

## DIASPORA SPACE: THE PRACTICE OF BIOGRAPHY IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE'S *RUNNING IN THE FAMILY*

I think all of our lives have been terribly shaped by what went on before us.  
Ondaatje 1993: 179

In postcolonial and postmodern discourses, diaspora comes to signal the liberating aspects of interrelationships and a resistance to the monologic thought and oppression that colonialism represents (Childs and Williams 210). Works by Homi Bhabha and Vijay Mishra, for instance, celebrate this social formation of displacement. Diasporic spaces are often likened to border zones or borderlines, indicating overlaps of histories and narratives. For Bhabha, the “interstitial passage” opposes hierarchy by opening up possibilities for negation and hybridity (1994:4). Mishra highlights the “vibrant kinds of interaction” that take place within diasporic communities” (1995:147). It could be said that the diasporic experience provides the new postcolonial subjects. However, because diasporas are complex sites or communities, they are not unproblematic, particularly in negotiating home. In “Mourning becomes Diaspora”, for instance, Mishra explores the role of memory and melancholia in the lives of diasporic peoples, triggered by the traumatic moment of the loss of the homeland. Stuart Hall, an important commentator and analyst of the diasporic condition, highlights the processes of history that impact on the search for identity. He believes that the “shifting divisions and vicissitudes of . . . actual history” (393) negate the possibility of a stable, shared identity. Culture identity, he says, has “its histories - and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects” (395). Hall’s observations of identity and history illuminate my study of the search for self-identity in Michael Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family*.

Ondaatje is a diasporic writer and his travel narrative *Running in the Family* recounts a return journey to his homeland Sri Lanka. The narrative — a combination of travelogue, autobiography, biography, poetry, photography, eyewitness accounts and journal entries — textualises the sensibilities and struggles of the diasporic writer as he tries to locate himself within his new surrounding which is also his homespace. The network of personal, cultural, social and national identities that forms the locus of home for Ondaatje also unsettles his idea of homeland. Traces of exoticism and condescension that sometimes appear in his representation of the space of Sri Lanka, underline the ambiguity that constitutes the diasporic condition. This study looks at Ondaatje’s search for self and family in his travel book. In trying to retrieve self and communal identities, the traveller employs contemporary

strategies of representation which undermine conventional notions of teleological history. Imagination and myth become modes of representation able to construct a sense of self. At the same time, Ondaatje's journey is still shaped by a personal history haunted by dissonance. Hence, it could be argued that even though *Running in the Family* is more often than not discussed and analysed as a postmodern narrative, the representations of self and society in the text also assert that history cannot be merely a subjective creation of the historian. Ondaatje and his family are portrayed as people living in "diaspora space", a site which foregrounds fragmented identities. My discussion looks at biographical practices in *Running in the Family* and the ways in which they relate to the writer's quest for selfhood and his sense of finding and belonging to his family.

#### Historical Relations<sup>1</sup>

*Running in the Family* is an historical chronicle. The book is about history, about retrieving and writing about history. This, on the surface, may seem curious because the text explicitly flouts what would be a conventional sense of history. In recounting past events, Ondaatje forgoes dates, sometimes names and even consistency. He relies very little on factual records, constructing his history around myth, gossip and rumour. Ondaatje has often been criticised for adopting an apolitical and ahistorical stance in his writings. Arun Mukherjee comments that Ondaatje "does not get drawn into the acts of living, which involves the need to deal with the burning issues of his time" (1984: 34) and that his success "has been won largely through a sacrifice of his regionality, his past and most importantly, his experience of otherness in Canada" (1985: 50). Kanaganyakam cites the text's refusal "to participate actively in the referential" as its weakness (40). Indeed there are glaring instances of solipsism in *Running in the Family*. Ondaatje, for example, does not draw attention to the simmering ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Even though tensions only escalated after 1982, they were still too obvious to be missed (Kanaganayakam 36). Also there is only a passing reference to the Insurgency which took place in 1971 and even then the writer leaves out significant political implications of the movement, choosing instead to domesticate the event: "While all this official business was going on around the front porch, the rest of the insurgents had put down their huge collection of weapons, collected from all over Kegalle, and persuaded my younger sister Susan to provide a bat and a tennis ball. Asking her to join them, they proceeded to play a game of cricket on the front lawn" (101).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the title of one of *Running in the Family*'s many sections.

