

Sentences from Michael Ondaatje (*The English Patient*)

Note his use of similes, metaphors, as well as his different approaches to reality

“Hana,” he said, and she stilled herself as if she could be camouflaged by stillness.

But the girl watches him quizzically, tilting her head in a question as a dog would when spoken to in a tone or pitch that is not human.

The nerves all gone. You can pass a match across his face and there is no expression
The face is asleep.

A pause among the voices. He was there to translate the guns.

I am a person who if left alone in someone’s home walks to the bookcase, pulls down a volume and inhales it. So history enters us.

She brushed her hand over its skin. A scurry in her mind like a mouse in the ceiling, a moth on the night window.

The candle flickers over the page and over the young nurse’s talking face. . . .

He whispers again, dragging the listening heart of the young nurse beside him to wherever his mind is, into that well of memory he kept plunging into during those months before he died.

She loves the hollow below the lowest rib, its cliff of skin.

She disliked this casual handling of the gun, his lazy spin towards her entrance as if his body were the axle of a wheel, as if the weapon had been sewn along his shoulders and arms and into his small brown wrists.

Hell. She was surrounded by foreign men. Not one pure Italian. A villa romance. What would Poliziano have thought of this 1945 tableau, two men and a woman across a piano and the war almost over and the guns in their wet brightness whenever the lightning slipped itself into the room filling everything with colour and shadow as it was doing now every half-minute thunder crackling all over the valley and the

She entered the story knowing she would emerge from it feeling she had been

immersed in the lives of others, in plots that stretched back twenty years, her body full of sentences and moments, as if awaking from sleep with a heaviness caused by unremembered dreams.