's behaviour but also his unorthodox and formless musical style. Like magnetism, the energy that keeps Buddy alive and creative is the same energy that causes him to break into violent outbursts "as if being thrashed." There is a blend of a fragile suspension in balance and a great volatility which could turn in any direction. As noted earlier in Slaughter, "His life had a fine and precise balance to it, with a careful allotment of hours. A barber, publisher of *The Cricket*, a cornet player, good husband and father, and an infamous man about town" (13). Here, we see the early indicator that Buddy's life, although most often in a state of disorder,

will have brief periods of order when he is able to maintain the balancing act of being a career man, musician and family man. But, like other Chaotic systems, disorder returns to fill the space between these moments where he can maintain his balance. In the end, Bolden isn't able to return to order. Like magnetic fields, elements around him such as music, alcohol, sex or Webb, disrupt his balance. The struggle within Buddy between his public and private selves parallels the tension between his instincts and consciousness which erupts so often into destruction and violence.

Ondaatje also invokes the image of the magnet, expanding it as a metonymic trope to include Bellocq along with Bolden. In doing this, Ondaatje simulates the intensity of the relationship between the two men. In his notes in Slaughter, Ondaatje refers to those "private and fictional magnets" that "drew him [Bellocq] and Bolden together" (158). The magnets not only connect them spiritually but also within the fiction. Both applications of the magnet image are appropriate since Ondaatje is linking two men who each have very destructive and violent tendencies. Bellocq takes pictures of prostitutes and cuts them up with scissors: "The making and destroying coming from the same source, same lust, same surgery his brain was capable of" (*CTS* 55). We can see a reference here to chaotic mental energy of Bellocq who, like Bolden, destroys himself or others to create his art. In the end, Bellocq, like Bolden, destroys himself surrounded by his art "diving through a wave and emerging red on the other side. In an incredible angle . . . Then he falls, dissolving out of his pose" (67). The magnets, which symbolize manic and irrational behaviours, also symbolize a common energy which brings these two men together. Part of the irrational dynamic is the

attraction/repulsion dichotomy that the magnets symbolize. Both men are simultaneously attracted and repelled by their artistic passions.

A significant image of self-destruction pertaining to Bolden's identity is the fan. The fan is a pun indicating both the machine itself and his musical fans. While he is in his barbershop doing his 'day job,' the fan is a constant reminder of both his compulsion to play and his own self-destructive behaviour while he is not playing. Bolden thinks of the fan while he is in his shop "turning like a giant knife all day above my head ... so you can never relax and stretch up" (*CTS* 47). Ondaatje creates another metonymic relationship here since we become accustomed to the fan, like the magnets, representing part of Bolden's psyche. They are always in his head, in his mental state. Appropriately, both of these mechanical devices are suspended from the ceiling above Bolden, but one is circular and cyclical while the other is erratic and non-cyclical. Both, however, symbolize volatility and danger; they symbolize how Bolden is as vulnerable to order as he is to disorder. Order makes Bolden recoil mentally, as he cannot stand it, while disorder will destroy him physically.

Near the conclusion of Bolden's final parade, the image of the fan is again invoked, along with Bolden's inner voice of self-immolation. Bolden is collapsing into the street when his hand starts "going up into the air in agony./ His brain driving it up into the path of the circling fan" (136). He defies his own limits, and his fear of self-destruction, by pushing his hand up into what he had earlier perceived as a turning knife above his head. The fan has become the symbol of his self-destruction. In the asylum, Bolden further demonstrates his loss of fear of the fan when, to him, the sun appears as "travelling spokes of light" (148). Until

the end, the fan image remains in Bolden's head.

By far the closest of the identifying tropes is the metonymic relationship Ondaatje creates between Bolden and his cornet, even while Bolden is not playing it. While making love to Robin Brewitt he plays her as though he is perfecting a number on his instrument. He presses his fingers into "the flesh on her back as though he were plunging them into a cornet . . . He had been improving on *Cakewalking Babies*" (59). This type of psychologically and sexually synecdochal relationship which Buddy has with his cornet is also shown when he and his musician friend Crawly visit with a "girl fan," and Bolden wants to put his "horn in her skirt" (101). This shows how Bolden perceives his cornet as part of his own anatomy, likening it to his penis.

This allusion of the cornet as phallus is strengthened during Bolden's final musical performance in the Storyville parade. The final thought before he collapses, "what I wanted" (130), sums up the paradox of contradictory desires within Bolden: to play an ultimate music in which the self is annihilated in order to find release from the constant compulsion to play. The literal "coming through slaughter" refers to Buddy's passage from the asylum, through the town of Slaughter, to his burial in New Orleans. The figurative meaning is a metaphor for Buddy's tumultuous life, concluding with the destruction of his self and his art. Aphasia or physical obliteration may have been the only way for Bolden to remain eternally outside of order--on the edge: "During the Storyville parade, Bolden ironically liberates himself by blowing himself into madness and silence; at this moment the contradictions in Bolden's life are resolved" (Van Wart 19). His silence is clearly an example of the tortured artist reaching his release through

aphasia, thereby converting the pain into a happy ending, at least in one sense. Yet, although the aphasia is a release of sorts, it intensifies that sense of hopelessness which pervades the reconciliation between Bolden's life and his art. "The use of a cornetist makes the image of a fall into silence particularly forceful; given that the novel is about both a musician and a writer, the silence--an ending without finality--is simultaneously literal and figurative" (Donnell 248). In Slaughter, the reader may get the sense that only half of the chaos remains. Ondaatje's Bolden has been silenced, and this makes for a much calmer read from the point of Bolden's aphasia onward.