<sup>2</sup> All subsequent references are to *Running in the Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) and will be cited in the text.

Yet on many levels, the book engages with history. Because the narrative is written from a diasporic background, it depicts the disruptions, fractures and omissions that characterise diasporic history. Ondaatje is the scion of an elite Burgher family. In Ceylon, the elite were a “composite” group, living “contiguous but non-contactual lives” with the masses (Sugunasiri 62). The Burghers, Suwanda Sugunasiri comments, were often financially well off but had little political clout compared, for example, to the Sinhalese Buddhist elite (61). They became “part of the elite simply by reason of European blood” (Sugunasiri 61). For the other natives, then, they came to represent “the residual vestiges of colonial domination, and therefore an extension of British, metropolitan culture” (Kanaganayakam 34). Nonetheless, Ondaatje, in *Running in the Family*, writes that there was “a large social gap” between the Burghers and the English who were never part of the Ceylonese community” (41) – implying that Burghers, unlike Europeans, were natives of the island. Much of the tenuousness of this community, Kanaganayakam observantly points out, lies in its cultural syncretism (34). Ondaatje comments that his father claimed to be a Ceylon Tamil though that had been true about three centuries earlier (41) and explains that his proud grandfather had “a weakness for pretending to be ‘English’” (56). Uncertainties ensuing from the Burghers’ dual role of victim and agent of colonialism are woven into the huge human tapestry of *Running in the Family*. The Ondaatje clan is portrayed as a hedonistic group, drifting from one drunken party to another. They are rich, hold good jobs but are a family lost in a labyrinth, their history overwritten by a dominant colonial history. They are imaged as displaced from their own land, living times that were “so whimsical, so busy – that [they] were always tired” (41). Hence the task that Ondaatje faces is considerable – how does the traveller recontextualise himself and his family as subjects of representation in the face of epistemic ruptures in the discourse of identity?

As argued above, the notion of home in *Running in the Family* is at once pervasive and elusive. While diaspora embodies the subtext of home, not all diasporas can sustain an ideology of “return” (Brah 180). Ondaatje cannot return to a homeland. Rather he articulates his homecoming by configuring a fluid map of his homeland. Within this space, his family members are seen as “dwellers-in-travel”, their plural identities resisting a discourse of fixed origins. In this context, Avtar Brah’s reflections on the interaction between individual and collective memories in diasporic experience are revealing. She refers to the site where diaspora, border and dis/location intersect to form “a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes” as a “diaspora space” (181). Her conceptual category is rooted in notions of mobility and she calls this point of confluence “a site of

'migrancy' and 'travel'" (181). Though separation marks the diasporic experience, "diaspora space" offers new beginnings where "individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure" (Brah 193). The retrieval of personal identity for Ondaatje also entails a reconstruction of the community to which he belongs. In *Running in the Family*, the traveller presents himself as embedded in a community. By taking into account today's conditions which do not easily permit belonging, "diaspora space" engenders possibilities for reinvention and establishing a sense of belonging.

A prominent feature of *Running in the Family* is its multiplicity of textual voices. The writer's voice and his memories coalesce with those of family members, friends, acquaintances and other natives of the island. Ondaatje wants to write a family memoir and understand this "original circle of love" (25). He himself is a link in the continuum, a "part of a human pyramid" (27). However, like the pyramid that threatens to become dismantled, his link to the family is uncertain and precarious. Ondaatje, who wants to touch his family "into words" (22), acknowledges in the very first page of the book that time is transient and elusive: "Half a page -- and the morning is already ancient" (17). The narrative demonstrates that no cohesive, unified past can be assembled. Instead Ondaatje creates what Brah calls a "diaspora space" in which polyphonic voices tell diverse histories. These voices rely on gossip, myth, memory and exaggeration to evoke their stories. And so exaggerated stories are also interweaved into this story: the "foul Ondaatje who was savaged to pieces by his own horse" (25) and the cousin who was mauled to death by his underfed racehorse (56). In the chapter "Lunch Conversation", for instance, unnamed voices try to piece together the past story of a wedding lunch. Someone drowns during the lunch and these voices try to get the facts straight. Much confusion and correction ensue:

