

THE TRUTH THAT WELL UP FROM THE GRAVE

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Abstract

The article critically observes the idea of colonial domination over the exploited Natives and desires to show how the director Stanley Kubrick has utilized the medium of films to express resistance to the colonial supremacy. The paper also makes an insightful and detailed study of the film The Shining as an instrument to subvert United State's barbarous greed of expansion at the cost of the lives of millions of The Native Red Indians. By the effective means of cods and images Stanley Kubrick implies the genocide of The Natives and offers us the naked truth that the so called civilized White Men conducted the most heinous act of mass murdering that caused as much carnage as possible.

Key Words: - *Westward expansion, Stanley Kubrick, Genocide of the Red Indians, The Shining, Colonial Supremacy, Resistance to oppression.*

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The practice of imposing the ruling state's political ideas, its own cultural values and its own language upon a subject state is not a new phenomenon. It existed since the birth of civilization. Michel Foucault, the most profound intellectual of this century defined knowledge as "Power". Interestingly, the word imperialism has its roots in the Latin word "imperium" which has many meanings such as, authority, power, command, dominion, realm and empire. The Rulers from both the western and the eastern world have expanded their kingdom as they believed in "civilizing the individuals" who were barbarians as according to their perception. All the empires including Chinese Empire, Sumerian Empire, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and Byzantine Empire and the various empires of Islam have had utmost faith in this practice.

By the end of the 19th century more than half of the world had become the colonies of the British Empire. Imperialism had various motives. Dictators like Hitler and Mussolini perceived imperialism as a natural struggle to survive. Poet Rudyard Kipling coined it as "The White Man's Burden" to civilize the barbarians. Modernist Joseph Conrad took a step ahead and declared Africa as the 'Dark Continent' in his novel "Heart of Darkness", the implication is that all of the African Natives have no sense of morality and their life is a total chaos therefore they need to be 'civilized' by the White Reformers.

When we observe the idea of Westward expansion we realize the hidden fact that The Americans eradicated the existence of the Native Red Indians. In order to expand their territories the Americans looked at the far west. As they moved further they massacred all the Red Indians since they displayed a strong resistance to this encroachment. The genocide of the Red Indians is the bloodiest truth upon which the kingdom of American Supremacy is built. Within this context Stanley Kubrick's -the most ambiguous master piece- *The Shining* analyses and symbolically subverts the colonial supremacy over the natives. By the effective means of codes and images Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* implies the genocide of the Red Indians and offers us the naked truth that the so called civilized White Men conducted the most heinous act of mass murdering which caused as much carnage as possible.

We must admit that history has many notions. Notion has many synonyms. It can stand for perception, concept or ideas, beliefs, views and opinions. An enlightened poet composes his poem with symbols and codes. The poet's intention is to conceal his actual ideas or thoughts. A reader has to strive hard to achieve the true notions of the poet. Like an enlightened poet

director Stanley Kubrick creates his films out of ambiguity and skepticism. He is an influential visionary, far sighted futurist man who has stimulated a generation through his ambiguous masterpieces. Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) was born in New York and was one among the greatest film maker of this century. He emerged as a director when the world was recovering from the horrors of the Second World War. His films were concerned with the mysteries of human heart. Stanley Kubrick redefined the idea of visual media by introducing post-modernist themes to the audience thus allowing them to enhance their insights. Besides from being a hailed director, Kubrick was also a genius photographer to the famous Life magazine. He inspired many directors like Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Oliver Stone, and Christopher Nolan and so on. In a way he opened the eyes of a generation. This paper's intention is to analyze codes and symbols that constantly appear in Kubrick's *The Shining* and to trace his notions of the reality. Stanley Kubrick emerged as the director when world was recovering from the horrors of the Second World War. His films were concerned with the mysteries of human heart. Stanley Kubrick redefined the idea of visual media by introducing post modernist themes to the audience thus allowing them to enhance their insights. Besides, being a hailed director, Kubrick was also a genius photographer, a fantastic editor, a perfect screen writer. His films have touched almost all kind of genres; be it a war epic, a scientific fiction, or be it a horror, a romance or a black comedy. He created the strongly haunting as well as thought provoking films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*ⁱⁱ, *A Clock Work Orange*ⁱⁱⁱ