During Bolden's final performance, the connection between him and his cornet becomes metonymic; he not only becomes the cornet, but actually blows himself through it in an orgasmic spasm. In effect, the cornet, or tool of his trade, becomes him and delivers him to his apotheosis of aphasia. A muse in the crowd, symbolic of all of his lovers, receives Bolden's love-making as all of his energies and his heart and blood are embodied in the cornet, asserting the metonymic connection. As Bolden plays, his perspective clearly becomes one indicative of sexual climax through the instrument: "All my body moves to my throat and I speed again and she speeds tired again, a river of sweat to her waist her head and hair back bending back to me, all the desire in me is cramp and hard, cocaine on my cock, eternal, for my heart is at my throat hitting slow pure notes into the shimmy dance of victory"(CTS 131). The transformation advances as Bolden alludes to his heart and life 'moving out' of his body into the cornet. Now, he injects all of who he is into his instrument and becomes it: ". . . feel the blood that is real move up bringing fresh energy in its suitcase, it comes up flooding past my

heart in a mad parade, it is coming through my teeth, it is into the cornet, god can't stop god can't stop it can't stop the air the red force coming up can't remove it from my mouth" (131). After he becomes his instrument he panics as now that he is out of his old body he "can't see I CAN'T SEE" (131). The audience sees Bolden collapse and his musical friend, Willy Cornish, tries to aid him. Cornish, "lifting the horn sees the blood spill out from it as he finally lifts the metal from the hard kiss of the mouth" (131). He then covers Bolden after seeing the blood on his white shirt. After his collapse, Buddy thinks of the finality of his musical orgasm, as well as his release from a life of chaos and the need to stay outside of order in his art. "What I wanted" is his final thought on the street as Cornish removes the horn from his body. Once the horn separates, Bolden is merely the shell of his formerly dynamic physical self, mute in the asylum until death brings him back through slaughter. His aphasia is his apotheosis and its agent is his instrument into which he has poured his self. Bolden, partly created, becomes a manifestation of what Ondaatje may have referred to years earlier in his poem "White Dwarfs" where he wrote of the "burned out stars . . . implode into silence / after parading in the sky" (*RJ* 71).

CHAPTER IV

Order from Chaos in *the Skin of a Lion* - Pendulums,

Bridges and Tunnels

In this chapter, I discuss *In the Skin of a Lion*, which does not stem from an American metanarrative. This is the most recent of the three novels which I study in this thesis, and it is historically more complex than the other two. In *Skin of a Lion*, Ondaatje again rebels against 'official' history, but this time there are no famous characters or heroes involved. Instead, it is a story in which various personal histories combine, or collide, quite by chance to make one chaotically unified history of the construction of Toronto's infrastructure. As Christian Bok points out in his article "The Politicization of Violence in the Works of Michael Ondaatje," *Skin of a Lion* is "a work that does not romanticize aesthetes who passionately reject social integration in the name of aphasia, but instead romanticizes aesthetes who passionately serve the social interests of the oppressed" (119). Hence it becomes a story of many people coming together, rather than of well-known individuals isolating themselves. Ondaatje not only gives a voice to the proletariat who have been ignored by 'official' history, but he also represents them heroically while discrediting those who normally claim history. Again, through chaotic history, many disparate voices are amalgamated. This novel also contains frequent metaphorical and literal references to machinery. Throughout the novel, machines symbolize traditional order, or the order of the superstructure of society, but this superstructure is penetrated by Ondaatje's people, or the human spirit, and this disruption perpetuates the chaos. I argue that,

although Patrick Lewis and Nicholas Temelcoff are metonymically related to machines, they and the infrastructure they help construct unify all of the disparate peoples in the novel--unlikely heroes.

HISTORY

In his article "Narrative and Chaos," Alex Argyros writes that history, among other traditional narratives, is "an information processing strategy characterized by an overall causal frame, the general plot, which itself is composed of a frequently tangled hierarchy of nested plots and subplots" (662). In the introductory notes to In the Skin of a Lion, Ondaatje acknowledges the powers of fiction, just as he has done in Billy and Slaughter. Citing John Berger, Ondaatje includes an epigraph to explain the type of fiction he creates in this novel: "Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one" (*SOL* Intro). This story reflects the protean nature of history and the variations of perspective within narrative. Furthermore, Ondaatje includes one of his customary acknowledgements of the dynamics of his historical fictions and the narrative power he wields, writing "This is a work of fiction and certain liberties have at times been taken with some dates and locales" (*SOL* intro). Again we see Ondaatje's own acknowledgement of the close connection between history and fiction.

Gordon Gamlin writes, in "Michael Ondaatje's In the Skin of a Lion and the Oral Narrative," that Ondaatje does "create the sense of a resonant past in the making" thereby recreating his own version of history in which "representation defies linearity, and the circles of narrative widen to include new characters and

their associates" while the "official dignitaries at the centre of civic history are much muted" (71). Ondaatje values the complex histories of people who are customarily ignored in history books. He writes the story of working men and women. We do not hear from any Toronto power brokers except for the powerful city engineer, Harris, and that is only after he has been symbolically humbled by Patrick the labourer. Carol L. Beran writes in "Ex-Centricity" that "as Ondaatje becomes each of his characters and each of his characters becomes an alter ego for Ondaatje ... the writer participates with the workers in the building of the viaduct and the water filtration plant" (72). Ondaatje employs the stories of the construction of Toronto as a framework on which to build a complex system—a chaotic system in which the stories of the workers intertwine. This is the narrative dynamic Ondaatje refers to when he writes "Each person had their moment when they assumed the skins of wild animals, when they took responsibility for the story" (*SOL* 157). *Skin of a Lion* is a melding of various workers' narratives. Beneath this chaotic web of connected narratives lies the submerged influence of Harris, an agent of order and a man who tries to impose his order on the labourers and on the city.

Ondaatje's depiction of the Toronto East End culture shows its complexity, and the inability of Harris to rise to the top and take over. Harris represents order, and the world described in *Skin of a Lion* symbolizes the entire Canadian culture as a chaotic system. This Chaotic system of Canadian culture cannot be ordered by Harris, or layed out in a linear fashion by historians because of the numerous elements of which it consists. The people of Toronto have incidentally fallen into a place where they have to establish a community. The violence which

accompanies the evolution and progress of this community parallels the violence which has led to the immigration of diverse cultures into Canada. Ondaatje depicts the chaotic system of the East End culture as more powerful than the order of the societal superstructure, so Harris cannot weaken it.

One way in which Ondaatje depicts the complexity and coherence of this complex historical system is that he combines the historical quests of Patrick and Clara. Patrick, after two years of lamentation and introversion over the lost romance of Clara, happens to encounter Alice outside a theatre in Toronto. She advises him to make inquiries at Clara's mother's house and directs him to the house ". . . to save him, to veer him to some reality" (88). Clara's mother informs Patrick that Clara had gone with Small to "a place he knows you will never go back to" (91). Her words "back to" mean that now Patrick's own history will help him to find the elusive Ambrose Small--in Bellrock, his childhood hometown. Past and present combine and suddenly there is a deeper order which helps Patrick find Clara.

