

The English Patient – Novel and Film

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“[R]ight from the start, all three of us [Michael Ondaatje, director Anthony Minghella, and producer Saul Zaentz] never wanted the film of *The English Patient* to be a dutiful version of the book. None of us wanted just a faithful echo. I knew my story’s shape and various swerves and plots would not go unscathed. There would be translations of form and emphasis.”

Michael Ondaatje 1997: vii-viii

I Introduction

Since its early days, film has had an interest in the various forms and ‘materials’ offered by literature. As a mode of representation that involves the temporal axis (as opposed to its precedent, photography), it seems indeed only logical to begin ‘telling stories’ by cinematic means, like in fiction and theatre. Ever since filmmakers began to draw on ‘high’ literature for their stories, film adaptations of literary works have been a widely used means of acquiring narrative material, profiting from the popularity or prestige of a well-known novel or play, or expressing the filmmaker’s appreciation and personal reading of the work. Even if the aim is to ‘faithfully preserve’ content and meaning of the literary source, the change of medium inevitably involves changes on many levels and to varying degrees. To Linda Hutcheon, the special appeal of adaptation lies in this very ambiguity: “It is not a copy in any mode of reproduction, mechanical or otherwise. It is repetition but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty. As adaptation, it involves both memory and change, persistence and variation” (Hutcheon 173). A well-made adaptation of a familiar novel may thus provide the enjoyment of indulging in familiar scenes, characters and quotes, and of discovering new aspects and an alternative reading to our own.

Their literary basis naturally makes adaptations also a popular means for the teaching and study of literature, be it to simply recall or solidify knowledge of the work’s contents (with regard to the more ‘faithful’ adaptations), as a starting point for possible interpretations of the literary source, or a means of introduction to the study of film. Besides these institutional contexts, film critic André Bazin sees in adaptation the more general pedagogical value of making a work of literature available and more

easily digestible for a wide audience, and the social value of helping to create national or cultural mythology, for instance in the form of characters such as Don Quixote (22ff.).

Despite these values of film adaptations, their very nature, being based on often very well-known, popular and prestigious works of literature, makes them prone to criticism. Traditionally, it is usually concerned with the film's degree of 'fidelity' to the work it is based on, but more and more the notion of the genre's 'specificity' has come to the fore, often along with a call for the use of genuinely cinematic strategies to 'translate' the literary work into the new medium.

One crucial difference between literature and film is their modes of production. While a novel is usually written by a single author in a flexible amount of time, the production of a film involves many people with differing backgrounds, qualities, opinions and interests. It is created by the combined effort and influence of a large group of people, from the many specialised professionals that lend their skills to script-writing, production, and post-production, to those who finance the project and give it more or less restrictions and opportunities. To pay credit to this fact, the "author(s)" of the film will in the following be referred to as the "filmmakers" in the plural.

Minghella's name is used when referring to the script or aspects resulting from it such as narrative structure or altered dialogue. However, it should be kept in mind that even the screenplay is not only of the director's making. As the chapter on the Making of the Film will show, Michael Ondaatje and producer Saul Zaentz contributed largely to its creation, and especially its final, published version reflects additional changes that were developed during the communal processes of production and editing.

The complex interplay of several minds and the creative unpredictability of the production process is perhaps best illustrated in the following example from *The English Patient* which Ondaatje uses in the introduction to his collection of conversations with editor Walter Murch in order to illustrate how a film is "born" several times.

In the scene in his novel where Caravaggio remembers how he was tortured, the past merges with the present, and the actual mutilation is not described. In Minghella's screenplay, then, the Italian interrogator was substituted by a German, the scene was enlarged (from two paragraphs to four pages), tension was heightened, and the placement of the sequence serves to reveal Almásy's connection with the spy's mutilation (which is an invention of the film). In shooting, new aspects emerged, as fifteen different takes were shot, which included one where the camera remained on Dafoe/Caravaggio's face throughout the scene. In editing, Murch (who had read that the Nazis hated any demonstration of weakness) used two takes of Caravaggio's line "Don't cut me" (an *ad hoc* invention of Dafoe's) to make him repeat his fear, and aligned them with a take of the German interrogator that shows his disgust. At this moment Murch pulled all the sound out of the scene, so that we know that now the interrogator has to do what he was previously just thinking about (Ondaatje 2002: xix-xx).

Another example of how editing served to include new aspects is the final confession between Almásy and Caravaggio, which was altered in the last cut. Footage from a scene between Hana and Kip, which had been removed, was inserted to have Hana overhear the conversation. This was done to let her know about the Patient's identity, so that when she administers him the fatal dose of morphine, she does so with the weight of this knowledge (cf. Ondaatje 2002: 134).¹

As the above examples highlight, alterations of the novel's material may go well beyond those planned in the screenplay, since the process of filming and editing, with all the individuals involved in it, develops a dynamic of its own. They also underline that choices are often based on what helps the film to be a better *film*, what works and what does not in this specific medium, and what is provided by the often unpredictable factors of people involved, filming location, excess material that may function in a context other than the intended, and many more.

In addition, alterations are not only due to the change of medium but also to the demands of the specific genre within that medium, as Younis (3) observes. With

¹ When referring to the title character, "Patient" with a capital "P" will be used in this paper since the term 'replaces' his unknown name. "Almásy" is used for the protagonist of the Patient's memories.

regard to the adaptation of *The English Patient*, he points out that the filmmakers chose to create a melodrama, which involves a main focus on a single love story and assigning paramount importance to love (ibid.). This has to be taken into consideration when discussing the film as an adaptation.

One also needs to consider the kind of novel that is adapted. An innovative, postmodern novel like Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, characterised by a complex and fragmented structure and strikingly poetic language certainly confronts any filmmaker with a difficult task. Tötösy de Zepetnek describes the novel as a "fictional text that succeeds in representing life – underlining its fullness, complicatedness, inexplicability, fragmentation, and its sub-textual richness which cannot be represented by traditional uses and linear narrative of historical 'facts'"(116). It remains to be examined, then, if the film by Minghella and his team succeeds in representing these aspects, mediating the novel's major themes, and reproducing its atmosphere. And to find out where, how, why and to what effect it deviates from its literary source.

To provide some useful background information, this paper will begin with a brief overview of Michael Ondaatje's biography in order to locate *The English Patient* in the context of his life and work.

This section is followed by a chapter on the making of its cinematic adaptation, as Michael Ondaatje, director Anthony Minghella, producer Saul Zaentz and editor Walter Murch inform us of the specific conditions and processes involved in the production of this particular film, that also provide insight into film production in general.

The theoretical section that follows is divided into two major parts. The first, entitled "The 'Language' of Film", describes the most important aspects of cinematic technique and their function and effect in a film as a whole to provide a terminological basis for the discussion of the strategies used in the film adaptation of *The English Patient*. Omissions are primarily based on what will be relevant for the analytic section.

The second part of the theory section is dedicated to cinematic adaptation of literature, more precisely, "The Problem of Comparing Literature and Film". After a

brief overview of the historical relationship between literature and film, it turns to discuss the two central principles in literature-film comparison, namely “Fidelity” and “Specificity”.

In the analytic section of this paper, *The English Patient* and its film adaptation will be compared with regard to selected major themes and motifs. These were chosen, naturally, on the condition that they figure in both works in some way and/or mark a striking instance of alteration in the film adaptation. The assumed spectrum of possibilities they offer for a ‘translation’ by means of cinematic techniques into the new medium also played a significant role in the choice.

A striking characteristic of the novel is its fragmentary, nonlinear structure, which is closely connected to the central role of memory. This aspect and how it is handled in the adaptation will be examined in the chapter “Narrative Structure” (divided further into “Framing”, “Memory and Narrative Structure”, and “Connections between the Diegetic Levels”). Since in the novel, memory and identity are often described as being located on the body, it will be examined to what extent this is the case in the film (“The Body as a Site of Memory and Identity”). “Point of View/Perspective”, the following chapter, constitutes an important aspect for the comparison because it plays a central role in Ondaatje’s novel and is a much-discussed aspect of film studies. Further, the role and representation of “History and Historiography” shall be examined. “The Portrayal of the Orient” is an important topic to be discussed in the novel-film comparison and has been extensively commented on in the literature, especially with regard to “Kip” (the first subchapter), but the creation of an “Oriental Atmosphere” is also interesting to have a closer look at, since it offers numerous cinematic possibilities regarding both image and sound. “Cartography” is one of the novel’s main motifs and the film includes it in several instances, as shall be seen in the relevant chapter. “Landscape”, especially the desert, has a striking presence and thematic importance in novel and adaptation that will be compared in the subchapters “Tuscany”, “The Desert”, and “Anthropomorphism and Geomorphology”. Finally, the chapter “The Dramatisation of Love in the Film” serves to have a closer look at how the film stages its central focus of interest.

Naturally, a list like this can never be complete nor can it be discussed extensively, and while some additional aspects may emerge in passing, others will have to go undiscussed. However, I hope that this paper will provide a substantial insight into how film adaptation, and that of *The English Patient* in particular, can go about its task, what it can preserve or ‘translate’, what it may chose to or have to alter, omit and invent, what cinematic techniques it can use and to what effect, and what the overall result is in comparison to the literary ‘original’.

II Background Information

1 Michael Ondaatje: Biography²

Michael Ondaatje was born on 12 September, 1943 in Kegalle, fifty miles west of Colombo, the capital of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). His family owned a tea plantation and was part of the well-established Ceylonese élite. His parents are Doris (née Gratiaen) and Mervyn Ondaatje. He has three older siblings, Christopher, Gillian, and Janet, and two half-sisters from his father’s second marriage, Jennifer and Susan. Mervyn Ondaatje was a heavy drinker, and by the time of Michael’s birth had mortgaged and sold most of his ancestors’ land. After his parents’ divorce in 1945, Michael moved to Colombo with his mother. Here, he later entered St Thomas’s College Boys’ School, which was largely modelled on British traditions, the emphasis being on “the arts and British notions of culture” (Jewinski 21). Being thus familiarised with the literary tradition at school, Michael was at the same time also influenced by American pop culture, and especially fascinated by the Western.

In 1952 he joined his mother in England, where she had moved in the meantime and established a boarding house. He was never to see his father again, though they did write to one another. He chiefly learned about his father from stories. Ondaatje’s biographer Ed Jewinski says that a father “was, in his mind, a figure that

² The following chapter is based primarily on the biography by Ed Jewinsky (1994), with additions from Douglas Barbour (1993) and, especially for the years after 1994, from John Bolland (2002).

he could imaginatively piece together from different points of view [...]. In all, it was a view based on a series of fragmented insights, often devoid of a full context or background” (Jewinski 13). He suggests that it is due to this situation “that in works such as *Billy the Kid*, *Coming Through Slaughter*, and *The English Patient*, the ‘truth’ of the protagonist’s life has to be pieced together from whatever is available” (Jewinski 13). However, Ondaatje did have a father figure in his uncle Noel, his mother’s brother. In England, he went to the renowned Dulwich College, where he developed his passion for literature.

In 1962, aged nineteen, he joined his elder brother Chris in Canada, where he studied literature at Bishop’s University in Lennoxville, Québec and at the University of Toronto. It was in these early days in Canada that he took up writing. Although he is best known today for his innovative prose, Ondaatje began his literary career as a poet. He found inspirational teachers at university who encouraged his writing and introduced him to a community of poets and scholars. One of his mentors was teacher and poet Doug Jones. Ondaatje for a time stayed with him and his wife Kim, herself a talented artist, and was also invited to their summer cottage. The couple had been separated for some time but were still good friends. Ondaatje and Kim, fifteen years his senior, began a relationship, and after the Jones’ divorce they got married in 1964. They had two children in the following three years, Quintin and Griffin.

After Ondaatje had completed his B.A. degree in 1965, they moved to the University of Toronto, where he engaged in intense literary and academic activity. He won the Ralph Gustafson Award in 1965, and the Norma Epstein Award for poetry in 1966; his poems were subsequently published in Raymond Souster’s anthology *New Wave Canada* (in 1965, he had acquired Canadian citizenship). The same year, he tied with Wayne Clifford for the E. J. Pratt Gold Medal for Poetry. In 1967, he completed his M.A. thesis at Queen’s University, entitled “Mythology in the Poetry of Edwin Muir: A Study of the Making and the Using of Mythology in Edwin Muir’s Poetry”. His interest in mythos, archetypes, and universals, and in the link of the local and immediate to the cosmic is apparent in much of his own later work. The same year his first collection of poems, *The Dainty Monsters*, appeared and established him as a poet. The same year, he began teaching at the University of Western Ontario. In

1969, he published the long poem *The Man with Seven Toes* (also performed in two stage productions in 1968 and 1969), and a critical study of Leonard Cohen. His narrative collage, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems*, for which he was awarded the Governor General's Award, appeared in 1970.

Ondaatje had to leave the University of Western Ontario in 1971, since he had refused to complete the Ph.D. required by the English Department. In the same year, however, he received a teaching post at Glendon College, York University. His next poetry collection, *Rat Jelly*, was published in 1973, and *Coming Through Slaughter*, his fictionalized biography of the jazz cornet player, Buddy Bolden, in 1976. The latter was co-winner of the Books in Canada First Novel Award. The humorous chapbook, *Elimination Dance*, followed in 1978, and he won the Governor General's Award for his 1979 poetry collection, *There's A Trick With A Knife I'm Learning to Do*.

In 1978, Ondaatje spent five months of sabbatical leave in his birth country Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, to collect material for his semi-fictional memoir, *Running in the Family*, which appeared in 1982. During his year as a Visiting Professor at the University of Hawaii in 1981, he met the television journalist and producer, Linda Spalding, and separated from his wife the following year. Jewinski suggests that his poems, *Tin Roof* (1982) and *Secular Love* (1984), deal with this painful experience of separation and loss (Jewinski 112).

Ondaatje established his national and international reputation with his novel, *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), which won the Order of Canada and numerous other awards. In 1989, a selection of his poems, entitled *The Cinnamon Peeler*, was published in Great Britain. *The English Patient* appeared in 1992 and received the Governor General's Award, the Trillium Award, and was the first Canadian book to win the prestigious Booker Prize. With his latest works, the collection of poems, *Handwriting* (1998), and the novel, *Anil's Ghost* (2000), he returns to Sri Lanka as a point of interest.

Besides his literary achievements, Ondaatje edited several journals and collections of poetry and fiction, and was eager to support the work of other young Canadian writers. He has also directed two films. *Sons of Captain Poetry* (1965) is a

short film on the Canadian poet, bp Nichol, during which Nichol discusses the influence of the Dadaists. *The Clinton Special* (1972) is a freestyle documentary on a farming community in Ontario. He was very interested in film techniques, and Bolland suggests that Sergio Leone's „alternation of static photographic effects with rapid action, has influenced the pacing of Ondaatje's narratives, which also show a familiarity with the whole vocabulary of cinema – cutting from scene to scene, montage, tracking“ (Bolland 13).

2 The Film Adaptation: Making of³

The project of adapting *The English Patient* for the screen was initiated by director Anthony Minghella. He states that one of the things that struck him most about the novel was its “deceptive appearance of being completely cinematic. Brilliant images are scattered across its pages in a mosaic of fractured narratives, as if somebody had already seen a film and was in a hurry trying to remember all the best bits” (Minghella 1997a: xiii). He says he was so enthused that he phoned producer Saul Zaentz the following day to suggest he read the book, which he did, and loved it (ibid.).

The first draft Minghella wrote alone, having spent some time researching the narrative's historical and geographical background. It was over two hundred pages long, which is twice the length of a conventional screenplay. Saul Zaentz states that the first draft he received from Minghella still had 185 pages and “many practical problems: it had too many countries, too many characters” (Zaentz 1997: xi). This comment allows a first glimpse at the practical issues involved in filmmaking, which

³ This chapter draws greatly upon the foreword (Ondaatje), preface (Zaentz), and introduction (Minghella) of the published version of Minghella's screenplay (1997), which provide insight into its evolution from the first draft to the released film, and into the process of filmmaking. In addition, Ondaatje's publication of his conversations with editor Walter Murch on the art of editing (2002) includes further informative references to the making of *The English Patient*.

differ greatly from those of writing a novel. As Ondaatje says himself: “A novel allows you longer arms, a deeper breath” (Ondaatje 1997: viii).

Subsequently, it was altered in several successive drafts that, as Minghella states, were “subject to the ruthless, exasperating, egoless, pedantic, and rigorous scrutiny of Michael and Saul” (1997a: xiv). He names numerous other people who were throughout the process involved in shaping the script and the released version of the film. This list of people underlines the crucial difference between literature and film, that the latter is, as Ondaatje puts it, “a communal story, made by many hands” (1997: ix). As a result of this complex cooperation and the often unpredictable process of filming, the published screenplay is a revised version created when the film was nearly finished and differs greatly from the script Minghella began shooting with (cf. Minghella 1997a: xv).

The film’s production faced severe problems of financing when Twentieth Century Fox pulled out as filming was set to begin, since the project was thought too risky with its high budget of \$ 31 million and the casting of two leading actors (Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas) who were neither stars nor even American. However, the filmmakers refused to abandon their plan and the project was at last ‘rescued’ by Miramax (cf. Sadashige 252). Jacqui Sadashige points out that comments by Minghella, Zaentz, and the popular press turned the film into “a symbol of artistic integrity and personal conviction” (ibid. 252).

A central aspect inevitably involved in the adaptation of a novel for the screen is the need for omission and abbreviation. Thus Ondaatje explains that for instance the scenes of Kip in England that Minghella had in fact included in the first draft had to be left out because “[t]ime spent on that flashback would have diverted the audience from the main plot for too long” (Ondaatje 1997: viii). This and other omissions Ondaatje calls “understandable choices” that “also made the film better” (ibid.). Ondaatje displays a great understanding of the process of filmmaking and a strong approval of Minghella’s work in his foreword. This obviously makes sense in this context, but the fact that he seems to have shown a high degree of cooperation with the filmmakers suggests that there is indeed some conviction behind his words. As was mentioned earlier in his biographical overview, Ondaatje has been very

interested in film for a long time and even directed two films himself. Strikingly, he takes a similar standpoint as André Bazin and Robert Stam (cf. pp. 26f. of this paper) in saying that the novel and film constitute “two stories, one with the intimate pace and detail of a three-hundred-page novel, and one that is the length of a vivid and subtle film. Each has its own organic structure. There are obvious differences and values but somehow each version deepens the other” (Ondaatje 1997: viii-ix). Ondaatje’s strong interest in the project is further underlined by the fact that he came to the shooting locations in Italy and the Sahara, contributing several ideas of his own, and continued to support the film’s creation during the editing process (cf. Zaentz xi). The full extent and nature of his contributions, however, remains unclear.

With regard to post-production, one has to note once again that a film is never solely the work of the director. This last stage is in fact, as Walter Murch points out, in most cases primarily the work of the editor: “The editor is the only one who has time to deal with the whole jigsaw. The director simply doesn’t. To actually look at all the film the director has shot, and review it and sort through it, to rebalance all of that and make very specific notes about tiny details that are sometimes extremely significant, this falls to the editor” (Murch in Ondaatje 2002: 28f.). For *The English Patient*, too, the process continued in post-production of compressing or eliminating scenes, and the director states that, in particular, the structure of the film with its transitions between the two narrative levels was radically revised (Minghella xv). This is due to the structural complexity of the underlying novel: “In editing, the order of scenes often changes from what it was in the script. [...] But in terms of its entanglements, I think *The English Patient* was the most changed. In *The English Patient*, there’s a double variability – you’re going backwards and forwards into several different time frames, and the point of view is not fixed” (ibid. 156f.).