Wait a minute, wait a minute! When did all this happen, I'm trying to get it straight.  
 . . . Your mother was nine, Hilden was there, and your grandmother Lalla and David Grenier and his wife Dickie.  
 How old was Hilden?  
 Oh, in his early twenties.  
 But Hilden was having dinner with my mother and you . . .  
 Wait a minute, wait a minute, when is this happening?  
 Your mother is nine years old, Hilden says. And out in the sea near Negombo David Grenier is drowning. I didn't want her to go out.  
 You were in love with a nine year old? (105-7)

Myth is added to the stories when a voice recounts how Lalla, Ondaatje's maternal grandmother, who almost drowned too, relaxed and allowed the water to take her out to sea. She "eventually came back in a semi-circle. Claimed she passed ships" (106). Echoes of this story reverberate in a later section of the book when Ondaatje gives his version of Lalla's death. In this "last perfect journey" Lalla is carried away by the flood waters through the town of Nuwara Eliya and as she is swept to her death, she passes places which are dear to her. This story is beautifully moving but as Ed Jewinski reports, Lalla had actually died "unromantically" of alcohol poisoning (118).<sup>3</sup> *Running in the Family* seems to demonstrate that history is never merely a neutral recital of facts. Indeed Ondaatje is following a path that has kept some of the memories of his family intact for he asserts that "if anything", his parents' generation was kept alive through "this recording by exaggeration" (169). Of course, the task of representation is made more difficult not only by the hybrid background of the family members but also their excessive lifestyle. The Ondaatje-Gratiaen clan of the twenties and thirties were a disconcerting lot, a "charmed group . . . part of another lost world" (51). In a recent article on the interplay of invention, memory and place in identity-formation, Edward Said, while highlighting the importance of memory in questions of identity, insists that it is not only the content but the form assumed by the representation of the memory which must be taken into account because memory is also a process that can be "manipulated and intervened" (176, 179).<sup>4</sup> *Running in the Family* problematises representations of memory. The manner in which the author weaves together memories in his text attests to their malleability. Not only are the contents of the stories sometimes questionable, they are presented in the form of a dialogue in which different voices intervene and try to correct or build on varied memories. The act of assembling runs parallel with the act of disassembling. Multiple centres of consciousness create a "diaspora space" in which identities are fluid.

*Running in the Family* identifies the techniques demanded by the representations of self and communal identities. One of these techniques is destabilising the process of representation. For instance, the relationship between his

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Ondaatje (Michael's brother) writes in his own family memoir, *The Man-eater of Punanai: A Journey of Discovery to the Jungles of Old Ceylon* (1922) that Lalla and her brother had been drinking "and Lalla simply never woke up" (qtd. in Jewinski 118).

<sup>4</sup> See Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26.2 (Winter 2000): 175-92, in which he lists examples of what he calls "invented memory" (178) which are basically memories constructed with a political agenda.

parents intrigues Ondaatje but in the chapter "Honeymoon", instead of talking about his parents, he lists the different happenings that occurred that year in Ceylon, running them together with events taking place in other parts of the world: "The Nuwara Eliya Tennis Championships had ended and there were monsoons in Colombo. The headlines in the local papers said, 'Lindberg's Baby Found – A Corpse!' Fred Astaire's sister, Adele got married and the 13<sup>th</sup> president of the French Republic was shot to death by a Russian. . . . In America, women were still trying to steal the body of Valentino from his grave. . . . It was rumoured that pythons were decreasing in Africa /Charlie Chaplin was in Ceylon. He avoided all publicity and was only to be seen photographing and studying Kandyan dance" (37-8). Ondaatje expresses despair at the possibility of grasping at the "intimate and truthful": "But nothing is said of the closeness between two people: how they grew in the shade of each other's presence" (54). He is only able to evoke the time of his parents' honeymoon by putting together newspaper reports and headings. In so doing, Ondaatje moves one step further by resisting representation of identity altogether. There is also the sense that the personal story is never private, always interacting with the public/historical narrative.

