The Sacredness of Bridges:

Kip's Role as Mediator in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*

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Johanna Tapio: “The Sacredness of Bridges: Kip's Role as Mediator in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*”

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Tutkielmassani analysoin Michael Ondaatjen kirjaa *Englantilainen potilas* (eng. *The English Patient*) vuodelta 1992. Tarkastelen intialaisen henkilöhahmon Kirpal Singhin eli Kipin roolia teoksessa. Ondaatjen romaanissa hänet kuvataan eräänlaisena välittäjänä eri kulttuurien välillä. Tutkin, onko Kip eräänlainen merkki toivosta toisen maailmansodan jälkeisessä Italiassa, joka on romaanin yksi tapahtumapaikoista. Analysoin henkilöhahmojen ja kulttuurien välisiä siltoja ja sitä, onko Kip ymmärtänyt siltojen pyhyyden merkityksen.

Ondaatjen romaani on romanttinen, mutta siinä voidaan myös havaita poliittisia ja jälkikoloniaalisia piirteitä. Ondaatjen teokset sijoittuvat usein hänen nykyisen kotimaansa Kanadan lisäksi esim. Intiaan ja muihin entisiin kolonialistisiin maihin. Kip on tutkielmassani keskipisteessä, koska aiemmin hän on usein ollut vain tutkimusten sivuhenkilönä.

Taustamateriaalinani käytän *Englantilaiseen potilaasta* tehtyjä tutkimuksia, erityisesti tukeudun Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singhin artikkeliin “The Mirror and the Sikh: The Transformation of Ondaatje’s Kip” (2001), jossa hän käsittelee Kipin muutosta Jacques Lacanin peiliteorian pohjalta. Hänen mukaansa Kip vapautuu romaanin kuluessa koloniaalisesta identiteetistä jälkikoloniaaliseen, voimakkaampaan persoonallisuuteen. Sovellan Singhin teemaa, jonka mukaan Kipille muodostuu eräänlainen sijaisperhe romaanin muiden henkilöiden sekä ympäristön kanssa. Viittaan myös Edward Saidin *Orientalismiin (1978)*, kontrapunktiseen lukutapaan (eng. contrapuntal reading) sekä Gayatri Chakravorty Spivakin kysymyksiin alistettujen (eng. subaltern) asemasta.

Tutkimuksessani analysoin erilaisia siltoja, joita Ondaatjen romaanissa esitellään. Tarkastelen Kipin rakkaussuhdetta Hanaan sekä hänen ystävyyttään Lordi Suffolkiin ja englantilaiseen potilaaseen. Tutkin myös Kipin suhdetta länsimaiseen taiteeseen: teoksessa on esitetty italialaista renessanssitaidetta, jotka nähdään Kipin silmin. Uskonnolla on myös tärkeä merkitys romaanissa, sillä Kip on sikhinä eräänlainen uskonnollinen välittäjä. Hän ei ole tyypillinen intialainen, koska ei ole hindu eikä muslimi. Hänen uskonnossaan on myös samoja piirteitä kuin kristinuskossa.

Yleisemmällä tasolla tutkimukseni käsittelee Kipin roolia idän ja lännen välillä. Em. silloissa on murtumia. Tutkin, ennustavatko ne romaanin lopussa olevia Hiroshiman ja Nagasakin ydinpommeja. Lisäksi selvitän, mitä romaanissa tarkoitetaan siltojen pyhyydellä ja katkeavatko romaanin lopussa kaikki yhteydet idän ja lännen välillä.

Avainsanoja: JÄLKIKOLONIALISMI, VÄLITTÄJÄ, KULTTUURIT, ORIENTALISMI, KONTRAPUNKTINEN LUKUTAPA, TOISEUS, STEREOTYPIAT, PEILITEORIA.

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1. Introduction

> The young sapper put his cheek against the mud and thought of the Queen of Sheba's face, the texture of her skin. There was no comfort in this river except for his desire for her, which somehow kept him warm. […] This woman who would someday know the sacredness of bridges (EP 70).

The symbolism of bridges in the novel is introduced in the excerpt above; Kirpal Singh, also known as Kip, feels comforted by the fresco of the Queen of Sheba on a church wall. The actual "sacredness" of the bridges is closely connected to the fresco depicting the Queen of Sheba, and that is also linked to the other kinds of bridges I will examine in my thesis.

The English Patient (1992) is about a group of shell-shocked people living in a half-ruined Tuscan villa in Italy just after the Second World War. There are also many other locations from North Africa to Europe and India in the novel. The four main characters are Kip, who is an Indian sapper, the "English patient", who is a badly burned pilot, a Canadian nurse called Hana, and a presumably Canadian thief called Caravaggio.

Kip's religion is Sikhism, which is perhaps best known for the external signs of the adherents, such as the turban and uncut hair. Being the only character in the novel coming from the East, Kip represents a connection between the characters and their cultures. Has Kip realized the sacredness of bridges? Can it be claimed that Kip symbolizes a sign of hope for the damaged and disillusioned West? Are there fractures in the bridges, and if so, do they symbolize something in the novel? In the broadest sense, my thesis will examine Kip's role as a mediator between East and West in *The English Patient*.

1.1 Michael Ondaatje as a Writer - Political or Not?

Michael Ondaatje was born in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) in 1943. A prolific writer, he has written novels, books of poetry, anthologies and articles of literary criticism. In addition, he has produced films and screenplays. His novels include *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), *In The Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), and *Anil's Ghost* (2000). *The English*

Patient is the best known of his novels and when it was released in 1992 it won the Booker Prize. It was also turned into a successful Hollywood film in 1996 (directed by Anthony Minghella).[1] Furthermore, *Running in the Family* (1982) is Ondaatje's semi-fictional memoir, which deals with searching Ondaatje's own roots, or in this case his father's.[2] *Anil's Ghost* is about Ondaatje's former country and in one of his collections of poems, *Handwriting* (1998); his attention is again turned to Sri Lanka.[3]

Ondaatje's way of writing often includes poetic elements, which originates from his earlier disposition towards poetry. He often mixes poetic with narrative elements and his prose becomes rich in metaphorical expressions. For example, *Running in the Family* includes short texts that resemble a collection of poetry.[4]

In addition, his prose texts often refer to different intertexts such as myths, such as the name of the novel *In the Skin of a Lion*, which refers to *The Epic of Gilgamesh.*[5] His novels deal not only with many cultures, but they also mix real and surreal, fact and fiction and also present and past.[6] Ondaatje's works sometimes interconnect as well: for instance, both Hana and Caravaggio appear in the novels *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient.* However, the same names do not entail a continuation of the same story.

Ondaatje is an author who used to live in a country colonized by the British. His former home country was Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) that was under the British rule from 1815 to 1948[7]. There are postcolonial features in Ondaatje's texts, that is, they are connected to previously colonized countries. This is also the case with *The English Patient,* although it is not actually located in India. However, the country and its culture are referred to in many different ways in the novel, and Kip, one of the main characters comes from the Indian

[1] New 2002, 845.
[2] New, 847.
[3] Ibid.
[4] New 2002, 847.
[5] New 2002, 847, see also Fledderus 1997, 19-54.
[6] "Ondaatje", The Columbia Encyclopedia Online.
[7] Lloyd 1984, 408-409.

subcontinent. In *The English Patient*, European colonialism is obviously present especially in the relationship between Kip and the English patient. As for the location of the colonial encounter, the type of postcolonialism which is underlined in the novel is Kip's Indianness vs. the other characters' nationalities: British and Canadian.

Postcolonialism is connected to Michael Ondaatje as a writer. Mark D. Simpson[8] writes that there can be political potential in Ondaatje's works. In his essay, "Minefield Readings: The Postcolonial English Patient ", Simpson[9] argues that the novel includes daring interactions that can have political and imaginative implications. Thus, it can be claimed that Ondaatje's intertextuality stretches from fiction to political issues.

Elizabeth Kella[10] finds political qualities in Ondaatje's writing, too. She discusses the history of Sikhs in her study on Michael Ondaatje, Toni Morrison, and Joy Kogawa. According to her, *The English Patient* creates a site for the history of India and Sikhs, especially because it refers to the year 1939. Kella[11] writes that during that year, when Britain declared war on Germany, it did so for India as well. Kella[12] continues that the British did not negotiate with the Indian congress, and due to this, all of the separatist Sikh demands were ignored. This is not discussed directly in Ondaatje's novel, but it can be seen as an underlying tendency.

Josef Pesch[13] writes in his essay "Cultural Clashes? East Meets West in Michael Ondaatje's Novels" (1998) that Ondaatje is one of those writers who have created methods which give them an opportunity to underline the effects of culture-clashes and "cultural landmines". Pesch[14] continues that these are often inscribed in the "postcolonial, postwar, postapocalyptic landscapes". In another words, Pesch has found political issues in Ondaatje's

[8] Simpson 1994, 217.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Kella 2000, 99-100. Kella uses Kirpal's full name in her analysis, perhaps in order to avoid the derogatory connotations of the nickname Kip. However, I use the name Kip.
[11] Kella, 2000, 99.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Pesch 1998, 75.
[14] Pesch 1998, 75.

writing: his view is that there are cultural confrontations inscribed in Ondaatje's works. This view is supported by Ed Jewinski,[15] too, who claims in his biography on Ondaatje that neither *In the Skin of a Lion* nor *The English Patient* are political statements as such, but they both can be read as one.

It can be argued that the choice of a Khalsa Sikh[16] as one of the main characters is a political choice, as they have not appeared as "vital" characters in many occasions.[17] Instead, possibly because of Indian history,[18] they are often seen as violent and very stereotypical, even terrorists.[19] In addition to this, as Christopher Shackle et al.[20] point out, the Sikhs are not very well represented in the Western media, and when they are, they are stereotypical and fragmented. According to Shackle et al.,[21] Ondaatje's Kip is the one of the few exceptions. Shackle et al.[22] continue that Sikh studies in the West and in India differ from each other considerably: the studies on Sikh issues made in the West are more independent, but not so institutionally rigorous. Indian Sikh studies, contrastingly, suffer from "considerable political and ideological constraints".[23] Consequently, it can be claimed that there is a need for Sikh studies both in India and in the West.

One of the scholars who have concentrated on Sikh issues is Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh. She writes on Kip's role in *The English Patient* in her article "The Mirror and the Sikh: The Transformation of Ondaatje's Kip" in *New Perspectives in Sikh Studies.* Singh's article deals with novel's potential for postcolonial readings. Singh[24] writes that in Kip, readers see a

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[15] Jewinski 1994, 122.
[16] The Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) formed the Khalsa community, whose adherents should fight the taboos of caste, protect humanity and maintain the status of worshipping the One Supreme Being (Singh 1971, 24).
[17] Shackle et al. 2001, 7.
[18] In 1984, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassined by her own Sikh bodyguards. This led to rioting, in which a great number of Sikhs were killed, and the holiest shrine of Sikhism, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, was taken by Indian troops in a military operation against Sikh separatists. One of the bodyguards, who did not get killed in the riots, was sentenced to death in 1986. (*BBC News Archive)*
[19] Shackle et al. 2001, 7.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Shackle, et al. 2001, 2.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Singh 2001, 118.

Sikh, an Asian, who perceives the Western world in the novel. Therefore, Singh[25] argues that the Western readers can mirror themselves in this Indian character. Stated differently, Kip is a character whose role invites a postcolonial reading: the fact the Kip is not a Westerner makes the novel political.

The Hollywood version of *The English Patient* is very different from the novel, because he novel is not only romantic. The distinction is also seen in the case of the Sikh character: Kip plays a much more significant role in the book than he does in the movie. In the film, the relationship between the English patient and Katharine is underlined. This is because the Hollywood adaptation was clearly targeted towards Westerners. The difference between the novel and the film has inspired many studies during the last few years; however, they are not discussed further in the present thesis. Glen Lowry shares my point of view that the political issues are clearly underlined in the book, but not in the film. Lowry[26] writes that the movie is "without the burden of complex sociopolitical questions raised in the concluding pages of the novel".

Moreover, Lowry[27] quotes Susan Ellis[28] when he describes *The English Patient* as the change in Ondaatje's works: it moves towards an "examination of the socio-political implications of colonialism, history literature, and to some extent, gender relationships". In other words, Lowry's view is that *The English Patient* is more political than his previous works. In an interview,[29] Ondaatje admits that a novel can have political potential: "I think it has more to do with *whom* you write about. I think a novel can become, in this way, a more political reflection of your time". Ondaatje[30] admits that *The English Patient* can be seen as a very political book, although politicians or sociologists may not share this view. Instead,

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[25] Singh 2001, 118.
[26] Lowry 2002, 228.
[27] Lowry 2002, 217.
[28] In Ellis, Susan: "Trade and Power, Money and War: Rethinking Masculinity in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*". *Studies in Canadian Literature* 21.2 (1996): 22-36.
[29] Bush, 1994, 247.
[30] Jewinski, 134. Jewinski quotes interwiew made by Stephen Smith in *Quill and Quire*, Sept. (1992): 69.

Ondaatje says[31] the book depicts four real people in a panoramic situation during the war. It can be argued that "political" in Ondaatje's book means that he has wanted to create a realistic image of real human beings, not only fictional characters.

Ondaatje[32] describes his view in another interview: "political theses I find impossible to read. I have to be affected emotionally or in a sensual way before something hits me. Notwithstanding the political undercurrents in his works, Ondaatje himself does not feel comfortable writing of politics. For example, Ondaatje himself does not insist being a postcolonial writer exclusively, because in yet another interview[33] he says:

> As a writer I don't think I'm concerned with art and aesthetic issues, any more than I would want to be just concerned with making the subject of being Sri Lankan in Canada my one and only subject. I go to writing to discover as many aspects of myself and the world around me as I can. I go to discover, to explore, not to state the case I already know.

Consequently, it can be claimed that in many of Ondaatje's works there are both imaginative and political elements. Ondaatje's writings are many-layered so they cannot be studied only superficially. *The English Patient* is a romantic novel on the surface, but it can also be interpreted differently. It can be fruitful to study *The English Patient* from a postcolonial perspective.

1.2 Postcolonialism - a Few Scholars

Since my study discusses *The English Patient* from a postcolonial point of view, the issue needs to be introduced before my analysis of the novel. My aim is to present only a few of the scholars in the field of postcolonial studies.

The term 'postcolonial' does not have very definite or accurate definition. Generally speaking, postcolonialism discusses issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, cultural

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[31] Jewinski, 134.
[32] Jewinski 1994, 124.
[33] Jewinski, 1994, 120. Jewinski quotes interview made by Linda Hutcheon, which is published in *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions,* Hutcheon, Linda and Richmond, Marion. Eds. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990.

imperialism and epistemic violence. In another sense, postcolonialism is "the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period".[34] *The Empire Writes back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Theory* (1989) introduced the issues for postcolonial studies into English literary studies. In *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*[35] the writers (also the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*) claim that there is also a difference between the terms 'postcolonialism' (without a hyphen) and 'post-colonialism' (with a hyphen).[36] Their opinion is that the term without the hyphen refers to colonial discourse theory, which is only one of the approaches of the postcolonial field. An another view[37] is that he term 'postcolonial theory' is a name for a collection of strategies and theories rather than a single theory.