Ondaatje combines elements of the childhood histories of Patrick and Clara when Clara nurses Patrick after Ambrose Small tries to kill him in Bellrock. Cleaning his face, she writes in the lather DICKENS 5, which is what her own father would shave into the fur of one of his dogs so he would never lose it: "I can't have you but I don't want you to get lost," she tells him (98). In his quest for Clara, Patrick accrues scars that document his search: "I knew I would be injured when I saw you again" (99). She leaves him to rest in his hotel room in Bellrock, and returns to the house, where Ambrose comes outside to see "her sitting there thinking, looking at Patrick's river" (100). These references to the childhood

memories of Patrick and Clara demonstrate how different histories of these two characters serve to reunite them. Patrick's infatuation with Clara's history brings him to her mother and, ultimately, back to Clara and the dangers associated with her.

This episode of reunion, in turn, acts as a catalyst of Patrick's return to the blasting trade. Patrick's ongoing quest and his vacillations between Alice and Clara and the scars he accrues along his journey are all symbolic of his chaotic life. For a time, his investigative movements as a searcher invoke different histories and combine different lives for Ondaatje. In a narrative intrusion, Ondaatje writes of the chaos found in history: "The chaos and tumble of events. The first sentence of every novel should be: 'Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.' Meander if you want to get to town" (146). Patrick's meanderings uncover the deeper, hidden order found in the chaotic system of history. In *Skin of a Lion*, history itself not only reunites Patrick and Clara, but also connects different communities and workers.

Patrick takes on the challenge of tumbling through life and history. He falls back into Alice's life at a theatre performance inside the unfinished Harris Waterworks, where all cultures of the Toronto East End come together. In secret, and under the cover of night, all of these east-enders would meet and watch performances put on by their own people; Patrick is invited to see the make-shift theatre one night. As he watches a performance, fate and empathy for the silent character Alice is portraying cause him to rescue her on the stage, as the audience thumps. During the day, and all week long, until they meet in the waterworks, all of these people live in separate communities in the east end. They move and

communicate in different ways and languages, and the multicultural community is chaotic in this sense. However, inside the waterworks, where many of these people work, they clap and thump in unison so the waterworks becomes a strange attractor. At the waterworks, disparate workers become a community.

Patrick's drive to know, his desire to uncover, is symbolized by his finding of Alice. He searches out history and, as Ondaatje shows us, history is chaos. Igor Maver points out this multiplicity and discontinuous continuity of history in "Creating the National in the International Context". He writes that "Ondaatje skilfully avoids the extreme postmodern end-of-fiction position by relying on some sort of internal logic in the events and psychic states he describes, regardless of the fact that he uses temporal dislocation, ahistoricity . . . and dreamlike scenes" (64). Ondaatje's "internal logic" and "dreamlike scenes" combine throughout Skin of a Lion to create the deeper order of his narrative chaos. This deeper order culminates when Patrick and Harris, or worker and oppressor, have their unlikely face-to-face meeting.

Chaotically, the tradition of causal plot is subverted as Patrick, surviving the intake pipes, overcomes his needs for destruction and revenge. We expect a violent revenge because of Patrick's previous attack on Muskoka Lodge. Instead, after risking his life to infiltrate and destroy the waterworks, Patrick rests inside the machine peacefully "stripping completely naked he squeezes the water out of his clothes and lays his shirt and pants against the hot machines. He lies down now and tries to rest" (232). After this peaceful episode, Patrick runs the live wires of destruction from the explosives right into Harris's office inside the waterworks. Patrick has more scars to document his diversion away from

revenge. As Harris watches Patrick enter his office with the detonator, Ondaatje writes about a transformation in Patrick: "Even if he had known the man before he would not recognize him now. Black thin cotton trousers and shirt, grease-black face--blood in the scrapes and at his side" (234). Patrick is not brandishing the detonator at Harris as he thought he might at the outset of the mission; rather, he holds "the blasting-box carried like a chicken under his right arm" (234). All of the determination to destroy seems to leave Patrick at this encounter, as the scars of his own history weaken that determination.

The chaotic tumble of events in Patrick's life has effected another bifurcation for him. He has decided that he will tell Harris of history rather than simply becoming another martyr to it. Patrick explains: "You forgot us . . . Your goddamn herringbone tiles in the toilets cost more than half our salaries put together . . . Aren't you ashamed of that? . . . Think about those who built the intake tunnels. Do you know how many of us died in there?" (236). Then Patrick tells Harris of the meetings and performances in the unfinished waterworks and of how Alice Gull was killed. The stories that Patrick tells Harris symbolize the history of death and struggle among the proletariat, and Harris recognizes his own fallibility despite the military patrols outside: He "realize[s] that he [is] relieved. The blasting-box was on the floor. Earlier Harris had understood why the man had chosen him, knew he was one of the few in power who had something around him" (242). He also recognizes how powerful the determination of the worker can be. The history related by Patrick has led to an epiphany for Harris: "those with real power had nothing to show for themselves. They had paper. They didn't carry a cent. Harris was an amateur in their midst"

(242). Patrick had accomplished revenge by destroying hubris rather than by destroying waterworks. Patrick demonstrates how he himself has learned from the history of the workers' struggle by choosing not to repeat the cycle of martyrdom for the cause. In the meeting between Patrick and Harris, the traditional and expected clash between the two opposing forces is averted as Patrick chooses the sharing of history over vengeance. Hence, history creates a diversion from the expected violent revenge plot, and miraculously results in a bifurcation leading to Patrick's unlikely reunion with Clara.

Aside from the significance of Patrick's survival is the fact that, historically speaking, Ondaatje has been able to accomplish a truly communal and inclusive history of Toronto in this novel. He has not only usurped the notion that it is the rich and powerful who built the city, but he has also demonstrated how history involves many different levels of happenstance. He has clearly laid down some new rules in terms of how we can understand the origins of the cultural mosaic in Canada, by empowering the various elements of that mosaic. R.F. Harney writes in Gathering Place that: "Without knowing the networks, folkways and values of the city's immigrants, whether from the United Kingdom or not, studying the encounter between city officials and the people of the city is at best one-sided, at worst vacuous" (6). I argue that Ondaatje would agree with Harney and therefore puts a good deal of value on the stories of the immigrant workers. Patrick Lewis demonstrates, physically and politically how the superstructure is built and it is empowered by the people who build and support its survival.

