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“She was more patient than nurse”. The Transformation and Empowerment of the Nurse as a Wounded Healer in Michael Ondaatje´s *The English Patient* (1992)

Final Degree Project/ BA dissertation

Author: Yasmeen Al Jaabari

Supervisor: Maria Cristina Pividori

Department of English Philology and German Studies

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Statement of Intellectual Honesty

Your name: Yasmeen Al Jaabari

Title of Assignment: "She was more patient than nurse". The Transformation and Empowerment of the Nurse as a Wounded Healer in Michael Ondaatje´s *The English Patient* (1992)

I declare that this is a totally original piece of work; all secondary sources have been correctly cited. I also understand that plagiarism is an unacceptable practise which will lead to the automatic failing of this assignment.

Signature and date: 12th of June 2023

Yours sincerely,

Yasmeen Al-Jaabari

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Abstract

During the Second World War, due to the increased demand for medical care and the numerous challenges they faced, nurses were not only viewed as reminders of the wives, daughters, and mothers that soldiers had left at home, but also as empowered individuals. As recent historical studies suggest, during the war nurses risked their lives to provide care for others and save countless lives and were also subject to male pressures based on their gender, sexuality, and desire to pursue autonomous (Hegarty, 2008; Winchell, 2008; McEuen, 2011).

Unlike other novels featuring female nurses during WWII, *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael Ondaatje, challenges traditional depictions of the military nurse to present Hana, a more complex and multidimensional character who chooses to remain in an abandoned Italian villa after the war to take care of a severely burned patient and at the same time deal with her own traumatic wounds (including the loss of her son, father, lover, and the memories of the patients she was unable to save). Based on Margaret McAllister's concept of the "wounded healer," a term initially coined by Carl Jung in his analysis of the Greek mythological figure Chiron, I will contend that Hana's traumatic wounds and vulnerability not only enable her to discover her true self through nursing, which she experiences as an act of survival, but also enhance her capacity to develop more therapeutic and compassionate relationships with the male characters in the novel. This dissertation will analyse the trope of the nurse as the embodiment of Hana's own personal path towards physical and emotional healing, as well as the complex and multi-layered connections she forms with an ambiguous "English patient," an Indian sapper, and an Italian/Canadian spy. Particular attention will be paid to, on one hand, the impact these interactions have on the masculine characters and on Hana's identity as a young woman coping with loss, trauma, and displacement and, on the other, Arnold Van Gennep's "rites of passages" (1960), as the characters in the villa undergo transformations that mirror the stages of separation, transition (liminality), and incorporation found in Van Gennep's framework.

Keywords: wounded healer, empowerment, trauma, vulnerability, identity, liminality, rites of passage, displacement

0. Introduction

During World War II, nurses laboured at the front line under very difficult and dangerous conditions. The reality of warfare compelled them not only to adapt to the circumstances, but also to improvise and make critical decisions. They played a significant role in caring for wounded soldiers and raising their morale. Moreover, they served in various capacities and were deployed to war zones and military hospitals where they were highly relevant not just for their professional and medical skills—they worked long hours treating battle injuries, trench foot, and combat fatigue— but because they reminded soldiers of the spouses, daughters, and mothers left at home and provided them with the emotional support they needed.

Such were the dangers they faced that army nurses utilised firearms for protection and some nurses received additional training to become flight nurses or evacuation nurses. In addition to their duties in field hospitals, Fessler states that "nurses persevered and provided the highest quality of care under the most adverse conditions, often against the greatest odds "(1997: 10). Although being so near the battlefield increased the risk for nurses to becoming prisoners of war, the risk was outweighed by the service rendered and the lives saved. Because of the increased demand for medical care, their new responsibilities, and the many challenges they faced, nurses were not just seen as angels, *madonnas,* or lovers, but were provided with opportunities and a sense of empowerment and autonomy that they had not been given prior to the war.

Recent historical works (Hegarty, 2008; Winchell, 2008; McEuen, 2011, among others), not only state that nurses were essential to the war effort, risking their own lives to provide care for others and save innumerable lives, but they were also subject to male pressure due to their gender, sexuality, and their desire to pursue autonomous goals.

During the Second World War, as Fessler states, nurses "froze, starved, suffered segregation, and became ill with numerous unknown diseases" (1997:10). What is more, a vast majority of them suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because they were exposed to a wide range of traumatic events—including the suffering and deaths of soldiers, the impact of weapons, and the emotional trauma of caring for the wounded—that led to anxiety, fear, hallucinations, and nightmares. Moreover, nurses faced challenging working conditions, including long hours, shortage of medical supplies, high patient-to-nurse ratios, verbal or physical mistreatment by patients or visiting relatives, and were vulnerable to enemy attacks and bombings. Referring to the psychological toll nurses experienced during WWII, Herman notes that "even those who are lucky enough to escape physically unscathed still lose the internal psychological structures of a self securely attached to others"(1997: 216). Furthermore, the stigma associated with mental health issues during that time prevented many nurses from seeking help for their symptoms, which may have prolonged their suffering and delayed their recovery.

Among the contemporary novels featuring female nurses during World War II are Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows' *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008), Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale* (2015), Kate Quinn's *The Alice Network* (2017), RV Doon's *The War Nurse* (2014), Elizabeth's Wain's *Code Name Verity* (2013). During the conflict, most of the women in these novels give their lives to save their families and their way of life. Themes of shattered lives, remorse, and redemption are emphasised, as well as survival, nursing, and the relationship between women.

The English Patient (1992) by Michael Ondaatje challenges the traditional depiction of the military nurse as an angel, lover, or a domineering woman by presenting a more complex and multidimensional character. Through the novel's protagonist, Hana,

Ondaatje subverts stereotypical portrayals by depicting a traumatised nurse who chooses to remain in an abandoned Italian villa after World War II in order to care for a severely burned patient known only as “the English patient.” Through Hana's interactions with the male characters, in particular the English patient in the villa, Ondaatje redefines the nurse-patient relationship. Hana is depicted as an ambivalent character with flaws and vulnerabilities who struggles not only with loneliness, fear, and her own personal demons, but also with the weight of her responsibilities as a nurse as a result of the many losses she has suffered during the conflict (including those of her son, father, lover, and the patients she has been unable to save).

Based on Margaret McAllister's concept of the “wounded healer,” a concept coined by Carl Jung in his analysis of the Greek mythological figure of Chiron, and on “the idea that the healer could be more effective in present if they developed awareness of their past wounds and used this vulnerability to connect and empathise with their patients”(McAllister, 2017:7), I will argue that Hana’s traumatic wounds and vulnerability allow her to find her true self through nursing. Hana experiences nursing as an act of survival, but also as a way to strengthen her ability to build more therapeutic and compassionate relationships with the male characters in the novel who are also grappling with their own emotional and physical wounds. The application of specific concepts, particularly Arnold Van Gennep’s “rites of passage” (1960)—separation, margin and aggregation—and Victor Turner’s “liminality” (1969) will also help me explore the challenges faced by the characters as they navigate the liminal space of their existence throughout the ravages of war and their subsequent relocation to an Italian villa. This significant location serves as a catalyst for their healing.

This dissertation will rely on research on Gender and Trauma Studies to analyse the trope of the nurse as the embodiment of Hana's own personal path towards physical

and emotional healing and the complex and multi-layered connections she creates with an ambiguous “English Patient,” with Kip, an Indian sapper, and with Caravaggio, an Italian/Canadian spy. As a wounded healer, Hana’s struggles give her a unique perspective on the healing processes of the three men, as she is able to offer empathy and understanding to the patient, Kip, and Caravaggio in a way that other nurses cannot. They all need to reassemble themselves and uncover a sense of self beneath the shattered shards of their identities. Particular attention will be given to the impact that these interactions have on the male characters themselves and on Hana's identity as a young woman coping with loss, trauma, and displacement.