Postcolonial theories have tried to challenge the traditional Eurocentric or Anglo-American-centered perspectives moving the focus to the Third Word and various minority perspectives. Stated differently, literary studies in the West have often neglected the "discursive marginalization of racial and ethnic others".[38]

Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient".[39] He also criticizes the artificiality of the term 'Orient.'[40] In Said's[41] opinion, a new kind of dealing with the Orient should eliminate the division of the world to "Orient" and "Occident" altogether. Said's book, *Orientalism* (1978), was his breakthrough in literature studies as well as in humanist studies.[42] The book participated in discussion of Otherness in the Western universities during the 1970s and the 1980s, and has influenced Western literary critics who

[34] Bahri 1996, n. pag.
[35] Ashcroft et al. 1998, 187.
[36] At any rate, I have decided to use the term without a hyphen in my thesis.
[37] Makaryk 1993, 155.
[38] Bennett & Royle, 1995, 160.
[39] Said, 1978, 1.
[40] Savolainen 2001, 8-9.
[41] Said 1978, 28
[42] Savolainen 2001, 8-9.

have wanted to study more the neglected or marginal texts.[43] Said's theory was affected by structuralism and poststructuralism, but especially by Foucault's theories on discursive knowledge and power.[44] For example, Said comments Foucault's works in his essay "The Order of Discourse" (1970).[45]

Said's concept of "contrapuntal reading"[46] was introduced in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993. In this book, Said's view is more global than in *Orientalism* and it shows how worldwide imperialism has reshaped European and North-American views on the "other" world and how the traces of colonialism and imperialism are clearly visible in European literature and culture.[47] Contrapuntal reading deals with rewriting texts from a postcolonial perspective: it employs strategic re-reading of texts and it examines how texts reflect and challenge colonialism and imperialism.[48]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (among others) has studied the Indian subcontinent.[49] She has examined 'colonization' from a feminist as well as Marxist point of view.[50] "Can the subaltern speak" is Spivak's most famous essay, which she first gave as a lecture in 1983. Its slightly modified versions were published in 1985 and 1988, and in 1999, Spivak wrote an enlarged version of it in her book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason.*[51] The term *subaltern* can be defined as 'a person holding a subservient position.'[52] In "Can the Subaltern Speak",[53] she writes that the woman as subaltern deserves a special attention of her as a literary critic. For example, Spivak[54] argues that when the British abolished the Indian Hindu *sati*[55]

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[43] Savolainen 2001, 8-9.
[44] Young 2001, 383.
[45] Ashcroft et al. 1998, 186.
[46] Said 1994, 66.
[47] Savolainen 2001, 9.
[48] Savolainen 1998, 20-29.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ashcroft et al. 1998, 186.
[51] Leitch et al. 2001, 2193.
[52] The term *subaltern* was originally developed by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in order to politice and organize people for the worker's revolution (Leitch et al. 2001, 2194).
[53] Spivak 1988, 296.
[54] Spivak 1988, 297.

tradition, it was a case of "[w]hite men saving brown women from brown men". At the end of her essay, she arrives at the conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*[56] continues to find answers to this question. In this book, she states: "[...] but one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern is irretrievably heterogeneous".[57] Spivak[58] claims that the problem of intellectuals of the first-world is that when they are concerned with the Other, they often encounter only the pick of Indian population.

These are only a few scholars who have studied postcolonial issues. To a certain degree, there are issues in *The English Patient* that are connected with these scholars.

1.3 Examining Bridges - The Aims of My Thesis

Researchers should always keep in mind their own positions, in other words, they should contextualize themselves. It is probably too complicated to observe all possible nuances of Kip's character, because his culture and religion are relatively unfamiliar to someone who is working in a Scandinavian or Finnish context.[59] As a reader coming from Europe my position is probably not as free from Western thinking as it would be if I were a Sikh or, for example, a "postcolonial" reader in contemporary India. Therefore, I rely on the scholars who have studied the novel before.

I will leave out the other Ondaatje's works for the most part. I feel confident to concentrate on *The English Patient*, because of its many dimensions as a complex work of fiction. For example, when talking about the history of his book, Ondaatje[60] admits that in *The*

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[55] *Sati* can also be spelled *suttee*, it is a former Indian tradition of a widow burning herself, together with the dead husband or soon after his funeral. ("Suttee". Encyclopædia Britannica Online).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Spivak 1999, 270.
[59] An example of Finnish context is Elina Helander and Kaarina Kailo's book that discusses the issue of researching another culture: *No Beginning, No End. The Sami Speak Up.* Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998.
[60] Wachtel 1994, 251

English Patient, he tried to make a contemporary book at first, but unconsciously ended up exposing layers of history from the times of Herodotus to the Second World War. In my analysis, however, I will not concentrate on history.

Young[61] writes that because Said's *Orientalism* is by no means unproblematic in many respects, a postcolonial study generally begins with a critique of Said. Consequently, Said cannot be totally neglected in my thesis either. For example, it can be claimed that Ondaatje's decision to choose an Indian as one of the main characters and Italy as one of the locations seems to comment on Said's[62] claim that the Orient has a special status in the European world. Moreover, in my opinion, a kind of contrapuntal reading is going to be applied to my thesis, because the main viewpoint will be Kip's instead of the other characters.

Shackle et al.[63] argue that the number of scholars who are interested in Sikh studies and who have positions in Western universities is steadily rising. When I made a MLA database search, it disclosed a good number of studies that examine *The English Patient*'s postcolonial issues. It is surprising, however, that there are only a few studies that focus on Kip's character, and especially few written by Western scholars. Ondaatje[64] himself says that he tends to find minor characters who are not highlighted in traditional historiography. It could be argued that Kip is one of them. Despite a few articles, a surprisingly small number of studies I found in MLA actually concentrate on Kip's role in the novel. In addition to the other points mentioned above, this was one of the reasons why I chose Kip as the topic of my thesis. Of course, many articles study Kip's role to some degree and these studies will be examined and compared in further detail in the analysis sections of my thesis.

[61] Young 2001, 385.
[62] Said 1978, 1.
[63] Shackle, et al. 2001, 2.
[64] Wachtel 1994 , 257.

One of the scholars involved with Sikh issues is Singh, whose essay[65] I mentioned earlier. Singh[66] points out that in many studies, Kip is studied only marginally, or he is merely studied in connection to other characters, and not as a separate, independent subject. Conversely, Singh's article examines postcolonial qualities of the novel and Kip is the focus of attention. As I mentioned earlier, Ondaatje's text can be explicated through Said's concept of "contrapuntal reading",[67] and it can be claimed that Singh's article is a good example of what Said was in quest for.

Singh's article deserves to be given a special attention because of its extensive knowledge of Sikh culture and religion. Moreover, it discusses Kip's transformation and maturation following the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan.[68] Singh[69] adapts Lacanian theory for the psychological transformation of Kip:

> As Kip's relationship evolves with his three Villa residents, so does his passage into himself. He begins to recognize himself. As he remembers his past, his dismembered self begins to heal. There are many scenes in which he reminisces about his brother, his maid, his sacred place of worship. Through developing these delicate and intricate patterns Ondaatje displays Kip's psychological progression.

Lacan's theory pertains to "the earliest period of child development which [Lacan] calls the 'mirror phase.' "[70] During this phase, which is also known as the mirror stage, the child perceives his or her body as disintegrated because of biological inadequacy and incoherence, the child has to compensate the fragmentary self with an "ideal unified self or imago".[71] According to Singh,[72] thus, Kip is in this Pre-Mirror stage until he finds his finds his "full

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[65] Singh, 2001.
[66] Singh 2001, 120.
[67] Said 1994, 66.
[68] Singh's interpretation of Jacques Lacan's *The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,* transl. by Alan Sheridan in *Écrits: A Selection*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977.
[69] Singh 2001, 130.
[70] Kearney 1994, 273.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Singh 2001.

self-awareness"[73] near the end of the novel. Singh also adapts the Marxist concept of false consciousness in her study. Thus, Singh states that Kip transforms from a colonial false consciousness to a more to a more intense and freer postcolonial identity.[74]

In *The English Patient*, male protagonists outnumber female characters. The apparent absence of feminist studies made on Ondaatje's novel does not eliminate the potentiality of examining *The English Patient* from this point of view. As Fledderus[75] notes, it is surprising that feminist scholars seem to neglect Ondaatje's works, because there are often a very limited spectrum of female characters in his writing. Despite of the desperate need for feminist studies on Ondaatje, I will not applied any kind of a feminist approach to my thesis. For instancem Hana's point of view will be discussed to a certain degree, but only in connection to the Sikh.

To some extent, I will discuss Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak".[76] In addition, as I mentioned before, Spivak[77] writes that the subaltern subject is heterogeneous. I will keep this in mind in my analysis of *The English Patient.* For example, Kip's role as a "bridge builder" cannot be fixed to a certain position, but it is important to study different aspects that are involved in his character. He cannot be studied as a stereotypical example of an Indian. Due to this, his relations to other characters—and to his surroundings—are important, since they illuminate different qualities of his role as a mediator.

To sum up the aims of my thesis: I will discuss symbolic bridges that are presented in the novel. I will underline different viewpoints on Kip's role as mediator. Despite the divisions I will introduce below, they overlap in Ondaatje's text, so it is impossible to treat them one by one. Nevertheless, I will concentrate on one issue in each section.

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[73] Singh 2001, 140.
[74] Shackle et al. 2001, 8; Singh 2001, 120.
[75] Fledderus 1997, 29.
[76] Spivak 1988.
[77] Spivak 1999, 270.

Firstly, there is a personal level, which exists in Kip's relationships to the main protagonists, that is, Hana, Lord Suffolk, and the English patient. I adapt Singh's[78] interpretation of the novel, when I claim that they form a "foster family" for Kip. The concept of family is very important for Ondaatje in general, as he says[79] that in *The English Patient* as well as *In the Skin of a Lion*, an extended family is underlined: in his works the characters are often very close, but this does not mean they are related. In *The English Patient*, especially Kip's and Hana's relationship is spotlighted, because of its intimate nature.

Secondly, there are other kinds of bridges in the novel, that is, Kip's relationships to different works of art. He meets different Italian frescoes in the novel. They are seen through Kip's eyes, so there are symbolic connections between the Indian sapper and Western art. For example, the sapper encounters a fresco painted by Piero della Francesca in an Italian church. Consequently, Kip's connection to this fresco depicting the Queen meeting King Solomon is especially significant. There are many similar features between the sapper and the Queen; for instance, they are both between two worlds. The relationship between Kip and the fresco's woman is also likened to that of Kip and Hana. In addition, there are other works of art in the novel. The sapper is not a traditional art admirer, though. Kip's way of meeting with them emphasizes the difference between the Indian character and Italian art history.

Third, religion is a very important element throughout the novel. A type of bridge can be seen in Kip's religion. Kip is not a member of the major religions of India: he is not a Hindu or a Muslim. Thus, Ondaatje has not chosen a stereotypical Indian character. Kip is a mediator in this respect as well. Kip's religion is compared and contrasted to Christianity in many occasions in *The English Patient*. The question of religious aspects cannot be treated separately due to overlapping of different elements. Therefore, to some extent, I will examine religion in connection to other issues mentioned above.

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[78] Singh 2001, 129-130.
[79] Wachtel 1994, 259.

Because of the postcolonialist issues, symbolic bridges can be analysed in a more general way. The division between East and West is analysed in the last section of my thesis. In addition, the expression “the sacredness of bridges” will also be illuminated further towards the end of my analysis. In the last section, I will examine the question whether there the atomic bombs created a permanent division between East and West in the last chapters of the novel.

2. Kip and His "Foster Family"

As I explained before, my thesis will concentrate on Kip's point of view. In an interview[80] Ondaatje said that *The English Patient* "is a book about very tentative healing among a group of people". Ondaatje[81] continues that there are many kinds of love stories in the novel between the characters. The relationships create symbolic bridges in the novel. Although the quality of the bridge is different in each case, there are also similarities and connections between them: they all are emotional and regarded with particular reverence by Kip.

I am extending Singh's[82] statement in my claim that the relationships in *The English Patient* can be seen substituting his real family. Singh[83] argues that Kip is attracted to his imperial masters, because of he misuses "his primal desire for his mother, father, and his brother". Not unlike Singh, Kella[84] writes about "a social secularization" which takes place between the inmates. As can be seen in the following analysis, it could be argued that Hana represents his mother or sister, and the English patient his father or brother. This "foster family" extents also to Lord Suffolk, who could portray his step-father. Furthermore, the members of this " foster family" are not always human; Kip also finds parental figures in the art works in Italian churches. The bridges between the sapper and Italian art are not uncomplicated, because the works of art are often seen through Indian eyes. And due to the qualities of his religion, Kip is an embodiment of a symbolic bridge in the novel. Thus, Sikhism presents yet another kind of mediator in *The English Patient*. There are also different kinds of references to religion on many occasions in the relationships.

These bridges are not without fractures and this becomes evident in the closer analysis of the relationships. Kip does not belong to this family completely, because he is also described as "some kind of loose star on the edge of their system [in the Villa]" (EP 75). Like

[80] Wachtel 1994, 255-256.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Singh 2001, 130.
[83] Singh 2001, 130.
[84] Kella 2000, 94.

the Queen of Sheba which Kip sees in a fresco in an Italian church, Kip will later realize the sacredness of bridges, that there will be something that will be "[t]he death of a [Western] civilization" (EP 286). The hidden brokenness in Kip's relationships foreshadow this large break which is to become in the end: the ultimate break between East and West, when the atomic bombs are dropped to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

2.1 "Their Continents Met in a Hill Town"- Kip and Hana

Hana is in the habit of writing her emotions in the books of the partly ruined library of the Villa. In her writings, she describes her love to Kip. Her attraction to the sapper's physical qualities is emphasized: "He is small, not much taller than I am. An intimate smile up close that can charm anything when he displays it" (EP 209). Consequently, in Hana's case, Kip's role as a mediator enhances the romantic aspect of the symbolic bridge between them, because their relationship is a love affair. However, as can be seen in the following examples, there are other qualities in their relationship as well. Singh[85] writes that between them, "All kinds of dualities, past and present, east and west, platonic and sexual, joy and quilt, body and mind, give and take, converge [...]". In other words, their liaison is more complicated than a simple relationship between a man and a woman.

The sexual quality of their relationship is evident. This can be seen in Hana's manner of observing Kip. Singh[86] writes that to Hana, Kip's hair is always connected to sensuality. For example, Hana looks at Kip in the following excerpt: "As he bends over her it pours. She can tie it against her wrists. As he moves she keeps her eyes open to witness the gnats of electricity in his hair in the darkness of the tent" (EP 218). Kip's long is hair an emblem of sexuality to Hana, who cannot help admiring the man. In addition to Kip's hair, Hana seems

[85] Singh 2001, 131.
[86] Singh 2001, 122.

to be attracted to his skin colour, too. Her infatuation for the man becomes evident in the following excerpt, which includes her thoughts during their love-making:

> She loves most the wet colours of his neck when he bathes. And his chest with its sweat which her fingers grip when he is over her, and the dark, tough arms in the darkness of his tent, or one time in her room when light from the valleys city, finally free of curfew, rose among them like twilight and lit the colour of his body (EP 127).

This excerpt clearly shows that Hana the masculine beauty of the Sikh's body is very fascinating to Hana.

However, there is not only sensuality in their relationship: there are spiritual qualities in their love. Singh[87] claims that "the gnats of electricity" (EP 218) create a reference to a warrior angel in this scene: the image that Kip encounters in the Church of San Giovanni, when he is waiting for the electricity to be turned back on. The connection to the warrior angel is also underlined when Kip is described as one of the warrior saints (EP 217). The expression probably refers to his religion, as he is one of the Khalsa initiated who originally were supposed to wear swords.[88] Another curious instance is presented when Kip is compared to an angel. This happens when Hana says to Kip: "I wanted to touch that bone at you neck, collarbone, it's like a small hard wing under your skin. I wanted to place my fingers against it" (EP 103). This remark show, thus, that Hana sees Kip's spiritual qualities in her lover.

Although Hana observes the erotic aspects of Kip's hair, she also sees them as an indication of Kip's devotedness to his religion. For this reason, a kind of a religious reference is made when Hana admires the long hair of Kip. The sensual side of his looks is sometimes laid aside when Hana thinks that the man is almost god-like. Perhaps surprisingly, she sees the sapper in a very feminine way as well: "At night, when she lets his hair free [...] She holds

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[87] Singh 2001, 122.