CHAOS

Bernd Engler writes, in "The Dismemberment of Clio," that it is a human desire to control environment, or to "emplot the seemingly random data of human experience" (27). History and Chaos are inseparable. Therefore, fiction is the only avenue through which we can experience the illusion of any "ordering emplotment of the chaos of our experience" (Engler 33). Ondaatje writes in the Skin of a Lion that "Only the best art can order the chaotic tumble of events. Only the best can realign chaos to suggest both the chaos and the order it will become" (146). Patrick Lewis is Ondaatje's agent to express the randomness or chaos of historical connections and, as such, he is dropped "like a piece of metal" (53) into the train station of Toronto. Like Ondaatje, Patrick becomes an archaeologist piecing together the connections between seemingly disparate lives as he searches for Clara and Toronto millionaire, Ambrose Small. After a life of working in the bush and exploding logs, "Patrick Lewis became a searcher" (59). This was a job found by chance as much as it was based on chance, but after working various small and non-lucrative jobs in Toronto, "any hope of a 'gusher' or 'strike' was worth pursuing. The search had turned the millionaire's body into a rare coin" (59). During this search Patrick falls in love with Clara. She seduces him and brings him to her remote farmhouse where he meets Alice.

Patrick becomes infatuated with the history of Clara, even more so than with that of Ambrose. The chaos of history leads to Patrick's desire to make sense of it, to contain it, so Patrick himself comes to symbolize this chaos. Before Clara goes back to Ambrose, Patrick doesn't want her to go because he considers himself to have 'found' her. She reassures him, saying "Don't worry Patrick.

Things fill in. People are replaced" (72). This statement symbolizes the protean nature and evolution of history. History, in its essence, is not something upon which any order can be imposed, despite the human desire to contain it in some comforting linear order. Patrick, in becoming part of the complex community of Toronto East Enders, learns that the search for one history leads to pieces of other histories. History then becomes Chaos itself.

Patrick takes his lack of knowledge and empowers himself with it, allowing the chaos of history to swallow him, following its direction. Like Nicholas who steps "into his harness, and drop[s] himself off the edge, falling thirty feet down through fog" (39) and seeing nothing, Patrick becomes empowered by his own blindness. Chaos is the magic of history and Patrick is not afraid to leap into chaos. Sometimes "Patrick will blindfold himself and move around a room, slowly at first, then faster until he is immaculate and magical in it . . . even run across his room and leap in his darkness" (79). It is this kind of strength Patrick needs in the archaeology of history, and it is why he is the only one of thousands of "searchers" who is able to find Ambrose Small. He can move with chaos because he has lived it, and he knows that life is not causal, predictable or linear.

Patrick, rolling through his own scarring chaos, seems to be fearless. After his search for Ambrose Small, Patrick becomes a digger, tunnelling under Lake Ontario for the Harris Waterworks, another bifurcation in his life which, this time, loops back to his history with his father. Patrick learned from his father and is now as good with explosives as his father was, so he is not afraid to use his skills under the lake. He is paid extra for this service because "nobody else wants the claustrophobic uncertainty of his work" (107). The pattern here is clear. Patrick

continues to invite danger into his life, and embodies Chaos. He moves quickly from one chaotic system to another, taking blow after blow. Unlike Nicholas Temelcoff, who opens a bakery, Patrick does not settle into stability or safety. He knows the hardship of life and understands the risks of uncertainty, stating one night in the Ohrida Restaurant that "I used to be a searcher. I can work dynamite" (114). With this affirmation of his own identity, Patrick becomes a blaster in the same restaurant where a nun became Alice and Nicholas the bridge-builder became a baker. Inside the Ohrida restaurant, all three major characters make decisions which combine their disparate lives. Once we discover this fact, we realize that the restaurant is an attractor within the self-organizing system.

Through his three main characters, Ondaatje shows how people will either avoid chaos or engage it straight on. Patrick continues to work with chaos in any capacity, as he has done since childhood. Alice leaves the rigid order of the nunnery and becomes an activist working against the order of the present system. After Nicholas has saved her, she leaves him in the Ohrida "tabula rasa," and changes her identity. Nicholas releases himself from chaos altogether by untethering himself from the Bloor Street Viaduct both emotionally and literally. These levels of Chaos meet in an ever-evolving community. All the flux leads to a strange and chance unification: "Patrick saw a wondrous night web . . . A nun on a bridge, a daredevil who was unable to sleep without drink, . . . an actress who ran away with a millionaire--the detritus and chaos of the age was realigned" (*SOL* 145). This quotation describes the chaotic coming together of four characters from very different places in society and the world. The passage further illustrates how the hidden order of Chaos can move the system randomly but surely toward

closure.

Another significant bifurcation point in the novel is the death of Alice. She is blown up after accidentally grabbing a bag of explosives from her own organization. Patrick remembers her citing the chaotic prophesies of Joseph Conrad to him: "*Let me now re-emphasize the extreme looseness of the structure of things*" (163). Through her final act, Alice unwittingly demonstrates the "looseness of the structure of things" in such a way as to cause Patrick to perpetuate Conrad's adage. Although Clara had earlier tried to assure Patrick that "People are replaced," the loss of Alice is too difficult and Patrick sets out to burn Muskoka Lodge, the playground of the wealthy. "His loss creates venom" (166), and he lights the match "and the fire ran upstairs and round and round the mezzanine. His arm was on fire . . . the deerheads above him on fire" (168). This event is not scientifically Chaotic in terms of the passion which results from Patrick's fury; it is expected. However, the event is Chaotic since the violence symbolizes the fight against a social system which attempts to impose a simple and linear order on society. Revolutionary violence in this novel, then, may be regarded as a force of Chaos which exemplifies a Chaotic social order. This Chaotic social order includes all factors and people in Toronto rather than just the superstructure of the society. The violence is Chaotic because its bifurcations, rather than simply fighting the order of the system of the wealthy, also create a new chaotic order. The violence in *Skin of a Lion* becomes an agent of Chaos, since the apparently destructive power of Chaos is also creative.

After burning the lodge, Patrick becomes a prisoner of his crime and has another scar to bear on his body. He is now an activist willing to commit violence

for the cause. Patrick continues, throughout the rest of the novel, to accrue the scarring on his body which symbolizes his quest, and symbolizes his lack of fear while living in chaos. After serving his five-year sentence for arson, Patrick is back in Union Station in Toronto feeling "like the weight on the end of a plumb-bob hanging from the very centre of the grand rotunda" (210). The image of the human pendulum and the sense of dangling remind us of the mechanical image of chaotic systems--particularly the image of the double pendulum. The image is in keeping with Patrick's life, as we cannot predict his next decision of employment. The pendulum image also connects Patrick with Nicholas Temelcoff so, through mechanical imagery, we see how histories combine in Chaos. The only thing which is predictable about Patrick is that he will go to Hana, and therefore to Nicholas's bakery. Nicholas saves Alice's life while she is still a nun and he is still a bridge worker. He doesn't know her at the time but the two of them, dangling, move in unison in order to make the rescue a success. Nicholas, having saved Alice, is therefore responsible for the fact that Hana lives.