Minghella’s concluding comments sum up the essence of the nature and effects of the adaptation process, especially of a novel as “oblique” and “abstract” as Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*: “[I] was obliged to make transparent what was delicately oblique in the prose. It seemed to me that the process of adaptation required me to join the dots and make a figurative work from a pointillist and abstract one. Any number of versions were possible and I’m certain that the stories I chose to

elaborate say as much about my own interests and reading as they do about the book” (xv).

Especially the notions of film’s “figurative” nature as opposed to literature and of the infinite number of possible readings – and, as a result, cinematic versions – need to be kept in mind when comparing the original novel and the film adaptation of *The English Patient*.

III Theory

1 The ‘Language’ of Film

The way we perceive a film and make sense of it can in several ways be compared to the reading process, the central one being that, as Bordwell and Thomson put it, we “attribute unity to the film by positing two organizing principles – a narrative one and a stylistic one” and “seek to tie these systems to one another” (2008: 55). In this chapter, I will give an overview of the most important cinematic terms and techniques that make up a film’s style and narration and that will be used in the analytic section of this paper.⁴

1.1 Film style: Mise-en-scène

In order to compare the film version with the novel effectively, it is necessary to first give an overview of what makes film in general different from a novel, of what aspects constitute its style. Whereas narrative is the common denominator of the two media, the most obvious difference is film’s audiovisuality. It normally involves real people acting in a real setting. Thus it has much in common with theatre. Accordingly, some of the terms used in film studies are taken from the theatre. A

⁴ Descriptions are mainly based on David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s influential handbook, *Film Art: An Introduction* (2008), additions from other authors are indicated as such.

central one – probably the most noticeable cinematic technique – is *mise-en-scène*. With regard to film, too, it refers to the director's 'staging' of events for the camera, and involves aspects that overlap with theatre, such as setting, lighting, costumes, and the behaviour of the actors (cf. Bordwell & Thompson 112).

Setting

As Bordwell and Thompson point out, setting plays a great role in the effect of a film, and “plays a more active role in cinema than it usually does in the theater” (115). This is due to the facts that films can show real outside places, larger ones and a greater variety than a theatre stage. Also, the camera need not be fixed to one spot like the spectator of a play, and cutting makes switches between different settings easy. All these aspects enable films to be visually more dynamic. Thus, “Cinema setting can come to the forefront; it need not be only a container for human events but can dynamically enter the narrative action” (ibid.). To create the setting, the director can use already existing locales and/or shoot in a studio. The first may result in a more natural effect, whereas the second option gives the director more control over the setting. The question of where to shoot a film, what to construct in a studio, and how, depends – besides practical considerations – on the intentions of the director regarding atmosphere, aesthetics and authenticity/historical accuracy. Part of the setting of a film is the colours that appear, the props that are used, and how they are placed in the locale. The various elements of the setting can shape how we understand the story action, serve to create a certain atmosphere, and even function as symbols and motifs in order to transport meaning or establish parallels between scenes. Often specific settings are used to describe the mental or emotional state of a character, e.g. rain for sadness or small rooms to indicate confinement of mind (cf. Hickethier 70). With regard to nature in film, Hickethier points out that, besides symbolising the inner state of a character, it also often belongs to the “Bedeutungsfeld des

Ursprünglichen, Urtümlichen, auch des Mythischen”, and points to the boundaries of human existence (ibid. 71).

Costume and Makeup

In a film with a historical setting like *The English Patient*, costumes obviously play an important role in making the time in which the story takes place come alive. But as Bordwell and Thompson point out, they can also “play important motivic and causal roles in narratives” (122). Thus, they may serve to characterize a person, show their status, profession, and state of mind. Hair and makeup also serve this function. Makeup can, in addition, be used to ‘mould’ an actor’s face with regard to, for instance, age and physical condition, or to underline facial expressions. Costume is often coordinated with the setting with regard to colour, shape, and pattern. For example, the background may be more or less neutral, so that, with the help of costume, the characters are emphasised.

Lighting

The manipulation of lighting forms an important contribution to the impact of an image. It helps create a certain atmosphere, articulates textures and shapes, and highlights objects by creating highlights and shadows. Bordwell and Thompson distinguish four major features of film lighting, namely its quality, direction, source, and colour (cf. ibid. 126-29). *Quality* refers to the light’s intensity on a scale from soft to hard. It can thus create anything between a diffused illumination on the one end of the scale, and sharp edges and clearly defined shadows on the other. Regarding the *direction*, one can distinguish among frontal lighting, sidelighting, backlighting, underlighting, and top lighting. These serve different effects. Sidelighting, for example, can be used to sculpt a character’s features, whereas backlighting tends to

create silhouettes. The source of lighting in most fictional films is manipulated by the director and cinematographer. Most work according to the assumption that normally any subject requires two sources of light: a key light, which is the primary source, and a fill light, which is less intense and used to soften or eliminate shadows cast by the key light. The use of three-point lighting, developed in classical Hollywood, is still widely used. It includes a backlight from behind and above the figure in addition to a key light coming diagonally from the front and a fill light from a position close to the camera. One distinguishes in this practice between high-key lighting, which is often soft and uses back- and fill lighting to create low contrasts, and low-key lighting, which is often hard, makes little or no use of fill light and thus creates stronger contrasts.

Actors and Performance

As far as the actors and their performance go, Bordwell and Thompson (136) suggest analysing performance along two dimensions: It can be more or less individualised (i.e., How complex and distinctive is the character?) and more or less stylised (i.e. on a scale from muted to exaggerated). But not only the nuances of an actor or actress's *performance* are part of the *mise-en-scène*. He or she is "always a graphic element in the film" (138f.). Thus, the way they move in or are placed within the frame lets them interact with the setting in creating a scene's overall effect. The crucial difference between stage acting and film acting is that at the theatre, the audience is at a considerable and fixed distance from the actors, whereas in film distance changes and the camera can move us quite close to them (as to any object or element of the setting).

Putting all these elements together, we can look at a given shot like a painting or photograph. Thus, "mise-en-scène offers many cues for guiding our attention and emphasizing elements in the frame" (Bordwell & Thompson 142). By balancing (or

unbalancing) a shot, i.e. by distributing elements in the frame in a certain way, the director can, for instance, emphasize the protagonist, underline the relationship between characters, prepare a new event by having a new character approach in the background, and so on. In contrast to painting, movement constitutes another element of a film's mise-en-scène, so that it (or its absence) can be used to guide attention.

The Dimensions of Space and Time

The dimensions of space and time play a great role in how a director controls the mise-en-scène (cf. Bordwell & Thompson 145-51). Two-dimensional as the movie screen may be, so-called *depth cues* in the image can create the impression that a space has both volume and several distinct planes. Volume is suggested by shape, shading, and movement. Several planes automatically exist if there is at least an object and a background. The most basic cue to create distinct planes is overlap of elements in the frame. The use of colours can create this effect too. Aerial perspective is also very effective in suggesting depth, so is the blurring of distant planes, and *size diminution* of figures and objects on distant planes. Depending on how extensively these means are used, we can talk about shallow-space and deep-space composition. A composition making use of depth can be very useful for the narrative of the action, as action in the background can serve as preparation for what is going to happen after the foreground action. The dimension of time also plays a great role in the director's shaping of the mise-en-scène. He or she for instance shapes the speed and direction of movement within the shot, thus creating a certain rhythm and sense of time for the scene.

As we have seen, a film's mise-en-scène is a very complex aspect consisting of several elements that need to be taken into consideration when comparing a movie with the novel it is based on. Mise-en-scène is a central part of a film's 'language',

and carries much of the narrative, atmospheric and aesthetic function for a film that language has for a novel.

1.2 Cinematography

Having had a look at a film's mise-en-scène, which shows its relation to theatre, the genuinely filmic technique of cinematography deserves some consideration.⁵

Among special effects that can be used in cinematography, one especially relevant here is superimposition. Separately filmed sequences are combined on the same strip of film, either by double exposure or in laboratory printing. Among other uses, superimpositions "frequently provide a way of conveying dreams, visions, or memories" (Bordwell & Thompson 174). They can also serve to establish connections between different places, people, and objects, or to accelerate narrative pace (cf. Korte 27f.), as shall be seen in the analytic section of this paper.

Cinematography further involves the choice of framing, of what is to be seen in the frame and what is not. The distribution of onscreen and offscreen space can create certain effects, such as surprise when a new figure suddenly enters from one of the offscreen zones.

Also of great relevance are the *angle*, *level*, *height*, and *distance* of framing (cf. Bordwell & Thompson 190f.). With regard to camera angle, three categories are usually distinguished: straight-on angle, high angle (looking down on the material within the frame) and low angle (looking up). High and low angle are usually motivated by the action (cf. Hickethier 59). The frame is also either level, i.e. parallel to the horizon – which is normally the case –, or canted.

The category of height refers to the height of the camera position in relation to the settings and figures. With regard to camera distance, one distinguishes (from long to short distance) between: extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium

⁵ The more mechanical aspects that shall not be discussed in detail here include lenses, filming speed, film stock and developing methods, toning, and the use of filters.

shot, medium close-up, close-up, and extreme close-up. The boundaries between these are obviously not clear-cut.

Camera position can be used to cue the viewer to take a shot as subjective, as seen through a character's eyes by placing the camera in a character's (approximate) position. In this case, the shot is called point-of-view (POV) shot (B & T 192f. and Branigan 73). Even though film scholars disagree on whether something like a "subjective camera" exists, the point-of-view shot is certainly the cinematic technique that comes closest to representing the 'counterpart' of a personal narrator, which gives it some importance with regard to novel-film comparison. Other narrative functions of framing may include the use of certain framings as a motif, or the sudden change of framing to indicate a turning point.

With film, mobile framing, or *camera movement*, is also possible (B & T 195f., 201). The most common forms are the panorama movement (pan), which rotates the camera on a vertical axis; the tilt movement, which rotates it on a horizontal axis; the tracking or dolly shot, where the camera as a whole travels along the ground; and the crane shot, where it moves above ground level. Camera movement affects our perception of space, including, for instance, a sense of continuity of space for pan and tilt movement and a more three-dimensional appearance of objects when the camera arcs around them. One of the most common functions of camera movement is *reframing*, e.g. in a *following shot* that follows the movement of a character. The duration (e.g. long take) and velocity of camera movement also affect our sense of time in the sequence, its rhythm.

Camera position and movement are also important as far as the relation between the axis of action and the axis of (the spectator's) view is concerned. If action passes parallel before the audience's eyes, it happens at a steady distance from them. If it crosses the axis of view, however, moving towards or away from the spectators, they become more involved as distance increases or decreases, maybe even to the point of 'threatening' the audience (cf. Hickethier 62f.).

1.3 Editing

As editor Walter Murch points out (in Ondaatje 2002: 32), “the editor works at both the macroscopic and the microscopic level: ranging from deciding how long precisely each shot is held, to restructuring and repositioning scenes, and sometimes to eliminating entire subplots”.

The term *editing* refers to the joining of individual shots. This can be done by fade-in, fade-out, dissolve (a brief superimposition) or, most commonly, by a cut. Bordwell and Thompson (220-27) differentiate four basic areas of choice and control: graphic, rhythmic, spatial, and temporal relations between shots A and B.

Editing according to graphic similarities or differences between two shots can serve to contrast two scenes or to make a transition smoother by making a graphic match.

The rhythmic potential of editing is used when the length of shots in relation to one another is adjusted. Thus, patterns, dynamics, and tempo can be created and controlled.

A filmmaker may also by editing imply a certain spatial relation between two shots, for instance by cutting from a shot of an object as a whole to one of a detail of it. Spatial editing can also be used to construct a space out of several components, or to give us a more complete sense of what a place looks like. Since the spectator does not see the ‘actual’ space filmed but constructs it from what is shown in the shots, the result is a diegetic, narrative space (cf. Hickethier 80), which Branigan also refers to as “story space“ (qtd. in Hickethier 80). Parallel editing between different places is called *crosscutting* (cf. B & T 228f.).

Editing also usually contributes to the plot’s manipulation of story time. Editing can for instance change the order of events as they take place in the story. The most common manipulation of this kind, which is also an important technique in *The English Patient*, is the flashback, traditionally used as a means of mimetic representation of memory, dreams, or confessions (cf. Turim 6). The opposite, flash-forwards, is also possible but much less frequent. Editing can stretch or contract time.

Elliptical editing can for instance shorten the duration of story events as presented in the film's plot by segmenting an event into individual frames and combining these into a sequence that is shorter than the event itself (Kargl 238).⁶

Continuity editing

In classical film, certain conventions of editing soon developed that are still widely used, especially in mainstream cinema. They serve to suggest continuity in the film's narrative and thus help preserving the illusion of reality (B & T 235f., cf. also Steinmetz 30). Spatial continuity is achieved by adhering to the axis of action or the 180° line. This 'rule' is based on the assumption that the camera operates in a half-circle. If it crosses the axis of action, the result is disorientation of the spectator. Continuity editing techniques also include an establishing shot delineating the overall space of a new scene (a reestablishing shot later is also possible); the shot/reverse shot pattern, for instance when a conversation is shown; the eyeline match shot, in which shot A shows a character looking at something offscreen, and shot B shows what he or she is looking at;⁷ and match on action, where shot B continues the action shown in shot A from a different vantage point. Of course, these continuity techniques may be purposely disregarded to create certain effects.

1.4 Sound

Besides accompanying the corresponding visual information on screen, film sound can have several other functions. One is to suggest the world outside the frame. Bordwell and Thompson (272) give an example from *The English Patient*: "when the

⁶ An example from *The English Patient* is Almásy's walk from the Cave of Swimmers to El Taj, which is combined out of several shots in different regions of the desert, at different times of day.

⁷ Both shot/reverse shot and eyeline match may often, just as the POV, involve over-the-shoulder shots that show part of the character on the edge of the frame.

nurse feeds the patient a plum, a distant churchbell rings, suggesting a peaceful refuge from the war” whose noises have been predominant in the film’s soundtrack up to this point. As Murch points out, the bell “brings a whole raft of associations along with it. There are religious connotations and geographical and cultural connotations, in addition to the purely spatial” (Murch in Ondaatje 2002: 244f.).

However, there is not only diegetic but also non-diegetic sound. The most common type is *musical score*. Music can have a strong effect on the viewer’s emotional response to the film. Musical sequences can also serve as motifs and thus function to “subtly compare scenes, trace patterns of development, and suggest implicit meanings” (B & T 273). Of great importance is often the title music, as it helps to draw the spectator into the film. The title piece or variations of it may reappear throughout the film as a motif (Hickethier 96).

A more subtle technique is the use of diegetic music, or *source music*. Here, the source of the music (an orchestra, a record player etc.) is visible in the frame. Editor Walter Murch points out that this way, the audience does not feel overtly manipulated because the sounds seem almost accidental (Murch in Ondaatje 2002: 171). It is also possible to play with the distinction between non-diegetic musical score and source music, as Murch has done on *The English Patient* (cf. pp. 43f. of this paper). To make source music sound more natural, manipulations are often necessary. In *The English Patient*, for instance, the piano in the Villa Girolamo was detuned to suggest that it had been exposed to the elements (cf. Ondaatje 2002: 172).

A film may also feature sound that comes from the mind of a character and cannot be heard by others. This is called *internal diegetic sound*. Together with nondiegetic sound it is also called *sound over*. Sound can also be used to manipulate time. For instance, images can be accompanied by *nonsimultaneous* sound from earlier or later in the story (B & T 288). A common device is the *sound bridge*: in the transition from one scene to another, the sound lingers on while the image we see is already from the next scene, or we hear sound from the next scene before the visual cut has occurred (ibid. 289).

1.5 Narration

What links fiction and film, and what ultimately makes filmic novel adaptations a widespread practice, is their narrative quality. Both present us with a world, what is presented is placed in temporal relations, changes are shown and causal relations between events and actions are established to create stories (cf. Hickethier 105 and Schmid 12). Several of the cinematic techniques described so far form central aspects of a film's narrative function and shall now be examined in this respect.

The camera has an important role in filmic narration, because it influences the audience's perception (Kargl 237), as has become clear in the section on cinematography. In terms of space, for instance, the question arises whether it is linked to a character or capable of unmotivated changes of location (ibid.). Editing constitutes a film's temporal mode of narration, as we have seen in the relevant chapter.

Of course, a voice-over narrator – if used at all – forms an important part of a film's narration. However, this is still only one aspect besides others, and Kargl rightly insists on a strict differentiation between voice-over narrator and the narrator of a work of literary fiction (for a more detailed discussion see Kargl 238f.).

As Bordwell (1989: 161) informs us, with the rise of auteur theory in France came also the emergence of the study of film style, which led to the construction of “two complementary personlike agents: the *narrator* and the *camera*” that were taken up by later critics. The narrator being a form of agency personified in style and narration, the heuristic construct of the camera as a personified agent is needed to embody the filmmaker's or narrator's relationship to objects and actions (ibid. 162f.). Tyler portrays the camera as the eye that creates a narrational omniscience (qtd. in Bordwell 1989: 163). Thus, it has become common practice in the theory of cinematic narration to identify camera and narrator (ibid.).

Even though the existence of a narrator in film has been debated (cf. Kargl 232ff. and Bordwell 1985: 61f.),⁸ it makes sense to have a closer look at what kinds of narrative mode we may find in film, how subjective it can be, or whether it tends to be primarily objective. As Anke-Marie Lohmeier has observed with reference to Stanzel's typology of narrative situations, a 'first-person narrative situation' is very problematic in film, since the artificial nature of the cinematographic look destroys the illusion of a character's natural perception. In addition, if the camera remains entirely 'inside' the protagonist, he or she 'disappears' (Lohmeier 197f.).⁹ Also, the distinction between experiencing self and narrating self – inherent in the first person narrative situation – is not given. The subjective camera may imitate an experiencing self, but never a narrating self, as Hurst points out (Hurst 96). If the narrative perspective is identical with a character's perspective, Lohmeier finds Stanzel's term "figural narrative situation" more fitting, since the camera takes the character's perspective (using point-of-view shots, including part of the character in the frame or not) but is not identical with it (Lohmeier 200ff.).¹⁰ When discussing perspective in the analytic section of this paper, however, Genette's terminology will be used to refer to a sequence's focaliser, since the application of Stanzel's model to film is problematic, and Genette's allows for more differentiation, also with regard to literature. It needs to be noted that even if a figural perspective dominates a sequence, there is usually a continual fluctuation between subjective and objective shots, which according to Jaireth is necessary since the "omniscient look [...] acts as a mediator or a referee who contextualises the seeings of the characters" (65).

This figural perspective is very limited, however, especially if one considers only the camera. As Kargl observes: "[D]ie Perspektive der Kamera [stellt] keine

⁸ Bordwell (1985: 62) in fact points out that as opposed to reading literature, "in watching films, we are seldom aware of being told something by an entity resembling a human being", and that one can usually not construct a narrator for a film with the same exactitude as one may assign attributes to a novel's narrator. Thus it seems more productive to speak of the narrational process itself (cf. *ibid.*).

⁹ The effect is an eerie one: we are forced to *assume the role of a character* we have no picture of. When reading fiction written in the first person, in contrast, there remains a distance, and to follow someone's verbal *account* of their thoughts and experiences is much more natural.

¹⁰ Bordwell and Thompson (2008) also compare the POV shot to the personal narrator in fiction, cf. p. 18 of this paper. Stanzel's model is quite obviously inapplicable to film for the simple reason that visual narration does not know personal pronouns like "I" versus "he/she".

Perspektive der Innerlichkeit, sondern lediglich eine Wahrnehmungsperspektive dar” (Kargl 241). If one includes other techniques, however, film is capable of illustrating a character’s thoughts and emotions. Voice-over narration, music and other sound (for instance nonsimultaneous sound from a character’s memory), close-ups of gestures and facial expressions, or sequences of symbolic content constitute examples that can be used to go beyond the mere representation of a character’s perception (cf. Kargl 242).