1. World War II as a Liminal Period for the Characters of *The English Patient*

This section offers insights into the transformative nature of war and its impact on the characters of the novel, particularly on the nurse Hana. I will focus on the disruptive and transformative nature of war itself as a liminal period. By examining the war experience as a rite of passage for the characters, I will explore the effects of war trauma on Caravaggio, Kip, the English Patient and Hana. My main focus is on Hana's experience as a nurse though, as I aim to connect her unique perspective to the broader understanding of how war trauma affects the four characters, particularly in gendered contexts.

The United States and the United Kingdom plotted an invasion against Italy in order to vanquish the Axis powers, Italy, and Germany. The Italian Campaign spanned two years and included Allied landings on the coast and land combat from Sicily and southern Italy to Nazi-occupied northern Italy. It was a violent, protracted conflict between the Germans and the Allies following the fall of the fascist government of Benito Mussolini. The Allies did not achieve a decisive victory until the spring of 1945, when all German forces on Italian territory capitulated and the war came to an end.

The Second World War—particularly the North African and the Italian campaign—is a central theme in Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), as the story is set in the bomb-damaged Italian villa of San Girolamo (in Fiesole), a monastery that is converted into a makeshift hospital during the waning days of the war. The novel explores the experiences of the four main characters whose lives intersect in this setting: Hana, a young nurse who tends to the English patient, a severely burned and amnesiac pilot; Kip, a Sikh sapper who works with the British bomb disposal unit; and Caravaggio, a Canadian

intelligence agent. Throughout the novel, the war is presented as a chaotic and destructive force that ravages Europe and leaves its mark on each of the characters in different ways.

The war results in radical change for the characters in the novel as it compels them to transgress national, socioeconomic, political, temporal, and spatial boundaries. Therefore, the war is perceived as a liminal period in the sense that it is a transitional phase through which people shift from one way of life to another. As a liminal period, war involves significant disruption and change that separates the characters from theit ordinary, stable world into a new and uncertain reality.

Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (1960)[1] and Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process* (1969) discuss the concept of "liminality", which involves a process of transition, an ambiguous zone that resides "'betwixt and between' defined states of culture and society" (Turner, 1966: 107) .Van Gennep studies various cultural and social rituals from different societies and identifies a common pattern or structure which is distinguished by three phases: "rites of separation, a transition rites, and an incorporation" (Van Gennep, 1960: 11) . According to Van Gennep, "the rites of separation from a previous world" are called "preliminal rites" (1960: 21). This phase involves the individual being detached from the previous identity and prepared for the upcoming change. The rites "executed during the transitional stage are liminal (or threshold) rites" (1960: 21), and place the individual in a state of ambiguity, being neither in the old social status nor fully incorporated into the new one. Van Gennep regards the challenges and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world as "post-liminal rites" (1960: 21) because they involve the individual's reintegration into society with their new social or cultural status or identity. As said above, the essence of "liminality" is ambiguity, disorientation,

[1] In 1909, Van Gennep's book was initially published in French, and later in 1960, the University of Chicago Press translated it into English.

transformation, and perplexity regarding the status of the individual within a particular society. Liminality occurs during rites of passage, such as initiation rituals, but it can also be present in other types of experiences, including war.

In *No Man's Land*, Eric Leed adapts the work of Van Gennep and Turner on rituals to study the experience of the First World War and argues that the war gave birth to a generation of men who continued to live in an internal "No Man's Land"—the most lasting and disturbing image" to them (1979: 15)—because they failed to resolve the central contradictions in their experience of the war: "The experience of war was an experience of marginality, and the "change of character' undergone by the combatant could adequately be summarized as marginalization" (1979: 15).

1.1 The Effects of War-Related Traumas on the Characters

In *The English Patient*, the characters gain knowledge and experience during the Second World War, but, as Leed suggests in connection to the soldiers of the Great War, they remain fragile and shell-shocked. The outbreak of hostilities represents a rupture in their personal and social fabric and creates a state of liminality that lasts for the duration of the conflict and throughout their recovery in the Italian villa. During this period, their social and cultural boundaries are suspended or redefined, and they are forced to adapt to new and often traumatic circumstances. This includes the loss of loved ones, their displacement from their homes and communities, the exposure to extreme violence, and the erosion of their established values and beliefs.

Hana, Caravaggio, Kip, and Almásy are exiles from their homeland. Their "rites of passage" begin with the separation from their homelands. These rites of passage, specifically the initial stages of separation and transition or liminality, establish a framework for understanding the war-related journey of the characters in Ondaatje's

novel. This framework enables an analysis of the transformations they undergo, encompassing both personal and social status changes. This section explores what "separation" and "liminality" truly signify to the characters and how they shed light on the disruptions that form a crucial part of their war experiences.

Caravaggio is a Canadian-born Italian immigrant who fought for the Allies in World War II as part of the British foreign intelligence service. During the war, he remains in North Africa and uses his former skills as a thief to infiltrate German strongholds and steal various documents. He contends with his sense of self during the conflict as both Italy and Hungary side with the Germans, and this is an allegiance with which Caravaggio appears to contend. The Germans capture Caravaggio near the end of the conflict and he endures severe physical and psychological torment as they use various interrogation techniques to extract information from him. Among the punishments he receives, his wrists are handcuffed to table legs and his thumbs are cut off (Ondaatje, 1992:54). These experiences leave Caravaggio deeply traumatized. He is transported to a military hospital in Rome suffering from shell-shock. In the hospital, he is treated as a war hero. Yet, Caravaggio is haunted by his war experiences: "For months afterwards he found himself looking at only the thumbs of people" (Ondaatje, 1992: 59).

Kip is a non-white sapper in a predominantly white army, a mysterious young Sikh who appears to have assimilated into English culture. As a colonised individual with a composite, in-between identity, he has a dual perspective that seems to disrupt the binaries of racist and colonial discourses. Kaimaki explains that "Ondaatje's Kip at first, craves acceptance among the English. He comes across as a pushover. He is the perfect subject, yet constantly an outsider, looking in" (2019: 206). Kip feels like an alien stranded in a foreign land; however, his war experience leaves him so traumatised and injured that he does not feel capable of returning to his life before the war. Futhermore,

he is doubly alienated due to his profession, which places him under a constant threat of death, and his foreignness, which reduces him to "the anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world" (Ondaatje, 1993:196) having been separated from his family by the demands of the war.

The protagonist of the novel, known as "the English patient," is László Almásy, a Hungarian Count, explorer of the desert and member of the British cartography group who conceals his identity and his service to the Germans during World War II. Almásy is a self-taught man, who harbours a deep fascination for maps, the desert landscape, and the works of Herodotus. He has an affair with a married woman, Katharine. When her husband, Geoffrey Clifton, finds out about the relationship, he makes a perilous attempt to eliminate all three of them by directing his aircraft towards Almásy, who is standing on the desert ground. Almásy narrowly evades the collision, but the ensuing crash results in Clifton's death, and in Katharine sustaining severe injuries. Almásy rescues Katharine and leaves her in a remote cave in the desert and goes for help. Yet, he is taken captive by the British military , as they erroneously believe him to be a German envoy. By the time Almásy arrives at the cave to rescue her, Katharine has already passed away. The severe burns sustained in the aircraft accident have rendered Almásy unidentifiable. The death of Katharine and his involvement in the war itself, leave Almásy both physically and emotionally traumatised. The physical pain and the scars serve as constant reminders of the tragedy, exacerbating his psychological distress.