After her rescue by Nicholas, Alice had been the wife of Cato, a Finnish labour activist who is killed by the lumber company he works for, as he is a strike organizer. Cato is executed while Alice is pregnant with Hana and Patrick doesn't understand how fate could make him a father figure to a girl who had two such heroic parents. Patrick wonders: "And who is he to touch the lover of this man, to eat meals with his daughter, to stand dazed under a lightbulb and read his last letter?" (156). Patrick is the rider of chaos, welcoming the unknown until the deeper cycles of his chaotic life repeat so that he can make connections find a chaotic order. Ondaatje's self-organizing system continues to unwind around

Patrick, enveloping more lives and histories. Ondaatje notes how the lives blend together: "Clara and Ambrose and Alice and Temelcoff and Cato- -this cluster made up a drama without him. And he himself was nothing but a prism that refracted their lives" (157). Patrick is the human strange attractor of this system in Ondaatje's novel. Rochelle Simmons writes in "Skin of a Lion as a Cubist Novel" that Ondaatje's main impulse "seems to be more towards connection than fragmentation and any discontinuity is offset by the thematic emphasis Ondaatje places upon communication and interaction" (705). This Chaotic and deep connective performance is exemplified by the linking functions of Nicholas and Patrick. Connectiveness is also symbolized by the waterworks as a strange attractor, unifying people and events. We see that, amidst the chaos, Patrick is the predominant link to which everyone is connected, to which everyone returns-- even Clara. We see that Patrick's function is not coincidence because Patrick searches for these histories and people. As Rod Schumacher points out in his article "Patrick's Quest," we learn to share, with Patrick, the joy of reunion between the different narratives: "The fragmented linearity of the text has encouraged us to desire that Patrick's narrative become sutured into the whole structure of the novel" (13). Ondaatje, like those seeking Ambrose Small, has employed Patrick as a 'searcher' and organizer.

MACHINE IMAGERY AS ORGANIZER

The idea that people are inseparable from, or part of, their machines is fitting in a story in which identities seem to come from occupation. Ondaatje writes, of the thousands of men working on the Bloor Street Viaduct, that "A man

is an extension of hammer, drill, flame. Drill smoke in his hair" (26). The man himself is smoking from the friction of the drill which has become who he is--a strong metonymic relationship is obvious here where the workers become their tools and identities are jobs.

There are occasions in the novel when Patrick greases up before undertaking a particularly difficult task with explosives. This ritual emphasizes his machine-like status, and is a custom which he maintains from childhood into his adult life. In difficult cases "Patrick would remove his clothes and grease himself down with oil from the crankcase of the steam donkey" (17). Such machine images connect different stages of Patrick's life. Despite his own machine-like tendencies, Patrick is the one labourer who is shown to possess the greatest range of human emotions. The superstructure seems to envision the labourers as mere commodities of production, or machines. We can tell that Ondaatje has chosen Patrick as the agent of both connection and change. He constantly changes his occupation, which makes it difficult to pin down his emotions or identity.

Karen Overbye writes in "Re-Membering the Body" that "Although the workers' bodies are made to work like machines, and are apparently considered mere means of production by the rich, we are constantly reminded that they are human" (2). This reminder is largely a function of Patrick, whose life is full not only of machine-like work, but also of determination and strong emotion. This mix of emotion and machinery is demonstrated when he undergoes another greasing prior to his final explosives job at the Harris Waterworks: "He takes off his shirt and she begins to put grease onto his chest and shoulders. He watches

her black hair as she rubs this darkness onto his body" (227). During this greasing, as Patrick "watches her black hair," we see that he is no longer the isolated, opinionless worker that he was earlier in the book. He, as a blaster, no longer consists solely of the history he had with his father. This coating of grease symbolizes the change in Patrick, foreshadowing the unrecognizable image which walks into the office of Harris at the end of the book. Patrick, at the conclusion of this mission, is reborn as he sheds his desire for violence and revenge when he finally encounters Harris. The flexibility of his character makes him a very effective human attractor.

The pendulum is a prominent mechanical strange attractor symbolizing bifurcation within this self-organizing system of history. It symbolizes the movement of men, and like men dangling in air, it also symbolizes a sense of helplessness. Yet this image is also symbolic of cyclical connectiveness as well as helplessness, reflected in life choices of characters, such as when the nun transforms into Alice. By chance, while Nicholas is hanging on rope in the darkness, he catches the falling nun, almost killing himself: "They hung in the halter pivoting into the valley . . . a soigne in the wind" (32). He saves her, but then she has to finish the job of saving them both by pendulous movement, as Nicholas has been stretched almost to death. "*We have to swing . . .* The two strangers were in each other's arms, beginning to swing wilder . . . till they were almost at the lower level" (32). Ondaatje writes of Nicholas that "he could be blindfolded . . . He knows his position in the air as if he is mercury slipping across a map" (35). Here Ondaatje uses the human pendulum as an image to combine the randomness or chance of a blindfolded man with the accuracy or

predictability of a machine. The dichotomy of the pendulum image symbolizes the possibility of a controlled randomness. There can be underlying causal relationships between seemingly random events, as in any self-organizing system.

Of Nicholas Temelcoff, Ondaatje writes "He is a spinner. He links everyone" (34). Through Nicholas' rescuing of the nun, the chaotic system of this book begins to take shape. While on most days, Nicholas is merely ". . . a fragment at the end of the steel bone the derrick carries" (40), he truly has become the 'link' between the nun and the rest of the story. Alice leaves Nicholas, at the end of the night, in his friend's restaurant in the early morning, remembering only him and the name of the restaurant parrot--Alicia. She takes her new name from the bird. From Nicholas, she takes a new awareness of the dangers faced by the working man. Ondaatje describes this bifurcation point: "What she will become she becomes in that minute before she is outside, before she steps into the six-a.m. morning" (41). Here the nun becomes the activist and the revolutionary for the proletariat. Even after her death, she inspires other chaotic occurrences in the name of her cause, such as Patrick's burning of the lodge and his plans to detonate the Harris Waterworks.