[88] Kip's turban and long hair denote two of of the five K's or *kes*, which the Khalsa initiated are supposed to wear: *Keshas*, long hair; *Kangha*, the comb, to keep the hair clean; *Kara*, the steel bangle as a symbol of the omnipresence of God; *Kachha* or drawers as a symbol of chastity; and *Kirpan* , the sword as symbol of resistance of evil (Singh 1971, 25). Nevertheless, this is not straightforward: according to McLeod (1989, 78), not all the Sikhs accept the Khalsa tradition, although they all retain the *kes*, in addition, McLeod continues (ibid.) that there are two kinds of Sikhs among *Kes-dhārī* Sikhs (who refrain from cutting their hair): those who undergo the initiation rite (*Amrit-dhārī*) and those who do not.

an Indian Goddess in her arms, she holds wheats and ribbons" (EP 218). The hair can even be an obsession to Hana, because during the war, she has cut her own hair (EP 49-50). The femininity of the Sikh reminds Hana of her own ghastly appearance.

There is yet another kind of religious quality in their relationship. At times they are not only lovers, but they only sleep side by side in Kip's tent: "A formal celibacy between them" (EP 225). Similarly, Kip loves that Hana "crawls against his body like a saint" (EP128). This underlines that the sexual quality of their love affair is not very significant after all.

When the Sikh and the Canadian nurse first meet, Hana is playing on the piano in the villa. A lightning illuminates the darkness, she notices that there are sappers in the room and immediately sees that one of them is a Sikh. This is because he recognizes his religion from his turban (see EP 63). It is probable that the men did not come in because they were attracted by the music, but due to the dangerousness of the playing. They are soldiers, who know that after the war there could be a bomb installed inside anything. Indeed, Ondaatje says in an interview[89] that there exists a reference to death in the situation as Hana is thinking: "In darkness, in any light after dusk, you can slit a vein and the blood is black" (EP 62). Therefore, it can be argued that Kip is not only her lover, his role is a kind of a "saviour" for Hana.

The defusing of bombs is significant between the lovers in another occasion, too: Kip needs Hana's help when he finds a bomb in the garden. Hana leaves her position as the patient's nurse and helps Kip to dismantle the weapon. She holds the wire connected to the bomb while Kip is defusing the bomb. After Kip has satisfactorily deactivated the explosive, Hana's tensions are relieved and at the same time she confesses her physical attraction to Kip. Her outburst reveals her earlier suicidal reflections: "I thought I was going to die. I wanted to die. And I thought if I was going to die, I would die with you. [...] [W]e should have lain

[89] Wachtel 1994, 253.

down together [...]" (EP 103). Hana's outburst shows that she almost wants to entrust her life into Kip's hands, and feels comfortable even dying with the man.

The Sikh's skills of dismantling explosives is depicted more humorously on another occasion, in which Hana and Kip prepare to spend their first night together. Kip's training becomes underlined as he wants that the patient will not hear them: he cuts the wire of the man's hearing aid and says to Hana: "I'll rewire him in the morning" (EP 115). Again, Hana wants to be freed or rescued by the man. Hana thinks that this is especially witty, and writes in of her "diaries" in the ruined library: "But he has a peculiar sense of humour that is more rambuntious than his manner suggests" (EP 209). Despite the comical qualities of this situation, it can be interpreted more seriously. The occasion can be an alternative rendering of Spivak's notion of "[w]hite me saving brown women from brown men";[90] Kip frees Hana from his arduous task as the patient's nurse. In the case of Kip and Hana, a brown man is saving a white woman from a white man (who is the English patient).

Hana is not only attracted to Kip's looks, but also to his nature, because in the man, she recognizes a similar shell-shock and mental disturbance than in herself. Their self-images seem to be so shattered that both of them prefer to avoid mirrors, which in Kip's case Singh[91] argues to be an indication of a Lacanian Pre-Mirror Stage. In Lacan's theory, prior to the Mirror Stage, the child sees the world without any cultural knowledge and the self is composed of unconnected experiences, everything happens here and now. The memory is still unable to construct the symbolic self with a history.[92] According to Singh, [93] this is why the Sikh lacks his selfhood and is not in contact with himself.

Not until after the war Hana wants to see her reflection: "She had refused to look at herself for more than a year, now and then just her shadow on walls" (EP 52). Similarly,

[90] Spivak 1988, 297.
[91] Singh 2001, 121.
[92] Mälkönen et al. 2006, 271.
[93] Singh 2001, 127.

"[Kip] himself has no mirrors. He wraps his turban outside in his garden, looking about at the moss on trees" (EP 219). In addition, both of them had also been loyal "soldiers":

> Some men had unwound their last knot of life in her arms [...]. Nothing had stopped her. She had continued her duties while she secretly pulled her personal self back. So many nurses had turned into emotionally disturbed handmaidens of the war, in their yellow-and-crimson uniforms with bone buttons. [...] She watches Kip lean his head back against the wall and knows the neutral look on his face. She can read it (EP 178).

Kip is Hana's lover, but Hana also needs the man because of her suffering, she needs to be comforted by him as he is capable of mapping "her sadness more than any other" (EP 270). He too desires to protect the woman: "He did not want comfort but he wanted to surround her with it, to guide her from this room [of the Patient]" (EP 114). Kip understands Hana's reasons of sorrow: "He knows the depth of darkness in her, her lack of a child and of faith. He is always coaxing her from the edge of her fields of sadness" (EP 271). Accordingly, both Kip and Hana think that they are being needed by each other, as Ondaatje[94] says about all the characters in the novel: "I think everyone thinks they're healing everybody else, in some way, but they're all wounded".

Hana's need for Kip's protection is also depicted in an extraordinary manner in the novel: when she works in the war-time hospital in Pisa, she watches a white marble lion, "[e]very night it was her sentinel while she moved among the patients" (EP 41). Kip's orderly and reliable behaviour at the Villa is analogous to the lion's trustworthiness, and the connection becomes even more evident when we know that Kip's last name, Singh, which denotes a 'lion'.[95] In a way, then, the sapper is Hana's sentinel. Kip's resemblance to a lion is also referred by Ondaatje,[96] as he argues that because Hana and Kip are more or less retreating into their childhood, they resemble more siblings than lovers, or in Ondaatje's term, "lion cubs". Likewise, Hana "sleeps beside him virtuous like a sister" (EP 126).

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[94] Wachtel 1994, 253.
[95] Singh 1971, 107.
[96] Wachtel 1994, 256.

Kip is slightly irritated by Hana at first, because he feels that the woman has made him indebted: "He was still annoyed the girl had stayed with him when he defused the bomb, as if by that she had made him owe her something" (EP 104). As his interest of Hana grows more intense, he becomes preoccupied with her so that he cannot concentrate on his work. Earlier he had been able to seclude himself from his surroundings by listening to music on his crystal radio. He is compelled to take the first step in their relationship, in order to be capable of working again:

> Tonight, gazing at the scene of the mine blast, he had begun to fear her presence during the afternoon dismantling. He had to remove it, or she would be with him each time he approached a fuze. He would be pregnant with her. When he worked, clarity and music filled him, the human world extinguished. Now she was within him or on his shoulder [...] (EP 114).

Another example of the familiar type of relationship is when Kip is thinking about his *ayah*, his wet nurse, who displaced his mother in his childhood. The intimacy between Hana is more like this old relationship, and as was mentioned earlier, on the deepest level sex is not the most significant part of their love story: "She reminded him of the pleasure of being scratched, her fingernails in circles raking his back. It was something his *ayah* had taught him years earlier" (EP 225). Singh[97] writes that this not only reminds of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901),[98] which depicts an Indian boy who was similarly raised by someone else than the mother, but also that Hana enters Kip's deep psychological fracture that has been created by the lack of his real mother and other family members. In other words, it can be argued that Hana is a kind of substitute for Kip's mother, because he either lacked one at home, or was not very close to her. There is another reference to family, when the intimacy with Kip makes Hana think of his stepfather Patrick (she refers to him as his real father): "Unlike the sapper, her father was never fully comfortable in this world" (EP 91). On another occasion Hana

[97] Singh 2001, 130.
[98] Despite the similarities between Kip and Kim, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to examine Kipling's novel in more detail.

wishes that Kip was “as though a good grandfather” (EP 103). Thus, Kip can be seen as the substitute for Hana’s father—or grandfather.

Kip clearly is able to brighten Hana, for example, when they play together in the darkness of the Villa (EP 225-226). In addition, the sapper’s presence brings joy to the whole of the “family”, but moreover, there is a curious aspect in his behaviour among the other residents: Kip celebrates Hana’s birthday in a very unusual way: “Caravaggio bent over the flutter of lights. They were snail shells filled with oil. He looked along the row of them, there must have been around forty. ‘Forty-five,’ Kip said, ‘the years so far of this century. Where I come from, we celebrate the age as well as ourselves” (EP 267). As can be seen in the excerpt above, in a very lovingly manner Kip introduces his culture to Hana.

However, there are breaks in the relationship between Kip and Hana. They are lovers by night but not in day-time: “As they grow intimate the pace between them during the day grows larger” (EP 127). In addition, Hana understands later that Kip’s need for Hana is not as desperate as that of the other soldiers had been:

> They are only a step past the comfort she has given others [...]. Her body for last warmth, her whisper for comfort, her needle for sleep. But the sapper’s body allows nothing to enter him that comes from another world. A boy in love who will not eat the food she gathers, who does not need or want the drug in a needle she could slide into his arm [...]. Just the comfort of sleep (EP 126).

There is not the same kind of eroticism in Kip’s thinking as in Hana’s. He sees Hana “as someone young and alone” (EP 114) only after they had been defusing the bomb together. He does not praise Hana’s looks in any way. There is a similarity between his desire and that of the dying soldiers, and because of their complete helplessness, she was “being lusted at by them” (EP 85). Perhaps, Kip’s attraction to Hana is not very deep. And possibly they are together only because there are no other young people left after the war.

Kip’s detachment is strange and even hurtful to Hana, because her comforting was appreciated by the dying soldiers, the English patient, and Caravaggio, but not by Kip. An

omniscient narrator informs the reader about the uncertainty of their relationship: “How much she is in love with him or he with her we don’t know. Or how much it is a game of secrets” (EP 127). Hana also understands that Kip never allows himself to be “beholden” (EP 128). He does not want to trust Hana. Due to his profession, Kip still behaves in the way he was trained: Kip is suspicious of anyone and investigates every detail of his surroundings fearing of hidden bombs. According to Singh,[99] at this stage of his psychological transformation, Kip has become dislocated from his own worldview, Sikhism, which sees the world as the home of “the Divine, the True One”. Singh[100] states that Kip has a lack of real selfhood, he has only his colonial self. Singh continues that this is because of his childhood in India, his working in sterile England, and the destructiveness of the war. Therefore, it can be argued that the connection between the Indian sapper and the Canadian nurse is also disintegrated on the deepest level. Hana probably sees Kip in a different light than the patient who is European, as can be seen in the later sections of the thesis. She tells Kip how she misses Canada, and she is annoyed by Kip’s detachment from the world: “She feels displaced out of Canada during the night. It is his world. She lies there irritated at his self-sufficiency [...]” (EP 128). The woman’s longing for her home country is very deep, as can be seen in the next excerpt: “ ‘I want to take you to the Skootamatta River, Kip,’ she said. ‘I want to show you Smoke Lake. The woman my father loved lives out on the lakes, slips into canoes more easily than into a car’ ” (EP 130). Hana, in other words, dreams of their future; but unfortunately she never takes her lover to Canada.

When looking at Kip, Hana only sees a Sikh (or an Eastern man) through the eyes of a Western woman. This relates also to Said’s claim about the fact that in the technical, post-modern world there is “a reinforcement of stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed”.[101]

[99] Singh 2001, 125.
[100] Singh 2001, 121.
[101] Said 1978, 26.

Burcar[102] writes that the reason why Hana actually is in the novel is that she balances Kip who originates from the other part of the British Empire. There is a significant disconnection in the symbolic bridge between the lovers, because Hana often accentuates Kip's skin colour. In spite of the sensuality of her attraction, there exists another, almost derogatory level in her thinking; Hana's observing of the brownness of Kip is almost obsessive: "She learns all the varieties of his darkness. The colour of his forearm against the colour of his neck. The colour of his palms, his cheeks, the skin under the turban. The darkness of fingers separating red and black wires [...]" (EP 127). This can be seen when she prattles nervously after the defusing of the bomb in the orchard: "I've always liked flesh the colour of rivers and rocks or like the brown eye of a Susan" (EP 103). With this, she is possibly referring to Kip's skin colour. The pigmentation of Kip is very pronounced in Hana's thoughts.

Hana's opinion on the man involves exoticism, sometimes she sees Kip only as an Eastern man. As a Western woman she appreciates his exotic looks. Naturally, Kip's reaction to Hana's opinion is a feeling of estrangement: "But even as she had said, he was the brownness of a rock, the brownness of a muddy river. And something is him made him step back from even the naive innocence of such a remark" (EP 105). It seems that Kip does not completely accept Hana's way of thinking.

There is also a curious situation that at first seems to be very sensual, but may also be a signal of discrimination in Hana's thoughts: "Hana was pouring milk into her cup. As she finished she moved the lip of the jug over Kip's hand and continued pouring the milk over his brown hand and up his arm to his elbow and then stopped. He didn't move it away" (EP 123). In this situation, Hana comments on Kip's brown skin by pouring the white liquid on him. The Indian acknowledges the break between them, and succumbs to it.

[102] Burcar 2001, n. pag.

Consequently, despite their love story, Kip remains the Other to Hana. Singh[103] writes: "Readers look into the novel but see an Asian, a Sikh looking at the West. Kip offers reflections for Western readers. In his Punjabi accent, he makes them examine their attitudes towards the Other". Because Hana is Canadian, Kip does not accept her customs or traditions. In addition, although it is not distinctly expressed in the text, the excerpt above hints that Kip does not approve of Hana's mild intolerance.

It could be argued that with a reference to Hana's and Kip's relationship, in his novel, Ondaatje comments on Spivak's claim: "[...] the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous".[104] This is because in the postcolonial world, the subaltern can no longer be treated as a uniform group. Unfortunately, Hana fails to perceive Kip as a human being, a man. She sees him as an example of the colonized Other.

In addition, Hana observes Kip as a stereotype of the Orient when "She imagines all of Asia through the gestures of this one man. Hana also thinks about "[t]he way he lazily moves, his quiet civilization" (EP 217). As I will explain later in my thesis, Kip does not represent a "typical" Indian, that is, he is not a representative a homogeneous culture. Hana's opinion of Kip is a very "Orientalist" view. Said[105] claims that the 19th Century European *made* the Orient Oriental, it was not discovered. Similarly, Hana "orientalizes" or makes Kip an Oriental man, although she could treat him as an equal partner or her fellow sufferer.

Religion binds the pair in many ways, but it also creates gaps between Hana and Kip. For example, Hana is not deeply religious, whereas Kip's religion is underlined even in his appearance. Hana's disillusionment and lack of faith becomes evident when Hana tries to make the badly damaged Villa more comfortable: "She worked in the garden and orchard. She carried the six-foot crucifix from the bombed chapel and used it to build a scarecrow above the seedbed" (EP 15). Thus, the wooden image of Christ, which had once been a sacred

[103] Singh 200l, 118.
[104] Spivak 1999, 270.
[105] Said 1978, 6.

item, has now lost its importance to the woman. Hana's clipping of her hair contrasts the appearance of the long-haired Sikh. More generally, Hana's behavious reflects the general worldview during and after the Second World war.

Hana listens to Kip's description of his religion and its holy place: "During the verbal nights, they travel his country of five rivers [...]" (EP 270-271). Ondaatje's poetic language creates a vivid image of the temple, and it emphasizes Hana's envy of Kip. She wishes that she could be a part of the graceful image. Kip seems to Hana very flexible by nature, "[because] whatever the trials around him there was always a solution and light. But she saw none. (EP 272). This issue will be examined more in the section on Kip and Sikhism.