1.2 The Traumatic Experiences of Nurse Hana During the War

Hana, a twenty-year-old Canadian nurse, makes the difficult decision to leave behind her family home in Canada and work as a resolute nurse amidst the harsh conditions of WWII. In the face of relentless challenges and witnessing the daily traumas of the

frontline, she must maintain an unwavering composure and display a stoic demeanour. While at the war front, Hana is aware that the spectre of death could manifest at any moment and that the principles that function well in times of peace do not always apply in times of war. She has to improvise and create new norms to respond to the crisis; her work is reduced to facilitating the safe transition from the world of war to the realm of patients and vice versa. Brooks explains that "The vast majority of nursing sisters who went to war between 1939 and 1945 therefore had no military experience. Few had even been abroad, let alone worked overseas, and many had lived the sheltered lives of young respectable women who moved from the parental home to the hospital Nurses' Home" (2018:3).

Hana's traumatic experiences during the war can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the challenges faced by nurses in general. As a young woman and nurse, she is thrust into the brutal realities of adulthood, compelled by the nature of her profession. In her journey, she yearns for nursing care that is not only attentive and compassionate, but also capable of fulfilling the needs of all her patients. Nevertheless, she is compelled to continue working for her own survival in a world that is tumultuous and unpredictable: "with all of her worst patients, she survived by keeping a coldness hidden in her role as nurse. I will survive this. I won´t fall apart at this. These were buried sentences all through her war" (Ondaatje, 1992:48).

Hana adopts an impersonal approach to nursing during the war that allows her to distance herself both from who she is, and from who her patients are. This emotional detachment serves as a coping mechanism, making it easier for her to tolerate the atrocities of war and the devastating frequency of loss and death. In an effort to cope with trauma, Hana disassociates from her former self and assumes a more generic identity as "Buddy, "blurring the lines between herself and the combatants. By referring to the

patients as “Buddy,” she creates a necessary emotional distance, relieving herself of the burden to recall each soldier's name. Hana’s interactions with her patients are limited to simple greetings of “Hello Buddy” and “goodbye Buddy” due to the continuous influx of new patients who rapidly pass away. Hana believes that “every damn general should have had my job”(Ondaatje, 1992: 84) and expose themselves to the intimate details of suffering, agony and devastation caused by the conflict. She contends that if these high-ranking officials truly understood the harrowing realities, they would have been less ‘enthusiastic’ about war.

In Santa Chiara Hospital, Hana has an emotional breakdown when she receives a letter from “an official” telling her “of the death of her father” (Ondaatje, 1992:41). Patrick, Hana’s father, enlists to serve in the Canadian Army during World War II, only to tragically meet his end alone and severely burned in a dovecot in France, far away from Hana’s presence. The devasting loss of Patrick serves as evidence of the profound trauma Hana must endure as a result of the conflict. She carries an immense sense of remorse for not being able to be by her father's side during his final moments, particularly given the potential nursing assistance she could have provided. Unwilling to embrace the reality of her father's passing, Hana retreats into the private realm of reverie in which her father's passing is denied. Engaging in her first conversation with the English patient at the Pisa hospital, she seizes the chance to substitute this fantasy for the concrete historical truth.. When asked, “What does your father do?” she deliberately eliminates the possibility of Patrick's demise from verbal acknowledgment and responds: “He is…he is in the war” (Ondaatje, 1992:42). This deliberate omission shields her from the painful truth and allows her to momentarily retreat into the realm of her constructed fantasy.

Hana, burdened by the traumas of war, experiences hallucinations; at the hospital, she sees “a white lion” (Ondaatje, 1992:40), a symbol of her emotional turmoil. Alongside

these visions, Hana grapples with additional agonies, including the loss of her lover during the war and the heart-wrenching decision not to continue with her pregnancy. Hana's claim that she "had to lose" her child reflects the grim reality forced upon her by the war's violence and hardship. It becomes evident that Hana, in the midst of war, would be unable to provide for and protect a child on her own, and this compels her to make an incredibly difficult choice. It becomes evident that Hana, in the midst of war, would be unable to provide for and protect a child on her own, so she is compelled to make this difficult choice. This decision continues to haunt Hana, as evidenced by the fact that she continues to speak about the child long after her abortion "I lost the child. I mean, I had to lose it. The father was already dead. There was a war" (Ondaatje, 1992: 82).

Hana carries deep emotional scars resulting from the overwhelming trauma she witnesses and experiences herself throughout the war: her experiences encompass caring for numerous wounded soldiers, the devastating news of her father's death in France, the loss of her Canadian lover, the weight of an unexpected pregnancy and the heart-wrenching decision to terminate it. The weight of these experiences shapes her character, as she grapples with their lasting impact.

2. The Villa as a Place of Recovery and Hana´s Role as a Wounded Healer

This section explores Hana's role as a wounded healer in the novel. I will focus on the villa as a crucial setting in the characters' rite of passage, continuing the liminal space created by the war. Additionally, I will examine the connection between liminality and the concept of the wounded healer, central to my analysis. By examining the villa's transformative qualities and studying the wounded healer archetype, this section explores how the villa aids Hana and the three male characters in their journey towards healing from the wounds inflicted by war. Understanding the dynamics between Hana and each

of the characters—Caravaggio, Kip, and the English patient— is essential in comprehending the healing process within the villa.

As World War II drew to a close, the protagonists moved into an Italian villa, which serves as a sanctuary for the characters as they navigate the transition period between their past traumas and their new circumstances. Within the confines of the villa , the characters embark on the arduous process of healing, as they grapple with their haunting war memories. Through meaningful communication with one another, they find solace and strength, gradually recovering from their physical and psychological wounds and overcoming the lingering effects of their traumas.

Villa San Girolamo, a former convent in the Tuscan highlands north of Florence that had been occupied by the Germans, served as an Allied field hospital. Spinks states that the Villa San Girolamo extends the symbolic resonance (…) of the treasure houses of Renaissance art, the mined and disfigured villa provides a grim reminder of the fragility of European cultural humanism in the face of political barbarism" (2009 :173). The serene Tuscan countryside serves as a stark contrast to the war's devastation and mortality, as well as the villa's own experience of bombardment**.** The region, encompassing gentle slopes, valleys, and bordered by mountain ranges to the north and northeast, emerges as a picturesque landscape. At the end of WWII, the Tuscan countryside, adorned with ancient fortifications, transformed into both refuge and challenge. It provided safe havens for retreating German forces, allowing them to regroup and find temporary respite. However, for the Allied forces striving to liberate Italy from Axis control, these landscapes posed formidable obstacles. Before departing, the retreating Germans meticulously prepared the villa, rigging it with numerous explosives. As a result, the villa becomes a treacherous space, with many chambers sealed off and rendered inaccessible.

The scars of war are evident as walls and ceilings are absent, exposing the once-grand interiors to the elements.

2.1 The Characters as Wounded Healers

It is within the villa that the four characters attempt to escape the reality of the conflict. “The Villa seemed a ruin” (Ondaatje, 1992: 14) and represents the effects of war's destruction on both the physical environment and the characters who seek solace within its walls. Despite the devastation that surrounds them, the villa becomes a refuge, a place where they can momentarily escape the external destruction. The once habitable space is now deteriorated, mirroring the characters’ own transient and temporary existence. However, they choose to remain, determined to restore its functionality as a demonstration of their resilience and ability to persevere despite their own deterioration as human beings.

The characters undergo emotional restoration alongside the physical rehabilitation of the villa. Through the meaningful relationships they establish within the villa, their own transformation becomes evident. All of them, as exiles, were uprooted and forged new identities in this foreign country. In a sense, they establish a new community insulated from the violence and conflict that permeates the outside world.

The concept of “the wounded healer” has often been linked to the Greek myth of Chiron. Chiron’s journey as a wounded healer began when he was accidentally struck by a poisoned arrow fired by Hercules. Despite being immortal, Chiron experienced excruciating pain as a result of the wound, which could not be healed. This made him intimately familiar with the suffering of others. Due to his compassionate nature and vast knowledge of healing arts, Chiron became a renowned teacher and mentor. Among his

notable students was Asklepios (Aesculapius), the god of healing. Chiron instructed Asklepios in the art of medicine, passing on his wisdom and skills.