The random event redirects Nicholas's own life. After the fall of the nun, he is rendered sleepless by recurring images of her fall. At one point, her body is replaced by his own in the image, and he resorts to drink so that he can sleep, the drink "blunting out the seconds of pure fear when he could not use his arms" (49). Her absence would cause him to look everywhere, but the image of the fall stays fresh with him. His mechanical being, which causes him to save her, also causes a major bifurcation for Nicholas. He opens up a bakery soon after the accident with

the money he had saved. One day he releases the umbilical attachment between himself and his former occupation as "He releases the catch on the pulley and slides free of the bridge" (49). Two characters then become free of their confining occupations through one chaotic movement. From this point forward, Nicholas Temelcoff becomes mechanically associated with the rollers upon which fresh buns move. We begin to associate him with the linear, causal and cyclical action of these rollers. Nicholas chooses to escape chaos into order, getting away from the dangerous dangling images with which he was once so closely associated. From the point where he detaches himself from the chaos, he becomes a peripheral character, since Skin of a Lion continues to be a chaotic system.

Just as Patrick serves as the significant human strange attractor, the Harris Waterworks become an important mechanical image of unification. The bridge is also an important and more traditional unifier as it not only leads to the unification of two parts of Toronto, but also to the unification of the main characters. However, the waterworks is more significant as a mechanical strange attractor because it is the cradle of unification for a growing community. It is the meeting place which echoes with the voices of a hundred languages, where Patrick gets initiated into the multicultural community of the Toronto East End. Hence the waterworks is the strange attractor to which the multicultural Chaos loops back time and time again. However, on the day it is completed, and sealed off to those who built it, the waterworks becomes a symbol of Toronto's wealth, and the hubris of its wealthy. Ultimately, when Harris orders it to be guarded during the labour unrest, it symbolizes a fortress of exploitation to the workers. Therefore, the plant represents the imposition of order by Harris and the superstructure, rather than the

strange attractor uniting the East End people. The waterworks is no longer the place where "the noise of machines camouflaged their activity . . . It was a party and a political meeting, all of them trespassing, waiting now for speeches and entertainment" (115). Harris has closed it off to those who have constructed it.

The waterworks is the attractor which, at one time, causes Patrick to become associated with Alice again, and on a more intimate basis. Before Patrick 'rescues' her from the stage in the waterworks, Alice is performing as a downtrodden human puppet, slamming her hand on the stage in a desperate plea for release. The "audience began to clap in unison with the banging hand, the high hall of the waterworks echoing . . . He was covered in the heartbeat of applause which started to become faster" (117-118). This pulse is the growing heartbeat of a revolution, an illegal movement. The waterworks has become the womb of a developing community united by a collective circumstance, and this is why it is always associated with rumblings, heartbeats and throbbing noises. It is the strange attractor in which all languages, although different, can echo together, for "if they speak this way in public, in *any* language other than English, they will be jailed" (133). The people are aware of their trespassing, but they are attracted to this place wherein they can create a combined culture: "Numerous communities and nationalities spoke and performed in their own languages. When they finished, the halls were cleaned up, the floors swept" (158). This was truly an underground movement within the waterworks. This is similar to the model of a chaotic system in which there are other functions or cycles at play beneath a surface which does not readily reveal them. The Waterworks are where the Chaos of the cultural mosaic of Canada develops into a complex system,

bringing together the numerous elements and artistic voices of a newly established but unlikely community.

As Patrick re-enters the community after his time in prison, activism and unionism are becoming very powerful voices within Toronto, and this leads to a unification and fortification of the rich and powerful: "When the last shift left the water-filtration plant the police and the army moved in to guard it" (220). This utility is guarded most obsessively of all because Commissioner Harris directs it so: "Cutting off the water supply or poisoning it would bring the city to its knees" (220). In addition, this complex is Harris's most treasured palace, so the guise of public safety justifies the cost of its defense. The waterworks is therefore closed to those who had once made its heart beat. After all, it is the "heart of the place" (227), pumping the life-blood of water throughout Toronto. Harris solidifies his ownership of it by deciding to live in it until labour unrest settles. Fittingly, "Harris saw the new building as a human body" (220), not knowing that the "body" has helped to give birth to a unified community of workers. He has no understanding of the workers, or knowledge of their meetings inside the waterworks to organize the same rebellion against which Harris is now fighting.

Much like Webb and Garrett, the agents of order in Slaughter and Billy the Kid, Harris is very much the antithesis of the Chaos embodied by Patrick and the multicultural community. He wants to contain Toronto's destiny, and for him this containment is a grand but simple plan. He will build the infrastructure and the immigrants will work to make his dreams come true. Ironically, his poor treatment of them only causes them to create chaos for him in the future. Harris, however, is under the illusion that he has all of the workers under control and that

his ordered system will continue under his ownership. He perceives the workers as unthinking cogs in the machine of his progress, not appreciating that there are minds on the other ends of the tar-crucibles, saws and drills. Ultimately, his strict adherence to his own ordered system perpetuates the formation of Chaos through revolution.

With the help of Caravaggio, Patrick re-enters the tunnel he once helped to build, in order to destroy the waterworks. If this centre of the community can no longer belong to the people, Patrick "wants the heart of the place. He wants to step in and destroy meticulously, efficiently" (227). As we know, Chaotic history loops back again and again to its strange attractors. These attractors--Patrick and the water plant--tie everything together in Ondaatje's story and they symbolize the peoples' revolution.

Once he has gained entry, as well as a few more scars from the explosions, Patrick lies down from exhaustion and dries his clothes on the warm machinery inside the heart of the building. Then, rising from his rest, Patrick revisits "the corridor where he had searched for [Alice] and found her bathing beside a candle among all those puppets . . . years ago" (233). Again we see how events connect and histories combine in Skin of a Lion--they all loop back to Patrick. However, we also see how everything loops back to the mechanical strange attractor, the waterworks.

The last major bifurcation point in the story is the meeting between Patrick and Commissioner Harris. Patrick does find Harris and what ensues is an unprecedented meeting of minds between new wealth and the proletariat. It is frightening to Harris, of course, to be confronted by the scarred man with a

detonator under his arm, who appears without fear. This is the manifestation of Rowland Harris' dream years earlier, when he dreamt of "The silence of men coming out of a hole each within an envelope of steam . . . swallowing the water one-and-a-quarter miles away, bringing it back into his body, and spitting it out clean" (111). Harris's dream is a premonition of his meeting with Patrick where Patrick emerges from his journey through the intake pipes, being "spat out clean" with his coat of grease removed by the water and the walls of tunnels. The meeting itself symbolizes the collapse in Harris's guarded and ordered system; Patrick is the embodiment of Chaos and Harris fears him. However, Patrick ultimately relinquishes his position as agent of violent revenge. Gordon Gamlin writes that "Patrick endorses the struggle [of workers] but rejects the position of final dominance. To do otherwise would mean a betrayal of his father, of his friends and even of Alice: Patrick would be written into history to be used by would-be followers to their ends" (76). Rather than destroying the waterworks and perpetuating violence and martyrdom, Patrick acts as a symbol of the power of human spirit, rather than an agent of violent activism. He shows Harris that Chaos rules over order. Patrick personifies the reality that the chaotic movement of the people cannot have order imposed upon it. Therefore, Patrick allows Harris to live.