2 The Problem of Comparing Literature and Film

From the very beginnings of film in 1895, critical voices that had already worried about how photography had “encroached on traditional aesthetic terrains and disciplines, recuperating and presumably demeaning pictorial or dramatic subjects by adapting them as mechanical reproductions”, extended their anxiety to film (Corrigan 2007: 29). Very soon, however, it developed a close relationship to literature. To attract new audiences, it had to become a commonly comprehensible medium of fictional storytelling, thus approaching the role of literature and theatre (cf. Paech 1997: 86). This structural influence was accompanied by using literature as what Gast calls a “Stoffreservoir für Handlungsmuster” (Gast 193: 45). Only after 1910, when film strove to improve its image and reach out for educated circles, filmmakers began to draw on ‘high’ literature (ibid.), and influence in terms of structure and contents moved in both directions from early on, as André Bazin noted in his seminal essay, “Adaptation, or The Cinema as Digest” (2000 [1948]).

Discussions of cinematic adaptations of literature most commonly (and naturally) circle around the notions of the specificity of the different representational genres and the fidelity of the adaptation to its source text (cf. Corrigan 31). Accordingly, these aspects shall be given a closer examination in the following.

2.1 Fidelity

It is still the case that, when a work of literature is ‘turned into’ a film, almost inevitably discussions arise on whether or not the film is ‘faithful’ to the book, and whether or not it achieves the original’s quality – the film being rarely able to do justice to the book for most viewers. Even academic writing, as James Naremore observes, tends to be determined by a great respect for the literary text and often remains within the narrow range of binary oppositions such as literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, and original versus copy (2000: 2).

For Robert Stam, this preference of literature over film is due to the influence of cultural prejudices such as *seniority* (i.e. older arts are better arts), and *iconophobia* and *logophilia*, which are especially rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and Platonic philosophy (2000: 58).

Naremore traces this attitude back to the influence of Kantian aesthetics and Arnoldian ideas about society on the study of literature. To Matthew Arnold (as he argues in his 1869 work *Culture and Anarchy*), culture is synonymous with great works of art, which can have a civilising and humanising influence on society (cf. Naremore 2). By Kantian aesthetics, Naremore refers to the notion – emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century in Europe – that both the making and the appreciation of art are “specialized, autonomous, and transcendent activities having chiefly to do with media-specific form” (Naremore 2f.).

Albeit not dismissing these ideas entirely, Naremore argues to see them as “historically situated ideologies, generated largely in response to industrial capitalism and mechanical reproduction” (Naremore 3). They reached an extreme in modernism in the period immediately before and after World War II, when theorists like Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenberg enunciated the idea of “authentic” art in defence against the culture industries, which involved dissolving the content of a work of art so completely into its form that it “cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself” (Greenberg, qtd. in Naremore 3).

Against this ideological background, a film based on a work of literature must inevitably appear problematic, since the artistic form of the ‘original’ cannot be preserved in a different medium, which has its own possibilities and limitations in creating form. Interestingly, though, film was at the same time regarded by some as the quintessentially modernist medium, and modernist literature has been argued to be fundamentally “cinematic” in its form (cf. Naremore 5f.).¹¹ Techniques to that end include “experiments with focalization or point of view, a marked preference for ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’, and a tendency to organize the text in the form of a montage” (Naremore 15).

At any rate, an approach to studying film adaptation guided by the question of the film’s fidelity, and of what of the novel ‘is left’ in the filmic version seems not very productive. Of course, the question of what degree of fidelity or innovation the film seems to aim at, and the motivations for and effects of omissions and alterations of the novel’s material need to be considered. I argue, however, that a film needs to be analysed with regard to what it does *as a film*, and to how filmmakers borrow narratives and themes from literature in order to create whatever kind of film they are aiming for. In other words, a point of view that does not assume that the film ‘does something’ to the novel (which, after all, remains intact for anyone caring to read it), but rather looks at what the filmmakers created with a certain amount of the novel’s material, and how they did so. As André Bazin puts it: “The true aesthetic differentiations, in fact, are to be made not among the arts, but within genres themselves” (Bazin 2000: 26). To him, “it is possible to imagine that we are moving toward a reign of the adaptation in which the notion of the unity of the work of art, if not the very notion of the author himself, will be destroyed” (ibid.). He imagines a future viewpoint from which a novel and the play and film made from it will be considered as “a single work reflected through three art forms, an artistic pyramid with three sides, all equal in the eyes of the critic. The ‘work’ would then be only an ideal point at the top of this figure, which itself is an ideal construct” (ibid.).

¹¹ Naremore refers to Spiegel (1976) and Cohen (1979).

The stance Bazin takes, stressing the equal interest of each individual version of the ‘work’ is taken further in the approach Robert Stam proposes, namely to see adaptation as an “intertextual dialogism” (Stam 2000: 54), a stance favoured also by Cartmell and Whelehan (2007: 3). Based on Gérard Genette’s model of *transtextuality*, Stam points out that with regard to Genette’s subtype “intertextuality”, adaptation participates in a double one: one literary and the other cinematic (2000: 65). Genette’s category of “hypertextuality” especially applies to adaptation, since, as Stam argues, “Filmic adaptations, in this sense, are hypertexts derived from preexisting hypotexts that have been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization, and actualization” (ibid. 66).

The benefit of Stam’s approach is that it moves us away from the binary (and often derogatory) opposition of ‘original’ versus ‘copy’, because it places filmic adaptation in the larger context of a cultural dialogism, an “ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin” (Stam 66), in which it is naturally interwoven as “a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts” (Stam 67).

However, the relationship between source novel and film adaptation, their similarities and differences (which inevitably touch on the ‘fidelity principle’), are an intriguing field of study since they give us insight into the filmmakers’ reading of the novel, the conditions of film production, and the limitations and possibilities of the medium film in contrast to literature.

2.2 Specificity

If the notion of fidelity is this problematic, how to look at film adaptation then? An important aspect that has evolved in the comparison of literature and film adaptation (in relation to the increasing establishment of film studies and criticism as serious fields of scholarship and teaching) is the emphasis on each genre’s specificity.

In her handbook *Literature into Film*, Linda Constanzo Cahir, summing up a stance held by many scholars of film adaptation, argues to see films based on literature as “translations” rather than “adaptations”, since the term adaptation suggests moving an entity to a new environment and altering its structure or function to make it fit. A film version of a piece of literature, however, should be seen rather as a translation of an entity into another language, with the result of a “*materially different entity* – [...] one that simultaneously has a strong relationship with its original source, yet is fully independent from it” (Cahir 14, orig. italics). Seeing literature-based films in this way further is to understand that “every act of translation is simultaneously an act of interpretation”, and that “film translators of literature face the same challenges, dilemmas, interpretative choices, latitudes and responsibilities that any translator must face” (ibid.). Based on John Dryden’s categories of translations, she distinguishes three types of literature-based films (cf. ibid. 16): literal translation (plot and details as close as possible to the book), traditional translation (maintains overall traits but makes alterations when considered necessary and fitting), and radical translation (radically reshapes the book both as a means of interpretation and of creating a more fully independent film). This kind of approach is quite common, and several other authors on film adaptation use analogous distinctions between three degrees of transformation, for instance Klein and Parker (1981: 9f.), Kreuzer (1993), or Desmond and Hawkes (2006, who use the terms “close”, “loose”, and “intermediate” interpretation, cf. ibid. 3).

Irmela Schneider’s concept of adaptation also involves a kind of translatory process and is thus termed “Transformation”: “Transformation soll heißen, daß nicht nur die Inhaltsebene ins Bild übertragen wird, daß vielmehr die Form-Inhaltsbeziehung der Vorlage, ihr Zeichen- und Textsystem, ihr Sinn und ihre spezifische Wirkungsweise erfaßt werden und daß im anderen Medium, in der anderen Kunstart und der anderen Gattung aus einem anderen Zeichenmaterial ein neues, aber möglichst analoges Werk entsteht” (Schneider 293). She points out, however, that this constitutes only one form of using literary materials, and that others are not automatically inferior (ibid.).

On the basis of her approach to film adaptation as interpretative translation, Cahir points out the analogies to literature by comparing a frame with a word, a shot with a paragraph, and a shot sequence with a chapter (45ff.). The rhythm of a film is, according to her, created similarly as that of a book: longer shots and sequences result in a slower rhythm as do longer paragraphs with simple sentences (cf. 49).

A stance like hers is on the one hand productive in that it underlines the material difference between the two genres, attributes film its own unique ‘language’, and undermines the ‘fidelity principle’ by correctly highlighting the fundamentally interpretative nature of any form of adaptation. On the other hand, drawing too close an analogy may result in new pitfalls, since the ‘languages’ of literature and film are too complex and genre-specific as to allow a parallelization of terms and fully justify the metaphor of “translation”, since it stands to doubt whether the formal analogy between two actual languages on the one hand, and language and audiovisual representation on the other can be drawn to the same degree.

According to Kargl, this analogous comparison of language and film was quite common in the early days of film theory (2006: 24). Even though it has survived in several studies and handbooks, many theorists have expressed a different, if not opposite position. Christian Metz (1972: 160, qtd. in Kargl 24), for instance, refutes the stance taken by Cahir and many others in five points. Firstly, the number of possible frames is infinite, in contrast to the number of words in a language. Also, frames are invented by the filmmaker, whereas words already exist in the lexicon. Thirdly, the amount of information mediated by a frame is indeterminably large, and thus corresponds rather to a complex utterance of indeterminate length than to a word or even a sentence. Further, a frame is an actualised unit, whereas the word is a potential (lexical) unit; thus, the image of a house does not mean, “house”, but rather: “Here is a house”. Finally, a frame receives its meaning only in part through the paradigmatic opposition with other frames that could have been placed in the same position of a sequence (because their number is indeterminably large), whereas for the word this opposition plays a crucial role.

One of the most fundamental differences between literature and film is the different nature of their signs. Whereas since Saussure the verbal sign has been

determined by its arbitrariness, many authors agree that the image is an iconic sign motivated by the similarity between signifier and signified (cf. Kargl 2006: 26-33 for an overview of the theoretical discourse), which gives it a realistic, evidential quality. Bazin points out that this is even more the case with film because of its additional ability to display motion (qtd. in Turim 14). Also, “Film is always *happening* in the present tense” (McFarlane 2007: 21, orig. emphasis).¹² In addition, differences in length as well as in modes and context of reception and production need to be taken into consideration.

However, on the syntagmatic level, a comparison between the narrative structure of film and literature is possible, as Kargl (57) points out. Film also possesses a number of connotational features, such as relations of perception (near/far etc.) or those taken from other traditions, for instance symbols like rose = love (cf. *ibid.*).

But let us have a closer look at one of the central problems both in adapting a novel for the screen and in comparing the adaptation with the novel: that the verbal sign of the novel has a much higher degree of abstraction than its visual counterpart (Kargl 2006: 20). It is obvious that every detail that is seen or heard in a film is one of an indefinite number of possibilities. As a result, it represents *one* version of how one can imagine what is described by words in a novel. Furthermore, any *mise-en-scène*, if it wants to look natural, will have to show a great amount of details that are not even mentioned in the text, and those that are cannot possibly be described in such detail as to ‘dictate’ the one and only ‘faithful’ cinematisation (cf. Stam 2000: 55f). For example, Almásy’s copy of the *Histories* is not described in the novel as detailed as to give us an exact description of its size, colour, texture, number of notes and clippings inside it, the sound it makes when being opened and so forth, not to mention situational details as where it is placed in the setting and in the frame, how it is handled, how it is lighted, and many more.

Language can, on the other hand, describe nearly anything (even things that are absent from the setting of the action), and do so in a more complex and

¹² Roland Barthes and Christian Metz observe this as well (cf. Turim 15 and 17).

differentiated way than images (Poppe 2007: 54). The verbal imagery of a piece of literature can include countless details that are not in the literal sense ‘visual’ or ‘aural’ and can only be suggested, not presented in an audiovisual medium. How to present a scent in a film, to pick a simple example? Or how to present metaphors and comparisons?

In Ondaatje’s novel, the metaphoric linkage of “acacia and bone” (175) is used to describe Katharine’s disassembling remains. What verbal imagery suggests varies considerably between readers. Our imagination of such a passage is very complex. Do we see in our minds images of bones oscillating with those of branches? Do we recall the earlier mentioning of acacias and see in between the hybrid tree-skeleton images the image of “the lost oasis that was called Zerzura. The City of Acacias” (135)? This extreme example illustrates how difficult, if not impossible, a task it would be to transpose a single reader’s mental imagination of suggestive verbal signs into the concrete signs of cinematic image and sound, and even if a filmmaker attempted to do so, this would hardly go without the irritation of most spectators. Like Robert Stam says, “the very processes of filming – the fact that the shots have to be composed, lit, and edited in a certain way – generates an automatic difference” (Stam 2000: 56).

As mentioned above, a cinematic shot will always contain more details of *mise-en-scène* than are described in a corresponding literary passage, no matter how detailed the description in the text may be. On the one hand, this fact offers the medium of film the opportunity of conveying several aspects simultaneously. On the other hand, the problem arises of how to distinguish meaningful elements (say symbolic objects in a room) from those that just happen to be there and merely have the function of helping to create an authentic setting. In literature, the fact that something is explicitly mentioned (whereas something else is not) already opens the possibility that it is significant.

Ulrike Schwab also stresses the polyvalence of the text, which renders the concept of fidelity inapplicable to its adaptation (2006: 13 and 26). She also underlines the different modes of reception that apply to film and literature respectively. Research generally poses ‘identification’ and ‘empathy’ as crucial

elements in the reception of both literary text and narrative film (cf. Schwab 11). However similarly film and literature may work structurally, however, Schwab points out an important difference: “Polarisierend formuliert besteht die Charakteristik des *Textverstehens* vorwiegend in einer kognitiven Tätigkeit, die Reflexion und Selbstreflexion einschließt, die Charakteristik des *Filmerlebens* vorwiegend in einem emotionalen Beteiligtsein, das bisensual induziert wird und sich echtzeitbezogen vollzieht” (Schwab 25, orig. emphasis). Thus, scholars of the hermeneutics place great importance on the cognitive activity and constructivity of the reading subject, who brings together the material features of the text with his or her knowledge, experience, expectations and attitudes (cf. Schwab 12, with reference to Groeben 1982: 78ff.).

Of course, emotional involvement is also part of the reading process. However, it is inherent in the nature of text that it is a sign system which implicates a more extensive ‘translation process’, and thus indirect experience, than does film, whose audiovisuality strongly resembles our usual way of experiencing the world, which gives the watching of a film a greater notion of immediacy, as Kargl has also pointed out (Kargl 246). As a result, filmic signs that go beyond the mere plot may easily go unnoticed as such by the moviegoer. They are just there, but we are not explicitly (i.e. verbally) pointed to them, and their multitude is “more than any viewer could mentally specify” (Chatman 1990: 39). Chatman thus attests film a “visual ‘over-specification’” which it shares with the other visual arts but in film occurs in combination with the pressure from the narrative component (ibid. 122): a cinema audience cannot adapt the pace of watching to their pace of observing and understanding, nor can they go back to a previous sequence as one may reread a paragraph in a book.¹³ These facts make it harder for the viewer to notice elements that are supposed to be significant and may make it necessary to use additional strategies (e.g. close-up) to point them out.

¹³ As Bordwell points out, a filmmaker who presents story events out of chronological order thus “risks forcing the spectator to choose between reconstruction story order and losing track of current action. This is probably why most films avoid temporal reshufflings. But we have seen in recent decades that films with complex time patterns can supply audiences with new schemata or encourage them to see the film more than once” (1985: 33).

Although filmic description happens simultaneously with narration, it is important to note that film does have the means (e.g. lighting or cinematography) to both highlight significant elements of the setting or to reduce it to the mere background against which events take place (Poppe 2007: 74).

We may conclude for now that the ‘fidelity principle’ as a sole angle of comparison is not helpful in studying the relationship between a novel and the film adaptation based on it, nor is it applicable due to the specificity of each genres modes of representation, production, and reception. Ambitious film, even if it may oftentimes be more immediately experienced than high literature, and confronts its audience with a much larger amount of information in the same instance, actually for this very reason asks of the critical viewer a high degree of attention. How this fact should be evaluated depends on individual taste, and a discussion of film adaptation should be careful to judge in terms of ‘fidelity’, and rather place differences that arise in comparison in the context of the medium’s specificity.

However, film adaptations do often aim at, if not faithfully reproducing, translating or transposing a text’s narrative and/or thematic ‘essence’, preserving as much as possible of the literary source. The cinematic strategies used to that end form an interesting aspect of analysis, and the core of the following discussion of the two versions of *The English Patient* shall be to look at the choices that were made in the adaptation of preserving, omitting, or altering, the cinematic techniques that were used to do so, and the overall effect resulting from this process.

IV Analysis

1 Narrative Structure

Memory plays a central role in both the novel and the film of *The English Patient*. Related to this aspect is the complex structure of the novel that involves flashbacks into the pasts of the different characters, often even blurring the

boundaries between past and present. It is not surprising that a complexity of this kind could by no means be fully preserved in a film adaptation. However, as this aspect is so central to the novel in terms of structure and content, it is necessary to have a closer look at how the filmmakers solved this difficult task, what they chose to omit, alter, or ‘translate’.

1.1 Framing

Even a look the framing of novel and film respectively gives us an idea of the respective thematic focus and the different role and function of memory in the two versions. The novel is framed by the plot-line that involves Hana and Kip in Tuscany (and later). This diegetic level is thus established as the standpoint in time and space from which we enter the story, as a frame into which the fragments of the Patient’s and the others’ pasts are embedded in the form of analepses as its background (hi)story.

At the opening of the novel, Ondaatje has us enter the story by having Hana enter the house, into the English patient’s room. Just like the young nurse we are, just at the end of the second paragraph, dragged “into that well of memory [the Patient] kept plunging into during those months before he died” (4). The third introduces us to the Patient’s indulgence in the past by opening thus: “There are stories the man recites quietly into the room which slip from level to level like a hawk. [...] He remembers [...]” (4). In this passage, we find memory and storytelling closely linked. It is notable that for what we know now to be his personal memories, at first the term “stories” is used, and for their telling the verb “recites”, as though he were reciting a literary text. This specific choice of words points to the constructive nature of the process of remembering as it is presented in the novel, most explicitly when Almásy at a later point speaks of invented memories: “When we meet those we fall in love with, there is an aspect of our spirit that is historian, a bit of a pedant, who *imagines or remembers* a meeting when the other had passed by innocently [...]” (259, my

emphasis). To imagine and to remember seem, in this context, to be nearly equivalent mental processes, and they certainly are in their psychological function to establish or heighten meaning by rooting a present emotion in the past.¹⁴ The quote also draws a link between personal memory and history/historiography, commenting on their similar nature: As Barbour notes, the verb ‘imagine’ “puts all memory in the novel in question, not to mention all historical documentation” (Barbour 209).

The novel’s last chapter is, on the same diegetic level, introduced by Kip’s leaving the villa. Then the tense switches to the narrative present when passages alternate between the main characters as focalisers. The very last section, however, describing Hana’s and Kip’s situation several years after returning to their home countries, starts with “Now” (299), and what we perceived as the *extradiegetic*-heterodiegetic narrator (subsequently termed “Narrator” with a capital “N” to distinguish him from the other narrators, cf. Haswell & Edwards) suddenly introduces himself as a person, a writer: “She is a woman I don’t know well enough to hold under my wing, if writers have wings, to harbour for the rest of my life” (301). This gives a sense of reality to the characters because they are now presented as belonging to the same world as this newly revealed Narrator figure: Hana seems to be a personal acquaintance of his, whose story he has now finished telling. Ondaatje thus plays one last time with the distinction between historical reality and fiction. The switch to a first person narrative situation also adds another diegetic and temporal level to this intricate novel, the ‘present’ of the Narrator and Hana and Kip fourteen years after the Villa Girolamo. Thus, the act of storytelling, as a central theme of the novel, is underlined by this metalepsis, pointing out that the novel itself constitutes a story told.¹⁵

Haswell and Edwards argue that by maintaining the oral quality of the characters’ stories and seeking a relationship with his readers by making his presence

¹⁴ With reference to Daniel L. Schacter’s psychological study, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (1996), Nünning et al. (2006: 2) point out this shared function of memory and narrative.