Based on the myth of Chiron, Carl Jung developed a unique and innovative framework for understanding the concept of the "wounded healer" which he explored as one of his archetypal motifs. In "Fundamental Questions of Psychotherapy" (1951), Jung emphasizes the importance of psychotherapists acknowledging their own flaws and biases in their therapeutic practice. He strongly advocates for therapists to undergo their own personal analysis to confront these biases and address their own psychological issues. According to Jung, each therapeutic endeavour involves a dynamic process where both the therapist and the patient actively participate: "It is his [the wounded physician's] own hurt that gives the measure of his power to heal" (1954: 116).

2.2 Hana's Role as a Wounded Healer and Her Relationship with the Three Male Characters

When the English patient sees Hana for the first time, he realises "she was more patient than nurse" (Ondaatje, 1992: 95). Hana's vulnerability and past traumas can be interpreted as those of the "wounded healer." As Jackson claims, "the inner 'woundedness' of a healer—the healer's own suffering and vulnerability," are said "to contribute crucially to the capacity to heal" (2001: 2).

Hana decides not to join her unit as they relocate from the provisional hospital in Villa San Girolamo to more secure quarters in the south and to commit herself to the singular care of the mysterious "English" patient, Almásy. As a vulnerable young individual Hana's aspiration is to provide a compassionate form of nursing to fulfil the needs of her patient. Yet, through her interactions with Almásy, Caravaggio and Kip, Hana also gains insights into love, beauty, humility, and ultimately, resilience. In this sense, the novel not only tells Hana's story of survival but also connects with the broader

trauma narratives of the other characters. It encapsulates the struggles inherent in Hana's nursing profession while also shedding light into the process of overcoming trauma and adversity undergone by the other characters as well. As Jackson claims, "there is nothing new about learning from one's own suffering, or about the enhancement of one's capacity to help others as a result of such suffering" (2001:6). What is interesting about the character of Hana, is that "[her] own suffering might contribute to [her] healing capacities" (2001: 6)

As discussed in the previous section, liminality refers to the characters' state of being in-between or on the threshold between two stages of life. Because of the traumatic experiences endured during the war, Hana, Caravaggio, Kip and Almásy can no longer return to their previous state before the war but have not fully transitioned into the next phase either. This is a state in which they are made to act amidst ambiguity and serves as a catalyst for the emergence of the "wounded healer" archetype, as they all confront their wounds and attempt to undergo a healing process. This journey entails embracing their psychological and physical wounds within the transitional space of the villa.

As Caravaggio is an old acquaintance of Hana´s father (Ondaatje, 1992: 85), when he learns that Hana lives in an abandoned villa with a burn patient (Ondaatje, 1992: 29), he decides to join her after his release from hostpital. Hana is shocked to find out that the man she has known for so long and who was a close friend of her late father has travelled so far to see her (Ondaatje, 1992: 31). She remembers him as an exuberant and confident man, but the conflict and suffering have shattered his personality; with regret, they recall their lives in Toronto prior to the war (Ondaatje, 1992: 40).

After leaving the hospital, Caravaggio develops a dependence on opiates, (Ondaatje, 1992:85), so to begin his journey towards recovery, he must deal with his addictions and confront the traumas inflicted upon him during the war. Through open

communication, observation, active listening, and sharing, he gradually finds solace and healing. On his healing path, Caravaggio learns how to help around the house and provide for his and the other characters' survival, as for example when Hana suggests that he employs his skills as a thief because they do not have enough food and might "need some chickens" (Ondaatje, 1992:33). A crucial aspect of Caravaggio's healing involves the power of literature and reading. Reading plays a vital role in Caravaggio's ability to understand and interpret the world around him, as well as to represent the connection between his personal story and the historical context. This is a habit he probably learns from Hana who is also an avid reader: books become "mystical creatures to him" (Ondaatje, 1992:81).

Music also serves as a vital source of recuperation for Caravaggio. He yearns for moments of relaxation, indulgence, and the opportunity to listen to Frank Sinatra's records (Ondaatje, 1992:33). Assuming the role of the detective instead of that of the thief, he also embarks on an investigation, driven by the desire to uncover the truth behind the English patient's mysterious identity. However, despite his persistent efforts to extract a cohesive narrative from the English patient's fragmented memories, he only manages to gather scattered fragments, which he attempts to reassemble, aiming to bring clarity to his present existence as well. By immersing himself in the historical debris of the Other, Caravaggio embarks on a quest to heal his own personal wounds: he "sits there in silence (…) He watches the man in the bed. He needs to know who this Englishman from the desert is, and reveal him for Hana's sake" (Ondaatje, 1992:116-117). Ye he gradually realises that it is in the patient's indirect and occult speech that he is to unlock aspects of his own past.

Apart from taking care of Almásy, Hana seeks to reassure Caravaggio of her professional competence as a nurse as well: "I would remove those bandages on your

hands. I am a nurse, you know" (Ondaatje, 1992:53). In doing so, she aims to assist in his physical and emotional recovery. Yet she extends beyond her professional duties, offering him companionship and support: "she walks towards her uncle from childhood, sees his eyes hoping to catch hers" (Ondaatje, 1992: 54).

Caravaggio treats Hana "like an uncle" (Ondaatje, 1992:30), although at times it seems he is in love with her because "she reminds him of his wife" (Ondaatje, 1992:39). Hana's relationship with Caravaggio indicates that she is beginning to recover, owing in large part to his affection and emotional support. Like the patient, Caravaggio represents a paternal figure to Hana. Concerned for her safety, he frequently endeavours to persuade her to leave the villa. According to Caravaggio, Hana has left the world to "love a ghost." Yet, in Hana's eyes, the patient is a "despairing saint," or "saviour" (Ondaatje, 1992:45). Hana also has feelings for Caravaggio; she removes *The Last of the Mohicans* from the library shelf and begins writing on a blank page near the book's back: "There is a man named Caravaggio, a friend of my father's. I have always loved him. He is older than I am, about forty-five" (Ondaatje, 1992:61). When she finishes writing, she seals the book and places it on the highest possible shelf, keeping it as a hidden memory from the past.

Kip is another significant character in the story. His mentor, trainer, and surrogate father was Lord Suffolk, an expert in defusing explosives. Through his bond with Suffolk and his second-in-command, Hardy, Kip forms deep connections and learns about Western melodies and customs, expanding his cultural horizons (Ondaatje, 1992:73) However, tragedy strikes when Suffolk and his colleagues sacrifice their lives while neutralising a new a new, devastating weapon. This harrowing event profoundly shakes Kip's faith in Western culture, triggering a profound disillusionment that prompts him to emotionally withdraw from his surroundings (Ondaatje, 1992:197). As a result, Kip makes the decision to escape England and work as a sapper in war-torn Italy. His arrival

at the villa was motivated by the knowledge of the English patient's presence and that of unexploded munitions on the property (Ondaatje, 1992:74). Within this setting, the friendships he forms with the other characters, particularly Hana, are crucial to his emotional healing and recovery. These connections provide him with a profound sense of belonging and foster a deepened sense of connection to the world around him.

Despite his expertise in defusing explosives around the villa, Kip's eagerness to ensure the safety of the other characters stems from a deep-seated necessity for a sense of purpose. One day, Hana is startled by Kip's shriek echoing from a nearby field. As she approaches the scene, she finds Kip standing with his arms raised, clutching two cables. He is trying to neutralise a device that he has stumbled upon near the villa. He claims it is a "trick" weapon, and he asks Hana to hold the cables so he can diffuse the bomb: "There were six wires jumbled up, tied together (…) He brushed the dust off the map board the wires lay on" (Ondaatje, 1992: 99).