Harris is scared, yet he strangely admires Patrick who has emerged from within the great machine. Patrick tells Harris the story of Alice's death, before exhaustion overtakes him. Still not fearful of the chaos, Patrick asks Harris to turn the light off. Ondaatje writes: "Without light he felt more awake, discerning shapes, the smell of a bed somewhere in the room" (236). Harris tells Patrick of

his self-justifying epiphany about the building of the Bloor Street Viaduct, while Patrick falls asleep. Strangely, Harris does not arrest Patrick. Perhaps one reason for this is that Patrick has abdicated his position of power by maintaining peace and not using his detonator. I believe it is more because Harris sees Patrick as one with the waterworks, since he helped to create the great machine, and also since he is *born of it*. Patrick is what Harris had dreamed of all those years ago—a man who would be delivered through his waterworks. Harris realizes: "My god he swam here . . . That's how he got in, through the tunnel. What vision, what dream was that?" (241). Patrick's penetration of the plant is a revelation of Chaos for Harris, a sudden realization of his failure to impose order. It is a message delivered by Patrick, who embodies the people and is part of the water plant—delivered into what Ondaatje refers to as the "PALACE OF PURIFICATION" (103). Karen Overbye states, in "Re-Membering the Body," that Patrick "can be seen as reentering the womb . . . becoming reborn, no longer the hero, the powerful physical male who will use violence to revenge his loved ones" (11). The image of the machine as womb is a Chaotic discontinuity and an organic allusion blending mechanical and human attractors. However, this fits well with Ondaatje's tendency to form synecdochal relationships between his main characters and the machines with which they are most closely associated. However, another chaotic element is the outcome of the confrontation between Harris and Patrick as it subverts the conventional plot cycle and the expectations of a violent climax. Patrick becomes the storyteller, rather than the detonator, who gives Alice's life meaning and context in the mind of Harris. In other words, Patrick becomes the agent of order—chaotic order. Patrick rests, and his life

changes one last time after the waterworks delivers Patrick into his apotheosis. He is weary now, and along with Hana, he will go to all that he has left to love, sacrificing Chaos for Clara. Everything comes back to Patrick in this system, and Clara, consistent with this tendency, has finally summoned him to reunite with her.

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have discussed many intersections between postmodernism and Chaos in Ondaatje's novels. These discussions have focused mainly upon the continual subversion of comfortable linear narrative and the customary order which history tries to impose. I have shown how Ondaatje's writing, through this subversion, illustrates the Chaos which is inherent in history. Chaos theory has proven to be a useful and interesting model for describing history's unreliability, which Hutcheon refers to as "one of the ways we impose meaning on the chaos of events" (66). Ondaatje deconstructs history, using fragments and facts, while maintaining creative control. This deconstruction is evident in Ondaatje's misplacement of the death of Isadora Duncan within the time frame of Coming Through Slaughter, and in anachronistic references to buses and telephones. In Skin of a Lion, he exerts his Chaotic power, stating that the Bloor Street Viaduct spans Rosedale Valley Road, which it does not do; Ondaatje misplaces people and things to counter our expectations. I have pointed out many situations when Ondaatje plays with the chaos of history, catching us with his narrative comments that, at times, cannot be located where we are immersed in his histories.

The Chaotic element of the self-organizing system is an element which is not explained by any other critical theory. Hence Chaos theory is an appropriate theory to describe either the narrative structures of the three texts under consideration in this thesis or the behaviour patterns of Billy, Buddy or Patrick. Each of them defies the expected rational code of behaviour for adults and the

expectations that we have for them at the outset of their stories. I have shown how the self-organizing systems of these characters exemplify the emergence of order and meaning from destabilized narratives. Billy has no rational connective behaviours or causal links between his life's events and is almost constantly suicidal. Buddy is revolted by order and he is extremely self-destructive. As a result, he refuses to read sheet music as a musician. Patrick places himself into one dangerous occupation after another and becomes obsessed by the erratic and unsafe quest for fractured histories and dangerous love. These lives themselves are examples of self-organizing chaotic systems because they all keep moving through seemingly unrelated episodes which ultimately point out consistencies within the characters and bring each of their stories to closure.

The term 'self-organizing system' also describes Ondaatje's narrative form in each of the books. In Billy the Kid, he employs many forms of media, including photographs, articles and interviews, while moving the story along in Billy's zig-zag motion. In Slaughter, Ondaatje defies chronology, cuts off episodes and intrudes directly into the text with his authorial voice. In Skin of a Lion, he leaps from history to history to create one story of many interconnected lives and intertwines lives of historical entities with the lives of his own creations so that it is difficult to discern which is which.

In Ondaatje's work, very small causes can have disproportionately large effects. In Chaos theory, the critical term butterfly effect suits this phenomenon well. In Slaughter, this chaotic device is exemplified by the girl fan at Bolden's final parade, whose presence and reaction to Bolden's music cause him to blow himself into aphasia and ultimately into madness. What may be the most

significant example of the butterfly effect in all three of these books is the sudden wind which blows the nun off of the Bloor Street Viaduct. Without this gust of wind, the complex plot of intertwined lives and histories in Skin of a Lion could not unfold the way they do.