¹⁵ The Narrator is in fact not completely ‘invisible’ before he makes himself known, which is most obvious in metafictional phrases like “One of the two older men in this story” (253), or: “her body full of stories and situations. Caravaggio has for instance given her something. His motive, a drama, and a stolen image” (36).

known, the Narrator seems “more like a *storyteller in the oral tradition*” (123, original emphasis).¹⁶ In addition, the switch to a level that represents the ‘time of writing’ also serves as a transition gradually leading us out of the narration, like the beginning had us enter it.

The film’s framing, however, presents itself quite differently. Contrary to the novel, a sequence from the hypo-diegetic level, the Almásy-Katherine story, opens and closes the film.¹⁷ Consequently, even the framing shows its focus on the tragic love story. This alters the story’s function as a memory: Even though it is gradually evolved in flashbacks during the film as well, by the point Hana and her Patient arrive in Tuscany, we already know how the Patient received his burns and that a woman is involved in his story. As a consequence, the novel’s idea of memory as something that needs to be recovered or “excavate[d]” (44) is in the film subdued in favour of a nostalgic sense of memory’s actual presence and importance over the ‘present’ in the Italian villa.¹⁸

The novel closes, in a way, in the ‘future’ (if one takes the Tuscany plot-line as a point of reference), i.e. years after the war, when the Patient has died, all have left the villa and the next generation, Kip’s children, have been born. It thus moves ahead, like Kip does on his motorbike in the last chapter. The film, on the other hand, has a double ending. One closes where it began, with Almásy and Katherine flying over the desert, a nostalgic look into the past. As Sadashige observes, this closure “brings the play of images full circle, lending the film a sense of visual balance and

¹⁶ The exchange of stories between the characters underscores this emphasis of the tradition of oral storytelling and recalls such intertexts as Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* (cf. Morgan 160) and *Arabian Nights*. In one scene, particularly, a storytelling situation is emphasised by pointing out its double nature: When the Patient tells the last passages of his story to Caravaggio, suddenly switching to the third person to refer to himself, Caravaggio asks the question the readers ask themselves: “Who is he speaking as now?” (244). Thus he takes on the role not only of the oral storyteller’s audience but also of us, the readers of the novel.

¹⁷ To be precise, the film has a double ending, which will be discussed later.

¹⁸ The film does use, however, cinematic means to establish the flashback narrative as a memory: The bright colours, whose effect is heightened by the strong contrast between the yellow/orange of the sand and the complementary blue of the sky, in connection with soft-focus give the opening sequence (and the following sequences of the memory narrative) an intense and somewhat unreal air that stands in strong contrast to the following sequence in the dark hospital train, a contrast that is supported by the transitional black screen. Also, there is only diegetic sound in the train scene, rendering it very realistic in contrast with the dreamy flying scene. Thus, the two sequences are clearly marked as belonging to different times and worlds, to memory and present.

narrative wholeness”, in contrast with the novel (Sadashige 248). He also states that it reassures us that the Patient is indeed Almásy, since the sequence is clearly marked as a memory of his. At this point, however, this hardly needs clarification, but it is true that the repeated opening sequence and the inclusion of the Patient’s death, which is not chronicled in the novel (cf. Sadashige 247-48) give a narrative closure to the film that Ondaatje purposely avoided. The novel, on the other hand, in its fragmentary narrative form makes a point of underlining the fragmentary nature of all memory and all attempts to record the past.¹⁹

The introduction of Almásy’s assisted suicide further implies, as Sadashige notes, “that only certain kinds of stories constitute a life, for he chooses to die once he has finished the account of his affair” (Sadashige 248). Romantic love is thus presented as an experience of paramount importance. By finishing with the vision of Almásy and Katharine flying alone, high above the desert, the film makes it clear that it is “the story of a love that knows no bounds” (official film home page [now out of service], qtd. in Sadashige 248). It suggests (even more so through the factual nature inherent in the visual image) that in a deeper sense of reality, the lovers have overcome all that destroyed their lives.

In contrast, the last passage of the Patient’s narration in the novel can be better described in terms of an unfulfilled longing, a mere poetic fantasy: “All I *desired* was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps. I carried Katharine Clifton into the desert, where there is the communal book of moonlight. We were among the rumour of wells. In the palace of winds” (261, my emphasis). He is not, at the end, reunited with his lover in any way; rather is his complete loss emphasised when to Caravaggio’s question, “Can I get you something?” he replies: “Nothing” (261; his last word).

Moreover, the novel finishes with Hana and Kip who, in spite of their spiritual connection (as indicated by him catching a fork just when Hana has dropped a glass [302]), cannot be together because the news of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

¹⁹ As Hilger notes, the novel’s “formal fragmentation [also] parallels the reality that the characters have to face” at the close of war, as is indicated in the title of the second chapter, “In Near Ruins” (Hilger 38).

have led Kip to turn his back on the West, because their different cultural backgrounds and the physical distance of their continents lie between them.

In the film, however, the bombs and thus the confrontation are omitted. The relationship ends because Kip cannot handle Hardy's death, and his and Hana's reference to 'their' church hints at the possibility that they may meet again. Furthermore, Hana, who is in the novel described as unhappy back in Canada, looks with hope at the sun behind the cypress trees in the last sequence – the 'second ending' of the film.

Regarding the framing of novel and film, the most striking difference we found is certainly the presence of a heterodiegetic narrator figure in the novel, which produces an emphasis on the theme of storytelling that is difficult for film to replicate. Another crucial difference is that in contrast to the novel, the memory narrative, namely the flying scene, was chosen to frame the film, which highlights its emphasis on the tragic love story (suggesting a reunion in death) and its indulgence in the exotic beauty of the desert landscape at the expense of the problematic issues concerning Kip and his relationship with Hana.

1.2 Memory and Narrative Structure

Aside from the framing, the major difference between novel and film with regard to the narrative structure is the film's chronological order of flashbacks (except the frame sequences), as opposed to the discontinuous, circular structure of the Patient's memory passages in the novel. This complex structure of the novel is part of its mimesis of memory, which does not adhere to the linear order of events: "Each swallow of morphine by the body opens a further door, or he leaps back to the cave paintings or to a buried plane or lingers once more with the woman beside him under a fan, her cheek against his stomach" (247). The fragmentary and nonlinear structure of the Patient's narration furthermore underlines a profound paradox, as Haswell and

Edwards observe: he “tells his stories not to reveal his identity but to understand it” (129).

The reordering of the memory narrative for the cinematic version may have been motivated by the fact that for a film audience, the lack of time to reorder events in their own minds (what Chatman [1990: 122] calls “the pressure from the narrative component”; cf. p. 32 of this paper) would make the viewing of a non-chronological film extremely difficult and exhausting. Ultimately, this is also an economical decision and indicates that the filmmakers wished to secure a mainstream audience that might be put off by a film structured in a similar fashion as the novel. In the end, it is possible to create very intriguing films featuring a non-linear structure, as examples like *Memento* and *Abre los Ojos* (and its Hollywood version *Vanilla Sky*) have proven.

However, the film makes use of several cross-references throughout that connect individual sequences, thus slightly qualifying its narrative linearity. These references consist in aural and visual elements that appear in distinct sequences. They contribute to creating what one could term the film’s concept of memory, its mimesis of the memory process.

In the opening sequence, before the theme song begins, the first sound we hear, accompanying the image of what we later recognize as a sheet of drawing paper is the tinkling of the Bedouin doctor’s glass containers. The doctor, however, does not appear until a later scene. Thus, the spectator’s own memory becomes involved in the viewing process when the man with his yoke of medicines appears and we realise that what we perceived as non-diegetic sound, possibly some musical element, in the opening sequence, is actually the diegetic sound of a sequence from much later in the story. Thus, nonsimultaneous sound (cf. p. 21 of this paper) serves to blur the boundaries between different points in time. One could also argue that the presence of the glass bottles’ sound during the plane sequence identifies it as the memory of the burnt man as he actually hears it when being cared for by the Bedouin.

The drawing of the swimmer belongs to yet another point in time of the story: It takes place long *before* the flight, when Katharine draws the swimmers in the newly discovered cave. And one could also argue that the swimmer himself points

even further back in time to the prehistoric “water people” of the desert. The drawing scene is significant for the narrative development, since the discovery of the cave is a shared experience that brings Almásy and Katherine closer to each other, and her offer of the drawings to him is a signal of her attraction. But again it is only in that scene that we can locate the position and role of the drawing in the opening sequence in the narrative of the film, as we remember its connection with the plane crash. Consequently, when we later watch Katherine make the drawing, as a result of the prolepsis it gains a foreshadowing function because it reminds us of the plane crash that we know will happen since we have already seen it.

Another example is the mysterious harp music heard for the first time in the healing sequence, imitating the tinkling of the medicine bottles. It reappears in the scene after the sandstorm, when Almásy shoots off the flare pistol (just before he admits that “K” in his notes indeed stands for Katharine), and, together with the tinkling sound and the theme song, when the exploration team looks at the paintings in the Cave of Swimmers, the figures lit by the shifting spots of the flashlights. As a result, these sound motifs establish a link between key scenes in the love story between Almásy and Katharine.

This combining of elements from different points in time mirrors the typical characteristic of memory to jump back and forth in time with no regard to the temporal sequence of events, as we have observed in the novel. The spectators experience the memory process themselves, as auditory (the tinkling of glassware) or visual triggers (the drawing) conjure up pieces of information they have received before, and which they interpret with regard to their temporal and causal location in the story and to their meaning for the narrative, just as the Patient’s memory process involves establishing order and meaningful relations between past events. Since this device of nonsimultaneity happens only on the level of motifs, not narrative structure, the sense of nonlinearity is much weaker and less discernible than in the novel, although it is a skilful technique if a linear structure is considered necessary.

1.3 Connections between the Diegetic Levels

The film follows the novel in drawing connections between the diegetic levels in order to point out the relevance of the past for the present, the similarities between different times, places, and cultures.

In the novel, flashbacks are usually not directly linked to the frame narrative by means of triggers, i.e. objects, sounds, etc. that remind the remembering character of a certain event. However, it draws several connections between the diegetic levels by means of constellations and imagery. Some of these will be pointed out in the following chapters, for instance the motifs of wells/fountains, lack of demarcation, conflicts and similarities between cultures, or character constellation. The film includes some of these as well, but it also frequently employs elements of the Tuscany setting as memory triggers to introduce a new memory sequence, e.g. by means of dissolves with graphic matches and sound bridges. It often uses similar transitions to return to the frame narrative.

The first memory the Patient has in the villa, for instance, is introduced by a sequence beginning with a close-up of the *Herodotus* on the nightstand, a bulged and battered copy suggesting past adventures it has been taken on. When the Patient at last manages to open it (his struggle underlining both his deplorable physical state and the pain associated with the memories contained in it), we see a great many slips of paper, clippings, pictures and so on that have been collected between the pages. They all spill out when the book falls to the ground, indicating that the past they represent comes back to him, and subsequently a cut takes us to the desert. This memory sequence ends with the two planes flying over the hills of the Gilf Kebir region, whose hills dissolve into the folds of the Patient's sheets.

Another example of how elements of the present function to conjure up the past is when the sound of Hana playing hopscotch in the yard takes the Patient back to the desert: the thumping of her feet is gradually replaced by the sound of drums, and this forestalling is finally resolved with a cut to a spontaneous party at the base

camp, where the group are playing Spin the Bottle and the Bedouin accompany the singing with their drums.

The following sequence is even more explicit in its representation of the triggering of memory. The *Herodotus* serves as a link and trigger once again, as Hana begins to read the story of Gyges and Candaules to her patient. Significantly, she misreads “says Candaules” and corrects herself, “said Candaules”; an indication that this story is in its essence timeless, and that the present of Hana’s reading is analogous to a reading of the same story years before, the memory of which it conjures up in the Patient’s mind. Image and sound cut to Katharine reading the next bit of the story in the camp, back to Hana, and to the desert again. Thus, not only is the Patient’s process of remembering imitated. At the same time, the two women and thus the two narrative levels are paralleled. Just as Katharine’s reading stands at the beginning of her love story, Hana’s reading implies that a love story of her own will develop later on.²⁰

In the novel, the episode of Katharine reading out the Gyges-Candaules story appears much later (Chapter IX) and is not presented as the Patient’s memory triggered by Hana’s reading but is part of a longer passage in which he tells Caravaggio about his past with Katharine. This alteration in the film version will in part be due to the fact that the Egypt narrative was rearranged in chronological order in the film. As a result, it appears at a stage where Caravaggio has not even arrived at the villa yet. To solve this problem in the way described above is an effective solution as it opens for the film another opportunity of picking up on the themes of memory and the universality of human experience.

In the novel, the relationship between past and present is a complex one, since it is, as Amy Novak observes, “not solely one of causality, nor is the past finished and left behind” (Novak 208). To underline this, she quotes the passage where the burnt man identifies guns for the Bedouin, the memory of which becomes associated with an even older one from his childhood, when his aunt

²⁰ Hana’s affair with Kip may not begin with her reading of the story from Herodotus – which would not make sense as theirs is not a story of betrayal –, but it begins with her playing the piano, an analogous act if one considers music a form of narrative.

taught him the game of Pelmanism. Each player allowed to turn up two cards and, eventually, through memory pairing them off. This had been in another landscape, of trout streams, birdcalls that he could recognize from a halting fragment. A fully named world. Now, [...] he picked up a shell and moved with his carriers, guiding them towards a gun, inserted the bullet, bolted it, and holding it up in the air fired. (20f.)

As Novak observes, “past and present bleed into one another, and meaning comes only through a sliding and shifting play of signification, which threatens to destabilize it.” This understanding of memory therefore does not see memory as a full embodiment of the past but as a construct that is shaped by the present (Novak 209). This blurring of boundaries between memory and present²¹ might have been represented in the film by use of superimpositions and/or voice-over which would, however, have destroyed the clarity and linearity its makers decided on. To avoid this, they had to fall back on dialogue to at least hint at the immediate presence his memories have for the Patient. Thus, he once says to Hana (who wants to move the bed so he can see the view): “I can already see. [...] I can see all the way to the desert. Before the war. Making maps.” He also imagines having sand in his eyes and ears²² and being able to see his “wife in this view” (Screenplay [SP] 27).

One needs to note, however, that the sound editing often links sequences not only within the memory narrative but crosses the boundaries between the diegetic levels. Examples include Hana’s improvised scarecrow which in looks and sound resembles the Bedouin doctor’s yoke of medicine bottles (Thomas 225; cf. also p. 73f. of this paper). Another one is the scene where Clifton leaves the base camp. Almásy asks him whether he considers it appropriate to leave his wife behind and Clifton replies, “Why are you men so threatened by a woman?” When the camera cuts back on Almásy, we hear a few single piano notes that create tension and underline the hidden implications of this conversation, namely Almásy’s bad conscience and discomfort about now being around the woman he loves, without her husband near. As the image gradually dissolves to Hana playing the piano in the

²¹ Cf. also the passage on pp. 174f., discussed further on p. 50 of this paper.

²² These words not only express a memory of the desert but form a direct reference to a memory scene later in the film, when Katharine washes the sand out of Almásy’s ears.

library of the Tuscany villa, we realise the notes are not just musical score but belong to the other diegetic level. This acoustic connection of the two scenes highlights their thematic similarity. Just as the desert scene marks a change in situation that opens the possibility of a love story to begin, the same is the case in the Tuscany scene: Hana's piano playing 'summons' Kip, who is to become her lover.²³ When Hana leaves the monastery in the very last sequence, her piano theme merges with the woman's singing from the opening sequence, indicating that the one story has come to a close and is now contained in the other, since Hana is taking the Patient's story with her (quite literally in the form of his book).

In line with its chronological narrative strategy, the film generally uses more direct or 'chronological' connections – like a 'trigger' followed by the respective memory – between the diegetic levels to make them easier to notice by the audience. Additionally, it employs the options offered by sound editing to draw connections parallel to the depiction of events, without interrupting narrative flow and linearity.

2 The Body as a Site of Memory and Identity

As early as in the second and third paragraphs of the novel, we notice the body's function as a carrier and trigger of memory. In the second, the description of the Patient's "black body" (3) induces speculations about a story that must have preceded this terrible state. In the third, he "remembers [...] a woman who kissed parts of his body that now are burned into the colour of aubergine" (4). Katharine is again mentioned only far into Chapter III as "the woman who bit into his flesh" (96). Thus, again, the memory of her is in a way 'located' on his body. It is striking that her name is still not mentioned at this point. On the one hand, the way Almásy's and

²³ This fact is humorously underlined, as in the novel, when Hana later tells the Patient that she will probably marry Kip because her mother always said she would some day summon her future husband with her piano playing. The piano notes are also paralleled with the sound of Caravaggio tapping against the syringe of morphine in the English patient's room, which scene is cross-cut into the library episode, thus connecting the two scenes to a third one, creating a link between all of the main characters.

Katherine's love story is thus only gradually 'excavated' in the novel underlines its being a *memory*, something buried by time and later events.²⁴ On the other hand, the passage where Katharine's name is first mentioned is rendered more significant for this very fact, as she is 'named' exactly at the point of the narrative where she gains importance for Almásy.²⁵

However, the absence of Katharine's name in the first memories of the Patient may also be due to the novel's negative connotation of names and naming as a means of appropriation and a symbol of nationality,²⁶ which carries in its core the potential for war and oppression. In line with this idea, the body comes to stand for the opposite, for a natural realm that does not know the politics of civilisation, and is marked by universal experiences. This notion is expressed when Almásy 'embalms' the injured Katharine in the Cave of Swimmers: "He looked up to the one cave painting and stole the colours from it. The ochre went into her face, he daubed blue around her eyes [...]" (248). And again when he, upon his return three years later, finds her "covered in bright pigment. Herbs and stones and light and the ash of acacia to make her eternal. The body pressed against sacred colour" (260f.). Thus, her body is marked both by her lover and by nature. The memories one has collected by the end of one's life are described not in abstract terms of experience or knowledge but in physical images: "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, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears we have hidden in as if caves" (261). This predominantly natural imagery ("rivers", "trees", "caves") is explicitly placed as

²⁴ The image of buried objects is used in the novel in several instances, for example the „buried guns” (20) Almásy is shown by the Bedouin, the „buried rooms” (22) of hidden desert towns, and Madox's „buried plane” (168). The archaeological image of excavation to describe memory is used in Caravaggio's thoughts when he watches Hana crying at the kitchen table: "The deepest sorrow. [...] Where the only way to survive is to excavate everything" (44).

²⁵ This passage appears only in Chapter IV. The Clifton's have just arrived at the base camp and Katharine recites from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It is significant that this passage coincides with the first mention of her name, since the Patient marks this episode as the beginning of their love story, the moment he "fell in love with a voice" (144).

²⁶ For instance with regard to discovery and colonialism. Compare the following quotes: "Look at a map of the Libyan Desert and you will see names" (136); "Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert. Still some wanted their mark there" (139); "We become vain with the names we own, our claims to have been the first eyes, the strongest army, the cleverest merchant" (141f.); and the fact that Almásy's name identifies him for the British as someone with the 'wrong' nationality (250f.).

an ideal in opposition to politics and colonialism: “I believe in such cartography – to be marked by *nature*, not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings” (261, my emphasis). In the context of this natural ideal, the body is presented as the place where memory should be marked (“I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead” [ibid.]). This marking renders ‘us’ “communal histories, communal books” (ibid.), the “communal” aspect being further emphasised by the frequent use of the personal pronoun “we” throughout this passage. Thus, the body appears not only as a site of personal memory.²⁷ It also serves as a site and symbol of ‘universal’, natural experiences shared by all humankind.

