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**Navigating the Third Space: Cultural Hybridity and Identity Crisis in
Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient**



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Abstract

This current study explores the complex portrayal of the main character's emotional upheaval regarding their cultural identity in Michael Ondaatje's "The English Patient" by drawing on Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity and the "third space". The paper describes Almásy, the main character, as a representative of the postcolonial identity crisis, thus demonstrating how the question of cultural belonging becomes a fluid, fragmented, and negotiated repercussion of war and colonial disruption. Through in-depth textual analysis, this paper argues that Ondaatje's narrative challenges the concept of fixed national identities and instead presents identity as a matter of performance and reconstruction in the spaces that exist between different cultures.

This research is a great addition to the postcolonial literature field. It demonstrates how "The English Patient" is essentially a poignant exploration of the emotional and cultural aspect of displacement and, furthermore, provides a refreshed insight into the postcolonial world still grappling with the effects of globalization and the process of identity formation. The paper reveals that the complex identity of Almásy is a symbol of the existential quest for a place and a sense of being which is the universal human condition in a world where the traditional limits have been broken down.

Keywords: Cultural hybridity, Identity crisis, Third space, Postcolonialism, Bhabha, Ondaatje, Nomadic identity

Introduction

Background and Context

One of the major features of the postcolonial literary field is the presence of stories which challenge concepts of identity, belonging, and cultural authenticity. After colonial disruption and global conflict, traditional ideas of fixed national identities have become increasingly unworkable, thus causing the rise of the complex issues of hybridity, displacement, and cultural negotiation. Michael Ondaatje's 1992 novel *The English Patient* is a major progeny of this heritage, in which the author, through the broken narrative and the multi-layered characters, offers a deep reflection of the discussed themes. The novel, which is a look at the final days of World War II, shows how people who had been taken away their national and cultural certainties become able to rebuild their identity in the transitional and transformative spaces that are in-between.

Basically, the understanding implied is the author's point of view acknowledging Ondaatje as a Sri Lankan-born Canadian writer which points towards a more refined comprehension of cultural hybridity and displacement. Consequently, the main character in his book, the burned and amnesiac figure referred to as "the English patient," is transformed into a powerful symbol of the postcolonial era - a man who did not have a clear national allegiance and lived in a kind of border both physically and psychologically. The paper here propounds the conception that the protagonist's identity confusion is a metaphorical utterance of the larger epistemological crisis to do with the constitution of identity in a world where the organizers of tradition have been upset by colonialism, war, and globalization apart from being just a personal loss.

Theoretical Framework

This research bases its arguments on Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, closely focusing on his ideas of cultural hybridity and the "third space". The *Location of Culture* (Bhabha, 1994) is the major source of Bhabha's thinking, and it supplies significant theoretical instruments for acknowledging the formation of identities in the gaps between cultures rather than inside the fixed cultural territories. The concept of the "third space" by Bhabha conveys a borderline area where cultural references are impersonal and altered, thus, the issues of identity beyond the dichotomies such as colonizer/colonized, East/West, or self/other being imparted are opened up. This theoretical background fits very well with the novel analysis of Ondaatje, which not only constantly fights against the oversimplified categorization but also, in fact, delves into the intricate, the most of the time paradoxical, the characters' side of the stories caught in the middle of various cultural allegiances (Bhabha, 1994).

The core of Bhabha's argument is that cultural identity should not be seen through an essentialist lens and instead Bhabha views identity as something always performed, unfolded, and open to continuous negotiation. He points to the possible creative side of cultural mixing - the characters in Ondaatje's novel are a perfect example to look through this enlightening prism of Bhabha's theory to see how they undertake the fragments of their identities in a dispersed manner. Moreover, this article embeds Stuart Hall's conception of cultural identity as an unfixed one and continually advancing one, thus, the study heavily relies on his views presented in *Questions of Cultural Identity* (Hall, 1996), where he emphasizes on the fact that identities come into being through difference and are always a work in progress rather than being some predetermined essentialities.