Engaging in Hana's garden tasks at the villa also gives Kip a renewed sense of purpose in life (Ondaatje, 1992: 207). While Kip's expertise lies in his exceptional skills as a sapper, he also channels his abilities to contribute not only to the safety and security of the villa but also to its aesthetic appeal. By combining his technical proficiency with artistic sensibilities, Kip finds fulfilment in constructing objects that harmoniously blend functionality and beauty: he "sets up a tent in the far reaches of the garden" (Ondaatje, 1992:72), which exists as both a physical structure and an extension of his very being. This merging of spaces blurs the boundaries between the outer world and Kip's inner world and symbolises his deep connection to the natural surroundings and his need for a space that reflects his identity. Furthermore, Kip also sings. He whistles Western tunes, demonstrating that he has absorbed and adopted Western culture and traditions. His voice

carries the vibrant echoes of diverse heritages as he joyfully croons the nostalgic lines of "Pennsylvania six-five-oh-oh-oh" (Ondaatje, 1992:127).

Kip is captivated by the patient's vast reservoir of encyclopaedic knowledge—"he had believed in the burned man and the meadows of civilization he tended" (Ondaatje, 1992:294)—which resembles his own yearning for intellectual stimulation. This recognition sparks a profound admiration within Kip, leading him to view the patient as a surrogate father figure. In a poignant encounter, Hana walks into the English patient's room and finds Kip standing beside the bed, engaged in deep conversation with the patient. The patient's exclamation, "We're getting along famously!" (Ondaatje, 1992:88), reverberates through the room, embodying the genuine bond that has developed between them. The patient's remarkable expertise in Italian fuses and explosives becomes a catalyst for their connection. Together, they create outlines of intricate devices, engaging in lively debates on the best defusing methods. In the midst of their shared experiences and connections, Kip finds kinship with the English patient, whose presence evokes memories of a majestic "fir tree he saw in England"(Ondaatje, 1992:218).

Kip also engages in meaningful conversation with Caravaggio, as they share a trip "by cart down into the valley to pick up a sack of flour" (Ondaatje, 1992: 87). During the journey, their dialogue gravitates towards Hana, And Caravaggio reveals that he has known Hana for years, even prior to the conflict. In a moment of vulnerability, Kip reveals his true identity as Kripal Singh, shedding light on the person behind the nickname "Kip" (87).[2]

[2] Kip's nickname originated from a humorous incident when he submitted his first explosive disposal report adorned with butter stains. Amused by the unexpected sight, an army officer playfully exclaimed, "What's this? Kipper grease?" (Ondaatje, 1992: 87). The laughter that followed solidified the nickname "Kip," endearingly likening him to a salty English fish.

Kip discovers solace and profound connection through his love bond with Hana. As their relationship deepens, Kip's emotional scars from the war begin to heal, finding comfort in the warmth and affection they share. Simultaneously, Hana's love for Kip becomes a lifeline, providing her with a renewed sense of connection amidst the overwhelming grief the conflict has thrust upon her.

Amidst the enduring bonds of their friendship, the group comes together to celebrate Hana's 21st birthday, which serves as a profound symbol of their connection and resilience. To mark the occasion, Kip takes it upon himself to prepare a heartfelt celebratory meal in honour of Hana. In this fleeting moment of respite from the pressures of war, Kip seizes the opportunity to share glimpses of his past life, inviting his guests to open up about their experiences and weave tales about Toronto, a place he views as brimming with "peculiar wonders" (Ondaatje, 1992:268).

Hana finds herself drawn to Kip not only emotionally but also sexually. Hana's sexual attraction is undeniably associated with Kip's distinctive brown complexion, which she keenly observes when he is "at work, careful and timeless" (Ondaatje, 1992:74). Hana plays a crucial role in providing support for Kip, particularly during his traumatic experiences defusing explosives. In those moments, when he feels as fragile as a lifeless body, it is Hana who offers him solace and keeps his spirit alive. She sits steadfastly beside him, a comforting presence as he grapples with the weight of his fears and memories (Ondaatje, 1992: 217).

In the aftermath of a successful defusal, as the tension begins to dissipate, Kip reaches out to touch Hana. Similarly affected by the lingering tension, Hana finds solace in seeking Kip's human contact. This mutual physical desire suggests the essential role that meaningful connections play in their process of rehabilitation. As Hana sleeps next to Kip, her breathing takes on a quality akin to the melodic resonance of a cello's voice

(Ondaatje, 1992: 104). The scene evokes a sense of tranquillity and profound rest that suggests that Hana's healing journey is nourished by the physical and emotional connection she shares with Kip.

In contrast to the other male characters, Kip stands out as an independent figure who seems not to rely on Hana, despite the nurse's undeniable allure. His experiences of discrimination in Western society have shaped him to be self-reliant, fostering a resilience that prevents him from leaning on her. This independence does not diminish the bond between him and Hana; instead, it adds a layer of complexity to it. While Hana finds him attractive and is drawn to him, she also recognizes and respects his autonomy and self-reliance.

László Almásy, known as "The English Patient " among the people of the villa who think he has English heritage based on his accent, is tormented by the haunting memories of his lost love, Katharine, and the betrayal of his former companion (Ondaatje, 1992: 119). While the English patient cannot recall his own name or nationality, he is able to remember almost everything else. Through the act of weaving his recollections together like a tapestry, he endeavours to piece together the events that have brought him to his current state. Following Freud's theory of "repetition compulsion," Cathy Caruth introduces the concept of "belatedness" or "latency" of the traumatic experience, suggesting that trauma holds the present captive by an indescribable past:

> "The ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it. And this suggests that what returns in the flashback is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness" (1995:152).

The inherent latency of the traumatic event resides in the interplay between the desire to comprehend it and the impulse to deny it. Viewing trauma as the delayed aftermath of a missed encounter with the past implies interpreting it in terms of the absence of something

that eludes temporal or spatial identification, rather than perceiving it as a tangible presence. This paradox highlights the inherent difficulty of both experiencing and genuinely comprehending trauma. Almásy struggles with the elusive nature of finding relief from his traumatic anxiety, as his memories point to a haunting past that will never be fully acknowledged.[3]

As Hana takes on the duty of nursing the patient back to health following the near-fatal plane crash in the North African desert, he reveals his identity as a desert explorer. The patient possesses a deep admiration for the desert and its transformative power, particularly during sandstorms that, in his view, can seemingly erase all traces, including one's national identity. As the patient shares with Hana his first-hand encounters in the arid landscape— "in 1930 we had begun mapping the greater part of the Gulf Kebir Plateau, looking for the lost oasis that was called Zerzura" (Ondaatje, 2019:135)—she is captivated by his stories and often sits by his bedside to listen to them. Moreover, the patient holds the belief that history is best kept and told through personal experiences and stories, rather than relying solely on official records and history books. This emphasizes the significance of personal narratives and the intimate connection between storytelling and the preservation of historical events.

A significant source of Almásy's anguish stems from his passionate affair with Katharine and the subsequent tragedy of her death. However, he finds solace in sharing his story with Hana, as an act of narration that becomes a source of strength and a driving force for his will to continue living. The patient reveals Katharine "had always wanted words, she loved them, grew up on them. Words gave her clarity (…) words bent emotions like sticks in water" (Ondaatje, 2019:238). He reflects on how words can shape

[3] In fact, he harbours a strong aversion towards nations and the division and prejudice that result from having distinct national identities. In fact, he explicitly expresses his disdain for everything nationalist, stating that he "hate nations" (Ondaatje ,1992: 138).

and manipulate emotions. So much so, that despite their intense connection, Katharine ultimately returns to her husband, leaving the patient with a profound sense of loss (Ondaatje, 1992: 238). Because he is aware of his impending death, the patient feels an urgent need to convey the truth to those around him. This urge to tell his story serves as a catalyst for his spiritual healing. In the act of retelling his story, the patient finds a measure of catharsis and restoration, as he goes through the complexities of his past and present with newfound clarity and awareness.[4]

On the other hand, Almásy helps Hana overcome the profound remorse she feels for not having been able to provide care for her father and for not having been by his side when he passed away. However, as she devotes herself to tending to the English patient's needs, a transformative healing process begins to unfold for her as well. As Hana offers her compassionate care and companionship to the English patient, she, in turn, finds healing and a sense of purpose.