The motif of the body as site of memory is realised in the film as well, by the medium’s own means, so for instance in the sequence corresponding to the novel’s passage discussed above, when Almásy returns to the cave. Here, Katharine has not been marked or ‘embalmed’ by the natural substances in the cave. Instead, her face is painted by her lover with saffron from the thimble he once gave her. This alteration firstly serves to direct the spectator’s attention to the marking.²⁸ Secondly, it serves to emphasise and illustrate the (abbreviated and slightly altered) passage from the novel (here presented as Katharine’s last words, written into the *Histories*), namely the lines, “I want all this marked on my body. We are the real countries, not the boundaries drawn on maps”. The notion of being marked by *nature* is lost through this alteration in the film version, in favour of a strengthening of the idea that the memories of one’s life and the people who touched it should be contained in and marked on one’s body: The saffron from the thimble is a memory token from the time of their love affair in Cairo, and her lover’s gentle gesture of embalmment is a last reminiscent act of the physical intimacy they shared.

²⁷ Note in this context the violent physicality of their love affair, often described with animal imagery, e.g. “They were bent over like animals” (149); “She always had the desire to slap him, and she realized even that was sexual” (150); the bite marks Katharine inflicts on Almásy, resembling those of a fox (153) or a scorpion (154).

²⁸ As was pointed out on p. 32, significant details, in order not to ‘disappear’ in the load of audiovisual information, may need to be pointed out by camera or editing technique (e.g. zoom, close-up) or the action in the frame.

The body serves as a site of memory also in terms of war. Besides the Patient's burns, Caravaggio's missing thumbs are probably the most prominent example. They are markers of past events and thus capable of triggering memories. In the film, this aspect is given credit as they introduce a memory sequence of Caravaggio's. When he is alone with the Patient, for an answer to the latter's question, "what is under your mittens", Caravaggio starts taking them off. Before we see what is under them, the image dissolves into what Caravaggio would now be telling the Patient, the events that led to the chopping-off of his thumbs. Thus – besides being the physical representation of Caravaggio's trauma –, as a kind of 'war-wound', the crippled hands carry historical 'memories' like practices of espionage and punishment in World War II. At the same time, they function as a site of guilt, since it is Almásy's involvement in the events that made Caravaggio (in the film adaptation) follow him to the villa in Tuscany.

In the novel, when Caravaggio is first mentioned he is referred to as "The man with bandaged hands" (27), just like the Patient is at first introduced in terms of his "black body" (3). This identification of the persons with their crippled bodies (marking at the same time their psychological traumata) serves to highlight how the damage inflicted on them by the war has marred their entire identity.²⁹ With regard to the Patient, this goes so far as to erase any visible sign of identity (which is, of course, also the case in the film). One could even argue that, as a living corpse, his identity is made up entirely of his memories. His process of remembering, gradually adding missing pieces to make up a narrative, thus corresponds to a (re)construction of his identity. The representation of the Patient's memory process thus serves as a psychological reflection on the workings of memory in general. The way it is intertwined with the question of the patient's identity is supported by theories on memory, as it is widely agreed that one of the psychological functions of memory is to construct a "continuity of personality" (Lange 62, my translation), to create an

²⁹ It is striking that the injuries of both men are not the 'usual' war wounds received in battle but are in other ways caused by the political situation in the Second World War. This underlines the fact that their stories represent counter-narratives, individual fates that are left outside the larger historiographic discourse, which focuses on major events and the fates of larger groups of people.

identity and establish meaning and coherence in one's life (cf. also Erll et al. iii and Aichinger 185). Readers of the novel inevitably go through a parallel process. Just as they have to piece together (map and chart) the Patient's story fragments, they have to do the same with his elusive identity (cf. Tötösy 124). In the film, the mere fact that both the Patient and his remembered self Almásy appear physically (in addition to narrative linearity and the early identification of the 'two' characters) destroys much of this elusiveness.

To conclude this point, the film naturally cannot preserve the novel's complexity of this aspect. In what remains, the role of the body motif in placing the story in the context of human history is reduced in favour of stressing the eternal love between Almásy and Katharine. Caravaggio's missing thumbs, in contrast, explicitly figure as enigmatic makers of personal experience and historical context. The Patient's body is due to the visual unambiguousness of film as fixed as his remembered self Almásy.

3 Point of View/Perspective

Another central aspect that characterises the novel narratologically is its inclusion of several perspectives. Its complexity can obviously not be 'literally translated' into the film. Nonetheless, perspective and point of view constitute an important element in the adaptation as well. Thus, this aspect shall at first be outlined with regard to the novel and then compared to the film's strategies.

At the beginning of the novel, Hana is the focaliser of the third person narrative, and is again in many passages of the Tuscany plot-line. When the Patient's account of his story sets in, he is introduced as the focaliser of another main narrative. However, his point of view is rather problematic. The lack of inverted commas and inquit formulae introducing the flashbacks makes it often difficult to identify them as memory or figural speech. The first fragment (4-5) is in the first person and clearly marked as told to Hana. The second (6), however, is already more problematic, since

it is told in the third person. Perspective remains restricted to the flashback's protagonist since the "he" is the focaliser (which holds true for the other flashbacks as well), and since the content of the passage continues the first, the reader knows it refers to the Patient. The passage is introduced by the sentence, "Sometimes at two a.m. he is not yet asleep, his eyes open in the darkness" (5). This indicates that the flashback is not filled-in information added by the heterodiegetic narrator but represents what the Patient remembers that very moment. However, it is not clear whether he just remembers it or tells it to Hana, who is lying beside him (cf. 5).

A similar instance is the flashback on pages 18 to 23. The first section is in the first person and told by the Patient to Hana ("He begins to talk across the darkness" [17]). Then suddenly a new paragraph continues the account of his time with the Bedouin in the third person (19), with no indication that he has finished talking. In both cases, the question remains why the second section is not in the first person, like the earlier one, but in the third. One possibility is to consider the first person passages as figural speech and the third person passages as accounts of the Patient's thoughts. At any rate, the effect is a sense of distance between the narrating/remembering character and his narrated/remembered self³⁰ that inevitably raises questions about identity. Does the Patient remember who he is? Is he trying to distance himself from his painful memories by remembering/telling them as though they were not his? This latter aspect is in fact pointed out in the novel. In the passage describing Almásy's mental state after the separation from Katharine, he writes down "all her arguments against him. Glued into the book – giving himself only the voice of the watcher, the listener, the 'he'" (172).

Another example (169-175) seems to represent an account the Patient gives to Hana and Caravaggio (it is preceded by a conversation with Hana and intermitted

³⁰ Thomas points out that at the same time, "as the boundaries between first and third person appear to collapse, or at least become blurred, there is a sense in which we are drawn into their mental worlds, however confused or unstable these worlds might be" (218).

The sense of distance between remembering and remembered self creates the illusion that they are two distinct characters, "he" or Almásy and the Patient. In the film, the POV dissolves identify them more clearly, but the striking visual contrast between them creates a similar effect. Both cases emphasise the distinction of time levels and thus contribute to the thematic system of ageing, the passing of time, and history.

twice, by a question and by his taking a morphine tablet from Caravaggio). Nonetheless, it alternates between first person and third person passages. This example indicates another function of the switch to the third person in a hypodiegetic passage, namely to blur the boundaries between past and present, which is facilitated if the memory and the frame narrative represent the same kind of narrative situation: After a passage narrated by the Patient in the first person and in past tense, “The voice stops. The burned man looks straight ahead in his morphine focus. The plane is now in his eye. The slow voice carries it with effort above the earth [...]. He looks down and sees oil pouring onto his knees. [...] How high is he above the ground? How low is he in the sky?” (174-75). Further underlined by the switch to narrative present, in this passage, the remembered experience is moved to the same temporal level as the moment of remembering, the past has become part of the present. On the one hand, this underlines the Patient’s psychological state and emotional involvement (which are in this passage amplified by the morphine). But this blurring between time levels is also part of a theme, namely the close connection between past and present.

Very late in the novel, we get an indication that the third person flashbacks could indeed represent direct speech by the Patient, that he “can slip into a new position in his discourse” (Penner 82), and that his use of the third person is meant to show that to him his life is over. At least this is the case here: in a narrative passage told to Caravaggio in the first person, he suddenly speaks of Almásy, switching to the third person, making Caravaggio wonder: “*Who is he speaking as now?*” (244, orig. italics). Later, the latter “is still amazed at the clarity of discipline in the man, who speaks sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third person, who still does not admit that he is Almásy”. He asks him, “Who was talking, back then?” and the Patient replies, ““*Death means you are in the third person*”” (247, orig. italics).

The effect of distance in the third-person memory passages may also remind the reader of flashbacks in film (and one may speculate about how much his interest in film has influenced Ondaatje’s writing [cf. p. 8f.]), which, as we have discussed earlier (cf. p. 23 of this paper), is incapable of creating anything comparable to first person narration but may only produce a ‘figural narrative situation’ by employing subjective techniques.

Accordingly, in the film version of *The English Patient*, the question of perspective in the memory sequences is far less complex. As has been noted in the chapter “Memory and Narrative Structure”, the memory sequences are all in one way or another motivated by triggers in the ‘present’ of the Tuscany plot-line. Since most are clearly marked as the Patient’s memories, one should expect Almásy to be the sole focaliser of these sequences. It is true that they all show only events he is involved in and very often point-of-view or eyeline match shots make it clear that we are witnessing something like a cinematic equivalent of the figural narrative situation. For instance, Bronwen Thomas notes that “when he is interrogated by the English the camera blacks out as he is knocked unconscious” (222). The differences in colour and sound commented on before (footnote 18, cf. also p. 84) may also be seen to represent an emotional tinge of the memory sequences and thus underline their status as the Patient’s subjective memories (or Almásy’s subjective experience).³¹

The most obvious example is probably the scene in which Almásy is found by the Bedouin. It gives us a disoriented, uncanny feeling, produced by the mysterious score, the distinctly audible, strained breathing sounds, the fact that we barely see the Bedouins’ faces, and unusually framed shots that we identify as point-of-view shots from Almásy’s perspective, like the legs of the camels or, most clearly, a shot filmed through the cloth that has been placed on his face. The combination of point-of-view shots, breathing sounds that seem to be as close to us as our own, and a soundtrack that underlines the character’s emotional state indeed evoke a very subjective experience that very effectively reproduces the burnt man’s perspective.

Another example marking a sequence’s perspective as Almásy’s is when Katharine tells the Gyges-Candaules story by the campfire. The sequence is introduced by Hana’s reading the story to the Patient. After she reads the line, “you will be able to gaze on her at leisure”, a cut shows Katharine standing in front of the group (her voice now taking over the reading), which image is linked with an eyeline match to Almásy, who is looking at her in fascination. The editing continues to join

³¹ As Branigan (1984: 94ff.) points out, colour and sound constitute productive formal devices for the representation of subjectivity.

over-the-shoulder shots of Katharine from Almásy's perspective with shots showing his emotional reaction.

As pointed out in the theoretical section (cf. p. 23 of this paper), perspective cannot be as strictly limited to a character's point of view in film as it can in literature. To make the focaliser present in the narrative, he or she has to be visible in at least some of the frames, and additional shots of surroundings and related action are often necessary to locate him or her in the setting and the narrative. Examples in the Patient's memory sequences that show what he cannot see or even present another character's point of view are scarce but they do exist. They can, however, be explained with narrative necessity, to avoid gaps in the plot. One is the Christmas scene, in which we at first watch Katharine approach Almásy from his point of view, but then see her pretending to swoon while he is busy writing on the Christmas cracker. Another is a close-up of Al Auf (one of the Egyptian guides) leading the prayer song, setting the mood for the cave discovery that follows and obviously has Almásy for a focaliser.

One of the novel's most apparent features is that several different narratives and thus focalisers are embedded into the frame narrative. Even the flashbacks relating the events in Egypt include an example where Almásy is not the only focaliser. Namely, the beginning of Chapter V, entitled "Katharine", is told from her point of view, albeit in the third person. Then, perspective switches between the "she" and the "he", even within the same paragraph: "He said later it was propinquity. Propinquity in the desert. It does that here, he said. He loved the word – the propinquity of water, the propinquity of two or three bodies in a car. [...] When he talked like that she hated him, her eyes remaining polite, her mind wanting to slap him" (150). And it is in fact the notion of "propinquity" mentioned in the quote above which accounts for the inclusion of Katharine's point of view into the Egypt narrative, and for how it is interwoven with that of Almásy. This change of narrative situation (the preceding chapter IV is written in the first person) mirrors the unity of the two lovers. Significantly, narrative voice switches back to the first person after they have "separated into themselves" (157).

More obvious than this passage are the accounts of Kip's, Hana's, and Caravaggio's pasts that Ondaatje places alongside each other and the Patient's memory narrative. Linked by several structural and thematic analogies and physically converging in the "Holy Forest" of the Villa Girolamo, they create a multi-faceted picture of human experience, colonialism and the implications of World War II.

Many of the flashbacks involving characters other than the Patient had to be omitted by the filmmakers, who decided to concentrate on the Katharine-Almásy story, 'framed' by the Tuscany plot-line. However, there remain two exceptions of flashbacks that are not the Patient's memories or narrations and thus add additional 'voices' to the film. One is the Tobruk/torture room sequence apparently 'told' by Caravaggio (SP 99-108) and accordingly centring around his perspective, and the more problematic wedding anniversary sequence, which is introduced by Caravaggio asking the Patient what the first wedding anniversary is called, but has Clifton as focaliser to show his pain at discovering his wife's betrayal (SP 90-91).

Aside from these exceptions, however, the pasts of characters other than the Patient are absent from the film.³² Its binary narrative structure – the Patient's memory narrative and, as its temporal vantage point, the Tuscany narrative – allows, however, the inclusion of Hana (not the only focaliser of the novel's Tuscany passages) as a second central focaliser in the film (cf. also Thomas 222). Since her past remains obscure, the film has to include in its 'present' plot sequences that give her psychological shape. An effective strategy is the invention of the sequence in which she learns about her boyfriend's death (which she only mentions briefly to Caravaggio in the novel [82]) and we witness its devastating effect on her, further amplified by the simultaneous explosion of a bomb.

Bronwen Thomas points out another example of how an aspect of Hana's omitted past is substituted by a newly created episode in the film's 'present': "Hana's father is overshadowed in the film by the insertion of a highly dramatic scene in which Hana's friend is blown up by a landmine. This enables Minghella to portray the degree to which Hana is 'more patient than nurse' with more immediacy and

³² The implications of omitting Kip's story, much discussed in the literature, will be examined separately in the chapter "Kip".

dramatic tension than is evident in the novel, where her emotional scars are more deep-rooted” (204).

These episodes are framed and cut to identify them as Hana’s subjective experiences. In the latter, for instance, an eyeline match cut from her point of view shows the blown-up truck in the distance, and the camera ‘follows’ her toward it, alternating between point-of-view shots, close-ups of her face, and medium long shots of her running along the road. At the villa, she is clearly the central focaliser of the action as well, and (aside from the close-ups introducing a flashback), the Patient, too, is seen from her perspective, not vice versa. The clearest examples include the sequence when she watches Caravaggio and the Patient talking in his room, seen in a point-of-view shot through a hole in the floorboards, and when, working in the garden, an over-the-shoulder shot reveals her reflection in a piece of broken mirror. Claims by many critics that the film focuses on Almásy/the Patient as its main character thus have to be slightly relativised. The Tuscany plot does circle around the figure of the Patient, but the perspective is chiefly Hana’s. He is central to this diegetic level in the effect he has on her. This is best visualised at the end, when before leaving for good, Hana returns briefly to the deceased Patient’s room and collects the *Histories* to take his story with her.

As we have seen, point of view and perspective present themselves differently in novel and film. The complexity created in the novel by switches between first-person and third-person flashbacks cannot be reproduced in the film without an excessive use of voice-over, which would in any case destroy the text’s ambiguity. The film, however, uses point-of-view techniques that identify Almásy as the character-focaliser of the flashbacks, thus preserving their role as personal memories. With the exception of the focalisation on Hana in the Tuscany plot-line and the flashbacks involving Caravaggio and Clifton, the novel’s multiplicity of narratives and thus perspectives is highly reduced. This can easily be explained with the need for abbreviation, but the result is that the novel’s view of history as non-linear and multi-faceted is lost.

4 History and Historiography

Closely connected with the topic of memory is that of history, its role and representation in novel and film. Of central interest are the aspects of individual or counter-memories versus collective memory as it is presented in common historiography and transported by culture, and the close relationship between past and present, namely how the former is portrayed as still relevant for the latter.

With regard to the representation of history and its impact on the present, the novel often makes use of linguistic constructions that suggests simultaneity of times. The visual nature of film and the common conventions of fairly 'realistic' narrative film, however, make extreme deviations from naturalistic representation problematic since they can easily create a highly artificial impression that lacks the subtle suggestiveness of language.

Consequently, the film version of *The English Patient* cannot – once again without excessive use of voice-over at any rate – conjure up times long past within the present as the novel does in the following examples: "I see the instrument scratch and then punch the serum within her and then release itself, free of her skin, years ago, when she was nine years old, in a school gymnasium" (158), and "Here there had been a lake. I could draw its shape on a wall for them. I could lead them to its edge, six thousand years ago" (18). Of course, besides these combinations of temporal levels, thoughts and observations on the relationship between past and present (e.g.: "These were water people. Even today caravans look like a river" [19]) must be at least restricted in a film if it wants to avoid excessive use of voice-over commentary or dialogue.

As Amy Novak points out, *The English Patient* (she is referring to the novel only) is not only about the personal traumata of the characters but at the same time a comment on the trauma of history. By "resist[ing] the linear, causal relationship of events" (Novak 211) the Patient's narrative "acknowledges the ambiguity of the past" (ibid.). The past lies just beneath the surface of the present and is continually repeated:

The last mediaeval war was fought in Italy in 1943 and 1944. Fortress towns on great promontories which had been battled over since the eighth century had the armies of new kings flung carelessly against them. Around the outcrops of rocks were the traffic of stretchers, butchered vineyards, where, if you dug deep beneath the tank ruts, you found bloodaxe and spear (69).

The way past is described here suggests not a linear progression but a fragmentary, repetitive and contradictory structure in which the remains of history continue to “haunt the present” (Novak 211). In addition, above quote also indicates that the central core of this notion of history presented in the novel is that it is a history of war. Examples supporting this point include the guns Almásy identifies for the Bedouin, which seem to be “from different time periods and from many countries, a museum in the desert” (20); the nunneries and churches of Tuscany, used as war hospitals that ironically “hold the remnants of war societies” (92); and the novels from other times and places, telling about “armies and horses and wagons – those running away from or running towards a war” (93).

The film transforms or invents some references of this kind, thus when Madox says to Almásy, “What do we find in the desert? Arrowheads, spears” (SP 110), and when he calls the hunt for suspects of espionage a “witch hunt” (SP 135). Another example is the newsreel shown at the cinema in Cairo, beginning with the huge insert, “Is it Peace or War?”³³

It should also be noted how the dying Katharine’s ‘embalmmnt’ is described in the novel both in terms of nature and of history and culture. “Herbs and stones and light and the ash of acacia” (260f.) belong to nature and have covered her body naturally because she has been lying in this particular environment. The colour with which Almásy paints her, however, is taken from the ancient cave paintings. It is both associated with Katharine’s cultural habit of “translat[ing] her face when she put on

³³ In addition, a pan over the audience reveals it to consist mainly of soldiers with their Egyptian girlfriends, which shows that to many young people, national boundaries did not matter much. However, on the background of an imminent war, we may wonder what the fate of these relationships will be. This tension between love and war is in the novel expressed in a passage that begins by describing the jazz music of the 1930s (“Great jazz years” [243]) and finishes thus: “There was the whispering of love in a booth. There was war around the corner” (ibid.).

makeup” (248), and with ancient “traditions he had discovered in Herodotus in which old warriors celebrated their loved ones by locating and holding them in whatever world made them eternal – a colourful fluid, a song, a rock drawing” (248), and of course even with the prehistoric times when the rock paintings were created. As a result, her life and death are located in a timeless realm of analogous signs and recurrent practices and experiences.