Research Objective and Questions

This article's main goal is to identify and analyze the problems related to cultural identity of the main character in *The English Patient* and to understand how these problems mirror postcolonial issues about the sense of belonging, nationality, and selfhood. The manuscript considers the following research questions:

How does the protagonist's ambiguous identity in *The English Patient* violate the idea of fixed or essentialist roots of cultural belonging?

What roles does the novel assign to the "third space" concept to fathom different ways of identity development?

In what way is the protagonist's lost feeling and inner conflict a metaphor for the postcolonial condition?

Significance of the Study

This study is part of the academic discussions about how identities are formed after colonization, and it does so by offering a focused, theory-driven analysis of one of the most intricately nature of cultural hybridity in the literature of the recent past. This research, through its close reading of Ondaatje's novel, shows how the author uses the medium of fiction to explore the psychological and existential aspects of the identity crisis and thus provides a wealth of insights that are applicable not only to the field of literary studies, but also to the broader interdisciplinary, held, in this case, between local and global, identity in the concept of globalization. The paper argues that literary works can serve as a kind of 'bridge' between theory and the 'real' when it comes to the experience of cultural dislocation and the artistic potentials that can be derived

from such a situation.

Literature Review

Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Hybridity

Several key figures have laid down the theoretical basis for recognizing cultural hybridity in postcolonial literature. Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) is a pioneering work that introduces the postcolonial concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. Bhabha claims that the colonizing and colonized cultural meet creates new ambiguous identifications as well as cultural intermixtures that, in a way, revolt against the colonizing power. His major work has been a turning point which has shifted postcolonial studies from binary oppositions into the more complex and subtle views of cultural interaction and change.

By focusing on how Western discourse invented the "Orient" as it's inferior other to justify domination through colonialism, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) made a deep impression to a great extent. The work of Said is mostly characterized by the binary oppositions, but it still offers a very important background for the comprehension of colonial identities that had been made in relation to each other. Stuart Hall's work in cultural studies, especially his essays on cultural identity and diaspora, also support Bhabha's theories by pointing out that identities are created through narrative, memory, and representation, not through biological or cultural traits.

Robert Young's *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995) presents a detailed historical background to the concept of the different ways in which hybridity has been thought throughout different periods, and in the meantime, Gayatri Spivak's works on the subaltern have made it difficult to understand the perspectives of those who can talk and be represented in the postcolonial set-ups. These theoretical bases lay down the grounds on which the study of Ondaatje's works related to the cultural hybridity can be of great help and effectively analyzed.

Critical Responses to The English Patient

After this novel came into light, it has been a subject of endless discussions in public and academia, among the other things, it is criticized for the way it handles identity, history, and cultural mixing. The intricate narrative technique and the engagement with historical memory were already recognized by the first round of critical responses to the book, however, it was the 1996 film adaptation that mostly led to the work's popularity and then to sustained academic inquiries.

Many of the scholars have been evaluating the novel within the framework of postcolonial theory. Eleanor Ty (2000) studies the ways in which the novel questions the representations of the colonies by depicting the characters of the type of Kip who confronts the stereotyping by the West. In her opinion, Ondaatje establishes the narrative space in which the characters' identities are not only troubling, but also an outright rejection of the concept allowing one to see the cultural interaction from a new perspective. In the same way Hilary Stael's (2007) deals with the issue of the novel reflecting interpersonal relationships between the different cultures in a transnational context and the importance of ethical aspect in author's treating of the other.

The issue of the use of maps and geography has been an important aspect of the discourse around the novel. Critics such as Sharyn Emery (2000) have been looking into how the novel employs map-making as a symbol of imperialistic knowledge and

dominion but, at the same time, it also ventures into new territories of space and belonging brought about by the different way of viewing the world. Specifically, the desert has been conceived as an in-between world that cannot be contained by fixed borders and categories, and it performs the function of what Bhabha might call a "third space" where the negotiating of culture takes place.