There is another kind of fracture between them; Kip has an "affinity with machines" (EP 272), which he claims is a specific quality of Sikhs. This is why Hana thinks that she cannot wholly become his lover, because he concentrates on the explosives: "the rest of us are just periphery, she thinks, his eyes are only on what is dangerous" (EP 272). Simpson[106] argues that Kip's thinking resembles "cyborgs", which are half machine and half human. In addition, Hana treats him like he was partly mechanical, as she "enters his tent and puts an ear to his sleeping chest and listens to his beating heart, the way he will listen to a clock on a mine" (EP 130). His machine-like thinking is so deep-seated in him that even when they are making love, Hana has to teach him to make a human sound (EP 127).

Accordingly, the relationship between Kip and Hana is not going to be permanent. Although Hana desires to take him to her home, the war has affected them in such a way that they seem to know from the beginning that they will not spend their future together. The fragility and uncertainty of their situation are underlined as they lie together in Kip's tent: "In the tent there have been nights of no talk, and nights full of talk. They are never sure what will occur, whose fraction of past will emerge, or whether touch will be anonymous and silent in their darkness" (EP 270). Their love is almost ephemeral: it is symbolized by the

[106] Simpson 1994, 234.

temporality of their residence. They sleep together in Kip's tent, but even their bed is not permanent "as they lie upon the air pillow he insists on blowing up every night" (EP 270).

Kip cannot discuss his deepest emotions, because he feels that it would be "too loud a gesture" (EP 197). The sapper is not able to thoroughly trust Hana or other Westerners. However, the complete detachment from the Westerns traditions—and in the relationship to Hana —does not happen until Kip hears the news on the radio about the bombs in Japan. After that, Kip detaches himself from Hana, and yet, there is a connection, as we shall see later.

2.2 "The Best of the English"- Kip and Lord Suffolk

Kip's role as a mediator in connection to Lord Suffolk is illuminated from a slightly different point of view. There are connections between Hana's and Lord Suffolk's relationships to Kip: for example, Kip is with the nurse in the tent when he is remembering Lord Suffolk. "He remembers such shadows of memory with him when he lay in his tent with Hana" (EP 197). The fact that he talks about Lord Suffolk to Hana reveals the actual closeness of his relationship to the woman. Accordingly, there is a similarity between these two characters and their relation to Kip: a bridge exists between Kip and Hana, as there appears to be between Kip and Lord Suffolk. It is to Hana that Kip says that Lord Suffolk was the best of the English (EP185).

As between very close friends, there is no need to express the friendship aloud. The strength of love towards Lord Suffolk is evident when Kip is thinking about the practice of the English map-making: "Drawn by desire . . . He was beginning to love the English" (EP 190). When he is later drawing a profile for the bomb, he uses the same word to honour his mentor: "Drawn by desire of Lord Suffolk, by his student Lieutenant Kirpal Singh [...]"

(EP 198). Singh argues[107] that whereas Hana was his mother/sister, his admiration for Lord Suffolk is also a replacement of his "primal desire" for his family members. Later, Hana sees him as "a man from Asia who has in these last years of war assumed English fathers, following their codes like a dutiful son" (EP 217). Indeed, Lord Suffolk treats Kip as his son: he talks about British culture "as if it was a recently discovered culture" (EP 184). He also introduces his passion of *Lorna Doone*[108] to Kip, which to the Sikh "sounded like a familiar Indian fable" (EP 185), and possibly because his own father has told him similar stories at home. In the following excerpt, Kip is remembering the spare time he had spent in England with Lord Suffolk: on his Christmas leave they had gone to see the play *Peter Pan*, which Kip had selected: "He held [Hana] the same strength of love he felt for those three strange people, eating at the same table with them, who had watched his delight and laughter and wonder when the green boy raised his arms and flew into the darkness high above the stage [...]" (EP 197).

In connection to Lord Suffolk, a sapper in a bomb disposal unit in England is a role of a mediator as well. Left in the terrain, the explosive is like "a terrible letter" (EP 76). Therefore, as Simpson[109] maintains, the bomb is like dreadful communication between different peoples and Kip is a mediator trying to interpret them. Simpson's[110] argument is that bombs are similar to the intimate language of lovers, because it is equally difficult to interpret the message of the explosives. The sapper's task is to disentangle the thoughts of the maker of the bomb in order to be able to defuse it safely.

In addition, because the sapper is befriended with a British officer, it can be claimed that he is actually disarming the cultural disconnections between his Indian and Lord Suffolk's British identities. There is another interesting aspect in connection with the bombs:

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[107] Singh 2001, 130.
[108] Written by R.D. Blackmore, 1869.
[109] Simpson 1994, 228.
[110] Simpson 1994, 228.

Pesch[111] writes that in the novel, the reason why Kip works in a bomb disposal unit is not to underline the technical side of bombs. He claims that the aim is to disprove the old predisposition that the Indian people are only mystics, whereas the Westerners are competent technicians. Because Kip plays such a central role in *The English Patient*, the novel underlines that in the war, the Indians had a more significant function than it is generally thought. In a way, the presence of the bombs can be seen as an alternative reading of the World War II in general.

As with Hana, there are breaks in the relationships between Kip and Lord Suffolk. There is no certainty of the permanence of the relationship between the nurse and the sapper, and this is also the case of Kip and Lord Suffolk. This is referred to at an early stage of their friendship. For instance, there is a rather derogatory nuance in Kip's nickname, although it was actually invented by another English officer. This man had laughed at the report made by Kip, because it had a stain of butter: "Whats this? Kipper grease?" (EP 87). Regardless of this, the name is not completely disparaging to Kip, because when Lord Suffolk continued to use the name, Kip does not mind as he dislikes the English habit of using last names (EP 88). The sapper's nickname, admittedly, could point to different directions at the same time; it might just denote Lord Suffolk's habit of nibbling Kipling's cakes, but the name could also be an abbreviation of the author Rudyard Kipling, who has written many books on India. Ondaatje seems to make many-layered postcolonial references in his novel.

Not only Kip's superior officer, Lord Suffolk is also a nobleman, who has a clearly condescending, yet friendly attitude towards the sapper. He accepts the Indian to the army, based on his preconceptions: This man who had never spoken to him (and had not laughed with him, simply because he had not joked) walked across the room and put his arm around his shoulder (EP 188-189). Lord Suffolk respects the Indian very much, but he also treats him as an inferior man. "Lord Suffolk [said:] 'I know that you don't drink' [...] Congratulations,

[111] Pesch 1998, 71.

your exam were splendid. Though I was sure you would be chosen, even before you took it' (EP 189). It can be argued that in this novel Ondaatje refers to the attitude of the British Empire towards its subordinates more generally. His attitude also reflects Said's[112] claim of European identity, the idea of it being superior to non-European cultures what made it hegemonic. Lord Suffolk, notwithstanding his friendliness, feels that he's Kip's superior—not only as an officer, but also intellectually. On the other hand, the Indian does not accept the English people thoroughly. This could also reflect Spivak's criticism[113] on the role of the subaltern: although Kip is accepted as a friend, he is not really allowed to speak out his opinions. He remains a subordinate to Lord Suffolk.

As I suggested before, Hana's and Lord Suffolk's relationships to Kip are similar in some respects. For instance, although Kip and Lord Suffolk are friends, there also seems to be a disconnection. As with Hana, the sapper feels as an Other to the English, he is an alien on the English soil:

> The self-sufficiency and privacy Hana saw in him later were caused not only by his being a sapper in the Italian campaign. It was as much a result of being the anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world. He had built up defenses of character against all that, trusting only those who befriended him (EP 196).

This excerpt reveals that on Kip's part, his friendship to Lord Suffolk is true and strong. The fractures were created by Lord Suffolk's patronizing attitude towards the Sikh. This is evident, too, when Lord Suffolk and his secretary, Miss Morden, "acquiesced and went to a screaming child-full show" (EP 197). Simpson[114] writes that the incident is "evocative imputation of infantalizing, albeit benign, racism". Simpson[115] continues that this intertextual connection to *Peter Pan* also ironically indicates Kip as a postcolonial character.

Thus, the English, although they are being friendly, misinterpret his ignorance of English culture as child-like behaviour. There could be a germ of truth in it, because

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[112] Said 1978, 7.
[113] Spivak 1988.
[114] Simpson 1994, 235.
[115] Simpson 1994, 235.

according to Singh,[116] Kip is in Lacanian infant stage, when he addresses the other characters as his family members. On the other hand, Kip is not a child, although Lord Suffolk seems to treat him like one. Singh[117] writes, the relationship between Hana and Kip is more equal than that of Kip to his superior officer. And we shall see later that the English patient treats the Sikh more like an equal.

Obviously, what creates the definite break between the two men is Lord Suffolk's death. Kip does not want to continue in Lord Suffolk's footsteps as an army officer, because he dislikes being authoritative: before Lord Suffolk's death, Kip was the officer's student or even his son, but now he has to be in command of all the risks involved:

> He had suddenly a map of responsibility, something, he realized, that Lord Suffolk carried within his character at all times. It was this awareness that later created the need in him to block so much out when he was working on a bomb. He was one of those never interested in the choreography of power [...]. [H]e concluded the work he was assigned to and reenlisted into the anonymous machine of the army (EP 195).

When Lord Suffolk dies, it could be argued that his death symbolizes the decline of the British Empire and also the wisdom of West in general. It could also anticipate the nuclear bombs in Japan, after which Kip denounces his coloniality completely.

Something in Kip's unconsciousness keeps reminding him that some bridges will not last forever. For example, he tells about his anti-colonialist brother to Hana: "my brother thinks me a fool for trusting the English [...]. One day, he says, I will open my eyes. Asia is still not a free continent, and he is appalled at how we throw ourselves into English wars" (EP 217). He is beginning to see his role as a mediator, and that the bridges will not last forever. Singh[118] argues that because Kip is saying the sentences above with "sunlight in his eyes" (EP 217), he is awakening from a dormancy which has blinded him from childhood. The alienation he feels is very deep: "Wise white fatherly men shook hands, were acknowleged, and limped away, having ben coaxed out of solitude for this special occasion. But he was a

[116] Singh 2001, 121.
[117] Singh 2001, 130.
[118] Singh 2001, 130.

professional" (EP 105). Kip is already starting to think that becase he is a foreigner, an Indian, there is something wrong in his working under the British flag, it can be seen for them as he is thinking about the suspicious attitude of the English: "They expect you to fight for them but won't talk to you. Singh. And the ambiguities" (EP 188). Thus, he is beginning to break the mirrors of his colonial self, as Singh[119] explains in her essay.

Raymond Younis[120] writes about Kip's "mixed loyalties and the dual cultures", and that in Ondaatje's novel, the traditional black-and-white world of the oppressor and the oppressed is not applicable. This is evident especially in Kip's relationship to the patient, which I will analyze further in the next section.

2.3 "International Bastards"- Kip and the English Patient

The relationships of Ondaatje's characters are intertwined in a complicated and curious manner; a delicate web of bridges is being built between them. For instance, when Hana introduces Kip to the patient: first, Kip finds a ladybird from the garden of the Villa and gives it to Hana, who then places it onto the dark skin of the English patient. The bridge is thus created between three characters at the same time. Similarly, Lord Suffolk's and the English patient's roles overlap to a certain degree, because at least in the beginning, they represent British culture. At the beginning of the novel, the patient is supposedly English, but his nationality is not incontestable, because towards the end of the novel it is revealed that the English patient is not British at all, but Hungarian.

Although Lord Suffolk and the patient never actually meet in the novel, they are connected when Kip is thinking about a fir tree he had seen in Lord Suffolk's garden: "its one sick branch, too weighted down with age, held up by a crutch made out of another tree" (EP 218). It could be argued that Hana is symbolized by the crutch. Kip admires the tree-like

[119] Singh 2001, 133.
[120] Younis 1998, 6.

patient: “In spite of such infirmity he sensed the creature within was noble, with a memory whose power rainbowed beyond ailment” (EP 219). The patient’s relationship is also likened to Lord Suffolk’s when Kip thinks that he is “most comfortable with men who had the abstract madness of autodidacts like his mentor, Lord Suffolk, like the English patient” (EP 111). The friendships of the men are of great concern to the sapper.

When Kip arrives at the Villa, Hana is thinking that there cannot be anything between him and the patient and therefore, she tries to keep them apart “knowing that they would probably not like each other” (EP 88). Surprisingly, the bridge of friendship between the men emerges easily, as a result of their common interest in weaponry: “Soon they were drawing outlines of bombs for each other and talking out the theory of each specific circuit” (EP 89). In addition to Kip’s relationship with Hana, that of Kip and the patient has a direct reference to Kipling’s *Kim*. When Hana sees Kip in the patient’s room, “it seemed to her as a reversal of *Kim*. The young student was now Indian, the wise old teacher was English” (EP 111). The relationship between the two men is special, which Ondaatje mentions in an interview[121]: many of the relationships in the novel are subtle, or “barely spoken”, and this is the case of the Sikh and the English patient. Ondaatje continues[122] that he deliberately wanted to subdue the backgrounds of the men. This makes the relationship between the men exceptionally close.

Another kind of bridge between Kip and the patient is created when the burned man compares Kip to David in Caravaggio[123]’s painting *David with the Head of Goliath*, (the issue of art will be examined in a more detailed way later). The English patient understands his incurable disease when he talks about death: “The judging of one’s own mortality. I think when I see him at the foot of my bed that Kip is my David” (EP 116). In other words, in Kip,

[121] Wachtel 1994, 255-256.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Caravaggio’s name refers to the Italian Baroque painter (1571-1610) whose style included dramatic illumination of form and deep shadows. (“Caravaggio.” Encyclopædia Britannica Online).

the patient sees himself as young. Singh[124] suggests that in the patient Kip could find yet another kind of member into his ”foster family”, he is like step-father to the sapper: “Kip unfolds layers and layers of the old man’s history; simultaneously he is the image of a son [...]”.[125] Kip is standing at the foot of the patient’s bed, and feels that he is at home again, listening to the man’s stories. He addresses the patient as his “Uncle”—granted that he also calls Caravaggio by the same name.

Kip and the English patient are like student and teacher. Thus, they can be like father and son, but they could also be seen as “brothers”. This similarity between the men is underlined when Kip and the patient enjoy their shared delicacy, condensed milk. It is almost like two babies fighting over mothers milk: “The Englishman sucks at the can, then moves the tin away from his face to chew the thick fluid. He beams at Kip who is irritated that he does not have possession of it” (EP 176). Condensed milk could also refer to Kip’s religion, in which all people are treated equal in general, for example, there is a tradition of drinking out of the same bowl, moreover, Sikhs also eat sweet “pudding” called *karah parshad*.[126] When Kip introduces condensed milk to the patient, he, at the same time, introduces Sikhism to the man.

According to Singh,[127] Kip is now at the Lacanian Mirror Stage, because he in the Villa, he begins to recover as he sees all kinds of “mirrors” around him: Hana, Caravaggio, the Patient, and the beautiful Italian surroundings. In Lacan’s theory,[128] the Mirror Phase precedes physiological maturing, a person is attracted to the ideal self. Singh’s adaptation of this seems to be that Kip is willing to accept his companions as mirrors, but more generally, Europe and America, which he sees as civilizations par excellence. It can be argued, then, that when he is with the patient, he sees an ideal image of himself in the man. Thus, the bridge

[124] Singh 2001, 130.
[125] Singh 2001, 130.
[126] Singh 1971, 105-107.
[127] Singh 2001, 127.
[128] Lindell 2001, 85.

between the men is psychological. Adapting Lacan's theory, Singh[129] states that the burned man has already gone through the Mirror Stage. Consequently, the older man understands their similar situation. Singh continues[130], the relationship between the patient and the Sikh resembles a fusion: she argues that they are the same man at different stages. Furthermore, following Singh's[131] Lacanian argumentation, it could be argued further that Kip is in touch of his "ideal self" when he is talking with the Patient, who treats him like an equal, not like a child. He begins to appreciate himself more. Singh[132] argues that Kip has touched the patient's feelings more than any other character in the novel. This is because the burned man cannot be condescending towards the Sikh. This was not the case of Lord Suffolk and Kip, because of Lord Suffolk's "real" British nationality.