Though Ondaatje is often charged with neglecting to situate his family within a larger historical context, this is not entirely true for historical facts are also important to him and his representations of identity engage with past narratives. Ondaatje talks about the importance of keeping "the facts straight, the legends uncovered" (85). For example, he draws a link between the poems inscribed on the walls of the camp where thousands of suspects were imprisoned during the Insurgency of 1971 and the fifth century graffiti poems etched into the rocks at Sigiriya – "the first folk poems of the country" (84). These in turn are linked to the Sinhalese script he learned in school: "I sat in the tropical classrooms . . . repeating them page after page. How to write. The self-portrait of language" (83). Verse upon verse connects the lives of the Ceylonese through the generations. Though there are diverse views as to the reasons Ondaatje plays down the local political events in *Running in the Family*, Sonia Snelling's reflections in "'A Human Pyramid': An (Un)Balancing Act of Ancestry and History" coincide with my discussions of identity and history in Ondaatje's text. Snelling writes that although the author does not directly address the historical and social consequences in Ceylon, he subtly discredits colonial control by refusing to conform to "Western emphasis on grand-scale historical events" — something that would explain the inclusion of the insurgents' cricket game rather than the uprising (31). The text interrogates and unsettles historiographic endeavour even as it highlights the importance of history. Ondaatje's self-conscious search for his family's lineage demonstrates that the history of the Ondaatje clan, and for that matter any history, is difficult to represent.

The author stresses the need to safeguard historical documents — tangible traces of history — but at the same time wonders at the way they easily come apart “like wet sand” (69). Hence, while history does affect the self in a real way, the historical narrative is imaged as fluid and evasive. Just as Ondaatje feels a sense of place in a gesture or a fleeting glance, so he locates history in the “diaspora space”: “I didn’t want the reader to feel locked into one character. I love that sense that history is not one opinion. I prefer a complicated history where an event is seen through many eyes or emotions, and the writer doesn’t try to control the viewpoint” (qtd. in Jewinski 133). However, Ondaatje’s representations do not always succeed in moving away from the conceptual symmetry of self and Other.

Though Ondaatje focuses on his family, he does not neglect the other native Ceylonese. Their voices add to the dense layers of narrative intertextuality, speaking about different experiences, ensuring that “history is not one opinion”. They are separate from Ondaatje but are a vital part of the movement — between belonging and alienation, the “charmed world” and other worlds — that distinguishes the travel motif in the text. These other natives figure dominantly in the poems inserted in the narrative. The verses are positioned in the centre of the text and call our attention because the writer’s style seems to alter here. While his family are characterised by “excessive movement” (Ray 46), i.e. their identities are fluid, always in the process of “becoming”, the other local residents seem to be static, attached to a particular identity: their images are “unfortunately . . . reminiscent of nineteenth-century European colonizing ethnographic depictions of landscape and people” (Ray 45). For example in “High Flowers”, the woman moves languidly in the tropical heat. “She chops the yellow coconut/the colour of Anuradhapura stone”, while the man “moves/in the air between trees” (87). The shape of his knife and pot “do not vary from 18<sup>th</sup> Century museum prints” (88). Both the woman and the man seem suspended in time, situated in a past realm. In “The Cinnamon Peeler”, the husband and wife are identified by the product of cinnamon, the first trade commodity sought by the Dutch East India Company. Their bodies carry the imprint of cinnamon scent: “you could never walk through markets/without the profession of my fingers/floating over you” (95). Ondaatje seems to reinscribe a homogenous identity for the natives; their representations are set squarely within a historical colonial framework. The positioning of these verses in the text, as Ray points out, highlights Ondaatje’s “own discourse of marginalization” (45) — meaning that by interrupting the fluidity of the narrative to situate what is marginal at the centre, Ondaatje still operates within the dichotomy of self and Other.

However, while there is no denying the exoticism of the native in the poems, there is also the sense of a people who have a special connection with the land. The poems "High Flower", "To Colombo", "Women Like You" and "The Cinnamon Peeler" gesture towards a sense of belonging to a place/space which is a privilege largely denied Ondaatje and his family. In "To Colombo", Ondaatje writes about "brown men/who rise knee deep like the earth/out of the earth" (90) – people organically sculptured by the land. This is a far cry from his Anglophile grandfather "Bampa": "It was only in the afternoons when, dressed in sarong and vest, he went out for walks over his property . . . that he seemed to become a real part of the landscape around him" (56). Though the woman chopping the coconut in "High Flowers" emerges as an exotic figure, she is also "the woman my ancestors ignored" (87), a grievous neglect on the part of his people. The man and woman in the poem move in shadows, discreet and hidden. While there are the obvious references to the peripheral status imposed on the natives, at the same time the indigenous people seem to blend with the landscape in which "everything that is important occurs in shadow" (88). This community seems to have found their place here; they belong to the land. It is also in these poems that Ondaatje expresses his double consciousness, i.e. his yearning to belong and to be different – what could be described as the shadows of diasporic writing.