Various research works have zoomed in on the characters to represent the hybridity of the identity. Cengiz Karagoz (2014) studies such a case in detail where Kip feels he doesn't belong anywhere and is out of place, and then he goes on to think how his being a Sikh in the British army generates complex identifications and conflicts. In addition, some scholars have emphasized the question of Almásy's unclear nationality and how his fire-charred, faceless body becomes a symbol for the vanishing of the firm kind of identities.

Ondaatje's Literary Context and Style

Ondaatje's creations have been comparatively related to postmodern and postcolonial literary conventions. His fractured narrative mode, numerous references made in the text, and the author's mixing of genres are in accord with postmodern aesthetic practices, from the point of departure, whereas his thematic issues of uprooting, cultural mixing, and colonial heritage, to name a few, integrate him deeply into the postcolonial literature sphere. A critic has remarked that Ondaatje's identity which is hybrid in nature and as a writer born in Sri Lanka and raised in Canada, has an impact on his literary probing of the concepts of belonging and displacement.

The novel's interaction with time has also been a major focus of critical recognition. In contrast to conventional historical fiction that strives for likeness of the truth, the *English Patient* intentionally confuses the characters between history and fiction, mixing up the direct historical instances and figures with the invention of the personal side of the story. The expression confirms a postmodern suspicion of big historical narratives while at the same time it is engaging with colonialism and world war's legacies.

Gaps in Existing Scholarship

Though severe criticism has been leveled against *The English Patient* to a large extent; there is still an argument that the protagonist's identity crisis is the embodiment of Bhabha's concept of the third space. A lot of research works briefly touching the idea of hybridity or that of the characters, but do not fully delve into the theoretical implications of the novel as a representation of identity as processual and performative. This paper attempts to fill in the void by examining in detail how Almásy's uncertain identity serves as a literary metaphor for cultural hybridity and how the novel, in its entirety, constructs the narrative spaces that can be aligned with Bhabha's third space.

In addition, a great deal of criticism has been directed towards novel theme-wise, and very few critics have focused on the formal features of the work, i.e., its fragmented structure, changing points of view, and intertextual references, which, in fact, dramatize the identity formation processes the novel deals with. This research will look into how Ondaatje's narrative strategies help the novel become a study of hybrid identity.

Methodology

Research Design

This investigation makes use of qualitative research design derived from literary analysis and theoretical interpretation. The method is highly centered on the text, involving a close reading of Ondaatje's novel with the application of postcolonial theory, especially Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and the third space. The method is interpretative and not empirical, aiming at uncovering meanings, patterns, and theoretical implications from the literary text.

The study adopts an inductive method whereby the themes and insights are allowed to emerge from the continuous engagement with the primary text instead of the researcher imposing the already formed categories. Such a method is especially suitable for the study of a novel which challenges being given fixed interpretations and is characterized by ambiguity and multiplicity.

Theoretical Framework Application

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory is the main source of the theoretical framework used in this research, in particular:

Cultural hybridity: the idea that cultural identities are the result of the mixture of and negotiation with other cultures, rather than being pure ones.

Third space: a transitional area where the meanings of culture are not only translated but also changed, thus giving rise to new possibilities beyond the binary oppositions.

Mimicry: the colonizer's imitation, to an ambivalent degree, of the colonizer, which brings to light the precariousness of the colonial power.

Ambivalence: the feature of colonial relations, which is characterized by the coexistence of attraction and repulsion.

These ideas equip the paper with the necessary analytical instruments to study the representation of identity formation in postcolonial contexts in Ondaatje's narrative. Besides, the research incorporates the ideas of Stuart Hall regarding cultural identity as a changeable and dramatized one, which is in line with Bhabha's focus on the process and negotiation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The novel of Michael Ondaatje *The English Patient* (1992) is the main source of primary data for this research. The study is largely based on the paper which mainly highlights the aspects shown in the following list:

Character changes and description, focus of the narrator's point of view

Sequence of events and characteristics

Figurative language and repeating figures of speech

Intertextual references and historical background

Subsequently, the research is based on various academic publications that deal with postcolonial theory, literary criticism of Ondaatje's novel, and historical and cultural studies. These sources help the comprehension of the novel and the positioning of the research paper among the scholars.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

As a literary analysis, this research study did not involve human subjects and thus it is free from the ethical concerns that are usually associated with empirical research. However, the interpretation is still considerate of the novel's deep and complicated

historical engagement with trauma, colonialism, and culture.