Aa I mentioned earlier, another comparison between the men is made when both of them are referred to as saints: it is the patient himself who uses this description of the Sikh: "The Englishman says he is one of those warrior saints" (EP 209). Similarly, Hana is thinking about the patient: "Hipbones of Christ, she thinks. He is her despairing saint" (EP 3). Although the characters of these "saints" differ from each other, religious symbolism is similar in the characters' of the two men.

Not only Kip, but also the patient can be seen as Ondaatje's political choices. They both can be seen as mediators between two cultures—Kip is between the British and Indian, and the patient between his English and Hungarian identities. It can be claimed that the English patient is more like his Sikh "brother" than neither of them can realize. The symbolic bridge in this case is cultural similarity.

As in the other relationships, there are also cracks in the bridge between Kip and the patient, and again the differences seem to well from religious aspects. Although both Kip and

[129] Singh 2001, 129.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

the patient are described as saints, they are different in character. The expression "warrior saint" refers to the nature of Kip's religion, as I mentioned in the section on Kip and Hana. Maurice Dekker[133] writes in his essay:

> [The patient's] deeds were not especially holy or worth of honour in the eyes of the Christian church, nor was he a very good and completely unselfish person, like a traditional saint ought to be. Nevertheless, for a man who loved against all odds, no other title could describe him nearly so well.

Consequently, the reference to the Christ and a saint is not made in Christian meaning, but to describe the status of the English patient in the novel. In contrast, in Kip's case the saint is now a warrior rather than a despairing one. Although they both are described as "saints", this distinction emphasizes the difference between the English patient and the Indian sapper and therefore, the gap between Christianity and Sikhism. This issue will be examined in greater detail in the section 3.2.

Hilde Stuve Kjellsmoen's[134] opinion is that in Ondaatje's novel, the patient symbolizes the communication between Colonizer and Colonized. Kjellsmoen[135] does not mention Kip, but it can be claimed that he is a similar symbol of intercommunication. Furthermore, she argues that the patient, who is very interested in maps, represents Ondaatje himself as a postcolonial writer. This underlined that idea I suggested in the Introduction of my thesis: Ondaatje may not admit that his works are political, nevertheless, the contain political issues.

Many scholars write about the friendship of the two men. Unlike Kjellsmoen, Younis[136] writes that because Ondaatje's novel deals with "mixed loyalties", they are not represented as traditionally binary opposites. For example, there are not a clear distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed, because Kip does not treat all the British as enemies. This is

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[133] Dekker 1998, n. pag.
[134] According to Kjellsmoen (1999, 111) J.E. Chamberlain has written on this issue is his article "Let There Be Commerce Between Us: The Poetry of Michael Ondaatje". in *Descant* 43 (1989), Sam Solecki in "Nets and Chaos: The Poetry of Michael Ondaatje" in *Studies on Canadian Literature* 2 (1977): 36-48, and Steven Heighton in "Approaching that Perfect Edge": Kinetic Techniques in the Poetry and Fiction of Michael Ondaatje, in *Studies in Canadian Literature* 13 (1988), 223-243.
[135] Kjellsmoen 1999, 110.
[136] Younis 1998, 7.

why he can become friends with Lord Suffolk and the English patient without difficulty. Younis[137] even suggests that Ondaatje's book does not totally represent colonialism in a negative light. Indeed, there is a similarity between the identities of the men. In connection to the relationship between Hana and Kip, I discussed Spivak's sentence "[w]hite men saving brown women from brown men",[138] which seems to be turned upside down in *The English Patient.* Another reference to this is the patient's racial difference, as it is revealed that he is not a white man at all. They are both equally "brown" and they love a white woman.

Lowry[139] argues that the relationship of the men creates an ambivalent social construct, because neither of them can actually represent "true" English Englishness. Similarly, Kella's[140] point of view is that Kip's geography and his jailed brother symbolize the East and the English patient the West, but Kip himself occupies "the no-man's land", which is situated between the (Western) supremacy and the site of the (Eastern) oppression.

The bridge between the men becomes even less solid if we take into account Fledderus's view.[141] According to him, some scenarios suggest that the cultures of Hana, Caravaggio, and Kip originate in the same Indo-European roots. This means that Hana, Caravaggio (who arguably is also a Canadian, too), and Kip are in fact "siblings". This is yet another example of Kip's "foster family". Conversely, the English patient has different origins, because he comes from Hungary, and thus he has non-Indo-European roots. What makes this issue significant is that Indo-European can also denote 'Aryan'.[142] As Fledderus[143] points out, the Nazis misused the term *Aryan* for their inhuman purposes during the Second World War. Again, Ondaatje's novel refers to the political issues.

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[137] Ibid.
[138] Spivak 1988, 297
[139] Lowry 2002, 242.
[140] Kella 2000, 100.
[141] Fledderus 1997, 26.
[142] Fledderus 1997, 26.
[143] Ibid.

The patient anticipates Kip's detachment from him when he says that Kip does not realize yet that they are similar, both of them have chosen to live outside their own countries. The patient admits: "Kip and I are both international bastards—born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere. Fighting to get back to or get away to live elsewhere" (EP 177). The burned man's remark forebodes that in the end, the Indian cannot feel comfortable in Europe. Burcar's view[144] is that to contrast these multicultural and multiracial characters, there are stereotypical Canadians such as Hana in Ondaatje's works. In addition to *The English Patient*, these kinds of characters are represented in Ondaatje's previous novel, *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987).

As I presented before, Kip is a person who easily "can switch allegiances, can replace loss" (EP 272). This can be either a positive or a negative quality. On one hand, it is positive that he is ductile, but on the other hand this can create problems. As will be demonstrated in the later section of the thesis (3.3), after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip will immediately change his loyalty from Englishness to Indianness, and from the English patient to his real brother.

[144] Burcar 2001, n. pag.

3. The Bridges Between East and West

The previous sections examined Kip's relationships to other protagonists, but there are other kinds of bridges in the novel. For example, connections between Kip and different works of Italian Renaissance art are explored in the novel. The art works are mostly seen through Kip's eyes; thus, they are considered from a non-European perspective. There is a special meaning in Kip's meeting with the fresco of the Queen of Sheba in Arezzo—the sacredness of bridges becomes more evident in this encounter than in any other. In addition, there are other references to Italian art in the novel, for example, when he sees the famous Sistine chapel ceiling painted by Michelangelo.

Religion and art create a juxtaposition between East and West in the novel. Kip's religion is Sikhism, which can be seen as a mediator between Hinduism and Islam. Thus, the reasons for choosing a Sikh as a representative of East in the novel are underlined in this context. Nevertheless, there are similarities between the religion of Sikhs and Christianity.

At the end of *The English Patient*, the dawn of the atomic age creates the ultimate breaking point between them. After the nuclear bombs, suddenly the sapper's attitude to Western people and to his environment changes. Some of the connections remain intact because of their exceptional character. The sacred nature of the bridges becomes more clarified towards the end of the novel.

3.1 "Parental Figures"- Kip's Relation to Art

> There was no promise of solution, or victory except for the temporary pact between him and that painted fresco's loyalty who would forget him, never acknowledge his existence or be aware of him, a Sikh, halfway up a sapper's ladder in the rain, erecting a Bailey bridge for the army behind him (EP 71).

In the excerpt above, Kip is remembering his encounter with the the fresco depicting the Queen of Sheba meeting King Solomon. In his mind, he finds solace in remembering the

beauty of the Queen when he is in the middle of enemy gunfire, hanging on the banks of a muddy river. For the first time he sees the painting when he is building a bridge for the troops —so this is an another reference to Kip's skills in building bridges, but this time concrete, not symbolic ones.

Being a Sikh by religion, Kip does not understand the situation in the fresco, but the appearance of the Queen seems to remind him of his Asian origins. When looking at the woman, he feels that he would prefer to be in his home land. Especially the colour of the Queen's clothes reminds Kip of his own background: Brown[145] states that the blue colour is often associated with divine beauty in Indian traditional art. Because of this, the blue cape of the Queen reminds Kip of the art he has probably seen in his home country. In connection to another fresco in the novel, this issue is further underlined. By mentioning the similarity between Kip and the fresco depicting the Virgin Mary, the novel suggests a connection between the work of art and the sapper: "The colour of his turban echoes that of the lace collar at the neck of Mary" (EP 280).

The frescoes could give a hint of Ondaatje's reasons for including Piero della Francesca's frescoes; as his writings can also be read with political undercurrents. At least half of the fresco cycles made in Italy from the fifth century to sixteenth century embedded religious politics in simple stories.[146] Simpson[147] writes that the Italian Renaissance art had "ideologies of perspective" and with them it conceals the "hegemonic narrative of cultural production". For example, the artist wanted to underline the movement of the Queen of Sheba in the cycle, as she was coming from the East.[148] The Queen was the ruler of the Kingdom of Saba (also called Sheba), depicted in Jewish and Islamic traditions in Southwestern Arabia.[149] In the Old Testament, the Queen visited the King's court carrying jewels, spices and gold

[145] Brown 1999, 10.
[146] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 28
[147] Simpson 1994, 224.
[148] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 30.
[149] "Sheba, Queen of". Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

during the reign of Solomon. The Bible, therefore, tells about the evidence for the existence of important commercial relations between ancient Israel and Arabia. However, there is a different interpretation of the story in an Arabic legend,[150] which tells that King Solomon and the Queen[151] were actually married. In another Islamic legend, the Queen of Sheba (called Balqis in this story) receives a letter from Solomon (in this story, he is named Sulayman).[152] In addition, the story of the Queen is described not only in the Bible, but also in *the Qur'an*, as well as in the *Kebra Nagast,* Ethiopia's national epic. By the light of this knowledge, it is safe to claim that like Kip, the Queen of Sheba is a person who is between East and West.

Kip has seen the fresco earlier with his fellow soldiers in Arrezzo:

> Looking up with service binoculars in the Gothic church at Arezzo soldiers would come upon their contemporary faces in the Piero della Francesca frescoes. The Queen of Sheba conversing with King Salomon. Nearby a twig from the Tree of Good and Evil inserted into the mouth of the dead Adam. Years later this queen would realize that the bridge over the Siloam was made from the wood of this sacred tree (EP 70).

The excerpt above refers to a fresco cycle painted by the Italian artist, Piero della Francesca (c. 1452- c. 1466) in the the Church of San Francesco in Arezzo, Italy.[153] The story depicted on the church walls is loosely connected to an Italian Renaissance legend, also told by Jacopo da Varezze in his *Legenda Aurea* that tells the story of Christ's cross.[154] On the walls, the Christian story of the humanity is depicted, starting from Adam to the Judgement Day.[155] In the first part of this legend, which is also called the legend of the True Cross, a small offshoot of the tree of knowledge is placed in Adam's mouth when he dies. This becomes the tree from which the Cross is built later.[156] After this she has had a vision of it. The Queen recognizes the log of wood used as a bridge as divine. She kneels down before the wood and meets the

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[150] "Sheba". The Columbia Encyclopedia Online.
[151] According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia* ("Sheba", The Columbia Encyclopedia Online), the Queen of Sheba is also called Bilqis or Balkis, but Al-Saleh (1985, 12, 50-57) uses the name Balqis.
[152] Al-Saleh 1985, 53
[153] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 27.
[154] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 17.
[155] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 16.
[156] Maetzke et al. 2001, 56.

King. She respects him, although in the holy wood she is able to foresee the fall of the Jewish empire.[157]

The story creates a connection between the sapper and the Queen. The Queen's leaving back to Africa is a premonition of Kip's departure to India at the end of the novel. Like the Queen, Kip realizes "the sacredness of bridges" (EP 70) when he identifies with the woman. The Queen understands that the bridge is made of holy wood, similarly, Kip is a kind of a visionary, since he does not accept the Western culture. As was seen in the previous sections, especially Lord Suffolk and the English patient are found guilty of pressing their Western ideas on him, nevertheless, Kip does not want to accept them. Ondaatje's novel suggests that like the Queen, Kip has a special knowledge that the Westerners have lost in their war. Similarly, Kella[158] writes that especially in art, Kip perceives that there is hope in the East when the fresco's Eastern woman gives consolation to Kip. Ondaatje's book suggests that because the war has destroyed Western values, mediators such as Kip and the Queen of Sheba are capable of restoring optimism.

The relationship between Kip and Hana and that of the sapper and the Queen of Sheba form a different kind of bridge. Obviously, both of these relationships are between a man and a woman, but they also share a similar nature. Kip loves "his Queen of Sadness" (EP 72). The woman in the painting is yet another member of Kip's "foster family". Kip thinks about Hana in the same manner, because he "has mapped her sadness" (EP 270). In addition, Hana provides a kind of "intimacy of a stranger" (EP 226) for Kip, and this is also the case with the Queen of Sheba. This is further underlined with another reference to art: when Hana is sleeping on the sapper's lap, he feels that they belong to a painting: "[...] he felt that he was now within something, perhaps a painting he had seen somewhere in the last year. Some secure couple in a field. How many he had seen with their laziness of sleep, with no thought

[157] Maetzke, et al. 2001, 30.
[158] Kella 2000, 99.

of work or the dangers of the world" (EP 104). Put another way, Kip feels the same comfort on Hana's lap and with the painted Queen as they are "within the imaginary painter's landscape" (EP 114).

Said[159] writes that in Flaubert's book, there is a model of the Oriental woman who could not speak for herself. It can be argued that through Kip, Ondaatje's novel gives a voice to the Queen with a reference to Spivak's essay, "Can the subaltern speak?",[160] or more specifically, her question "Can the subaltern (as a woman) speak?"[161] The Queen definitely speaks to Kip. Like Kip, the Queen is a visionary, a holder of significant knowledge. The sapper thinks of himself a similar, peaceful character, who is submissive, but only on the surface. A case in point is when Kip thinks of himself: "Quite early I had discovered the overlooked space open to those of us with a silent life. I didn't argue with the policeman who said I couldn't cycle over a certain bridge or through a specific gate in the fort—I just stood there, still, until I was invisible, and then I went through" (EP 200). He and the Queen secretly understand that the situation is going to change for the better. And both of them seem to understand that they will return back to their home countries. Consequently, they do not feel any need to oppose the Western world by force.

Another example of Kip's encounter with art is when he spends night in a church with terracotta figures and a tableau[162] depicting "[a]n angel and a woman in a bedroom" (EP 279) in the Church of San Giovanni a Carbonara. The installation describes the story of the angel informing Mary about her life's purpose, which is giving birth to Christ. Kip is in the church because he is waiting for a possible explosion. He is one of the sappers who are ordered to spend the night in the evacuated city. Again he finds comfort of the female characters:

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[159] Said (1978, 6) undoubtedly refers to Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1864).
[160] Spivak 1988.
[161] Spivak 1988, 296.
[162] Simpson (1994, 229) claims that the painting is called the *Annunciation*, but this is not defined in the novel. In reality, the work by that name by Piero della Francesca is in Arrezzo, as a part of the fresco cycle (Maetzke et al. 2001, 244).

"Above his head the tentative right arm of the woman. Beyond his feet the angel. Soon one of the sappers will turn on the city's electricity, and if he's going to explode, he will do so in the company of these two [...]. At least he has found these parental figures. He can relax in the midst of this mime conversation" (EP 280). Due to this, Kip's "foster family" extends to works of art too.

A bridge is created between the sapper and the works of art when the lightning reveals biblical imagery from the 1600's: "The bound arms of the scourged Christ pulled back, the whip coming down, the baying dog, three soldiers in the next chapel tableau raising higher the painted clouds" (EP 277). This scene is further linked to Hana, who is making a fire, and Kip, who is walking is the garden. The storm is approaching him and the sapper feels mysteriously the presence of "the naïve Catholic images from those hillside shrines he has seen [...] as he counts the seconds between lightning an thunder" (EP 278). Kip is like an ethereal link between the characters: "Perhaps the villa is a similar tableau, the four of them in private movement, momentarily lit up, flung ironically against this war" (EP 278). Symbolically, the protagonists are linked to characters in a painting. They are all his "parental figures". As I explained earlier, Kip is described as Hana's sentinel, but the sapper finds himself a guardian in a church: "[...] moving as close as possible against them in the darkness, a grieving angel whose thigh was a woman's perfect thigh, whose line and shadows appeared so soft. He would place his head on the lap of such creatures and release himself into sleep" (EP 104). The safety of the pieces of art make him feel secure.