In the film, the complexity of this passage is lost. As has been mentioned in the chapter “The Body as a Site of Memory”, Katharine is in the film only embalmed by her lover, with saffron from the thimble he gave her. The ‘historical’ connotations, created in the novel through using colour from the cave paintings and the reference to ancient traditions recorded in Herodotus are lost, in favour of emphasising the theme of eternal love. A further instance, also connected with the body aspect, is the film’s description of the Cave of Swimmers as being located in a “mountain the shape of a woman’s back”. As Sadashige notes, this “evidence that cultures preexist their discovery and inscription by the West” is thus instrumentalised as another means to foreground the romantic and/or erotic (Sadashige 251).

Also, Ondaatje’s use of Herodotus differs greatly from Minghella’s. As Sadashige observes, Ondaatje’s “quotations from and echoes of texts including Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* underline the imperialist and orientalist aspects of Herodotus’s *Histories*, in part establishing Herodotus as a kind of Ur-text for the instantiation of exoticism and its role in the naturalization of Western imperialism” (Sadashige 248). In general, frequent reference is made to the content of the book.³⁴ It is pointed out how it contains both fiction and truth usable for Almásy’s exploration, giving the occasional “clue to geography” (233) and serving as “his guidebook, ancient and modern, of supposed lies. When he discovered the truth to what had seemed a lie, he brought out his glue pot and pasted in a map or news clipping or used a blank space in the book to sketch men in skirts with faded unknown animals alongside them” (246). This latter quote

³⁴ E.g., “We find jars at Abu Ballas with the classic Greek amphora shape. Herodotus speaks of such jars” (140); “We all slept with Herodotus. ‘For those cities that were great in earlier times must have now become small, and those that were great in my time were small in the time before.... Man’s good fortune never abides in the same place’” (142).

especially shows how in the novel the *Histories* serve to illustrate the nature (mixture of truth and lies) and the accumulative and corrective process of historiography. But the work also represents an alternative to common historiography: “‘This history of mine,’ Herodotus says, ‘has from the beginning sought out the supplementary to the main argument.’ What you find in him are cul-de-sacs within the sweep of history” (118-19). In this respect, the *Histories* are programmatic for the novel itself, which unites a number of individual counter-narratives. Not only content-wise but physically, Almásy’s copy of the *Histories* contains “the supplementary to the main argument” as he inserts his own notes and clippings, embedding in the history of a region the personal memories of an individual.

In the film, Almásy/the Patient’s book is a recurring motif and emphasised in several close-ups. Especially the aspect of preserving one’s personal ‘history’ stands out since the book obviously bulges with the numerous items kept in it, which are in turn focused on several times.³⁵ However, references to the content of the work itself are limited, which almost reduces the *Histories* to an unusual kind of diary. Herodotus is mentioned briefly when Almásy tells Katharine about the different winds, and his work only plays an actual role in the scene where Katharine reads the Gyges-Candaules story. And, as Sadashige notes, the scene’s importance arises solely “from its representation of the moment when Almásy falls in love with Katharine” (248). For Ondaatje, however, the story “is neither singular nor transparent; political succession, the ebb and flow of power, and the way that desire can effect that movement are all woven into a tale of triangulated desire” (ibid.). For Minghella, on the other hand, “meanings are obvious and often singular: the essence of history is the truth of romance, love is timeless and essential, and, as a result, love possesses the ability to justify almost everything” (ibid.).

The latter aspect is crucial with regard to the representation of the historical background of *The English Patient*. The film triggered several articles and comments on the historical Almásy’s involvement with the Nazis and addressed moral issues of

³⁵ E.g. when the Patient drops the book and they all spill out, triggering a memory, or when Katharine leafs through them (again in close-up), discovering notes on herself. Even the DVD features an open book as its menu background.

idealising such a problematic character.³⁶ This debate is due to the film's simplification of motivations and its focus on the love theme. Sadashige notes that by having Almásy reply to Caravaggio's accusations, "Thousands of people did die, just different people", rather than "addressing the nature and the effects of political difference, the film fixates on individual or personal differences" (Sadashige 250). Caravaggio's forgiveness suggests that "the individual is freed from the issues of political and social responsibility, and questionable acts merit forgiveness if they are performed in the name of love, 'for the heart is an organ of fire'" (ibid. 250). Ondaatje's insistence, in contrast, "on the multivalent nature of erotic and political associations renders the judgment of any one character difficult, if not misguided" (ibid. 249). One has to take into account, however, that the Patient's line could also be read to mean that all lives are equally valuable. Sadashige also ignores the fact that the Patient's problematic comment is followed by Caravaggio's revelation that the former is indirectly responsible for Madox's death (cf. SP 134), which proves the Patient's indifference inappropriate since the suicide of his friend makes him and the audience realise "the enormity of [his] actions" (Thomas 204) that *did* make a terrible difference, albeit this difference is on the personal, not the moral/political level.

Other passages that thematise history in the novel had to be omitted as well, such as the Patient's account of the Medici who used to live in the villa. However, several examples can be named in which times past are evoked in events and setting of the film. The flashback 'narrated' by Caravaggio, for instance, provides historical background. Significant elements of the setting include the frescoes in the Patient's room (which are often visible in the frame), those in the church we see in close-ups, as well as the church building and the monastery, which is twice shown in whole in long shots. The most prominent example, however, is the Cave of Swimmers. The engraved handprint in which Almásy places his hand before climbing up to the cave (an invention of the film) serves as a gatepost into the past. The close-up that shows his hand to fit perfectly into the engraving is a strong image suggesting an analogy between prehistoric times and the present. The rock paintings in the cave itself are

³⁶ See for instance Pathy Salett (1996), and Thomas Hurka, who describes the film's moral perspective on the events it portrays as "me-centred and immoral" (47).

emphasised in close-up, the moving spots of the flashlights suggesting water, and the long take gives the audience time to recognise in the representation of swimmers in the middle of the desert an image of the passing of time.³⁷

To conclude this point, history clearly plays a smaller role in the film adaptation. Whereas the novel's language often blurs the boundaries between different times, cinematic techniques cannot create such a subtle effect. One could imagine the use of superimposition or crosscutting, but it would destroy the illusion of reality and divert from the main narrative (which would also be the case if relevant passages from the novel were added as voice-over or turned into dialogue). The result would be an (economically risky) 'art film', which was certainly not the filmmakers' aim. Thus, only a few instances were included that refer to times past or underline the story's historical context, which is problematic because the moral ambiguity of the Almásy character becomes less clear. With regard to Katharine's death in the Cave of Swimmers, its location in the 'history of mankind' gives way to an emphasis of the notion that love can transgress all boundaries, and Herodotus's *Histories* is turned into the chronicle of a love story.

5 The Portrayal of the Orient

In his analysis of orientalism, Edward Said describes the Western view of the orient as both "a repository of knowledge and a site of exoticism, excess, and mystery" (Ty 10). In this context, the concept of "Otherness" is relevant, which involves, as post-colonial studies have pointed out, also a "silencing of the subaltern" and a projection of negative qualities onto an Other (race) (Ty 10; cf. also Williams & Chrisman).

³⁷ The mise-en-scène and editing of this sequence may remind the audience of their own viewing experience. The flashlights resemble the film projector, the exploration team is assembled like a cinema audience, and shots of them gazing at the painted wall alternate with the 'screen' they are looking at, thus emphasising (and drawing the film audience into) the act of gazing.

An important aspect for the comparison of the two versions of *The English Patient* is how notions of orientalism are transported, both because of the setting of the Patient's memories in Egypt and the character of Kip, an Indian. Accordingly, both aspects, especially Kip and his reduced role in the film, have been much discussed in the literature.

5.1 Kip

Embodied by the character of Kip, an Other plays a central role in Ondaatje's novel. Comparing it with its film adaptation, it is striking that his role is very much diminished. Because of this great difference, it seems reasonable to sketch Kip's role in the novel first and then discuss the effect of the omissions and of those sequences that were included.

In the novel, much space is given the description of his career as a sapper for the British, the colonisers of his home country, and his relationship with the colonist culture. The latter can be best characterised in its ambiguity. Even though Kip becomes "immers[ed] in the bowels of white culture", as indicated by his descent into the giant white horse of Westbury (Burcar 107), he still remains the foreigner. Note for instance his relationship with his mentor Lord Suffolk, which is on the one hand characterised by the latter's respect for Kip's "brilliance and character" (189) in spite of his ethnic background, but on the other hand replicates in its teacher-pupil constellation the patronising relationship between coloniser and colonised.³⁸ Kip comes to love Lord Suffolk (195) and the English (190), but is also aware of the problematic aspects of his relationship with them: "The English! They expect you to fight for them but won't talk to you. Singh. And the ambiguities" (188). As Younis puts it, "the novel focuses on the issue of the cultural hybrid with his mixed loyalties

³⁸ This constellation – like the one between the Patient and Kip, and the Patient and Hana – mirrors the constellation in Kipling's novel *Kim*, which establishes a direct link to issues of colonialism. As a mirror image (in *Kim*, the wise Indian teaches the white boy), it reveals the ambiguity in Western views of Asia: a patronising sense of superiority on the one hand, and on the other an idealising and romanticising fantasy of an ancient wisdom lost in modern Western culture.

and the dual cultures to which he belongs, in order to show perhaps that such cross-cultural relationships are not necessarily reducible to black and white terms or to traditional binaries such as oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized” (Younis 5). As Amy Novak observes, the novel allows, in the character of Kip, the silenced voice of a foreign culture to be heard. This is done not only by including long passages presenting intercultural contact from his point of view, but also – in line with the symbolic value attached to names in the novel – by giving him his proper name Kirpal Singh in those passages rather than the anglicised Kip, which by referring to a kind of fish denies him the status of a full human being (cf. Novak 221). The novel not only challenges colonial logic by bringing an outsider’s perspective to the fore; it also describes how even as an outsider, Kip has learned to make use of “the overlooked space open to those of us with a silent life” (200) in order to do what he wishes. His identity is multifaceted: at the beginning of his stay at the villa, he is first introduced as a “Sikh” (63), and referred to as such or “the sapper” until he becomes more acquainted with his companions and his name and nickname are introduced (88, when he walks to the village with Caravaggio), and the latter used predominantly to refer to him from now on. This change of titulation thus reflects the perspective of his companions who at first notice his turban, which identifies him as a member of another culture, and his profession as a sapper.

In the film, critique of colonialism is marginal. The only explicit instance is the sequence where Kip reads from Rudyard Kipling’s novel *Kim* to the Patient, who corrects his reading. As Gillian Roberts (201) notes, this scene is even stronger in its criticism. In the novel, Hana is the recipient of the Patient’s reading lesson, whereas in Minghella’s version, Kip not only reads but responds: “It’s still there, the cannon, outside the museum. It was made of metal cups and bowls taken from every household in the city as tax, then melted down. Then later they fired the cannon at my people *comma* the natives. *Full stop*” (SP 75), his intonation growing sharper towards the end. He goes on to say: “And the message everywhere in your book – however slowly I read it – that the best destiny for India is to be ruled by the British” (ibid.). This scene was assumably altered in this manner to substitute at least in part the many omissions that had to be made on the colonial issue, the character of Kip, and

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* as an intertext. Thus the importance placed in the novel on language, literature and reading and the theme of the contrary perspectives of coloniser and colonised are both given some credit, so is the idea that despite their different cultural backgrounds and experiences, human beings are not so different: Like in the novel, the two men share a common love for condensed milk. As Eleanor Ty points out, this is a symbolic act of communion, and "[j]ust as condensed milk has become a kind of international food, so they share an existence in a kind of borderless, nationless state" in the monastery (Ty 18).

One crucial omission in the film has a great impact on the relationship between Kip and the Patient: The news of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been left out and accordingly also Kip's accusation of the Patient and his turning his back on the West, on his Western friends. As J. U. Jacobs has noted, the "Englishman whose life is coming to a close in the ruined villa, represents the end of the great imperial narratives of Western Europe" (103). Without Kip's confrontation, however, the notion is lost of an "emergent postcolonial subject" (Jacobs 107) acknowledging "that he too has become a casualty of Englishness, and [rejecting] his colonisation by an essentially destructive and self-destructive force" (ibid. 110). Roberts explains the omission of the atomic bombs with the amount of controversy around the ending of Ondaatje's novel (some critics arguing that it suggests a negative view on the allied war effort, and some American critics insisting on the justness of the bombings), which suggests that "such an indictment of American military action [...] would present a notable risk to a film's distribution prospects in the United States" (Roberts 203).

The film's editor Walter Murch, however, provides a different explanation. The sequence had actually been shot, so there was no intention at first to omit the issues connected with the news of the bombings. The problem was that the team found it was not going to work:

The film was so much about those five individual people: the Patient, Hana, Kip, Katharine, Caravaggio – that to suddenly open it up near the end and ask the audience to imagine the death of hundreds of thousands of unknown people... It was too abstract. So the bomb of Hiroshima became the bomb that killed Hardy,

someone you knew. Everything else reorganized itself from that new starting point (Murch in Ondaatje 2002: 213).

Thus the choice actually stems from the nature of the medium itself, being less abstract and encompassing than literature.³⁹ Also, “perhaps film has much more inertia than prose. A book can nimbly switch tracks in a way that would wreck a film” (ibid. 214).

David L. Kranz comments on several postcolonial interpretations that compare Minghella’s adaptation with the novel, mostly attesting the film a fatal reduction of the postcolonial theme. To Kranz, this stance is based on an exaggerated focus on postcolonial theory and an incorrect reading of Ondaatje’s novel. He points out that in fact, “Ondaatje’s portrayal of Kirpal Singh does not adequately reflect current postcolonial ideology”, since he is “on the whole [...] treated well in England and Italy” (Kranz 104). Furthermore, he describes Kip as an ambiguous character who is “at least as reactionary as he is progressive” (ibid.), since in reaction to the bombings on Japan, he “categorizes all nationalities in the West as ‘English’, illustrating a non-Western ethnocentrism almost as vicious and divisive as the racism he attacks” (ibid. 105).

Kranz makes an important point. However, in evaluating Minghella’s adaptation one can draw the conclusion that an even more complex aspect has been omitted, namely Ondaatje’s portrayal of an ethnic character that is not a simplistic postcolonial portrayal of hardships and discrimination but rather focuses on the character as such, not solely on his role as a suppressed colonial subject, and includes the fact that racism engenders racism in the other direction, and that tendencies to ‘map’ and categorise are commonly human.⁴⁰

Kranz does point out that, besides the colonial aspect, Kip’s role in the novel is much larger, since he is “part of a bigger theme in the novel, crossing or erasing

³⁹ Besides, as Roberts notes (with reference to Pesch), the scene in which Kip’s bomb defusal is threatened by celebrating American soldiers crossing the bridge, causing the surrounding terrain to tremble, might be read as a “buried version of Ondaatje’s ending: ‘A victory celebration which threatens the life of an Asian from up high’” (203).

⁴⁰ Being a brilliant sapper, Kip is strongly associated with charts and plans (i.e. ‘maps’), and Kranz points out that ‘his’ chapter “In Situ” is the most chronological one in the book. Consequently, he terms Kip “the most logical and conventional of all the major figures” (Kranz 104).

boundaries – national, racial, marital, elemental (e.g. swimmers in a desert, earth moving in a sandstorm), historical, and so forth. The novel asks readers to be suspicious of all identities because they can divide us” (Kranz 105). And this function of Kip has clearly been preserved in the film, since his relationship with Hana is given some importance. Also, one must not forget the practical demands of adapting a 300-page novel to a feature film. As both Minghella and Ondaatje have pointed out (cf. p. 10 of this paper), the first drafts of Minghella’s screenplay did include scenes of Kip in England which had to be cut for reasons of length and narrative focus, and because “in the novel we are more within the meditations of Kip [...] – but these were some of the passages and nuances that film could not carry” (Ondaatje 1996: viii).

The colonial issue and the complexity of his character thus reduced, a major function of Kip in the film is that he serves as “the love interest in relation to Hana and does his duty for the military” (Younis 6). The aspect that in the character of Kip, the mapmaker is confronted with a member of a colonised, i.e. ‘mapped’ terrain is downplayed (cf. *ibid.*).⁴¹ Younis offers the emphasis on the love stories in the film and the disquieting nature of the traumata of decolonisation as explanations (cf. Younis 6), which seems quite plausible.

A good example of how the issue of Kip’s complex and ambiguous relationship to Western culture is reduced in the film is when he shows Hana the frescoes in the town’s church. It is striking that the main interest of the camera in this scene is Hana’s happy face, and it obviously indulges in the beauty of a woman with a bright torch being swirled around the dark room by her lover, to the accompaniment of symphonic music. Of the frescoes by Piero della Francesca, we see only indistinct medium to long shots, the camera pans over them in imitation of Hana’s movement, and only one close-up each is given of the face of a young woman and that of a bearded man, who the spectator may associate with any pair of protagonists, or just be confused about since explaining references to the Queen of Sheba and Solomon, so important to Kip in the novel, are missing. The only direct reference to the religious

⁴¹ India is clearly identified as ‘mapped terrain’ in the novel when the Patient shows Caravaggio the location of the Gilf Kebir on the map on the frontispiece of Kipling’s novel, thus pointing also to the thematic relevance of *Kim* for *The English Patient*.

content of the fresco is suggested in the light of Hana's flare, which creates a halo around her (cf. the description in the first draft of the screenplay, as quoted in Forshey 96). In the novel, Kip never takes Hana to a church; instead, he visits one with a mediaevalist whom he hoists up into its dome in a similar fashion, before climbing up the rope himself (cf. 71f.).

This scene is an example of a major change in the screenplay. It is partly due to the necessity of abbreviation: Kip's war experiences before coming to the villa were chosen to be left out, the entire background of his church visits thus falling away. In the novel, these scenes portray his encounter with another culture's religion, art and history – which are presented as referring to universal phenomena he can relate to in spite of his very different cultural background. In the film, because most aspects concerning Kip had to fall away, the church sequence is used as an aesthetic illustration of his and Hana's happy romance. The setting of a church is fitting in this context since it suggests a wedding. This notion is underlined in the next scene at night in the shed, where the naked couple lie in unworried peace, and his "I want you to find me" is answered by Hana's happy smile.

Another notable aspect in the representation of Kip is his exotic aesthetisation. Part of the exotic eroticism associated with Kip in the film is present in the novel as well, and described from Hana's perspective. In the chapter "The Holy Forest", he is described flipping his hair forward and drying it after washing. Watching him, Hana "imagines all of Asia through the gestures of this one man" (217). At night, she "holds an Indian goddess in her arms, she holds wheat and ribbons" (218). The difference, though, is that the novel places this description alongside Kip's own perspective (cf. 217-18). Also, the exotic idealisation in the quotes above is clearly identifiable as Hana's perspective, whereas Kip's visual representation in the film is not clearly confined to a lover's idealising point of view. In addition, the natural imagery associated with Kip in the novel suggests procreation and a transgression of social boundaries.⁴² The latter is supported in several instances, for example when he clears the library of mines so that it seems as if "the room has now finally emerged

⁴² Cf. the last quote and examples like his climbing out of the well (222) and descriptive phrases like "his body the tail of a mantis" (224) and "his spread hair like grain in a fan-shaped straw basket" (217).

from the war, is no longer zone or territory” (224), and “He turns off her light so they are equal in darkness” (225).