This research acknowledges some limitations:

The interpretive nature of literary analysis implies that alternative readings are always possible

The emphasis on Bhabha's theoretical framework automatically leaves out other theoretical approaches that may be equally valuable

The study is confined to the literary text and the extension to reception studies or comparative analysis with other works is not done

The limitations outlined have not prevented this study from setting an ambitious goal of offering a careful, theory-driven analysis which, in turn, is a substantial contribution to the understanding of Ondaatje's novel and its thematic concern with the postcolonial identity.

Analysis

The Protagonist as Embodiment of Hybrid Identity

The person who can be called "the English patient" is the major novel's figurative representation of cultural hybridity and the identity crisis. A man who has been charred all over and is suffering from amnesia, he is, as it were, the embodiment of complete indeterminacy—his nationality, name, and past, are all vague. His psychological as well as physical state reflects the epistemological skepticism which post-colonial theory takes as its basis, i.e. the disruption of/refusal of traditional markers of identity.

Ondaatje presents the patient under a veil of uncertainty: "She had always wanted words, she loved them, grew up on them. Words gave her clarity, brought reason, shape. Whereas I thought words bent emotions like sticks in water." Katharine Clifton's and the patient's contrasting relationships to language serve as a ground for the latter's difference—his preference of ambiguity instead of clarity, his inclination towards fluidity rather than fixity. His identity is, in fact, one of the major themes in the novel, and here it is constructed through fragments of memories and stories rather than undeniable facts.

The fire destroyed body of the patient is, in fact, a very potent symbol of hybridity. As Caravaggio notices: "He is a man who has become a landscape." The journey from a unique individual to an undifferentiated land, is a metaphor for the demise of not only the author's personal situation but also the cultural one which the novel is concerned with. The rescuers' oil, which is of course the cause of the darkening of the skin, visually shows cultural mixing—the European body marked by Middle Eastern healing practices.

The Third Space: Desert as Liminal Zone

The Libyan Desert is the main "third space" in the novel—both a real and an allegorical place where the cultural boundaries become blurred and new opportunities arise. According to Bhabha, the third space is "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation" where one culture's meanings are changed instead of being simply handed over. The desert is a perfect example of such a place - a place that denies being mapped and categorized, which are the methods used by colonial knowledge systems.

Almasy describes the desert experience in a manner that very well matches Bhabha's concept: "We disappeared into nature. Fire and sand. In that fire, we erased the family

name. We left the countries behind." This disowning of national identity, as a comeback and a loss, is the liberation of being outside fixed categories but at the same time losing the stable sense of belonging. The desert becomes, according to Almasi, "the sea of all its latitudes," a place where identity is not limited but can be infinitely reshaped.

The desert explorers become, according to Almasi, "a clutch of a nation between the wars," a community which is not defined by the members' nationality but their common displacement and shared purpose. This fleeting community is the one which stands as an alternative to nation-based belonging and goes ahead of Bhabha's point of hybridity as a source of new social ties beyond the boundary of the old ones. Nevertheless, the novel also depicts the vulnerability of such communities as they, in the end, disintegrate due to the difference in their national loyalties with the start of war.

Narrative as Identity Construction

The theme of identity runs deeply through the book, and it is revealed in the way the characters shape identities through the stories they tell rather than seeing them as some kind of inherent human nature. The patient's previous life is revealed bit by bit through the stories he tells his caretakers, which are very fragmented and have a lot of gaps as well as possible inventions. This portrayal of identity as a construct through the patient's stories reflects Bhabha's focus on the fact that identities are performatively created through the process of repeating and telling them.