There is another connection between the sapper and art as Kip sees Michelangelo's fresco, *Isaiah*, while he is with other soldiers in the Sistine Chapel:

> [...] the sergeant released the flare […] the young sapper what already on his back, the rifle aimed, his eye almost brushing the beards of Noah and Abraham and the variety of demons until he reached the great face and was stilled by it, the face like a spear, wise, unforgiving [...]'Did you see it? The face. Who was it?' [...] 'Yes. Isaiah' (EP 78).

Kip identifies with the prophet in the fresco. Again, his ”foster family” extends to inhuman objects. As Kella[163] notes, the sapper hunts for a connection with the art work he as he views the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel “as if he were searching a brother in the crowd” (EP 77).

Another connection between Kip and the fresco’s *Isaiah* can be seen as he is likened to young Michelangelo in Ondaatje’s novel. The English patient thinks—admittedly under the influence of opium—that his room is the same in which the young artist had also been: “This must be Poliziano’s[164] room […]. This fountain in the wall. […] Poliziano and the young Michelangelo” (EP 57). Singh argues[165] that Kip is seen as a re-incarnated Michelangelo; his religion provides a connection to the artist, because its founder, (1469-1539) lived in the same era.[166] The sapper is a mediator between the past and the present.

Although coming from India, Kip connects so well with the images is that he is capable of enjoying the fresoces relatively well. As Michael Baxandall[167] notes, it depends on the person’s capacities what he sees in the picture: “[T]he picture is sensitive to the kinds of interpretative skills—patterns, categories, inferences, analogies—the mind brings to it”. He continues that for a person coming from a fifteenth century China, Piero della Francesca’s disciplined perspective would be too difficult to understand. However, it is claimed that Kip “had come from a country where mathematics and mechanics were natural traits” (EP 188). Therefore, the Indian definitely understands the harmonious structure of the paintings.

As with the characters discussed in the previous sections, there are breaks in the bridges between Kip and the works of art. A case in point is Kip’s encounter with the frescoes in Arrezzo. The sapper is not a traditional art admirer, at first he looks at them with service binoculars, and then a month later, he returns to the church with a medievalist whom he had

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[163] Kella 2000, 103.
[164] Angelo Poliziano was an Italian poet and humanist. He was the friend and protégé of Lorenzo de' Medici, and a very significant classical scholar during the Renaissance. (“Politian.” Encyclopædia Britannica Online).
[165] Singh 2001, 127-128.
[166] Singh 1971, 1-2.
[167] Baxandall 1988, 34.

become friends with.[168] He climbs to the upper level of the church and hoists the old scholar in midair, simultaneously lighting the dark church by flares. The lighting, thus, is not the best possible to look at art. This is why he has to pull himself up in order to see the painting more clearly: "He was now aware of the depth of this church, not its height. The liquid sense of it. The hollowness and darkness of a well. The flare sprayed out of his hand like a wand. He pulleyed himself across to her face, his Queen of Sadness, and his brown hand reached out small against the giant neck (EP 72). The emptiness of the church underlines his terrible situation during the war. The "liquid" space does not seem very comfortable to him. Simpson[169] claims that when his character seems to disappear when he is among the fellow sappers in the war, this "approximates a dissassembly of self", both as an art enthusiast and as colonial subject.

Moreover, the Sikh recognizes the familiar darkness of the Queen's skin, but this may also be due to the fact that oil lamp have made the frescoes tarnished during the centuries. The darkness and also traumatic experiences in his past may cause him to think that the otherwise safe building is like a empty, even hell-like pit. In this situation, the Queen brings him only feeble comfort in the barrenness of his life.

In addition, the encounter of with *Isaiah* is equally abnormal as with the he fresco of the Queen, both are seen in a nearly dark church, and Kip also looks the prophet through the telescope of his rifle. Kella[170] proposes that his contradictory attitude to Western art is clearly visible in his strange way of examining it. Kip acknowledges the holy place, but does not understand the Biblical meaning of the images. Similarly, Singh[171] writes that although his aim is to make a connection with the frescoes and the culture that they represent, his Western instruments are not advantageous in this respect. Furthermore, at the end of the novel, he is

[168] This scene differs from the film version, in which the romantic side of Kip is enhanced and therefore, Kip goes to see the frescoes with Hana instead of a medievalist.
[169] Simpson 1994, 224.
[170] Kella 2000, 104.
[171] Singh 2001, 125.

again looking through his weapon: Kip looks at the burned patient through his rifle's sight. In other words, in the same manner he looks at the patient, he looks at art; ultimately they both represent to him an enemy.

There is another reason why the Indian cannot be totally connected with Italian Renaissance art. He cannot understand the mindset of Renaissance people. Being a Sikh by religion, Kip does not exactly understand the story depicted in the frescoes. According to Bruce Cole,[172] people in the Renaissance had a very different world spiritually, intellectually and physically. Cole continues[173], they saw themselves at the center of the universe, as they still believed that the sun revolved around the Earth and not vice versa. In addition, Cole points out[174] that they thought that the cosmos consists of spheres. This is why they looked at the paintings in a very different manner than a soldier during the Second World War.

A conflict between the *English Patient*'s reality and the reality outside the novel can be detected: Ondaatje uses the name *The Flight of Emperor Maxentius* (EP 72), but Maetzke et al.[175] state that the fresco is called *Constantine's Victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge*.[176] It could be claimed that Ondaatje wants to underline that the novel is not real history, similarly as the English patient uses his copy of Herodotus's book, "gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations—so they are cradled within the text [...]" (EP16). Ondaatje's novel, thus, does not necessarily tell the truth either, it may be "his guidebook [...] of supposed lies" (EP 246). Kip's encounters with art become even more surreal within this context.

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[172] Cole 1983, 10.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Maetzke et al. 2001, 126.
[176] Another Piero della Francesca's fresco, *Madonna del Parto* is also mentioned in the novel (EP 69), which also in reality is situated at Monterchi, Italy (Maetzke et al. 2001, 277). However, there is a more vague reference to "a stone pulpit where Hercules slays the Hydra" that cannot be specified on the grounds of the novel.

A negative connotation in Kip encounter with art is suggested by Simpson[177]: the scene with an angel and the Virgin Mary scene is very beautiful, but because of the threat of an explosion, the gap between the darkness and light—just a few moments before the electricity will be turned on—is also a presentiment of the atomic explosion at the end of the novel. Simpson[178] argues that when Kip is waiting for the explosion in a church, the situation represents a similar revelation to Virgin Mary's meeting with an angel. I agree with Simpson, it is clear that after the nuclear blasts Kip is sure of his future and his mission: he belongs to India and not to the Western world.

There is another kind of allusion to this in the quality of the bombs he defuses, because they are delayed-action weapons. Their forthcoming destruction is postponed until the end of the novel. According to Simpson,[179] there is also a semblance of bombs and the subaltern position, both are untoward and uncontrollable. Michelangelo's *Isaiah* could also be seen as a sign of the dreadful future. In the Bible, the prophet saw hope in the future but mostly he was appalled by the spiritual decadence of Judah and prophesied judgment to it.[180] The same kind of an apocalyptic connection becomes underlined in the bombs' names: Kip is often defusing bombs called "Hermann" or "Esau"or "Satan" (EP 183). The bomb named by the devil is the most powerful, and as Simpson[181] suggests, perhaps Ondaatje is making it resonate with Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.

Another negative a allusion to art exists in the novel. The patient talks about death and mortality to Kip, and refers also to the biblical prophet: "There are of course hundreds of Isaiahs. Someday you will want to see him as an old man—in southern France the abbeys celebrate him as bearded and old, but the power is still there in his look" (EP 294). Although

[177] Simpson 1994, 229.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Simpson 1994, 233-234.
[180] Saarisalo et al. 1973, 256-257.
[181] Simpson 1994, 228.

Kip had liked both the English patient and the great face of the prophet, ultimately, they both represent the enemy, as will be seen in the next section of my thesis.

As Simpson[182] suggests, the figures only seem to be creating a cosy timeless space where it is not possible to feel comfortable: they are on the threshold of the atomic era. As I suggested in the previous section, even though Kip only seems to find consolation from the religious images in Italian churches, he is very psychologically disturbed. He cannot find consolation among the living people, but in the midst of the works of art in churches. According to Singh[183], the war has disturbed his psyche, his personality is shattered. Singh continues[184] that his lack of trust is especially seen when he is like a "humming radar" who is always looking for hidden fuze wires. Singh[185] argues that instead of a complete person he is a broken man and this is due to the destructive forces of human greed, which were very powerful in the Second World War. As I mentioned earlier, Simpson's[186] view is that in Kip's thinking about mechanics, there are "explosive prospects of an entirely machine-based intellection". Kip wonders about the differences of his country and England: "What he saw in England was a surfeit of parts that would keep the continent of India going for two hundred years" (EP 188). Singh[187] is following Lacanian interpretation when she claims that there is a break in Kip's social skills. According to her, this can be seen, for example, when it is said of him: "He may look intently at eyes but not register what colour they are, the way food already in his throat or stomach is just texture more than taste of specific objects" (EP 219). Therefore, the bridge between the sapper and the works of art is not flawless.

There is a curious link between the sapper and old English art as well. Burcar notes[188] that when Kip is on his training mission in England, and when he descends "into the giant

[182] Simpson 1994, 229.
[183] Singh 2001, 125.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Simpson 1994, 234.
[187] Singh 2001, 125.
[188] Burcar 2001, n. pag.

white chalk horse of Westbury" (EP 181). The Indian is "literally cradled in the bosom of white civilization". The link between Indian and ancient art is obvious, and Burcar continues[189] that Western civilization "literally digests him" so that culturally determined "outside" and "inside" change places at every turn. Thus, there is a connection between Kip and ancient art. He identifies better with it than Western art. This seems to underline the fact that Kip is an Indian, although the British have trained him. For a man from another culture, it is easier to assimilate with the ancient civilization that made the chalk horse.

3.2 "He Had His Own Faith After All"- Kip and Sikhism

The sections of my thesis overlap to a certain degree. I have discussed religious art, but the religion of Kip needs to be examined further in the next section. As I have stated before in Kip's connection to art and to the other protagonists, religion plays a very important part in *The English Patient*. There are reasons for the author to include it in his novel: Ondaatje[190] admits that in his childhood, issues such as the landscape, politics, and religion affected him, although not necessarily on a conscious level. According to Fledderus[191], Ondaatje chooses to leave out sociological facts of Sikhism; a case in point is the fact that there were almost six million Sikhs in 1941.[192] Consequently, Fledderus claims that this enhances the religious vision of Ondaatje's book: it prefers general spirituality to specific religious traditions.

Sikhism is yet another kind of bridge in the novel. Fledderus[193] points out that this is reflected Kip's literal bridge-building. Singh[194] writes that the founder of the religion, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), had a vision before God and understood that "Na Koi Hindu, Na

[189] Ibid.
[190] Wachtel 1994, 259.
[191] Fledderus 1997, 30.
[192] Fledderus 1997, 30. Fledderus apparently means world-wide, since he writes that the religion of the Sikhs were not very well known in India either.
[193] Fledderus 1997, 30.
[194] Singh 1971, 2.

Mussalman", which means: 'There is no Hindu here, nor a Muslim,'[195] Singh[196] continues that he understood the divinity as the "God of no Religion". According to Singh[197], Nanak chose his successor, and after him followed nine other Gurus. He writes[198] that he tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (1666-1708), re-edited the *Granth Sahib*, or *Adi Granth* and completed it. In addition, Singh[199] concludes that in Sikhism, God's Word is found in the book, and after the tenth Guru there were no longer living Gurus, but the book will remain as the embodiment of the spiritual Guru, whereas the secular Guru will be the Panth, that is, the community of the Khalsa.

Put it shortly, as Grönblom[200] writes, the history of Sikhism originated as Guru Nanak wanted to create peace with the Hindus and Muslims. He continues[201] that here are also many legends that link him to these religions and that Guru Nanak preached that there is only one God (like Muslims) and accepted karma and rebirth (like Hindus). Furthermore, Grönblom[202] points out that there is a connection between Sikhism and Christianity: Guru Nanak's idea that people should love each other before they can love God, resembles Christ's view on the same issue. Nevertheless, Grönblom states[203] that the founder of Sikhism created a religion of its own, not a combination of the other religions.

Though the concept of the desert is not connected to Kip directly in *The English Patient*, Singh[204] notes that the novel binds different religions together by the metaphor of the desert; like the religious figures in the biggest religions, Moses, John the Baptist, Christ, the Prophet Muhammad, desert explorers renounce all material attachments and blend into the void and experience the Divinity in these empty, sandy regions. Singh continues that the

[195] Singh 1971, 3.
[196] Singh 1971, 2.
[197] Singh 1971, 22-27.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Grönblom 2001, 236-242.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Singh 2001, 132.

temple of the Sikh is also like a desert, a haven in which it is possible to forget hierarchies. This is visible in Kip's behaviour, too, because it is the same towards all the characters. For example, the sapper does not make a difference between Caravaggio, the thief, or Lord Suffolk. Singh's[205] view is that Kip does not classify sacred places in any way either, and this is why he feels comforatable in a Sikh temple as well as in a church. Kip's attitude also reflects Guru Gobind Singh's writings: "The embodiment of love extends to all lands, to every nook and cranny". Fledderus[206] notes that Kip's religion respects other faiths, as many Sikhs avoid alcohol and drugs, because they respect Muslims and Hindus. Nevertheless, this is not always visible in their attitude, as can be seen later.

Singh[207] stresses the metaphor of desert explained above is inscribed in the Sikh shrine, which was finished by Guru Arjun. The nature of Kip's religion becomes evident as he describes thid building, the Golden Temple at Amritsar to Hana: "If I took you before morning you would see first of all the mist over the water. Then it lifts to reveal the temple in light. You will already be hearing the hymns of the saints—Ramananda, Nanak and Kabir" (EP 271). In the following excerpt there is a depiction of the Sikh temple:

> They move through the night, they move through the silver door to the shrine where the Holy Book lies under a canopy of brocades. The *ragis* sing the Book's verses accompanied by musicians. They sing from four in the morning till eleven at night. The Granth Sahib is opened at random, a quotation selected, and for three hours, before the mist lifts off the lake to reveal the Golden Tamples, the verses mingle and sway out with unbroken reading (EP 271).

This reveals that to some extent, the religion of the Sikhs reminds of Christianity. Nikky Singh[208] writes on the connection between Christianity and Sikhism, and points out several aspects in the religions: firstly, the hymns in churches and *gurdwaras*[209] sound similar.

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[205] Singh 2001, 123.
[206] Fledderus 1997, 30.
[207] Singh 2001, 132.
[208] Singh 2003.
[209] In Punjabi, *gurdwara* means 'doorway to the Guru'. It is the place of worship of the Sikhs. ("Gurdwara". Encyclopædia Britannica Online).

Secondly, Singh[210] writes that both Jesus and Guru Nanak said that they were not speaking on their own behalf. Third, Singh continues[211] that their messages were similar: both prefered the inner attitude to rituals and codes. And she adds that both religions they teach similarly on love: one should love other people as well as God/the Divine. Furthermore, according to Singh[212], even their festivals are partly the same: the same date Christians celebrate the Easter, Sikhs have the Baisakhi on the day of the birth of their community. Bearing all this in mind, it is easier to understand what Kip experiences in Italian churches. As Singh[213] points out, Christianity gives a concrete example of Guru Nanak's teachings, which offer several possible methods of meditation and love.