Another Chaotic element which helps to illuminate Ondaatje's work is the bifurcation point. This critical device which describes the smaller fluctuations found inside the larger movement of a story's direction. It seems that the proliferation of disorder or Chaos in these novels is partially caused by characters' ongoing attempts to impose order. The resulting bifurcations lead to patterns such as Billy's zig-zagging across the Canadian border while being pursued in the same general direction by Garrett, who is trying to impose his order onto Billy's world. His senseless fluctuations of movement give the feeling that he is not only a fugitive of the law, but also a fugitive of order. Bifurcation points are also crucial in describing the many unpredictable variations in the behaviour and movement of Buddy Bolden. Even Webb the detective has a difficult time tracking Bolden as he flees from his roles as family man and musician. Webb tries to tame Bolden, and it drives Bolden back into chaos. The fluctuations in his own life are similar to the fluctuations found in jazz music. One of the most significant bifurcation points for Patrick in Skin of a Lion is that where he chooses not to blow up the waterworks, and instead, tells Harris that he has mistreated the workers. I have described some mental bifurcations stemming from Ondaatje's system at these points in his stories, since these are times when seemingly orderless narratives lead to epiphanies shared by readers and the characters alike. One example of this shared epiphany is the dream of Mr. Harris which is a premonition of Patrick's

arrival inside the waterworks. Ondaatje's stylistic fluctuations and his mixing of genres are also bifurcation points on a stylistic level, exemplified where he suddenly enters a direct but brief dialogue with either the reader or his character. Like the postmodernist theorist Lyotard, Chaos theorists also embrace the concept of multiple and incongruous language games. However, Chaos theory is able to define the smaller relationships within these games of representation, or what Jameson refers to as the "random play of signifiers" (222).

In Billy the Kid, Slaughter and Skin of a Lion, there are seemingly insignificant elements or images which are repeated and magnified to the point where they become central unifying motifs. The strange attractor is the most important chaotic element in this thesis. Ondaatje's work is saturated by episodes which rely on the connective tissue of his strange attractors. The most important of these strange attractors are the random images that embody the main characters. Mechanical strange attractors in all three of these books become the ordering master-tropes which help the characters achieve their ultimate apotheoses of self-identity in Billy, Slaughter and Skin of a Lion. As we know, for Billy the mechanical strange attractor is his gun, which seems to become part of him and which often leads him into violence. For Buddy, the mechanical strange attractor is his cornet, not only because it becomes part of Buddy, but also because of the jazz music it plays. Jazz parallels the inconsistencies and unpredictable bifurcations in Buddy's life. For Patrick, the identifying master-trope is the waterworks because it is here where he is brought into the multicultural East End population of Toronto. In addition, it is here where he is reborn into a new life after refusing to blow up Mr. Harris, Toronto's chief engineer.

In Postmodernism, as well as in Chaos theory, I am most interested in the elements which deal with history, because this theory of writing exposes the fact that recording history requires an imposition of order. Historiographic metafiction focuses on the authorial intervention in historic events and people. Because of this, it reveals the many layers of variation which culminate in what we refer to as history, which is a construct that itself is fictional. Chaos theory, though, can pinpoint the phenomenon of how small variations in perception can change history as a construct. Chaos theory also helps us to understand that life stories, as series of events, cannot be contained in a linear narrative as traditional history would have it. History itself contains non-causal and random occurrences which are not necessarily linked through logic or expectation. Hence, history itself has traditionally been utilized as a narrative device to bring a sense of control or comfort to the chaos that has led to the present. History, then, is reduced to what it really and practically is--a tool of convenience to conceal disorder.

Historiographic metafiction may deconstruct history, but Chaos theory literally eliminates the need to form or organize history while acknowledging the play of interconnecting events. It must be emphasized, however, that this is not meant to be an argument for a more accurate history, because it still remains a construct, although it does not need to adhere to any structure or style. History continues to be a narrative performance, which excludes a voice for each one that it includes. Ondaatje's three novels are not Chaotic history or 'pure' history, but rather mimicry of the Chaos of history.

Chaos is not as convenient for imposing meaning or order as is history, but Chaos theory is a very practical and comforting theory on a different level. Once

we overcome the need for linearity in events, Chaos helps us to realize an order in disorder. Often, upon perceiving disorder, people feel a need to introduce or impose some order into that disorder. If this is not possible, we tend, at least, to develop a language to describe the disorder thereby developing some perception of order to surround it. This tendency within myself may have something to do with my compulsion to locate the language of Chaos theory and apply it to the writing of Michael Ondaatje. Chaos offers a way of seeing order and a sense of pattern where formerly only the random, the erratic or the unpredictable had been observed. After all, the scientific theory of Chaos initially evolved from the need for scientists to describe physical and mathematical systems which contained hidden and irregular patterns.

Chaos also offers a critical perspective which does not focus on the primary parts or elements of the narrative, but rather on what happens when these elements interact with one another. This is why the theory is suited to Ondaatje's style, since it challenges the reader's sense of direction, which is accustomed to arriving at neat ends. As readers of literature and history, we tend to seek out connections which are logical, linear or 'make sense.' Chaos theory allows us to uncover the complex connections that lie between people and events. This is very much in keeping with the initial purpose of the scientific theory which evolved to offer a model flexible enough to delineate a compromise for what Alex Argyros calls a "relation between complexity and teleology" (668). Now, literary theory also has a model to incorporate into the Canadian literary landscape. We are able to detect patterns in the postmodern landscape which lie below the surface and can describe the relationships between entities which are often described by lack of relatedness.

The Canadian postmodern is dominated by what Lyotard has referred to as the faltering metanarrative. Billy the Kid, Slaughter and Skin of a Lion are all based on American and Canadian metanarratives, and I have explained how Ondaatje manipulates each of them, injecting incredulity into each of them. His deconstruction of history shows how history is merely another form of fictional construct. Chaos theory provides a historical model which also permits Ondaatje to inject his own political perspective, which has a higher value than mere incredulity. Ondaatje, with his chaotic style of writing history, has usurped the power of traditional metanarratives in Billy the Kid and in Coming through Slaughter. He has also usurped the power of 'official' history which has been created and perpetuated by the superstructure in In the Skin of a Lion. I am not sure whether it is a result of his maturing as a writer, but in the most recent of these three novels, Skin of a Lion, Ondaatje gives voices to characters which are becoming progressively more obscure and unknown. This progresses to the point where, in Skin of a Lion, the entire plot rests on the shoulders of communal, oppressed and hard-working immigrants. The complex nature of this depiction of our multicultural mosaic can only be appreciated critically through chaos theory. The creation of our nation becomes another example of a chaotic self-organizing system with human spirit and solidarity as the attractors, and our great cities as the mechanical identifying master-trope of those who have worked to create them.

Throughout this thesis, we see many critics who use modern and postmodern theories to discuss Ondaatje's work, and they fall short of containing the fluidity of his style. I have still not encountered a critic or scholar who has applied Chaos theory directly to Ondaatje's literature. This application is what I

hope to have contributed to the ongoing dialogue on Ondaatje's writing as it fits into the postmodern landscape.

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