The patient's copy of Herodotus' Histories, which he has marked up with his own thoughts and changed pages from various books, is a very strong allegory for hybrid identity. As the patient makes a hybrid text by mixing Herodotus' narrative with his own additions, so his identity is a palimpsest of different cultural influences and experiences. He explains: "Every night I cut out a cartoon and stick it over a passage in the book. Once I found a whole page of illustrations of hands." This cutting and pasting is quite emblematic of the identity construction process that is happening—implicitly, one is selecting, arranging, and recontextualizing elements from different sources."

Hannah perceives this process when she thinks: "All his life he has avoided sitting himself in the continent of a family. He was a man who erased others' names, substituted them with new ones." This act of renaming signifies not only the ability to reconstruct identity but also the possible side to the power of such a reconstruction—that is the erasure of others because of the process of self-invention.

Mimicry and Ambivalence in Colonial Relations

The book delves into complicated dynamics of mimicry and ambivalence in colonial relationships mainly through the character of Kip. Being a Sikh in the British army, Kip is a character with an ambivalent nature—he has assimilated British technical knowledge and military discipline, yet he is culturally different. His very nickname reflects colonial appropriation—"Kip" is a short way of "Kirpal" which has been Anglicized—but he continues to be a Sikh through religious practices and later by going back to India.

Bhabha sees colonial mimicry as making colonial subjects who are "almost the same but not quite," thus causing anxiety to colonial power. Kip is an example of ambivalent mimicry: on the one hand, he is a skilled technologist of the West (bomb

disposal), on the other hand, he is a radical other. By his abilities, he frustrates the colonials' stereotype of the Indians' low capabilities and by his final act of repudiation of the Western ethos after Hiroshima he shows the boundaries of colonial incorporation.

The patient himself is involved in the mimicry act also, as he adopts Englishness through his accent and cultural references whilst hiding his Hungarian background. Such a performance is so plausible that he is taken for English thus showing how identity can be successfully performed when one does not have authentic origins. As Caravaggio finds out: "He could be anybody. He has prepared himself to forget, to disown his life." This intentional disowning is a representation of both the freedom and the alienation of the hybrid identity—the capability to create a new self comes with the loss of the authentic side of one's past."

Displacement and the Search for Belonging

Each main character in the novel undergoes different types of displacement. Their situations vividly epitomize the wide dislocation that the war and colonialism have brought Hannah - Her father is gone, and she has detached herself from normal life. Caravaggio - He has been physically maimed, and psychologically traumatized. Kip - He is engaged in a war in a foreign land, fighting for colonial power. The patient - He has lost everything; his lover, his health, and his identity.

Their gathering place, a villa, turns into a temporary refuge, a "third space" where they make fragile bonds across their differences. Ondaatje tells how they invent "a new culture of the villa, based on the habits of the patient," thus, they establish their routines and rituals which provide them with a momentary sense of stability. This small community is a metaphor for the possible belonging through shared vulnerability and not nationality, hence, it resonates with Bhabha's concept of hybrid communities which surpass the traditional boundaries.

On the other hand, the novel illustrates the boundaries of such transient communities through the story of Kip. After the bombing, Kip leaves, indicating how the political realities outside the personal sphere always have the final say and intervene in personal relations. The patient's mortality is their temporary community's coming to an end, thus, their hybrid ties' precariousness in a world that is still mostly ruled by national divides, is implied.

The Politics of Naming and Identity

In different parts of the book, the way characters are named or referred to is a significant factor that exposes the shifting power relations theme of the novel. The patient's anonymous portrayal is strongly associated with his personal evolution towards freedom from constricting identity; however, it also accentuates his deep loneliness. To illustrate his point, he says as follows: "I didn't want my name to be close to the beautiful names. Get rid of the family name! Get rid of countries! The desert taught me these things." What this renaming rejection essentially unfolds is a complete fire, socio-political ideologies of nationalism that classify people by the collective categories they belong to, profoundly diatribe.

Contrarily, Kip's renaming odyssey reveals the imperialist power systems. His British friends rename him "Kip" thus they convert his identity into one that is more suitable for them and consequently they find it easier to break down his cultural background. Nevertheless, he still uses his Sikh name "Kirpal Singh" in some instances thereby

making a statement that he is different even though the colonial forces are urging him to let go of his cultural roots. This double naming symbolically reflects the colonial subjects' ambivalent stance whereby they have to juggle their various identifications in the process.