In connection to Kip and Hana, I mentioned that the Indian is capable of brightening up the life of the other recidents in the Villa. Singh[214] points out that Kip's positive outlook on life reflects Sikh lifestyle in general: even in the most terrifying situation Kip seems to have "an aura of joy", because he is always "humming and whistling" (EP 74). This becomes clear in a closer look at his religion. Singh[215] describes a few of the tenets of Sikhism:

> Besides the Khalsa format, Kip exemplifies the Sikh institutions of *seva* and *langar* [...]. The highest ideal in Sikh ethics is *seva*, voluntary manual labour in the service of the community which may take various forms. Beginning with Guru Nanak, it has become an essential part of Sikh life through which Sikh believers cultivate humility, overcome ego, and purify their body and mind. By working faithfully as a sapper, Kirpal Singh performs a continual *seva*, being fully dedicated to serving others as he searches for caches of explosives everywhere. [...] The practice of *langar* is a central practice of Sikhism, and testifies to the social equality and familyhood of all people.

The humble behaviour of Kip is clearly due to his Sikh religion and culture. Singh[216] also finds another mediating aspect of Kip's religion: the Sikh greeting 'Sat Sri Akal,' in which hands are held together and both persons greet the Timeless Truth. Singh continues[217] that the

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[210] Singh 2003, n. pag.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Singh 2001, 123.
[215] Singh 2001, 122.
[216] Singh 2001, 135.
[217] Ibid.

greeting of the Sikhs is in deep contrast to the negative one-handed Western shaking, which also leaves out God or the sacredness of the greeting. Fledderus[218] adds to this: Kip is in fact a quite relaxed person, a "sahajdari", who does not wear the dagger or let his beard grow. Fledderus continues that Kip's easy-going personality shows as he accepts Western music, and this enhances Ondaatje's refraining from presenting or idealizing Kip as an example of a pure ethnic culture. Kip's eating habits are a mixture of his vegetarian diet and English habits, and the next excerpt show that his role as a mediator is again spotlighted: "His onions and his herbs [...] he peeled the onions with the same knife he used to strip rubber from a fuze wire. This was followed by fruit [...]. [He had been] holding out his cup for the English tea he loves, adding to it his own supply of condensed milk" (EP 86). It could be argued that by making Kip a mediator in many ways Ondaatje's book avoids making Kip a stereotype of Indian culture or religion.

Since Kip's religion accepts many possible faiths, he is also flexible and capable of adapting himself to different situation. The patient saw this in the Sikh too, as he had said that the man is "*fato profugus*—fate's fugitive" (EP 273). As I have mentioned before, he feels calm as he sleeps among the religious "race of stones" in a Christian holy building (EP 104). It is mostly due to the adjustable nature of his religion, he is able to find peace in Italian churches during the darkness of the war. Likewise, Singh notes[219] that as Kip finds comfort in Italian religious art, this underlines the Sikh way of seeing: it is enough for him that he understands that the art "represents some fable about mankind and heaven" (EP 279).

Nevertheless, there is a fracture between Kip and the religious figures. An unpleasant situation with a piece of religious items unfolds when Kip watches a Catholic festival honouring Virgin Mary. He does not find solace in the holy image, which in this case is a plaster statue depicting Virgin Mary carried by a group of people. As with the other works of

[218] Fledderus 1997, 30.
[219] Singh 2001, 123.

art, he almost attacks it: "He raised his rifle and picked up her face in the gun sight—ageless, without sexuality, the foreground of the men's dark hands reaching into her light, the gracious nod of the twenty small light bulbs" (EP 79). In Kella's[220] opinion, Kip acknowledges the closeness with the statue, but then suddenly realizes a racial difference between him and it; and even more significantly, the difference between the religions, that is why he cannot make an offering to the Virgin.

As I have suggested earlier, Hana has disillusionment in her religious life. Due to this, she is jealous of Kip's faith: "She herself would be allowed to place money or a flower onto the sheet spread upon the floor and then join in the great permanent singing. She wished for that. Her inwardness was a sadness of nature" (EP 272). Hana's depressed state of mind breaks the bridge Kip's religion has made. Althouh Kip's religion would allow Hana to enter the temple and join the worship, Hana is incapable of doing that.

Kip often uses a piece of military technology in order to examine the religious items, Simpson[221] claims that in these situations "the acolyte becomes an assassin". Simpson[222] proposes that this also refers to "TABULA ASIAE". According to Simpson[223], the term was used by Ondaatje in his previous book, *Running in the Family*, in connection to "imperial blindness", that is, the instability of colonial identity. Similarly, enhancing Kip's psychological disturbance even further, Singh[224] writes: when looking through Lord Suffolk's binoculars or the telescope of his rifle, Kips is still in his Lacanian infant state.[225]

In the end, Kip realizes that he does not accept any other faith after all. This becomes evident as Kip remembers the patient's copy of Herodotus's[226] *The Histories*[227]: "Isaiah and

[220] Kella 2000, 104.
[221] Simpson 1994, 225.
[222] Simpson 1994, 224.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Singh 2001, 121.
[225] Cf. Mälkönen et al. 2006, 271.
[226] Herodotus was a Greek author of the first great narrative history of the ancient world: in his *History* he writes on the Greco-Persian Wars. ("Herodotus". Encyclopædia Britannica Online*).*
[227] Ondaatje uses the name *The Histories* instead of the more common, singular form of Herodotus' book.

Jeremiah and Solomon were in the burned man's bedside book, his holy book, whatever he loved he had glued into his own. He had passed the book to the sapper, and the sapper had said we have a holy book too" (EP 294). Singh writes[228] that the Sikh Gurus instruct in savouring: it is the ideal, but Kip's Western training has made him forget this and instead of enjoying sensual experiences, he simply swallows his meals. According to Singh,[229] this happens because Kip forgets "the heightened aesthetic experience" cherished in Sikh scriptures. I do not fully agree with Singh[230] who sees Kip as "a victim of the modern war machine which numbs his senses and sensibilities". In my opinion, Singh seems to contradict herself as I mentioned before, she admits[231] that Kip has "an aura of joy".

Sikhism is not a perfect example of a faith mediating between different religions as it is not as open to other religions as was described earlier. It accepts other beliefs, but in order to avoid blending into them, it does not fully approve of them. McLeod,[232] who stresses that there exists overt hostility towards Muslims in the early *rahit-namas*,[233] provides a case in point. According to him, this is evident, for instance, in some of their eating habits: Sikhs should avoid eating *halāl* meat of the Muslims and also avoid sexual contact with Muslim women.

Kip's religion is not always a source of peace as it creates conflicts, or at least awkward situations, in his relationships in the Villa. The strict religious diet creates a break between the Sikh and the other residents. Although he enjoys both English and Indian food, Kip is very strict about his diet in general. For example, he accepts tea, but not alcohol, as Caravaggio thinks that he "was diverted from by the startling prescence of three bottles of red wine on the table [...]. He knew that the sapper would not drink any of it (EP 267). His opinion on drugs

[228] Singh 2001, 125.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Singh 2001, 123.
[232] McLeod 1989, 72-73.
[233] *Rahit-namas* include several different versions of the Khalsa code of conduct (McLeod 1989, 33).

becomes evident when Kip hurts his hand and Caravaggio spat morphine on the wound "Kip pushing him away, glaring in anger" (EP 166). When they eat and drink wine, they become tipsy and call Kip " the great forager" (EP 267). The Westerners do not respect the sapper's convictions. Caravaggio does not approve of Kip's behaviour in connection to religion, either. In the novel, he is said to be a thief and a morphine addict, and it can be argued that he is not worthy of passing judgement on other people. Nevertheless, as he observes Kip's behaviour in the Villa, he feels entitled to criticize Kip's ethics: "It looked to Caravaggio like a string of small electric candles found in dusty churches, and he thought the sapper had gone too far in removing them from a chapel, even for Hana's birthday" (EP 267). Because the sapper is so strict in his religion, it is very difficult for Caravaggio to accept that Kip does not respect the sacred objects of an another religion. Again, the sapper's disturbed state of mind becomes underlined, since he is not able to respect the religious items he encounters.

There are other kinds of contradictions his religion creates in the novel: on the one hand, it is mediating between different beliefs, but on the other hand, it is strict: Kip belongs to the Khalsa and wears a turban. Moreover, despite the similarities, there are serious differences between Christianity and Sikhism. Singh[234] writes on this issue: in the Bible, God is the Father, but in Sikhism, there is "the Trancendent One". In addition, Jesus is described as the Son of God, but in the Sikh viewpoint, Guru Nanak is an enlightener of the Divine. Another, a feminist point of view is also brought out by Singh[235], who sees negative messages of the body in The Virgin birth of Christ. When listening to the English patient's excerpts from the Bible, Kip possibly feels similarly as Singh,[236] who describes her feelings: "But when Christ alone is the Omega Point, or Baptism the exclusive way to the Kingdom of God, then where do I stand? As a Sikh I have no place". In *the English Patient*, Kip must feel this when he encounters the frescoes. For Sikh, then, the Christian object can also be threatening,

[234] Singh 2003, n. pag.
[235] Singh 2003, n. pag.
[236] Ibid.

and this may explain why Kip sometimes expresses disrespect and hostility towards the others in the Villa.

In sum, Kip is between the Western and the Eastern worlds, but in the end he keeps his own culture and religion: "If he could have parted with it, Kip would have left something there as his gesture. But he had his own faith after all" (EP 80). He does not want to succumb totally to the West, although on occasions, he feels a connection to Catholic art. Nevertheless, when the atomic bombs explode, the Bible's Isaiah was is not only depicted in the fresco, but also narrated by the patient, becomes even more threatening to him, as we shall see in the next section.

3.3 The Bomb - The Destruction of Bridges?

> One bomb. Then another. Hiroshima. Nagasaki. [Kip] swerves the rifle towards the alcove. The hawk in the valley air seems to float intentionally into the V sight. If he closes his eyes he sees the streets of Asia full of fire. It rolls across cities like a burst map, the hurricane of heat withering bodies as it meets them, the shadow of humans suddenly in the air. This tremor of Western wisdom (EP 284).

Ondaatje says[237] that the Bomb are like his *deus ex machina*, it appears to provide a convenient solution to an insoluble difficulty in the plot. Despite of this, he claims that he tried to prepare the reader for the disaster in many ways. Pesch[238] agrees: a second reading of the novel reveals how the effects of nuclear apocalypse are present throughout the novel. In my opinion, the fractures in the bridges presented earlier forebode the nuclear disaster in the end.

Finally, then, the atomic bombs explode, and the sapper's behaviour changes suddenly. After he has heard the terrible news, Kip attacks the burned man with his rifle. Although Caravaggio remarks that the patient is not really an Englishman after all, but a Hungarian count called Almásy (EP 285), Kip sees the English patient and the whole of the West as the

[237] Kamiya 1996, n. pag.
[238] Pesch 1998, 131.

Other. Kip sees the man as a stereotype of the suppressor. He rages at him: "American, French, I don't care. 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" (EP 286). Only his emotional affection for his "relative" prevents him from killing his new enemy. Irrationally, he attacks the burned man, who is not able to defend himself in any way:

> Kip looks condemned, separate from the world [...] . He pivots back so the rifle points at the Englishman. He begins to shrudder, and then everything in him tries to control that…'I sat at the foot of this bed and listened to you, Uncle [...]. I grew up with traditions from your country, but later, more often, from *your* country [...] . You stood for the precise behaviour. I knew if I lifted a teacup with the wrong finger I'd be banished. If I tied a wrong kind of knot in a tie I was out. Was it just ships that gave you such power? Was it, as my brother said, because you had the histories and printing presses? (EP 283).

Thus, Kip cannot attack the vague "West" which has dropped the bombs, he questions the patient of the crimes the British. In addition, he takes the bombs personally and compares them to all the wrongs the British had done to him, as he had to adapt to their rules. In addition, his newly found racial identity becomes underlined. Kella's[239] view is that now Kip sees Englishness and whiteness as one and the same, blended together by the imperialistic drives of Western humanism. In Singh's opinion,[240] at this point Kip has finally reached the end of the Lacanian Mirror Stage as he realizes that he and the other Asians had been converted with "missionary rules" (EP 283). Singh[241] argues that in fact, the "postcolonial Kip is awakened to White supremacy and White brotherhood. Singh[242] continues: as he identifies himself with the yellow and brown races, Kip sees the appropriate mirror in Asia instead of the West. Kip realizes that "his name is Kirpal Singh and he does not know what he

[239] Kella 2000, 109.
[240] Singh 2001, 136
[241] Ibid.
[242] Singh 2001, 135

is doing here (EP 287). In Singh's[243] opinion, he regains his self-identity, "not a fractured entity, a Kip or a Kipper grease, or a Mr. Kipling cake", but he has finally realized what is his home: the Sikh community. Singh[244] emphasizes that as Kip leaves Hana, at the end of the novel he is called by his real surname, Singh, instead of the nickname, because of his new self-identification.

Consequently, Kip is willing to break the bridges to the other members of the "foster family". He attacked the patient, and he now hates the customs of Westerners along with Lord Suffolk. An allusion to Hana is also made: before, Kip was able to provide protection for Hana; however, now that the sapper has left them, he "has left the three of them to their world, [and] is no longer their sentinel" (EP 286).

Kip also breaks the religious bridges. As I explained in the section on Kip and art, there is a similarity between the biblical prophet Isaiah and Kip: they both detest political contracts: "Never turn back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers. Never trust Europeans, he said. Never shake hands with them" (EP 284-285). Now even the prophet he had admired is his enemy. Tellingly, after he has left the Villa by his motorcycle, the words of the Isaiah read by the patient echo in his ears. The prophet's apocalyptic visions are very appropriate at the dawn of the atomic age: "*For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like garment, And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worms shall eat them like wool*".[245] The sapper has forgotten all hope, and in the middle of the excerpt above lacks the consoling words of the prophet. Apparently Kip has forgotten the Bible's consoling words in his rage: "but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye

[243] Singh 2001, 136.
[244] Singh 2001, 137.
[245] The Bible, Isa. 51: 6,8.

not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings".[246] The sapper despises the Bible and the culture it represents. After Kip decides to leave the Villa, he only remembers these "few callous words in the Bible" (EP 286): "Let the dead bury the dead".[247] For him, all the residents of the Villa are dead already, although only the patient will die.

When his disappointment grows, Kip feels detached from the whole world. The ultimate point of his detachment is when he falls into the Ofanto River. Again the words of Isaiah[248] reflect his situation, as he is going back to India. He feels like he is being thrown there: "*He will toss thee like a ball into a large country*" (EP 295). Singh[249] claims that this alludes to the similar experience of Guru Nanak, who apparently drowned in the River Bein, but re-emerged after three days. In this situation, he also breaks his "affinity with machines": "Heavy tin fell off and shouldered past him. Then he and the bike veered to the left, there was no side to the bridge, and they hurtled out parallel to the water [...]. The cape released itself away from him, from whatever was machine and mortal, part of the element of the air" (EP 295). The place were he fell off is also significant, the bridge symbolizes all the connections and relationships he has had in his past.

At the end of the novel, thus, Kip has followed his family traditions after all, since he is the second son, his family expected him to become a doctor (EP 201). Singh[250] claims that finally, Kip's nationalist phase is over, which started from the atomic bombings. This can be seen in his clothes; instead of a *kurta*[251], he wears western clothes and spectacles. Furthermore, Singh[252] continues that since his goggles ended up into the river, they symbolized his "white man's values". Kip also likes his Indian identity when he sees his "two children and a laughing wife" (EP 299), because unlike in the Villa, in his Indian home, "at

[246] The Bible, Isa. 51: 6-7.
[247] The Bible, Matt. 8:22.
[248] The Bible, Isa. 22:18.
[249] Singh 2001, 137.
[250] Singh 2001, 138.
[251] A typical Muslim attire for men and women is a long white cotton shirt (*kurta* or *kurtah*). ("Religious dress". Encyclopædia Britannica Online).
[252] Singh 2001, 137-138.

the table all of their hands are brown" (EP 301). This is in contrast to the Villa, and to the connection he had with Lord Suffolk: In England and Italy he had also seen white hands at the table.