Stanley Kubrick is a master in divulging a story by the means of visual technology. He unveils the story through discourses, narrative methods and makes the perfect use of visuals to carry on the plot. *The Shining* revolves around the Overlook Hotel, an allegorical entity to United States of America. A family heads to an isolated hotel for the winter. Jack (Jack Nicolson) is appointed as the care taker of this isolated hotel, during the winter season. At the hotel, due to excessive claustrophobic sensation and Jack's own personal depression and failures he senses the presence of supernatural spirits. All of these disturbing developments persuade him to murder his wife and his son Danny, who is gifted with the psychic power. In the due course of time he becomes a prey of his own insanity. It appears from the surface as though the film is just about a failed and depressive writer, Jack Torrance, the caretaker who slowly descends into the madness in the haunted Overlook Hotel. . But it is not as simple as it appears to be since the implication is colossal.

When the poster of the film "The Shining" came out it said, "The tide of terror that swept across America." Now the word "Tide of Terror" is a direct reference to the genocide of the Red Indians. The terrifying memory in the history of America is the genocide of the Natives. However the American History has been repressing these nightmarish recollections, here we need to carefully analyze the sentence on the poster. According to it the term "wave of terror" is not confined to a 'family' but to a larger entity, "United States Of America". Later a vigilant viewing of the film reveals reference being made to the Native indigenous people of America (a kind of tribes who took shelter in American forests). One of the character Stuart Ullman(the manager of the over look hotel) tells Wendy(wife to Jack, the protagonist of the film) that when building the hotel a few Native American attacked on them since it was constructed on

their(Native American)burial ground. So the wave of terror that swept across America was the genocidal armies and the white men with their axe. In other words in the name of industrialization Americans have eradicated the natives from their forests forcefully. When they resisted they were brutally murdered. Jack who has the urge to chop of his own family is an allegory to the white men, who had massacred the natives. The so called sophisticated Americans had eliminated the natives from their homes, so that the Americans can build lavish hotels and other amusing constructions.

A meticulous observation of the opening scenes of the film *The Shining* would reveal the word Calumet, branded on the baking powder as a logo. The word 'Calumet' literary means American Indian Peace Pipe which has a ritualistic value. The Native Americans share their pipe with the Whites only as a significant custom which would bring peace between the both. To highlight this aspect here we have a little boy Danny (Son to Jack the psychopath representing the cruel side of America) and Dick Halloran (the representation of The Natives), sharing an ice cream re visiting the idea of peace treaty. Mr. Dick explains the true meaning behind the word 'Shining'. "Those who can shine will see what happened before.... "Here the inference is leading us to the brutal facts behind the polished and sophisticated standard of living of the modern America. A sensitive mind still can see the gruesome blood soaked incidents such as the mass killings of the Natives in the distance history. That's what the word Shining stands for.

Britain seemed to foster in its political institutions as well as in literature universal ideas for proper living, while at the same time perpetuating the violent enslavement of Africans and other imperialist cruelties around the world, causing untold misery and destroying millions of lives. To emphasize this notion here Kubrick brings in the allusion of Rudyard Kipling poem "The White Man's Burden" in a very sarcastic manner. In one of the scene the antagonist of the film Jack Torrance is talking to himself. He is an alcoholic and is eager to get a drink at the deserted bar of the overlook hotel. So he imagines that he sees a bar tender and utters the words "White Man's Burden". He uses this phrase twice and according Kubrick white man's burden is to drink alcohol and to chop out the Afro American who in the film came to rescue the fragile victims i.e. Jack's wife and an eight year old son. Actually, the Afro American is black and Jack murders him as he comes to save them. Therefore Kubrick, in a broad sense, is suggesting the brutal exploitations of the whites over the natives or the dominated. Implication is huge here. The Whites came to the natives land, claiming to civilize them, asserting to bless the natives with their enlightened life style. Yet the reality differs from the presumed positive images. They exploited the natives, marginalized them and labeled the natives as the "others". This comes as a sharp criticism of Kipling's poem where he suggests that the White Man's burden is to civilize the barbarians. On the contrary in the film *The Shining* the White man is evolved with the most barbaric attitude.