Though Ondaatje pinpoints distinct differences between himself and the other natives, he expresses a wish to be like them: "If I were a cinnamon peeler/ I would ride your bed" (95). The movement between alienation and belonging, the encounter and representation of the Other and the struggle to trace "historical relations" (39) not only give shape to *Running in the Family* but form its travel motif as well. There is no rigid mode of travel here. Indeed the need to specify location seems immaterial. The text seems to "run", flowing seamlessly from one episode to another. The combination of genres which shapes the text also has a dual function, sometimes lending the book an air of authenticity and at other times mythologising characters and events. Ondaatje's travel narrative is a "textual journey" (Thieme 41) running parallel to his physical journey and the modulations of his perception and rendering of the Other. The word "running" — from the title of Ondaatje's book — carries layers of meanings. "I knew I was already running" and some lines later again, "I was running to Asia and everything would change" (22). The traveller is running back to Ceylon, the place of his birth and early childhood, and to a family he knows little about. The word alludes to the different ancestries "running" in the Ondaatje clan, a mixture that is reflective of the island's hybrid history. Consequently, the narrative "runs" against essentialising identities. These connotations of "running" highlight a need to explore self- and place-identity in all its multiplicity.



By flaunting generic conventions, Ondaatje's travelogue creates space for experimentation. The travel in the text truly lies between the parentheses of the points of departure and arrival. There is, as Thieme suggests, "little sense of linear movement" (44), a general characteristic of travel narratives, in which the traveller simply moves from the site of departure to the site of arrival. The traveller in *Running in the Family* tries to move away from boundaries by fracturing the sites of departure and arrival. Ondaatje's attempts at writing the history of his family and, to an extent, the history of the island and the indigenous community, follow a non-teleological route. History as a totalising narrative with potentialities of continuity and closure are undermined in the narrative. While the desire to recoup some semblance of the past permeates the text, the problems and challenges implicated in the process are foregrounded. There is no cohesive, unified past that can be assembled and Ondaatje relies on language, myth, memory and exaggeration to comprehend and create this family memoir.

*Running in the Family* reenacts the difficult process of historiography and the ruptures that emerge in the act of compiling a history. As Snelling observes, the self-reflexive strain in the text and its active problematisation of recording a coherent past indicate a postmodern approach to representations of history (31). The narrative persistently undermines a teleological, linear history. There is a point in the text when after leafing through some old ledgers with "immaculate recordings of local history and formal signatures" (66), Ondaatje washes his hands and sees "very clearly the deep grey colour of old paper dust going down the drain" (68). Ondaatje's historical chronicle also emphasises that the colonial history of Ceylon has created hybrid identities and the depictions of the Ondaatje clan exemplify that diasporic identity "is always plural, and in process" (Brah 197). By pursuing an "indeterminacy of genealogy", Ondaatje, as Ray astutely observes, "escape[s] into movement" (42) to represent his family as "dwellers-in-travel". His representations of his family resist essentialist definitions of origin. At the same time, they reconstruct identities disavowed by personal and historical migrations and displacements. The provisionality of identity-formation and history is foregrounded by the travel experience in the narrative. *Running in the Family* displays the complex workings of the author's mind, moving, shifting, creating varied impressions as he attempts to reconcile outward experience with the inner search for clarification and understanding.

Being at Home in Homelessness

For his first forty days a child

For his first forty days a child  
 Is given dreams of previous lives.  
 Journeys, winding paths,  
 a hundred small lessons  
 and then the past is erased.