At the same time, the story is a portrayal of how the authors of the names can either turn the names into weapons or utilize them as protective gears. Caravaggio, in the process of carrying out espionage, employs different names and personalities showing that one can deliberately change identity as a trick if required for certain strategic purposes. On the other hand, the patient through his assumed English persona shields himself from being watched as a suspicious character thus giving a practical example of how the enactment of the dominant identities can be a source of security for the marginalized ones.

Memory and the Reconstruction of Identity

Memory is a major factor in the novel's treatment of the theme of identity, particularly through a patient's scattered memories. His memories are not presented as one story but rather as different pieces: "The memories were like images in a stained-glass window, each distinct but together forming a pattern." The patient's fragmented memories reflect how hybrid identities are not the result of a single origin but are made up of different cultural materials.

The patient's connection to memory is also ambivalent—he wants to recover his past but understands the need for forgetting. Speaking to Hannah, he says: "We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom." This statement regards identity as being made up of and being something which can absorb rather than being the original and pure ones—through us, diverse experiences and influences become internalized and thereby we become who we are.

Ondaatje presents contrasting memories of the characters through their dialogues. Hannah wants to keep the memory alive through the patient's care and her reading; Caravaggio is plagued with traumatic memories; Kip holds on to the memories of home to keep himself safe in the midst of foreign experiences. These different relationships with memory are different ways of identity retention under the circumstances of displacement and hybridity.

The Body as Site of Identity and Transformation

The novel is a constant reminder of the body as a place where identity is not only visually demonstrated but also changed. The physical identity markers on the patient's burnt body are so radically dissolved that it makes him "a man with no face, no name, no book, no language." This situation of the body acts as a means to his identity change but at the same time, it signifies an immense loss."

Besides, the characters that impinge upon identity also undergo bodily transformations. The cutting off of Caravaggio's thumbs is what forever associates him with the side of the victims of torture, at the same time, it compels him to find new methods of dealing with the world. Hannah's body experiences changes through her nursing and her emotional side. The body of Kip is the one that is affected by his bomb disposal work—his hands become very sensitive, and his movements get to be very precise and economical.

Ondaatje reiterates the influence of culture on the body. The Bedouin healing methods

that do the magic for the patient's life changing also have an impact on his look as they make his skin darker with oils. Kip's Sikh customs—his uncut hair, his vegetarianism, his ritual washing—not only keep him connected physically to his cultural heritage but also show that he is a foreigner in the surroundings. These corporeal activities are a demonstration of how identity is both embodied and narrated, expressed through physical habits and appearances.

Language and Cultural Translation

The language was a very significant part in the process of cultural mixing of the novel. It was the primary means by which the merging cultures were compared and contradicted. The patient's polyglot nature - he speaks English, German, Arabic, and several other languages - not only reveals his cultural mobility but also makes an image of him as a person who has no firm ground. He explains: "I have spent weeks in the desert without remembering to look at the moon, he says, like a married man who forgets to look at the face of his wife." The comparison suggests that his relationship with language, just like his relationships with people, is one of quick but on/off type engagements, rather than of lasting ones.

The book is a mix of different languages. It mixes one language into another poetic and technical language (bomb disposal, desert exploration, medicine), historical references with personal account. The argument to the cultural mixing which is being demonstrated on the content level is the linguistic hybridity here. Ondaatje's writing style changes very smoothly between different registers and points of view, thus creating a narrative "third space" where different voices and discourses can meet and interact.

Translation is shown as a real action and at the same time as an allegory for the process of cultural negotiation. The patient reads and annotates Herodotus in various languages, thereby creating a palimpsest of cultural views. The characters are always engaged in translating their experiences to each other; thus they become bridges over river of their different backgrounds. But at the same time there are mistranslations and misunderstandings which indicate that there are some limits to cross-cultural communication.