As I mentioned earlier the neatly decorated, lavishly designed, sophisticatedly constructed Over Look hotel is erected upon the graves of the Native Indians. Regardless of these artificial decoration as well as blunt aristocratic life style, no one can deny the ghastly

truth which is the true source for all these celebrations. The breathtaking elevator scene in the film symbolizes this impression. Jack's son, Danny has the telepathic powers and he could see through both past and the present. In one of his vision he sees a huge cascade of blood from an elevator of the Over Look hotel. This symbolizes the blood of the countless American Natives upon whose bodies the hotel has been built. The literal blood of the natives is spilling out of the elevator maze. Kubrick is a Freudian and has used Sigmund Freud's work while writing the screenplays. Here, he is revealing that the sinful deeds keep coming out despite the historical repression. They always flow beyond the surface. Therefore the predominant concealed theme of the movie is about the blood on which the nations are built; especially he is linking this blood to the glory of United States. Kubrick uses this scene as a perfect metaphor for human being's subdued psyche; the elevator's doors are closed but the blood is overflowing from the inside, eventually the door slides out since it cannot hold the flow. The Whites do not want to admit the terrifying crimes which they have committed in the distant past yet it explodes as the secrets cannot be stopped from breaking out.

There is a scene in which Jack enters into the room 237 and he sees a beautiful woman, emerging from the bath tub. With an unquenchable lust, Jack kisses the woman but as he does he finds that she is not really a beautiful woman, but a half burnt, dreadful old lady who is now walking towards him. As Jack discovers this he is horrified and locks the room. At the outset this scene appears as yet another horror thrills. However it draws our attention to the prohibited truths. In other words, in the film the room 237 is a forbidden room. The young boy Danny has strongly been advised against entering into that room. But still he does and gets beaten. Therefore the room 237 is a symbol for all the brutal incidents that took place in the American History. The alleged elimination of the Red Indians is one among the brutal sides of American History which should not be revived at any cost. They are not comfortable in remembering what has already past. They even hide the truths from the books of the history. They formulate a false impression in the young minds. The beautiful woman who emerges from the bath tub in the room 237 comes forward to seduce Jack, the antagonist, but she suddenly turns out to be gruesome old woman. Implication is the gorgeous elegant cultured representation of American contemporary life style is surely capable of seducing anyone however that is not the true face as it has been the mask to conceal the ghastly olden times where a generation of the tribal inhabitants was exterminated.

The antagonist Jack Torrance is a former school teacher and eager to be a writer finds solace in the isolated over look hotel. His family follows him to the hotel with a hope. When he eventually transforms to be a blood thirsty monster with a strong urge to kill both his wife and his son we realize the idea of the protector being the destroyer. Earlier the tribal were depicted as monsters who would mercilessly massacre the innocent humans. One can recall the depiction of the Native Africans in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness". They were portrayed as the savages. On the contrary Mr. Jack Torrance, the neat white man, happens to commit a disgraceful action which the Natives were presumed to do.