Ondaatje 1998: 60

Towards the end of his travelogue-memoir Ondaatje writes: "I think all of our lives have been terribly shaped by what went on before us" (179). He feels that by going back to Ceylon everything will change. The homecoming does indeed challenge common conceptions of home for Ondaatje with his mobile background. Though, of course, Ondaatje cannot expect a final placement in this island, he certainly seeks for possibilities of belonging and of tracing the roots of his imagination. However, the return home is never easy and Iain Chambers highlights the dilemmas faced by the traveller: "it is now time to go home. But, then again, it may be that there is no home, no fixed abode waiting for us" (1990: 103). For the diasporic traveller whose experience of home is always ambiguous, a possible way of retrieving the past and evoking a sense of belonging is, as Chambers suggests, through "seeking to be at home here, in the only time and context we have" (1990: 104). "Here" refers to the intersections between past and present, colonial and postcolonial, local and global that constitute today's temporal and spatial configurations. "While 'going home' recalls the nostalgic associations of a mythologized point of origins (our mothers and fathers), 'being at home' in the world involves finding ourselves in a wider, shifting, but more flexible, framework in which our mothers and fathers, bonds and traditions, the myths we know to be myths yet continue to cling to, cherish and dream, exist alongside other stories, other fragments of memory and traces of time" (Chambers 1990: 104). *Running in the Family* is a vivid manifestation of this notion of "being at home" in the world. Within the space of the narrative, through myth, rumour, frail memories and historical documentation, Ondaatje creates places/spaces for himself which are layered with past meanings and associations yet are provisional and mobile at the same time.

Ondaatje finds his family within a mythical space. In "Thanikama", Ondaatje's life and the life of the whole Ondaatje clan is pictured as a "mid-summer dream. All of them had moved at times with an ass's head, Titania Dorothy Hilden Lysander de Saram, a mongrel collection part Sinhalese part Dutch part Tamil part ass moving slowly in the forests with foolish and serious obsessions" (188-9). The absence of commas in the line suggests a continuum and a histrionic blending of histories; the merging of past and present that constitutes both personal and public

"always separate until he died" (172), reappears after his death in the form of a grey cobra to protect his family. Ondaatje also images his own "being at home" within a mythical space. The surreal scene in the Wilpattu jungle is a good example. Ondaatje, his family and a friend, a "strange mixture of people", dance wildly in the middle of the jungle, in joyous celebration of the sudden torrential rain. Hands up in the air to catch the drops of water, they "are slightly drunk with this place". They soap themselves and "everyone is suddenly white, as if in a petticoat". Curious animals surround them and Ondaatje is especially fascinated by a huge wild boar which appears out of the trees (141). At this point Ondaatje feels a connection with his surroundings: "Wild black pig in a white rainstorm. Concerned about this invasion, this metamorphosis of soap, this dented Volkswagen, this jeep" (142). It is one of the few times in the text when Ondaatje portrays himself communing with the land, when he feels "in place" in the world. Certainly there are romantic, nostalgic traces in this description but a very subtle link – yet a link nonetheless – is established with other natives of the island. Through language, memory and myth Ondaatje, to borrow from David Malouf, "mythologize[s] spaces" and finds his way into a culture (3). He is able to share a communal space with the natives. The mythical dimension in the articulation of the homespace and in the human portraits are a means of discovering self and place/space for Ondaatje who believes in "the possibilities of finding [one's] own mythology in [ones's] own landscape" (qtd. in Jewinski 93).

Ondaatje's travel-memoir which questions travel as a discourse and as a genre does so in the context of postmodern and postcolonial approaches. By incorporating such perspectives, *Running in the Family* follows a discrepant travel route, abandoning "rigid" travel lines for "supple" ones. In this, it moves away from a linear movement of travel emphasising points of arrival and departure so that the journey and, by extension, the search for individual and communal identities, follows a pattern of arrivals and departures with no fixed point of definition or reference. This pattern also informs the biographical project in the text – the self is denied its usual position as a centre of authority. However, the traveller is unable to free himself completely from a discourse of fetishism inherent in exotic representations of place, space and people in the text. Nevertheless, this too is frequently challenged by representations of place/space as sites for translation and flux and of people inhabiting these sites as diverse, mobile and elusive. Such tensions point to the double pull of native and foreigner in the narrative. However, Ondaatje presents himself as embedded in a community. The "diaspora spaces" that emerge in his narrative allow for dialogue and interaction. The loose structure afforded by collage enables the travel writer to move between opposing poles of

afforded by collage enables the travel writer to move between opposing poles of belonging and alienation characteristic of a state of hybridity. Indeed the mixture of genres and voices in *Running in the Family* demonstrate that fluidity is the one viable mode towards a sense of belonging.

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