When looking at how Kip functions as an image of exotic sexuality in the film, the first scene of significance is actually based on a passage from the novel mentioned above. He is shown washing his long black hair, his well-shaped brown chest naked, his turban hanging in the background to dry. All this while, Hana watches him from the window and later joins him in the garden. This sequence can be seen as a comment on gender roles since it “reverses tradition because it is the man who bathes and the woman who gazes, turning her into an active participant” (Ty 15). The significance of the gaze is emphasised by the fact that she is watching him through a window,⁴³ and her elevated position out of Kip’s sight emphasises her active status. Nonetheless, the Indian is presented as an exotic object of desire, since his body and (by Western standards of the time) unusually long hair are thus shown off.⁴⁴ This aesthetisation continues when he and Hana are shown in a naked embrace by candlelight, her white body against his dark one. The church sequence discussed above can be considered significant in this context as well, since it not only suggests a romantic, spiritual union of the lovers but also features highly erotic connotations. As Hsuan Hsu observes, it “stands in for a love scene, placed as it is between a courtship by candlelight and a naked conversation in bed” (Hsu 59), which is supported by the fact that “Hana calls out Kip’s name as she rises into the air, then thanks him enthusiastically when she alights” (ibid.). The screenplay informs us that this scene was indeed meant to be a symbolic love scene: “KIP *guides the rope as if they were making love, which in a way they are*” (SP 119-20).

This scene, even though it emphasises the fact that Kip’s function in the film is primarily located in the love affair with Hana, includes another crucial aspect: It

⁴³ Windows stand out as motifs in other instances as well, when the reflection of the landscape outside is clearly visible on the pane of the open window as in a painting, thus transporting the landscape into the room itself, blurring the boundaries between inside and outside. Cf. also the scene in which Hana, in a double image of liberation, cuts her hair short while looking out the window at the green landscape.

⁴⁴ Hana’s passing a cup of olive oil to him appears like an inversed version of Tristan passing the love potion to Isolde. The fact that the oil is meant for his hair underlines the strong sexual connotation of this scene which is further supported by Kip’s sensual movements when drying his hair, and Hana’s moment of hesitation before walking back to the house.

shows Kip as an *active* character, since he is both the initiator and ‘motor’ of this scene. Consequently, his role in the film does not completely lack complexity: He may be the object of an orientalist gaze, but he is not ‘colonised’ by Hana but takes an active part in initiating their affair. And even though it is Hana who takes the first step by offering him a cup of olive oil, this can also be seen not as proof of Kip’s objectification but as a feminist comment, empowering Hana. The scene is also staged as a crossing of racial and cultural boundaries, since Hana passes the cup over the clothesline.

Furthermore, the fact that very little criticism of colonialism is present in the film can be seen to make a point too. Since narrative film as a dramatic art form has a strong focus on the characters and their interaction, the omission or reduction of critical comments, say by Kip, can serve as a signal not of obedience to colonial rhetoric but of tolerance among the central characters gathered in the monastery. This keeping of peace among the group, which is not shattered by Kip’s accusation of the Patient for the atomic bomb, may leave out Ondaatje’s important observation that prejudice and aggression create their mirror images; but it underscores the fact that the characters ultimately represent individuals, not nations, and establishes their refuge as a humanist model for the peaceful coexistence of distinct cultures and (hi)stories. For, as Linda Hutcheon puts it, they are all “patients of the English; colonials, each in his or her own way trying to find an identity beyond the protection of and the abandonment by the empire” (qtd. in Morgan 160). Thus, the argumentative tension between the Patient and Kip in the *Kim*-sequence, as mentioned before, ends with a gesture of comradeship. To the Patient’s question what he objects to, Kip replies: “What I really object to, Uncle, is your finishing all my condensed milk” (SP 75). This reconciliatory comment is followed by another piece of criticism (“And the message everywhere in your book [...] that the best destiny for India is to be ruled by the British” [ibid.]), but he is already rising and picking up the empty can while saying this. And when the Patient tells Hana of their “*shared* pleasure” (my emphasis), which is not “[a]rguing about books” but “condensed milk” (SP 75f.), Kip grins and leaves to get another tin. The film’s message is clear:

tolerance and sharing, not accusation should be at the heart of intercultural relationships.

5.2 Oriental Atmosphere

If we have above shown how much issues of orientalism and colonialism (in India) have been shifted to the background of the film's narrative as compared to the novel, this holds true for its portrayal of the Arab Orient as well. However, it does play a central role in creating atmosphere and emphasizing the emotions of the characters. The visual nature of the medium inevitably makes the Oriental setting of the Almásy-Katharine narrative ever-present in the film adaptation. Musical score, diegetic sound, and a few minor characters complete the picture.

The Oriental atmosphere of Cairo and the desert plays an important role in Katharine and Almásy's encounters as lovers. Thus, the bazaar scenes that were introduced in the screenplay figure important moments of their relationship. When before their affair, Almásy 'runs into' Katharine at the bazaar, she emerges from a group of local women and begging children. These people not only serve as part of the 'realist' setting; the dark veiling of the Muslim women also sets off Katharine as a white, blonde beauty. Here, foreign culture remains in the realm of the merely functional and aesthetic/atmospheric. In Almásy's room, we can glimpse the roofs of Old Cairo through the grids of the wooden windows. In addition, in all three love scenes that take place there, the sound of a muezzin is heard from outside. Sensenig-Dabbous observes that it is used to emphasise the "juxtaposition of the exotic, Islamic Other and Western forbidden sexuality" (173), and that the orientalist experience is further accentuated by Katharine when she says: "This is a different world – is what I tell myself. A different life. And here I am a different wife" (SP 93). The scene is a good example of how film sound, even if it is diegetic and simultaneous, can be used not only to imitate the characters' aural perception but at the same time support the mediation of their experience and interpretation of a given situation. The effect of this

“assumed colonialist/Orientalist permissibility of things forbidden at home” (Sensenig-Dabbous 173) with regard to the view of the Orient presented in the film is that it relegates the foreign culture to the mere function of the ‘Other’, a world where social restrictions do not apply (which is ironic considering that adultery is a severe crime in Islamic culture, as we will be informed by the German major in the torture room sequence).

Another item transporting Oriental atmosphere is the film’s theme song, “Szerelem, szerelem.” When it is first heard during the opening scene it not only sets the mood of sadness and loss. It is in Hungarian, while its melody and colouratures lend it strong Oriental features. Thus, it implies a subtle comment on the theme of (national) identity, as it is a first hint at the ‘English’ Patient’s real nationality, and at the same time at his connection with the desert and its people. Thus, it helps to express his longing for “an earth that had no maps” (261) that is visually represented by the desert the plane is passing over.

However, spectators not familiar with the Hungarian language will at first – like Katharine does later in the film (cf. SP 91) – mistake it for an Arabic folk song. The connection, then, of ‘Oriental’ music with a soft-focus, warmly-lit scene of a couple in a plane flying over a beautiful, almost sensuous landscape evoking images of naked bodies transports a highly romanticised and eroticised vision of the Orient. The song is later revealed as a Hungarian folk song by Almásy when he plays it to Katharine in his room in Cairo. But in this very scene it nonetheless supports the romantic-Oriental atmosphere also created by the yellow “desert light” (cf. 156 in the novel), the wooden grids of the windows – associating the room with a harem – and the minarets of Cairo one can glimpse through them.

In the novel, the setting of the room is described with several details that mark its Oriental location:

In the northeast section of Cairo was the great courtyard of religious students, and beyond it the Khan el Khalili bazaar. Above the narrow streets we looked down upon cats on the corrugated tin roofs who also looked down the next ten feet to the street and stalls. Above all this was our room. Windows open to minarets, feluccas, cats, tremendous noise. She spoke to me of her childhood gardens. When she couldn't sleep she drew her mother's garden for me, word by

word, bed by bed, the December ice over the fish pond, the creak of rose trellises (161).

What we find here is not merely a number of exotic props for a romantic love scene but a detailed description lending the setting a life of its own. By linking this description to Katharine's description of her childhood gardens in England, the Oriental setting gains an important function in contrasting Almásy's world with Katharine's while highlighting the lovers' status as foreigners.

In general, the descriptions of and reflections on the foreign world of the desert, Cairo, and their people are more complex in Ondaatje. The Patient's renditions are informed by a great knowledge both from personal experience and reading. For example, he refers to Arab writers (135; 153) and encounters with Bedouin (138). His descriptions are in one instance placed beside accounts of the Royal Geographical Society, which creates a strong contrast between the complexity of Oriental life, landscape, and history as experienced by the 'nationless' explorers, and the colonialist perspective of the Society that reduces the region to "interesting geographical problems" (134) in terms of possible exploitation, such as, "*Can other depressions in this region, besides the much-discussed Wadi Rayan, be considered possible of utilization in connection with irrigation or drainage of the Nile Delta?*" (134, orig. italics).

However, the novel's Almásy/Patient is clearly not a critical realist but rather romantic, mystical, and irrational. Andrew Shin even calls his "dream of the romantic outsider [...] infantile" (218). And in spite of his knowledge of the Bedouin, he clearly remains in the perspective of the Western gaze. As Shin observes, at his "most sentimental register", he "orientaliz[es] the Bedouin – 'There were rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful humans I've met in my life' (138) – as silent, exotic other, assimilated to the master narrative, 'the histories in Herodotus' that for him 'clarified all societies' (150)" (Shin 218). One can add that in descriptions like this, the Bedouins also somewhat merge with the scenery they are travelling through and that Almásy is mapping, since they are referred to as "rivers", an image that is used in another instance as well: "Even today caravans look like a river" (19). Compare also

the following passage: “They had reached the valley within the red high canyon walls, joining the rest of the desert’s water tribe that spilled and slid over sand and stones, their blue robes shifting like a spray of milk or a wing”, when they lead him into the “womb of the canyon” (19). This view is clearly Almásy’s, who is the first-person narrator in the passages quoted above, and must of course not be confused with the author’s view, a distinction not as easily made with regard to film, whose means of identifying a figural perspective are very limited, and whose immediate, ‘showing’ nature renders the distinction between a narrative voice and the filmmakers’ more difficult (cf. p. 22 of this paper). On the one hand, as Shin puts it, the poetic description of desert and Bedouins “becomes Ondaatje’s way of debunking Western rationalism” (Shin 218). On the other, Almásy’s view on the Other, connected to his romantic ideal of an “earth without maps” also serves to unmask the perseverance of colonist attitudes remaining at the core of an assumed internationalism, which is probably made the clearest in his ambiguous notion of ownership: hating to be owned but at the same time claiming ownership of Katharine and mapping the desert for the British.

The Patient’s account of his stay with the Bedouin after the plane crash is naturally longer and more detailed in the novel than in the film. He includes several not commonly known pieces of information, cul-de-sacs, like those included in Herodotus (cf. 119). In analogy to Herodotus’s *Histories*, they represent “the supplementary to the main argument” (ibid.), the inclusion of identities otherwise marginal to Western historical narratives. Not only are the novel’s descriptions more detailed: they are also more differentiated, thus undermining a homogenous, unspecific vision of Oriental cultures. The Patient speaks of “*specific* customs and *specific* music” (21, my emphasis), giving examples like “the water-drawing songs of the Mzina tribe with their exultations, *dahhiya* dances, pipe-flutes which are used for carrying messages in times of emergency, the *makruna* double pipe [...]” (ibid., orig. italics), or a fire dance ritual he witnessed (22). In the film version, on the other hand, the omission of such cultural details and the submission of others to the love story results in a perpetuation of a distant, homogenous image of the Orient.

Of course, Ondaatje's poetic descriptions of the Oriental setting and customs do evoke a certain atmosphere and are related to the love story. The descriptions of Arabs and their customs in the novel evoke what Sensenig-Dabbous calls an "otherworldly milieu" (173), a foil to contrast with Western experience and show Almásy's broadening of perspective as he has left his cultural origins behind. However, the Orient is not merely "relegated" to this milieu, as Sensenig-Dabbous puts it (*ibid.*). The vagueness and elusiveness of the Arabs that are mentioned rather serves to reflect the incompleteness of Western knowledge of them. And what is mentioned of their customs and history functions in terms of imagery and symbolism, and is thus closely connected to the main narratives of the novel. The following quote is a good example:

There was a time when mapmakers named the places they travelled through with the names of lovers rather than their own. Someone seen bathing in a desert caravan, holding up muslin with one arm in front of her. Some old Arab poet's woman, whose white-dove shoulders made him describe an oasis with her name. The skin bucket spreads water over her, she wraps herself in the cloth, and the old scribe turns from her to describe Zerzura. (140f.)

This passage transgresses cultural boundaries by drawing a parallel between the Arab poet and Almásy, the bathing woman and Katharine. It does so not only in terms of constellation but also of symbolism: the men are identified by the acts of gazing and writing/mapping, and the women by the shared association with water/fertility and a place – like the "lost oasis" – that is there to be discovered, explored, and appropriated. Another example is when the Patient describes the mysterious Bedouin doctor as "a vessel to himself, this merchant doctor, this king of oils and perfumes and panaceas, this baptist" (10). This description simultaneously points to the foreign culture's self-sufficiency, its richness and wisdom, and with its reference to Christianity suggests a universal notion of 'the Sacred', compassion, and healing that transcends the specifics of distinct religions.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The character of the Bedouin healer as a travelling sage reflects, in the novel, the Patient's vision of Herodotus himself: "I see him more as one of those spare men of the desert who travel from oasis to oasis, trading legends as if it is the exchange of seeds, consuming everything without suspicion, piecing together a mirage" (118-19).

This latter aspect, however, is drawn upon in the film as well, namely when in its first minutes, Hana's work as a military nurse and the Bedouin healing practices are linked by crosscutting between the two narrative strands.⁴⁶ Another instance is the sequence in which Hana is working in the monastery garden and her scarecrow produces the exact same sounds as the Bedouin healer's ointment bottles. In addition, the scarecrow – an iron cross from which are suspended pieces of broken china and mirrors, and empty syringes (i.e. containers of medicine) – is a similar construction as the Bedouin's yoke with rows of suspended glass containers.

However, due to the specific nature of the medium, the Arab world cannot be used as clearly as an "otherworldly milieu" in the film because inevitably, the Arab setting and people "are constantly in front of the camera", for Sensenig-Dabbous in "obviously subservient, often ridiculous roles" (173). For instance, he points out that Fouad, the Egyptian member of the International Sand Club, only raises his voice to sing "Silent Night" at the British Christmas party. He also notes that at the farewell dinner (also a scene invented for the film version), Minghella has Almásy speak for Fouad, who remains in embarrassed silence when the former says: "And the people here don't want us. You must be joking. The Egyptians are desperate to get rid of the Colonials [...] Isn't that right, Fouad?" (SP 114, cf. Sensenig-Dabbous 173). It must be added, though, that in this scene Almásy speaks for *all* of his colleagues, no matter what their nationality: "The International Sand Club! Misfits, buggers, fascists, and fools. [...] Oops! Mustn't say *International*. Dirty word. Filthy word. His Majesty! *Der Führer! Il Duce!*" (SP 113-14, orig. italics). Besides, the function of having only him speak out is to underline both his rage and desperation and the phoniness of the International Sand Club, which in reality is not beyond the conflict of nations (which becomes even clearer when we later learn that all this time, Clifton had been working for British Intelligence). However, Almásy's remarks cannot be taken for a pure renunciation of colonialism either. As Alan Nadel points out, "it is more apt to regard it as a form of ire about the fact that the club's principles were not sufficiently

⁴⁶ The crosscutting also establishes a link between Hana and her patient, an "allegorical equation: her suffering equals his" (Nadel 23).

universal. Unlike North Africa, Katharine could not be owned by virtue of having been mapped” (27).

Maggie M. Morgan states that in the film, the “differences between [the Egyptians] and the Europeans are magnified” (Morgan 165). She refers especially to the initial sequences, where, so she says, “the scenes with the Bedouin in the desert are darkly lit” (ibid.), whereas in Europe, “the shots are full of light” (ibid.). This is not quite true, however. The light on the hospital train is actually very dim, and the sequences in which the Bedouin pick up the burnt man and transport him through the desert are lit with bright sunlight. Morgan apparently remembers only the dim lighting of the night sequence in the oasis, where the Bedouin doctor puts ointment on Almásy’s face. This sequence is indeed very mysterious, an augmentation of the already confusing and fragmented frames in the preceding desert sequences. We do not know where the tribe has taken him – he is placed in what seems to be a pond –, we do not understand the Arab words and singing, nor the gestures and the treatment Almásy is given. The doctor, especially, is introduced as a mysterious character. When he first enters the scene, he is backlit so that at first he presents only a dark figure surrounded by ‘wings’ of shining glass bottles filled with various substances in different colours, an apparition that according to the screenplay is supposed to resemble an angel (cf. SP 9). If the audience picks up this cue, it represents a visualisation of Ondaatje’s description, “A wave of glass, an archangel” (9), thus preserving an item of the novel’s religious symbolism.

The overall rendition of the novel’s corresponding passage in this sequence is, however, prone to criticism, and Morgan terms it a “stereotypical portrayal of the Bedouins as backward practitioners of witch-medicine” (Morgan 165). The mysterious atmosphere of the sequence also presents us with another orientalist stereotype. What causes this criticism of the film as orientalist, in contrast to the novel, is perhaps the fact that film is commonly perceived as a realist medium, and that consequently, what is presented is seen to represent the filmmakers’ vision of reality. When reading a novel, on the other hand, we are much more used to focusing on symbolic and thematic value and function. One needs to point out, however, that the sequence described above (like the preceding desert sequence) makes much use of

point-of-view techniques (cf. p. 18 of this paper) that link the portrayed action to Almásy's perspective and mental state.

An Arab character that was introduced in the screenplay is Bermann's lover Kamal. The function of this relationship (besides possibly hinting at rumours of the real Almásy, Bermann, and other members of their entourage being gay)⁴⁷ is to underline the idea of the desert as a place "without maps", without social restrictions. As Bermann says: "How do you explain? To someone who's never been here? Feelings which seem quite normal" (SP 61). The implied idea of the desert, in turn, functions in the film primarily as an image of love and the assumption that it transgresses the boundaries of nation states, cultures, and societies, which can be seen as the central 'message' of the film, since the emphasis on the Almásy-Katharine story and the notion that they are reunited in death strongly point in that direction.

The Kamal character is also part of a scene that has a certain significance in leading up to the central love story and symbolically foreshadowing its fatal end. It begins with Bermann feeding slices of orange to the boy, who is sitting on top of the car. This image of eroticism and nurturing has two functions. Firstly, it links the film's narrative strands by mirroring the scene in which Hana feeds the Patient a plum. It also connotes the biblical bite into the apple from the Tree of Good and Evil. Significantly, an accident is caused by Bermann's lover Kamal falling off the car when leaning down for another bite, as a result of which Bermann loses control over the car, causing it to tumble down a sand dune. This accident foreshadows the tragic end to Almásy's and Katharine's story, which ends with a similar movement. Clifton's (and later Almásy's) plane crashes down from the sky, this too in a way the result of 'leaning out to far'. But this episode of the symbolic Fall not only foreshadows, it helps the new love story to actually begin, since it ultimately leads to Katharine and Almásy getting trapped in a car together in a sandstorm.

The Arab boy, in any case, does not gain shape as a person, and functions rather as an exotic object of eroticism and a fatal temptation. The question remains how far one should push moral judgement to the film's portrayal of another culture.

⁴⁷ Cf. Tötösy.