Most of the films of Kubrick are ambiguous and are concealed criticisms of the contemporary world. In that sense his film *The Shining* is a multi dimension film. Let us have a look at this instance. In Stephan King's novel *'The Shining'* the number of the room is 217, but in the film Kubrick has changed it to 237. The moon travels around the earth at an average distance of about 237 miles. As the little boy Danny is playing on the carpet a round tennis ball approaches him that is thrown out from the room number 237. The patterns of the rug where the toys are arranged resemblances the launch pad of NASA. As the boy Danny gets up and begin to walk towards the room 237, one can notice an image of rocket on it, a very special rocket that says 'Apollo 11'. Apollo 11, the name of the NASA's project specially launched as the mission to moon. According to some theory the moon landing had actually taken place but NASA appointed Stanley Kubrick to shoot the whole scenario here on earth. As per as this analysis, Room 237 represents moon. The little boy Danny and the elderly psychopathic father Jack both represent the two sides of the same person. To put it much more precisely both of them signify Stanley Kubrick. In fact, it might be seen as Kubrick has actually wanted to make a confession to the whole world about his involvement in the 'Moon Landing'. The mission to moon and the profoundly disturbing Vietnam War almost occurred concurrently. American's involvement in the Vietnam War resulted in the countless deaths of innocent peasant of the Vietnams. However the War did certainly come as a fund raiser for most of the scientific experiments which took place in that time. Kubrick is trying to create an invisible link between these separate incidents (moon landing and the War in Vietnam). Therefore the significance of the huge cascade of blood from a closed elevator of the Over Look hotel can also be connected to the idea of moon landing. In that scene the elevator's doors are closed but the blood is overflowing from the inside, eventually the door slides out since it cannot hold the flow. This is not a horror trick at all. It is much more intense. The Blood signifies the flesh and blood of the Vietnam's Peasants and other innocent civilians as well as young American Soldiers and the blood of Native Americans. Americans alleged role in the war has of course given a golden opportunity for the War Lords to sell their weapons and the state invested the war money on these prolific experiments. For that reason it was mentioned earlier that the civilized Whites who assumed the responsibilities of 'civilizing' the oppressed class had ended up in being the barbarians.

The director Stanley Kubrick has utilized the medium of films to express resistance to the colonial supremacy. The concern of this paper is to decode the symbols and ciphers, so that the actual intentions and point of views of the director shall reach the world of literature. His film "*The Shining*" can be interpreted on several grounds. In the post modern world, we are all creating the world of our own, by isolating ourselves from the external reality. '*The Shining*' intensely portrays the troubles of human segregation in the modern atmosphere. Although it is based on Stephen King's popular entertainment novel, Kubrick expands it into a thoroughly postmodern work of art. Here the 'postmodernist effect' is created by constructing 'depthless character'. In King's original novel the central character Jack and Wendy are strong and intelligent, Kubrick's Wendy and Jack are flat and ordinary. Sometime they are treated in such a "depthless" way that it is hard to accept them as normal human beings. The pale conversations, dull reflexes suggest a "flattened" human psyche, and these "depthless"

characters take the film to a new thematic and to a fresh metaphysical level. If Stephan King's story is an epic of Good versus Evil, Kubrick's film is much more ambiguous as it endeavors to explore the subconscious empire. So the construction of the hollow characters is deliberate attempt to emphasize the void space created by the brutal past of the West. In the climax, we notice that Jack Torrance remains frozen in the midst of the heavy snow. Kubrick is certainly suggesting that many elements can freeze a man, untold or repressed history is definitely on among them. Mr. Jack Torrance remains as an outsider until the end for he can't come out from the feeling that he was there in the hotel before. He is representative of the man in the postmodern world who is neither capable of justifying his country's lurid past nor can adopt the present.

ⁱMichel Foucault has been hailed as the most powerful literary theorist of this century who is the author of thought provoking books such as *Madness and Civilization*, *History of Sexuality*

ⁱⁱ*2001: A Space Odyssey (1969)* Scientific Fiction, 1969. It became a postmodernist classic. The film was written by Arthur Clarke (based on his novel) and Kubrick. It is well known for its ambiguous themes, revolving around complex issues like, dawn of the man and his ultimate attempt to land on Moon. Louise Sweeney of *The Christian Science Monitor* felt that *2001* was "a brilliant intergalactic satire on modern technology. It's also a dazzling 160-minute tour on the Kubrick filmship through the universe out there beyond our earth."

ⁱⁱⁱ*A Clock Work Orange (1971)* is about behavioral therapy and the authorities' immense struggle to alter the behavior of a human being.

^{iv}Stephen King is a popular writer of the horror fictions. "The Shining" was his novel which was adapted to the screen by Stanley Kubrick.

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