Hana is captivated by the patient's tales and exploits in Africa, which transport her to a world she has never known, offering an escape from the atrocities of war: "Hana sits by his bed, and she travels like a squire beside him during these journeys" (Ondaatje, 1992:135). Enescu claims that "The patient is a mentor initiating Hana in the art of reading, thus opening the archives of history but also the sources of aesthetic pleasure more suited for peacetime leisure" (2012 :53). Intrigued by the patient's identity and the mysteries that surround him, Hana's curiosity leads her to peruse some of the patient's

[4] Within the confines of the villa, the English patient owns only one cherished possession: a weathered copy of *The Histories by Herodotus*, meticulously annotated and marked by the passage of time. This book serves as a powerful symbol of the interplay between history and personal stories. Alongside the "1890 edition of Herodotus' Histories, are other fragments—maps, diary entries, writings in many languages, paragraphs cut out of other books" (Ondaatje, 1992:96). These fragments, carefully collected by the English patient, intertwine with the pages of Herodotus' work. He fills the margins and inserts pages of his own writing, effectively merging his own history and personal story with the ancient text. Through his engagement with Herodotus's book, the English patient reveals "how people betray each other for the sake of nations" (Ondaatje, 2019:119), and this realisation deepens his understanding of the intricate dynamics at play within society.

personal writing while he sleeps. She observes while reading that he writes about Katharine (Ondaatje, 1992:97). Yet, overwhelmed by the invasion of privacy, Hana sets down *The Histories*, without closing it "and "walks away from it" with a sense of remorse (Ondaatje, 1992:98).

Hana sees the patient in a dual role: as a paternal figure to fill the void left by her father's absence, and as a potential lover to replace her fallen partner in the war. She wholeheartedly dedicates herself to the daily care for the patient's body (Ondaatje, 1992:3). Her affection for him is evident in her tender gestures: "she pours calamine in stripes across his chest" and expresses fondness for "the hollow below the lowest rib" (Ondaatje, 1992:4)**.** Due to the patient's physical injuries and his inability to eat or move normally, Hana undertakes the responsibility of feeding him daily, **"**[passing] the flesh of the fruit into his mouth" (Ondaatje, 1992:4) nurturing him in the hope of his eventual recovery.

Hana's perception of safety within the villa proves illusory, as the lingering danger from the past still haunts the surroundings.[5] The presence of the numerous unexploded German explosives serves as a constant reminder of the perilous nature of the sanctuary. Yet, amidst this precarious environment, Hana feels a sense of rebirth through her connection with the natural world that surrounds the villa. The villa's garden serves as a symbolic representation of the devastated landscape of Europe, and it becomes Hana's personal duty to restore the scorched earth and nurture new beginnings: "The English patient advises Hana on what to grow" and encourages her to get her "Italian friend to find seeds" (Ondaatje, 1992:124).The painted garden adorning the walls of the English patient´s chamber becomes a visual testament to the possibilities of regeneration and

[5] The villa bears visible traces of decay, its worn areas mirroring the impact of time and the elements. Dampness seeps into the beds, and corners remain adorned with scattered leaves.

revitalization. It becomes clear that cultivating the garden requires significant effort, but Hana's belief in the potential for life to flourish drives her forward.

Hana's journey towards healing encompasses several facets. When WWII finally comes to an end, she decides to distance herself from the part of herself that had been entangled in the conflict. She symbolically removes her uniform, a physical representation of wartime duty, meticulously washing and folding it before returning it to the departing nurses (Ondaatje, 1992:41). This act signifies her intention to leave behind that chapter of her life and embark on a new one.

In her quest for personal transformation, the mirrors within the villa hold a significant role. Hana, yearning to break free from her previous identity as Hana the nurse, chooses to remove and stow away the mirrors, avoiding their reflective gaze (Ondaatje, 1992: 23). By disassociating herself from her past self, she seeks to embrace a new sense of selfhood as simply Hana, untethered from the burdens and memories of war. However, a chance encounter with her reflection while caring for the patient becomes an unexpected catalyst. McVey states that "The patient is both an Other and a mirror, reflecting back to Hana her own traumatic past that she could not previously confront or assimilate, but reflecting that past imperfectly, allowing Hannah to explore her relationship with that past while keeping it safely at arm's length" (2014:150).

Hana also finds solace in playing the piano, a familiar and comforting ritual that invokes memories of her mother and her upbringing. When she sings and plays the piano within the villa's walls, her voice resonates with a sense of vulnerability and strength: "She sang up into darkness, beyond their snail light" (Ondaatje, 1992: 269). The act of playing the piano and singing allows Hana to express her pain and become powerful avenues for her to confront her own traumas.

In her search for Italian books to share with the patient, Hana ventures into the library. The dilapidated condition of the bombed-out library serves as a stark reminder of the insecurity that pervades the entire building. Over time, Hana develops a fondness for these books, appreciating their Italian spines that hold stories and knowledge within (Ondaatje,1992: 221). One instance stands out when she opens "*The Last of the Mohicans* to the blank page at the back and begins to write in it" (Ondaatje, 1992:61). Hana's own thoughts and experiences are inscribed into the book. In this act, Hana intertwines her own story with the narratives contained within the pages.

The characters in the novel forge a profound connection with history through the literature and stories they engage with. For Hana, storytelling becomes a vital means of escaping from the horrors of war. Within the confines of the villa, books serve as the sole link to the outside world, transcending their role as mere inanimate objects and transforming into living entities that hold the narratives of their readers. Hana enjoys reading a variety of books both to herself and aloud to the patient: "she reads to him from whatever book she is able to find in the library (…) he listens to her, swallowing her words like water" (Ondaatje, 1992:5). The significance of books extends beyond their storytelling function as Hana uses them to reconstruct the destroyed staircase (Ondaatje, 1992:13). Moreover, Hana's interest in poetry adds another layer to her connection with literature. While reading passages about Lahore, "an ancient city," she embarks on a mental journey into the outside world (Ondaatje, 1992:209). This exploration of poetry serves as a gateway to broader cultural experiences and opens her mind to perspectives beyond the confines of the villa.

However, it is in witnessing the patient's struggle to heal that Hana is truly able to confront her own unresolved anguish. Through her dedicated care for the patient, Hana begins to perceive her own "woundedness," making her transformation from being

wounded to becoming a wounded healer. As a result, she is able to transcend her own agony and use it to establish intimate connections with all the characters in the villa. While tending to the patients' specific needs, Hana begins to feel a sense of safety and growth, which prompts her to modify her approach to caregiving. Rather than merely carrying out her duties, she becomes an expert in her own right, establishing her own set of guiding principles and focusing solely on caring for the burned patient and engaging in communication exclusively with him (Ondaatje, 1992: 14), Ahmad, Benziman, Kannai (2012) state that "The suffering patient is not only cared for by a wounded physician, but also assists in the physician's own healing process. The relationship is now more equal and mutual. Each physician-patient encounter can be transforming and creative for both parties" (2012: 2). In doing so Hana defies orders and prioritises the well-being of the patient, demonstrating the power of female individual agency and the profound influence one person can have on another.