Hana, conversely, remains single in the end. She is happy in her own way; because of her experiences in the Villa, she has regained her self-confidence and can look at herself again: "She is a woman of hour and smartness whose wild love leaves out luck, always taking risks, and there is something in her brow that only she can recognize in a mirror" (EP 301). As I have presented, Singh[253] claims that Kip went through a Lacanian transformation, but this applies to Hana as well.

Thus, all the bridges appear destructed because of the nuclear attack. This recalls Kipling's poem: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat [...]".[254] Along with the millions of dead people, the Second World War wiped out everything West had valued. As I mentioned earlier, Hana's disillusionment with religion was very deep during the war, and that can be seen as a symbol of the whole West. Singh[255] points out an example of breakage in India too: Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs fought in the Punjab and in the Bengal, and this resulted in the division between East and West Pakistan. Singh[256] continues that the colonial masters in India were not innocent either, but fundamentally, it is universal greed that destroys the bridges between human beings. Singh argues[257] that after the war, "[t]he sacred is forsaken. The technological supremacy of the colonial powers does not make the world a better place; it only bombs and destroys". As Singh[258] writes, this is also the view of Guru Nanak, who wanted peace, but saw only death and destruction in his country.

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[253] Singh 2001.
[254] Kipling 1994, 245-248.
[255] Singh 2001, 138.
[256] Singh 2001, 139.
[257] Singh 2001, 139.
[258] Ibid.

What caused the destruction of the bridges? Pesch[259], who examines cultural clashes in the nuclear age, argues that understanding the clashes is essential, because if people understood the origins and their structure, the potential bombs could be defused in time. Pesch[260] also suggests that not even the patient and Kip are not able to build bridges over the cultural divides, although they are "international bastards" or as he writes, "multicultural individuals".[261] His opinion is that it is important to reveal these impacts or even "post-apocalyptic cultural wars",[262] even though not everybody likes to discuss the issue. According to him[263], especially Caravaggio's remark on Kip has been criticized in the USA: "the young soldier is right. They would never have dropped is on a white nation" (EP 287). Finally, even the thief is able to see the injustice of Western wartime ideology.

As I have suggested, Kip's relationship to Hana is special in the novel. There are references to this near the end of the novel, and Hana never found a companion, which means that she eventually loved Kip more deeply than it was suggested earlier in the novel. Furthermore, Kip decides not to kill the patient after all, because he sees Hana at the door (EP 284). The woman's presence is one of the reasons he cannot shoot the burned man. Like the Queen of Sheba, he feels her sadness, and when he finally throws his gun away, he sees Hana on the periphery of his vision (EP 285). He feels the same connection to Hana as he felt to the woman depicted in the fresco. Another case in point is when Kip is leaving the Villa, Hana tries to talk to Kip, but he "is stone in front of her" (EP 288). However, Hana does not give up, because he sees, like the Queen of Sheba, that there is something sacred between them. Similarly as the Queen kneels before the sacred bridge, Hana "kneels down to his level and leans forward into him, the side of her head against his chest, holding herself like that. A beating heart. When his stillness doesn't alter she rolls back onto her knees" (EP 288). She

[259] Pesch 1998, 75.
[260] Pesch 1998, 73.
[261] Pesch 1998, 75.
[262] Pesch 1998, 74.
[263] Ibid.

recalls the words in the Bible that the Englishman has read to her: “Love is so small it can tear itself through the eye of a needle”,[264] and she wants to remind Kip of their mutual affection. Moreover, Hana can also make a reference to Kip’s religion, as I mentioned before, Sikhism and Christianity share the same view on love. Hana reminds Kip of his humanity, and the hope that it can bring. Nevertheless, Kip is so enraged that he cannot understand it yet.

The novel’s ending suggests that there is a connection between Hana and Kip after all, because when in his home country, he is thinking about the woman and wonders whether he should call her or not. Although he decides not to, there is a mystical connection between the characters:

> And so Hana moves and her face turns and in a regret she lowers her hair. Her shoulder touches the edge of a cupboard, and a glass dislodges. Kirpal’s left hand swoops down and catches the dropped fork an inch from the floor and gently passes it into the fingers of his daughter, a wrinkle at the edge of his eyes behind his spectacles (EP 301-302).

In this scene, Hana is on the other side of the globe, but still curiously close to Kip. Singh’s[265] view is that since the sapper has awakened to his postcolonial self, the woman in Canada and the man in India can be totally separated from each other again, as they are now in a postcolonial and post-war world. Put another way, they now understand the meaning of bridges.

The novel also suggests that the closest relationships can be created between two individuals that are strangers to each other: Kip forms the closest relationships with strangers: “All through his life, he would realize later, he was drawn outside the family to find such love. The platonic intimacy, or at times sexual intimacy, of a stranger” (EP 226). Similarly, “a man not of your own blood can break upon your emotions more than someone of your own blood. As if falling into the arms of a stranger you discover a mirror of your own choice”

[264] Cf. The Bible Matt. 10: 25: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”.
[265] Singh 2001, 140.

(EP 90). In the end, the reason why he was so angry at the patient is because he felt that the burned man was an outsider too. Kip felt "platonic intimacy" with the patient as well. It can be argued that the connection between the sapper and the patient got lost only because Almásy died, not because Kip hated the "Englishman".

The sacredness of bridges, thus, can also be found in the relationship between self/Other. Kella's[266] view on the concept of the "intimate stranger" is that the novel presents a social model in which self and other are not mixed, but are constructed in a dynamic relation, in which they are inseparable. Pesch[267] points out that if one and the Other are inseparable, in other words, the destroying of the self entails the destruction of the Other. As Kip decides not to kill Almásy, he understands that he cannot destroy the patient who is like him, because killing the patient would ruin him at the same time. He would not be able to return happily to India as a murderer. And if he would do that, he would be like the people he confronts, the ones who dropped the bombs in Asia. Singh[268] argues that in the end, after the sapper has passed the Lacanian Mirror Stage, he is "his own authentic person, reconnected with himself, his history, his culture, and his land". *The English Patient* maintains that a bridge to self is needed to be formed before there can be a connection to the other.

As Pesch[269] notes, Kip is actually criticizing Western culture, when he says about the triumph of the bomb brought to the West, simultaneously attacking it: "Smell it. Listen to the radio and smell the celebration in it. In my country, when a father breaks justice in two, you kill the father" (EP 285). However, Pesch[270] continues, that it is not self-evident which cultures clash in the novel, because the patient's uncertainty is hinted when he asks: "But who was the enemy? Who were the allies [...]" (EP 19). The actual break Kip makes is with

[266] Kella 2000, 101.
[267] Pesch 1998, 75.
[268] Singh 2001, 140.
[269] Pesch 1998, 73.
[270] Ibid.

culture, not with the patient who he loved after all. Kella[271] points out that in Ondaatje's novel, "Western humanism" has a very ambiguous relation to imperialistic violence.

All the relationships of Kip include some kinds of breaks. The fractures contain another kind of information; as all the nuances in characters' relationships to each other are depicted in the story, the novel avoids describing them stereotypically. As I mentioned earlier, the atomic bombs are foreshadowed throughout the novel. This is another reason why the symbolic bridges in the novel can be called mysterious—or even sacred. As the bridge over the Siloam to the Queen of Sheba, the symbolic bridges to his "foster family", art, and religion predict the future destruction for Kip. Kip understands the situation, similarly as the Queen of Sheba, who understood that Solomon's empire would eventually fall. Throughout the novel, Kip was able to predict that the English/West would ultimately suffer because of their arrogance, and due to the "tremor of Western wisdom" (EP 284).

Although Pesch[272] claims that the novel does not give a happy ending, in Kella's[273] opinion, in the coda of the novel, humanist vales are affirmed again. My view is that Ondaatje's novel stresses that the true bridges can be created between individuals, not between nations or cultures. As long as there are visionaries like Kip, it is possible to learn to understand the sacredness of bridges.

[271] Kella 2000, 111.
[272] Pesch 1998, 73.
[273] Kella 2000, 112.

4 Conclusion

Although Ondaatje's novel is romantic on the surface, is encompasses underlying political or postcolonial tendencies. In my thesis, I have argued that Kip is a mediator between East and West. Many scholars do not concentrate on Kip in the novel, therefore, my thesis applies a "contrapuntal reading"[274] of the novel.

Symbolically, Kip's relationships could be presented as bridges. His role is enhanced in connection to the other protagonists, especially in his relationships to Hana, Lord Suffolk, and the English patient. Following Singh's[275] psychological adaptation of Lacan's Mirror Theory, it can be claimed that together, they form a "foster family" for Kip.

The relationship between Kip and Hana is sexual on the surface, but it includes other qualities as well. There is a religious side in their liaison, and Kip's defusing of bombs is also significant between the lovers. It can be claimed that on one hand, Hana is a kind of substitute for Kip's mother. Kip is also Hana's protector. On the other hand, Kip replaces Hana's father or grandfather.

All of the relationships also contain fractures. First, Kip and Hana are both disturbed because of the war. Moreover, Kip's disturbed, almost machine-like mindset alienates him from the woman. As Singh[276] claims, at this stage of his psychological transformation, Kip has become dislocated from his own worldview, Sikhism. Kip's religion similarly separates the lovers. In addition, Hana sees Kip's brown skin stereotypically, and fundamentally Kip remains an example of an Oriental man, the Other to her. Hana is not capable of seeing Kip as a human being. Ondaatje's novel reflects Said's[277] statement of the post-modern world that Orient is perceived through stereotypes. Hana's imagining "all of Asia through the gestures of

[274] Said 1994, 66.
[275] Singh 2001.
[276] Singh 2001, 125.
[277] Said 1978, 26.

this one man" (EP 217) refers to what Spivak's writes about the heterogeneous colonized subaltern.[278]

The sapper is befriended with a British officer, Lord Suffolk. In this relationship Kip's work is significant as well: it is noteworthy that in Ondaatje's novel, the Indian has a particularly important role in the Second World War. And not only explosives, he is actually disarming the cultural disconnections between Indian and British cultures. However, because he is Kip's superior officer and also belongs to the upper class, Lord Suffolk's attitude towards the sapper, there is a disparaging quality. Kip sees the man as his friend, but also as a representative of the British imperialists, who is sometimes condescending towards him. Lord Suffolk's Kipling cakes and the nickname Kip underscores the novel's potential for postcolonial reading. The British officer treats the Indian in the way that reflects Said's[279] notion of European attitude towards non-Europeans in general. Lord Suffolk treats the sapper as a child, or a subaltern who is not allowed to speak (cf. Spivak 1988). Lord Suffolk's death symbolizes the decline of the British imperialism and forebodes the nuclear disaster in the future. Singh's[280] view is that Kip is now beginning to see more clearly, free form his colonial self. In a way, then, he is beginning to understand his role a mediator, but also that all the bridges will not be permanent.

The relationships between the Sikh and the other characters can be described as a web of bridges in Ondaatje's novel. However, Kip's friendship with the patient is special. They are like brothers, but the burned man is also like a teacher or a stepfather to the sapper. The patient and Kip are both described as "saints", and they are similar mediators between two cultures. According to Singh[281], Kip is now at the Lacanian Mirror Stage, because Kip sees his ideal self in the "mirror" of the patient and other residents of the Villa. The symbolic

[278] Spivak 1999, 270.
[279] Said 1978, 7.
[280] Singh 2001, 130-133.
[281] Singh 2001, 127.

bridge between the men is not straightforward, however. The patient can represent the oppressor, and Kip the oppressed, but since neither of them is actually British, they both are "international bastards" (EP 177).

Kip encounters many works of art in the novel: at first sight he forms a close affiliation with the fresco depicting the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The Renaissance painting enhances the postcolonial tendencies in the novel. Like Kip, the Queen is a mediator between East and West. There is another similarity between them: both of them have realized "the sacredness of bridges," because both of them know that instead of Western culture, there is hope in the East. They both are holders of significant information as they realize that it is useless to resist, instead, there will be solution in the future. Said[282] mentions the Oriental woman who could not speak for herself. The fresco's woman speaks to Kip. This can be understood with a reference to Said's[283] Oriental woman. In addition, the Queen of Sheba brings to mind Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern (as a woman) speak?"[284]

Another bridge is between Hana and the Queen. They both belong to Kip's "foster family". Similarly, the sapper feels safe in near "parental" terracotta figures in a church. The family is formed of Kip, 17 C Catholic art, and the other characters in the novel. Michelangelo's *Isaiah* belongs to his "family", too. He is likened to young Michelangelo in the novel. For this reason, Kip is also a mediator between the past and the present. Kip feels a strong affinity to the paintings, because as he is able to read the harmonious frescoes. Nevertheless, he is not a traditional art admirer, because of the post-war surroundings. The frescoes are seen in a dark church and the paintings are tarnished. The Sikh cannot understand the stories in the paintings. The frescoes are not able to bring happiness for Kip after all. In addition, Kip watches them through his rifle's telescope. Like the patient in the end, they represent an enemy to him. The Sikh's psychological state also causes breaks in his

[282] Said 1978, 6.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Spivak 1988, 296.

connection with art. In Ondaatje's novel, the frescoes are like the patient's copy of Herodotus, there is no certainty whether they are real or not. Kip's defusing of bombs, Isaiah and the fresco with the Virgin Mary forebode the nuclear disaster in the future. Moreover, instead of Western or British art he identifies better with ancient art.

Religion plays a very important part in *The English Patient.* Like Kip, Sikhism seems to be a mediator between other religions: Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. The Sikh does not discriminate against anyone in the book. Kip's attitude reflects the Sikh way of life, which underlines the sacredness of every greeting. He is also flexible and this is why he is able to enjoy Catholic art as well. In addition, the Golden Temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar is open to all. There are also many similar features between Sikhism and Christianity. Ondaatje's novel gives an example of a mediator between religions and cultures, not a stereotypical Indian.

Sikhism is, nevertheless, a religion of its own. It seems to be open to all only superficially. Ultimately, prefers to hold on to his faith. He cannot make an offering to the statue depicting the Virgin Mary. Kip's religion also creates conflicts with the other characters, for example, because he does not accept alcohol or drugs. Sikhism is a strict religion. Kip may feel threatened by the Catholic items, because he has "his own faith after all" (EP 80).

The fractures in the bridges prefigure the end of the novel: the atomic explosions. After them, Kip sees the patient and the other Villa residents as his enemy. As Singh[285] claims, this is because in that Kip transforms from the colonial self to a more self-confident postcolonial identity. Kip breaks the bridges he had made with people, art, and the whole world. This is underlined at the end of the novel, along with the atomic explosions. Because of them, Kip's attitude towards his "foster family" and towards the Western culture is changed.

The sacredness of bridges unfolds at the end of the novel. Firstly, the fractures in his relationships mysteriously foreshadow the atomic bombs at the end of the novel. Kip's

[285] Singh 2001, 120.

defusing of bombs in a way presents a premonition of the forthcoming nuclear destruction. Only a connection to Hana remains in the end. The novel suggests, thus, that the closest connections are formed between strangers: an Indian sapper and a Canadian nurse or a sapper and a woman depicted in a fresco. Kip's affinity with the patient is also significant, because in the end, they both were outsiders. The sacredness of the relationship between the self and the Other is profoundly underlined in *The English Patient*: Kip realizes that he cannot destroy the patient, as it would destroy himself, too. Finally, Kip criticizes cultures, not people. On the deepest level, the sacredness of bridges is found between individuals.

In my thesis, I have examined Kip as a mediator. It would be interesting to extend the study of mediators to Ondaatje's other works. Hopefully a feminist study on Ondaatje will emerge in the near future, because his female characters have often been neglected. In addition, comparing *The English Patient* to Kipling's *Kim* would provide an interesting subject for further studies.

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