Historical Context and Postcolonial Critique

Though it unfolded during the Second World War, the book, in a way, questions and re-examines the past, in particular the histories of colonialism and the meeting of different cultures, that have been influencing long before. The desert travelers' map-making can be seen as the record of colonial exploration and taking over, whereas the fact that Kip is in the British army shows colonial hierarchies even in the anti-fascist alliance. The dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, which makes Kip very upset, is a link between the Second World War and the longer histories of Western violence against non-Western peoples.

Ondaatje moves the patient's telling of the Herodotus story to different locations and times in the past to uncover the same patterns of domination and resistance that have continued all along. The references made by the patient to Herodotus serve to link the twentieth-century desert exploration with the ancient imperial expansion. Kip's treatment is just as much as the history of colonial subjects who have to serve the imperial powers as it is of the longer histories. This historical layering, in fact, reveals how modern identity crises are the product of age-old processes of colonization and

mixing of cultures.

At the end of the book, Kip is shown to be moving back to India and deciding to study medicine as his career. This not only demonstrates the postcolonial return to the beginning but also acknowledges the traces of the colonial period in the memory of the villa community. The memory, which is a representation of the idea of the intercultural bond, also reflects the difficulties of maintaining such bonds amidst the history of the divisions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The English Patient remains a deeply significant text for understanding complex aspects of cultural identity in a postcolonial setting. Its subtle interaction with topics like hybridization, exile, and the search for one's own place deeply echoes the global migration experiences, the formation of intercultural relationships and identity negotiation which continue to happen worldwide. The severely disfigured protagonist of the novel and his fractured community, thus, become the means to convey the overwhelming feeling of confusion, yet also the dazzling creative potentials, that result from the demise of the time-tested boundaries.

One of the major things that Ondaatje's work shows is not only his theme of postcolonial issues but also his style and form which mirror these issues at the level of the story and style. Actually, the book becomes a kind of "third space" in which various times, cultures, and voices meet and transform each other. So, The English Patient is largely a means of representing hybrid identity; it is, in fact, an example of such identity being enacted, its very structure being the demonstration of this.

Ondaatje's questions about identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation are still highly relevant with the ongoing globalization that is accelerating the mixing of cultures and migration that is reshaping communities worldwide. His novel is tremendously valuable to us in the very disappearance of fixed identities, which can be somewhat scary is the fact that it is what actually liberates the new types of connection and understanding by crossing the traditional boundaries. A community, albeit temporary, in an Italian villa, however, weak it might have been, symbolizes the power of human beings to create meaning and relationship even in conditions of extreme displacement and uncertainty.

To recap, this paper has detailed how The English Patient is a rich source for examining postcolonial identity questions through its portrayal of the main character whose vagueness was a strong way of showing the core of identity in the current world. Furthermore, the study of this portrayal through Bhabha's theory helps us to have not only an insightful understanding of Ondaatje's novel but also significant bits of the human puzzle of self-awareness and cultural negotiation in a world that is increasingly interdependent yet still divided.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the results and limitations of this study, the authors propose several directions of research to be undertaken in future:

Comparative Studies: Such research may compare The English Patient with other postcolonial works that deal with the theme of hybrid identity, for example, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and might have the

capacity to find the commonalities and variations in the manner in which cultural hybridity is characterized.

Character-Focused Studies: Delving into the novel's detailed analysis of the side characters, especially Kip and Caravaggio, would be in line with this research's focus on the central characters. Finding out how different characters portray different aspects of a hybrid identity could well be a fascinating point of research.

Reception Studies: An investigation of the novel's characterization of identity as understood by various types of readerships (scholarly, popular, intercultural) might lead to the insight that the concept of hybrid identity is understood differently by separate factors and scopes.

Historical Contextualization: Analyzing the novel in terms of the different deconstruction, World War II, or Canadian multiculturalism stages and dates, will certainly help to understand how the book is related to the history of these social-historical conditions.

Theoretical Extensions : Besides Bhabha's framework, novel-based studies that investigate different theoretical perspectives (theory of trauma; studies of diaspora; cosmopolitanism theory) may open the way for quite different but consistent insights.

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