3. The Characters' Journeys of Return and Recovery

In this section, I explore the pivotal role that the act of returning plays within the context of the characters' rites of passage. By analysing the experiences of the three male characters, I will assess whether they have undergone transformative journeys and how their returns have impacted their personal growth. Yet most importantly, I will delve into the question of Hana's recovery and examine how she has been able to find healing amidst the challenges she has faced. Furthermore, we delve into the symbolic significance of the English patient's death and its profound implications for the healing process of the other characters. Through this exploration, I will hopefully gain a deeper understanding of how the act of returning shapes the characters' journeys and contributes to their path of recovery.

Years have passed since the end of WWII, and the characters who once inhabited the Italian villa have either passed away or moved forward in their lives. However, a significant turning point occurs with the flagrant bombing of Hiroshima by the West, an event that marks a definitive end of the conflict.[6] Kip, infuriated by the detonation of the atomic weapon, confronts the English patient, aiming his rifle at him as a fiery expression of his rage. In his confrontation, he passionately asserts "When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have fucking Harry Truman of the USA. You all learned it from the English" (Ondaatje, 1992:286). Kip experiences a profound loss of faith in a world governed by the English system of values, which makes him embark on a search for new guiding principles: "He feels all the winds of the world have been sucked into Asia (…) He knows nothing about the weapon (…) All he knows is, he feels he can no longer let anything approach him" (Ondaatje, 1992:287). Kip senses a seismic shift in the global order, and in the face of this turmoil, he struggles with a profound sense of uncertainty and disconnection.

The devastating bombardment of Japan serves as a catalyst that opens Kip's eyes to the bigotry and injustices perpetuated by British colonialism. He sees the English patient as a symbol of England and its historical legacy of systematic oppression and abuse in Asia. In response, Kip takes off his uniform, symbolically rejecting his adopted Western identity, and embraces his Asian roots once more. As a powerful act of solidarity with his fellow Asians, he removes his turban and fashions a topknot with his long hair, adopting a traditional Japanese hairstyle. This transformation reflects Kip's profound

[6] The bombing of Hiroshima is a crucial historical event as it marks the use of the atomic bomb by the United States on August 6, 1945. This is followed by the subsequent bombing of Nagasaki, which led to Japan's surrender and to the end of the Second World War. The devastating impact of the atomic bomb and the immense loss of life became a turning point in global history, ushering in the nuclear age and forever changing the dynamics of warfare.

reconnection with his native culture and his rejection of the European influences that have shaped his identity.

As Kip leaves the villa and distances himself from Western influences, he loses interest in the West, particularly in the absence of his rifle, a potent symbol of the impact the West had on his life and on his involvement in World War II. In addition, he embarks on his journey with an antique motorcycle he discovers hidden in the chapel. By choosing to travel "against the direction of the invasion" (Ondaatje, 1992: 290), he symbolically reverses the process of Westernisation that he has endured throughout the conflict and returns to his native origins and culture. Furthermore, when Kip tumbles into the river and resurfaces, it serves as a symbolic act of rebirth and renewal: as his "bare head comes out from the water, and he gasps in all the air above the river" (Ondaatje, 1992: 296*)*, he is releasing the burdens of the past and embracing a new beginning. This moment encapsulates a metaphorical rebirth, as Kip sheds the remnants of Western influence that have shaped his life over the past several years and prepares to return to his traditional culture and way of life.

Kip's returns to India marks a pivotal moment— his ritual passage has been "consummated" (Gennep, 1960: 138)—in which he embraces his indigenous culture and finds fulfilment in a prosperous life that was destined for him before the upheavals of the conflict. Kip's story embodies the prevalent prejudice ingrained in colonial society, where despite attempts at integration, individuals from the Eastern Hemisphere are consistently deemed as "other" and diminished in value by the Western world.

As he establishes himself as a doctor, Kip marries and starts a family, but he continues to think about Hana and the affection they shared in the abandoned Italian villa. In his mind, he envisions her journey of growth and transformation into a woman. Despite not having responded to Hana's letters for that past year, as Kip gathers with his family

for dinner, a yearning to see her lingers within him, revealing the enduring impact of their connection and the complex emotions that continue to echo within his heart (Ondaatje, 1992: 300). Kip's love for Hana transcends the war, defying the boundaries of time and distance. It serves as a testament of the enduring power of love, which transcends the constraints of life circumstances.

Caravaggio's initial prejudice towards Kip and the English patient, turns into genuine fondness for them. When Kip threatens to kill the English patient, after blaming him for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Caravaggio stops him explaining that the patient "is probably on your side" (Ondaatje, 1992:286). The encounter between Caravaggio and Kip down the path to the gate as Kip is leaving the villa unfolds in a poignant moment of connection. Caravaggio embraces Kip tightly and senses a profound bond, as if he is being pulled into Kip's very being. He expresses his deep affection, saying "I shall have to learn how to miss you" (Ondaatje, 1992:289).

Despite discovering the identity of the English patient, Caravaggio finds himself drawn to him. This newfound affinity leads Caravaggio to question the need to hand over the charred body to British intelligence. During a conversation with Hana, they both reach a shared conclusion that it is best to "let him be" (Ondaatje, 1992:265).The English patient's tragic tale erases any trace of Caravaggio's anger towards him, allowing him to let go of his initial resentment. Caravaggio's animosity is replaced by empathy and compassion, forging a profound bond that transcends their past conflicts.

The novel leaves Caravaggio's ultimate fate uncertain. It is unknown whether he departs or returns to Canada. Smyter suggests that Caravaggio embodies a figure of transition and liminality, "a figure of the in-between, which is strengthened by the fact that he disappears from the novel while walking across a rope between a statue and the

well, or, read metaphorically, the world of representation and the unconscious; the symbolic and the source of the semiotic" (2010: 425). Caravaggio's arrival at the villa introduces him as a detached and wounded individual, bearing the scars of his past experiences. However, as the narrative unfolds, Caravaggio emerges as a benevolent and trustworthy figure. His interactions with the English patient, Kip and Hana contribute to his own personal rehabilitation, but also foster healing and growth in the others.

In the final chapter of the novel, as the English patient attempts to sleep, he becomes aware of a shadowy presence in his chamber, hoping it might be Kip (Ondaatje, 1992: 298). The air is heavy with anticipation as he waits for the figure to move, but it remains motionless, an enigmatic silhouette. Throughout the night he remains vigilant, resolved to stay awake "till the light dies out" (Ondaatje, 1992:298). This haunting apparition serves as a metaphorical manifestation of the English patient's deep-seated regret and introspection regarding colonialism and the oppressive systems that have impacted individuals like Kip. It represents the weight of his own guilt and the lingering presence of the past that continues to shape his existence. In the end, as sleep eludes him, the English patient finds solace in the company of his cherished copy of Herodotus: "His hand reaches out slowly and touches his book and returns to his dark chest" (Ondaatje, 1992: 298). Through his association with Herodotus and the stories contained within, the English patient struggles with themes of identity, history, and the intricate interplay between personal narratives and collective experiences.

Through his personal narrative, the English patient unveils a rich tapestry of human experiences that go beyond the mere facts and dates found in history books. He sheds light on the significance of personal narratives in comprehending the past. While history texts provide a broad overview of events, they frequently fail to convey the

subtleties and complexities of individual experiences. In contrast, the English patient's own story provides a more holistic and complex picture of the time period he lived through. His account offers a glimpse into the intricate webs of relationships, emotions, and personal struggles that shape his journey. In particular, his relationship with Katharine serves as a powerful illustration of the transcendent power of love. Their connection transcends the boundaries of marriage, defies the constraints imposed by conflict, and persists even in the face of death.

The conclusion of his story offers no consolation to the patient. Instead, he regresses into "silence," his body mutilated and charred: "For him now the world is without sound, and even light seems an unneeded thing" (Ondaatje, 1992:298). This descent into silence reflects the patient's internal turmoil and the haunting spectre of his past that continues to torment and disrupt the narrative in the present. The incorporation of the English patient's memories into the narrative serves to characterize the weight of the past, conjuring a ghostly afterlife that lingers and exerts its influence over the present. Benjamin argues that "memory is the epic faculty par excellence. Only by virtue of a comprehensive memory can epic writing absorb the course of events on the one hand and, with the passing of these, make its peace with the power of death on the other" (2007:97).

The patient's ultimate silence represents the profound impact of his memories in shaping his understanding of events and the enduring presence of past traumas that reverberate through time. The patient, in the culmination of his journey, transcends physical and linguistics boundaries, turning into the embodiment of hybridity. His body, once the realm of the cartographer, now becomes a map of his own being. As Hana reaches the end of the patient's story, a sense of peace descends upon the patient, signifying his acceptance of his impending passing. Beyond his personal journey, the

patient’s story carries a powerful message to future generations—a testament to the importance of embracing diversity and accepting oneself as one truly is.

3.1 The English Patient´s Demise and its Impact on the Other Characters

The patient’s impending death functions as a powerful symbol, representing the culmination of a specific historical era and the dawn of the new one, as the patient embodies the values and perspectives of the past, particularly colonialism, imperialism, and romantic idealism. His demise becomes a significant marker of transition. Moreover, the patient’s passing signifies the conclusion of the characters' time at the villa, as they are now compelled to confront their individual destinies and move on from their shared experiences. The collective bond they formed within the villa is irrevocably altered, and each character must grapple with the realities of the modern world. Hana’s profound compassion for the characters in the villa, serves as a catalyst for her own healing and recovery from the ravages of the conflict. Through her experiences as a nurse, she confronts the fragility of life and the inevitability of mortality. The weight of her inability to save the English patient forces her to confront her own mortality. Embracing her newfound understanding of the fleeting nature of life, Hana evolves into “a woman of honour and smartness (…) always taking risks” (Ondaatje, 1992:301). She becomes willing to face the challenges that lie ahead with courage and resilience. This transformation is a testament to the growth she has achieved through her encounters with the other characters.

Hana and Caravaggio share a solemn pact in the villa: if the English patient succumbs to his wounds, they will hide everything about him except his copy of *The Histories.* This decision carries great significance, as it ensures that Almásy's story will therefore continue to resonate through the pages of Herodotus's book. In death, Almásy’s

personal history becomes intertwine with the narratives within the book, creating a lasting testament that preserves his legacy.

In her journey as a wounded healer, Hana achieves a unique form of catharsis that none of the other characters appears to attain. The sight of the patient's charred corpse serves as a moving trigger, evoking memories of Hana's deceased father.

After the war comes to an end and Hana departs from the villa, she undertakes a significant act of emotional healing by writing a letter to her stepmother, Clara, something she had not been able to do until then. In this heartfelt letter, she delves into the painful details of her father's death and, for the first time, openly expresses her own grief:

> And how was my father burned? (…) He was the most unverbal of men, and I am. always surprised women liked him (…) We are the rationalists, the wise, and he was often lost, uncertain, unspoken. He was a burned man and I was a nurse and I could have nursed him. Do you understand the sadness of geography? (Ondaatje, 1992:296).

Hana eloquently explains that attempting to rationalise the terror inflicted by war , and constructing a logical narrative would be inherently unjust. She recognises that true justice lies not on imposing a rational framework, but rather in the act of remembering and embracing the contradictions that emerge from traumatic memories. In the face of unimaginable devastation, Hana emphasises the importance of listening for what remains unsaid, the unspoken truths that can only be approached through a willingness to engage with the complexities of collective trauma.

Hana, now 34 years old and residing in Canada, finds solace in her memories of the English patient's recollections and the "the lines of poems the Englishman read out loud to her from his commonplace book" (Ondaatje, 1992: 301). These verses continue to linger in her mind, a reminder of the enduring impact of their connection. In a seemingly coincidental moment, Hana accidentally collides with a cabinet, causing a

glass on the shelf to teeter precariously. In a swift and instinctive gesture, Kip captures the falling object, preventing it from shattering on the ground. As he smiles, a sense of significance emerges from the scene. Younis states that "the novel's end suggests, once again, to be sure, that it is the things that bring two nationalities or two people together, and not the things that separate them, that are ultimately of the greatest value" (1998: 7). In effect, the conclusion of the novel suggests that by acknowledging and expressing their wounds, the characters are able to move towards restoration and reconciliation. Their individual journeys intertwine and contribute to a larger narrative of wounded healing, demonstrating the potential for growth and resilience in the face of profound suffering. This implies that by acknowledging and articulating their traumas, the characters can progress towards personal healing and reconciliation. Their individual journeys intertwine and contribute to a larger narrative of wounded recovery, illustrating the potential for growth and resiliency in the face of extreme suffering.

4. Conclusion and Futher Research

This dissertation has conducted an analysis of *The English Patient* by examining the concept of liminality and the process of healing from traumatic wounds in the character development of Hana, a nurse who carries the weight of war-related trauma. Hana embarks on a personal odyssey in tandem with the English patient, whose eventual demise serves as a pivotal juncture in her life. Hana's establishment of a deep connection with the patient results in her personal growth and self-realization. Kip and Caravaggio, the other two male characters inhabiting the deserted Italian villa, assume a crucial role in a shared story of redemption, each demonstrating an unwavering determination to accept their circumstances despite enduring significant hardship and confronting formidable obstacles. The villa serves as the backdrop for the collective journey of the

characters towards recovery, amidst the prevalent disorder and devastation in the post-war era. Collectively, they undertake the task of reconstructing what has been lost by drawing on their shared experiences and mutual commitment.

The first section has shed light on the profound impact of war trauma on the characters, with a particular emphasis on Hana, the nurse. Through an exploration of the disruptive and transformative nature of war, specifically its role as a liminal period, I have explored the experiences of Caravaggio, Kip, the English Patient, and Hana as they undergo their own rites of passage. By examining Hana's nursing background, I have established a crucial connection between her unique perspective and a comprehensive understanding of the effects of war trauma on all four characters, with a particular focus on the gender-specific contexts they navigate.

The second section has focused on the character of Hana as a wounded healer within the contextual backdrop of the villa. I have explored the pivotal role of the villa as a transformative space continuing the liminal realm created by the war. Moreover, I have examined the intricate correlation between liminality and the concept of the wounded healer, which holds crucial importance in my analysis. Through an in-depth analysis of the villa's transformative properties and a comprehensive examination of the wounded healer archetype, this section has uncovered the ways in which the villa becomes a catalyst for healing for Hana and the three male characters.

In the third section of this dissertation, I have focused on the profound significance of the act of returning in the context of the characters' rites of passage. Through the analysis of the experiences of the three male protagonists, I have assessed the extent of their transformative journeys. Furthermore, I have closely examined Hana's healing process and the strategies she employs to achieve restoration despite the formidable

obstacles encountered along the way. Additionally, I have analysed the symbolic meaning underlying the passing of the English patient and its profound impact on the healing process for the remaining characters. By examining these elements, I have aimed to shed light on the intricate interplay between return, healing, and personal growth within the narrative.

Further research might involve a more comprehensive understanding of the wounded healer archetype. I would like to purse a comparative analysis of the character of Hana as a wounded healer in *The English Patient* with other literary or cinematic portrayals of wounded healers, investigating the shaping historical and cultural factors. I would also like to explore the intersection of gender and power dynamics in the portrayal of the wounded healer and analyse how gender influences the characters' experiences of woundedness and their roles as healers. Another path of research might be examining the implications of colonialism, cultural identity, and cross-cultural encounters on the characters' woundedness and their healing journeys.

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