Neither Kamal nor Fouad are presented in a derogative way, and they share their status as functional support roles with several other supporting characters of different nationalities. Especially Kamal's role is ambiguous in that respect: on the one hand, the fact that an Arab boy was chosen for Bermann's lover reinforces orientalist views. On the other, it supports, as already mentioned, the film's idea of love as a borderless force that disregards nationality. Furthermore, the invented accident is effective in creating tension and supporting the theme of fatal love. Albeit the novel's representation of the Orient is naturally more complex, the film does try in several examples to reproduce (or substitute) some of that complexity with the use of cinematic strategies, including music, setting, and cinematography. For the most part, however, it serves primarily as an exotic backdrop for the love story.

6 Cartography

Since mapmaking is "one among the imperial arts, whereby territory, property, empire are imagined, inscribed, maintained" (Simpson 226), cartography figures as an important symbol of nationalism/colonialism, and ownership in general, that are rebuked in *The English Patient*.⁴⁸ This notion is pointed out in the film as well, most explicitly in a sequence between Almásy and Madox. It opens with a close-up pan over maps of the desert spread on a table and continues with comments on imperialism and war: "Those maps belong to His Majesty's Government", and "In a war, if you own the desert, you own North Africa".

⁴⁸ Cf. for instance: "The ends of the earth are never the points on a map that colonists push against, enlarging their sphere of influence. On the one side servants and slaves and tides of power and correspondence with the Geographical Society. On the other the first step by a white man across a great river, the first sight (by a white eye) of a mountain that has been there forever (141); "Give me a map and I'll build you a city. Give me a pencil and I will draw you a room in South Cairo, desert charts on the wall" (145); "maps compress the world onto a two-dimensional sheet of paper" (161); "Never turn your back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers" (284). As Renger notes, the frequent merging of time and space in the novel (e.g. 18-19) "suggests that the mapping of space, through cartography, is closely related to the mapping of time, through historiography. In the colonial era, historiography served the same purposes as cartography" (Renger 113).

Cartography also refers to ownership in general,⁴⁹ and to the restrictions imposed by society. In this respect, Hsuan Hsu observes several instances in the film in which the “cartographic gaze” (Hsu 51) is replicated by the camera. “Both at the farewell dinner and at the earlier Christmas party, Almásy watches Katharine through grid screens – analogues of those of the map maker’s. His room, where the two first make love, has similar windows which cast shadowy grids on their bodies, transforming them into erotic complements to the maps hanging from Almásy’s walls” (Hsu 52). When Clifton has crashed their plane, Katharine is wearing a grid-patterned dress (cf. *ibid.* The pattern of the dress is, however, barely discernible), and when Almásy is being carried by the Bedouin, a point-of-view shot “shows Almásy’s view of the world through the grid of a reed mask” (*ibid.*). Hsu interprets this motif as a meta-cinematic comment in which film literally functions as a “screen” between viewer and object. Its “cinematic gaze” he compares to the cartographic one, “organized as it is by framings and ‘cuts’” (Hsu 52). Indeed there are other examples (including references to other films supposedly meant to replace the numerous literary references in the novel with genre-specific ones) that support the idea that the filmmakers intended to weave meta-cinematic comments into the film.⁵⁰

On the level of the film’s narrative, there seem to be primarily two ways in which the novel’s motif of maps and cartography is reflected in the film. Firstly, with the visual techniques of film employed by Minghella, the notion of a “cartographic gaze” that strives to appropriate its objects is emphasised in comparison to the

⁴⁹ In the novel, note for instance how Almásy claims parts of Katharine’s body (156) and parallels her to the desert he maps (235).

⁵⁰ Besides the rain scene, which refers back to the classic film *Singin’ in the Rain* (Ty 18), a striking similarity to *Lawrence of Arabia* has been noted, for instance when the film uses long-range shots to show Almásy’s dash through the desert to get help for Katharine (cf. Jaireth 62 and Thomas 202). Another example is the scene in which Clifton tries to crash the plane onto Almásy, which is framed to closely resemble the famous sequence from Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest*, when Thornhill is chased by a biplane as well. One may also argue that Kristin Scott Thomas with her blonde mane evokes images of Marlene Dietrich and Marilyn Monroe, contemporary to the time in which the film’s story is set. A very obvious cinematic quotation is the supposedly original newsreel and advertisement material shown at the open-air cinema in Cairo, which also serves to create a historically realistic setting. Furthermore, when Katharine reads the Gyges-Candaules story to the exploration team, her figure, lit by the fire, seems to be projected against the black night sky while the others, especially Almásy, are placed opposite her like a cinema audience. Cf. also footnote 37.

novel.⁵¹ In the film, the spectator is easily made to assume the gaze of, for example, the cartographer mapping the desert, or Almásy claiming parts of his lover's body, and it seems a plausible strategy to amplify this effect by means of the techniques Hsu observes.

Another possible interpretation of the grid-patterns observed by Hsu (Christmas/farewell dinners, Almásy's room, Katharine's dress, the reed mask) is to see them, in analogy to prison bars, as images of imprisonment within the closed system of social rules: Almásy is separated from Katharine at social events like the Christmas party and the farewell dinner; their affair is confined to their room in Cairo; Katharine feels obliged to remain in her marriage; after the plane crash Almásy 'turns into' the Patient, he is – due to the combined forces of social restrictions and nationalism – imprisoned in his devastated body and the painful world of memories in his mind.

Alan Nadel observes the use of grid patterns in the film as well, particularly the instances involving Almásy.⁵² He points out that they "imply that he, and thus everyone who maps, is potentially subject to being mapped", which he indeed is when the British officers at El Taj assign him German nationality, and the British insignia on Madox's plane ascribe him British nationality in the eyes of the Germans that shoot him down (Nadel 30). In this light, his 'name', and title of book and film, "English Patient", is highly ironic. Having worked on the side of the British, of the colonists, before the war, his "nominal identification with England [in fact] renders him its colonial subject, completely dependent on the English for care and for identity. He thereby manifests the hybridity that for Homi Bhabha defines the colonial subject's position" (Nadel 30. Cf. also Ty 31).

In the novel, his inversion of roles to the Other, the Patient, is underlined by numerous references to the dark colour of his skin, which is described as "black" (e.g. 3, 174, 247, 294), "dark" (e.g. 4, 174, 298), "pure carbon" (109), or "ebony" (48). In

⁵¹ There, it is thematised too, for instance when Hana gazes on Kip's body (cf. p. 67 of this paper), which fixes him in a romantic vision of Asia; or, more implicitly, in the Patient's detailed descriptions of the desert, but the motif is more complex and appears in other contexts as well (cf. footnote 49).

⁵² They include, in addition to those mentioned above, the cross beams in the ceiling of his room in the monastery through which he is looked at by Hana.

the film, the Patient is not black, probably because this would seem too gruesome or unrealistic (his healed skin would not look black). Still, due to the visual nature of film, it suffices that he looks very different from his remembered self Almásy to evoke the notion of two distinct characters. He clearly does not look like a ‘normal’ person but rather resembles a creature from a horror movie (cf. Ty 14). Thus, the film clearly follows the novel in establishing the Patient as an Other, who is – due to his own desire to map and possess – marked by the nations struggling for power.

As we have seen, cartography and mapping feature in the film adaptation in a notable way. Although the complexity of the motif is diminished – necessarily so since verbal descriptions and commentary (like those quoted in footnote 48) suggest themselves for omission when adapting for a visual medium – the filmmakers created a few visual references to the novel’s motif that double as carriers of intertextuality.

7 Landscape

7.1 Tuscany

When comparing the two narrative strands of the film and their respective landscapes, the difference in colour and light inevitably catches the eye. To Eleanor Ty, the contrasting background colours “highlight the contrast between the relatively stark and threadbare existence of the present and the sumptuous gaiety of the past. Greys dominate the rooms of the villa while the past is lit by the oranges, yellows, and reds of the desert, the campfire, and the elegant upper-class world in which the Cliftons move” (Ty 13). This cinematic rendition reflects the novel’s description since there also, the villa and its surroundings represent the (post-) war situation characterised by devastation, danger, and hardship. The darker and more natural quality of the Tuscany narrative’s film footage, however, also underlines its green tones and thus its association with enduring fertility and hope.⁵³

⁵³ Note that the film ends with a hopeful vision of Hana’s departure – past cypress trees with the sun behind them – that suggests a new beginning.

In the novel, not only the desert landscape figures as an image of the timeless, universal, and borderless. The Tuscany setting on the one hand forms a contrast with the barren desert (death) in its association with the Garden of Eden (life), but at the same time, villa, garden and surrounding landscape parallel the desert in the blurriness of demarcation between them, which serves to mirror the blurred boundaries between past and present that are thematised in the novel: “Some rooms faced onto the valley with no walls at all. She would open a door and see just a sodden bed huddled against a corner, covered with leaves. Doors opened into landscape. Some rooms had become an open aviary” (13).⁵⁴ The villa’s openness extends beyond the garden, to the sky and to the forces of nature: “Some nights she opened doors and slept in rooms that had walls missing. She lay on the pallet on the very edge of the room, facing the drifting landscape of stars, moving clouds, wakened by the growl of thunder and lightning” (13). And further: “There seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth. To Hana the wild gardens were like further rooms. She worked along the edges of them aware always of unexploded mines” (43). It is notable that in this instance – in contrast to the desert – the near identity of house and landscape derives from their shared state of devastation. This fact serves to emphasise the all-encompassing devastation of the war.⁵⁵

In spite of this devastation, Ondaatje’s descriptions also suggest an association of the villa’s garden with the Garden of Eden, which it shares with the analogous image of the oasis Zerzura. The fruit and vegetables Hana plants provide the basic food for her and her companions, and the garden suggests a durable fertility: “In spite of the burned earth, in spite of the lack of water. Someday there would be a bower of limes, rooms of green light” (43). Just as in this quote the garden is associated with “rooms”, the Patient’s room is in turn described as “another garden – this one made up of trees and bowers painted over its walls and ceiling” (3).

⁵⁴ This description creates an analogy with Zerzura, which is also called “The Oasis of Little Birds” (136), and with the “street of parrots” (145 and 236) in Cairo, which marks the location of Almásy’s room.

⁵⁵ Josef Pesch (1997) even uses the term “post-apocalyptic” to describe the situation of the Tuscany narrative, drawing a connection also to the numerous biblical references in the novel.

In the film, the openness of the villa is presented visually in some instances. When Hana finds the piano in the remains of the library, the gaps in the walls are made strikingly apparent when a pan of the room imitates Hana's gaze, and are further emphasised when Kip climbs in over the rubble that used to be a wall. In another example, the reflection of the landscape outside is clearly visible on the pane of the open window in the Patient's room, thus being transported into the room itself, blurring the boundaries between inside and outside. Confined, however, to the square of the windowpane, this glimpse of nature also reminds the viewer of a painting – perhaps a reference to the garden painted on the walls of the room in the novel. At the same time, the shot creates a contrast between the whitewashed bareness of the Patient's room (a tomb for this living corpse) and the lush green scenery outside, thus highlighting his withdrawal from the world. Since for his film, Minghella chose to replace the novel's 'garden room' with the chapel – a way of visually including a replacement for the abundance of religious references and imagery of the novel, especially the Patient's association with a saint – the room becomes a "holy plac[e]" (260), and in contrast with the fertile landscape outside, a tomb, thus mirroring the Cave of Swimmers in the Sahara. The religious connotation also underpins the garden's association with Eden. It is visually presented as a fruitful place when Hana is shown gardening, and her flower dress further underlines this notion and her role as a healer and nurturer.

In the novel, the fountain outside the villa is a strong image that draws a parallel to the oasis Zerzura of the Egypt narrative and connotes its grounds with Eden. Even though any mention of Zerzura is missing in the film, the filmmakers obviously recognised the significance of the water motif⁵⁶ and included two bathing scenes in this narrative strand as well: Hana bathing in a bathtub outside (cf. her bath in the novel, p. 92) and Kip washing his hair, outside as well (cf. 217 in the novel). The large round water basin in the garden also figures as a fertility symbol, and is emphasised in a high angle shot when (in a sequence invented by Minghella) Hana,

⁵⁶ Kranz notes that with regard to the novel's liquid imagery, the film reproduces some scenes directly (e.g. Hana feeding a plum to the Patient or the frequent dispensing of liquid drugs to him and Caravaggio) and adds others, namely Katharine's and Almásy's bath in Cairo, Hana's gift of olive oil to Kip, or the villa community's dance in the rain (Kranz 109).

Kip, Hardy, and Carvaggio carry the Patient around it in the rain,⁵⁷ in a joyous parade reminiscent of a ritual rain dance.⁵⁸ It also refers back to an earlier example of the water motif in the film that Douglas Stenberg points out: “Almásy lies in cave water as the Bedouin doctor applies balm to his charred face” (256). In both cases, he is exposed to water as a healing element by those who care for him.

7.2 The Desert

In both novel and film, the desert plays an important role. For the novel, Whetter (446) even attests it one comparable to that of an additional character (cf. the chapter “Anthropomorphism/Geomorphology”). Jasper notes that *Sahara* means “the brown void” or “nothingness” in Arabic (153), and the desert indeed serves the function of a non-delineated space in the novel, as quotes like the following underline: “In the desert it is easy to lose a sense of demarcation” (18); “Here in the desert, which had been an old sea where nothing was strapped down or permanent, everything drifted” (22); and “it was a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names” (138).⁵⁹ To the Egyptians, death was the desert’s strongest connotation (Kjellsmoen 110), which is reflected in the

⁵⁷ This emphatic presentation of the basin’s circular shape suggests a connotation with the life cycle that further underlines the notion of fertility. In the novel, the well in the villa’s courtyard is placed in a cyclical structure when Kip climbs into it as into the underworld and emerges from it again as if reborn (221-22). Similar passages are when in the film he defuses a bomb in a hole filled with water (SP 123-27) and the rivers he has to climb into as a soldier in the novel (129).

⁵⁸ As Eleanor Ty points out, the rain scene also contains an intertextual reference to the classic film “Singin’ in the Rain” (a filmic substitute for the novel’s dense intertextuality), and functions as the film’s replicate for the united spirit expressed in Hana’s birthday dinner in the novel (Ty 18). It is thus a good example how in film adaptation, not only omissions but also the invention of new scenes can help abbreviate the chosen material by combining several aspects in one sequence.

⁵⁹ In this respect, it mirrors the Patient’s story, and his mode of storytelling corresponds to travelling through the desert. This notion is expressed in passages like, “Only desire makes the story errant, flickering like a compass needle. And this is the world of nomads in any case, an apocryphal story. A mind travelling east and west in the disguise of sandstorm” (248), and: “Hana sits by his bed, and she travels like a squire beside him during these journeys” (135). Of course, the desert’s lack of demarcation and permanency also reflect Almásy’s international ideal and the passing of time, connected to the difficulties of historiography and memory, and, on a metafictional level, of delineating characters and telling a fixed, linear story.

novel's portrayal of its barrenness (e.g. "In the desert you celebrate nothing but water" [23]) and destructive force (cf. sandstorms [137]).⁶⁰

What is most striking about the film's representation of landscape is the breathtaking photography of the desert. It not only serves as a background to the narrative but is also set off in all its beauty and diversity in numerous shots that emphasise it as a central motif. By combining various long to extreme long shots, including aerial shots, taken from different perspectives and in different areas of the desert, the photography succeeds in mediating a sense of vast, borderless, empty and barren space. But the desert also strongly figures as an image of (erotic) love in Minghella's film.

The most obvious and significant alteration in this respect is having an actual sandstorm take place. In the novel, the actual occurrence of a sandstorm is only briefly mentioned (137), but Hana reads a passage about different kinds of winds inserted in the Patient's copy of Herodotus (16-17), which is in part turned into Almásy's and Katharine's dialogue in the film (SP 68-69). As Gerald E. Forshey points out, by "transposing it to the sandstorm, Minghella makes it erotic" (94).

In the novel, the passage is loosely connected to the Patient's narration of his time with the Bedouin tribe that saved him. Before, he has so far told Hana that he crashed down burning into the desert, was found by nomadic Bedouins, and anointed by the mysterious healer. When Hana has finished reading the passage on winds, he begins again to talk about the Bedouin, describing what he knows about their culture from several books, maps, and rock engravings he has seen himself (18-19), continuing with the narration of his time with them, identifying guns, travelling, witnessing their customs (19-23). Placed in this context, the passage is not only a description of natural phenomena, but at the same time serves to illustrate the Bedouin's world of experience, interwoven as it is with myth and tradition.

In the film, what is preserved of the passage serves as an 'ice-breaker' between the lovers-to-be, offering Almásy an opportunity of showing off his

⁶⁰This notion is further underlined by Almásy's identification with the jackal-headed Egyptian god Anubis (258-59), the "awakener of souls in the afterlife" and also the "god of the displaced: travellers, orphans, and the lost" (Haswell & Edwards 132). Almásy actually means "jackal" in Hungarian (*ibid.*).

knowledge and entertaining the beautiful woman beside him.⁶¹ Thus, as the representation of Arab culture is generally reduced in the film, in this scene too, the primary centre of interest is love, and it shows “how readily even the non-narrative can be made into love stories” (Sadashige 251). However, having once chosen love for a central theme, using the idea of sandstorms as an image of passion, a natural force that ignores the limitations of society and nations, by incorporating an actual sandstorm into the narrative is a dexterous way of preserving a non-dialogue passage from the book. The filmmakers use cinematic techniques to underline the sandstorm’s force and dramatic and narrative significance. At the beginning of the sequence, a medium shot shows Katharine sitting on a dune at night, smoking and looking at the stars. The cigarette smoke and the flapping of the tarpaulin in the background foreshadow the approaching storm but seem innocent as yet. The tracks of Madox’s car, stretching into the distance, suggest the remaining team members’ isolated location far away from civilisation. When Almásy climbs up and warns her (“In a few minutes there will be no stars. The air is filling with sand”), a point-of-view long shot shows an ominous cloud on the distant dunes, beginning to cover the stars. This building-up of tension is followed by the sudden blow of the storm’s full force as a cut shows the team hurrying around against the wind, the air filled with sand and noise. Once Almásy and Katharine are virtually trapped inside the cabin of the car, the sudden diminishing of the storm’s noise and the obstruction of the view by the sand swirling outside the windows make the world disappear around them, and the natural timeless force of the storm – and the storms from the realm of history and myth Almásy speaks about – mirrors the passion they feel for each other. It is a passion that blurs all sense of orientation – just as the sandstorm blots out the stars and obstructs the view from the car. The invented episode thus also serves to visualise the notion expressed in the novel that “[i]n the desert it is easy to lose a sense of demarcation” (18). Subsequently, this is the sequence in which their passion breaks out physically for the first time. Almásy cannot help touching Katharine’s hair, and she puts out her hand, which is shown in a close-up tracing across the window: a

⁶¹ Katharine laughs at the name *Ghibli* and its supposed effect of producing a strange nervous condition.

caress meant for him, as is emphasised by the dissolve of this image into a close-up of the Patient lying in his bed in Tuscany, which for a second creates the illusion that she is stroking his face.

The sandstorm episode also serves to show that their small space does not grant them freedom from society, on which their forbidden love already has an impact: because they fell asleep lost in their own world, they miss Madox's car that passes them in the distance, and only in the last minute manage to rescue their companions from their buried vehicle. The two buried cars also symbolically connect with the Cave of Swimmers as foreboding images of entombment.

7.3 Anthropomorphism and Geomorphology

As Stenberg notes, the notion of “anthropomorphism and geomorphology [...] resonate[s] throughout the film” (Stenberg 257). In the novel, it is quite explicit: “that pure zone between land and chart between distances and legend between nature and storyteller. Sandford called it geomorphology” (246). In this quote, geomorphology serves as an image of Almásy's ideal of a world without nations, since the passage continues: “The place they had chosen to come to, to be their best selves, to be unconscious of ancestry” (ibid.). The desert especially is presented as a place that assimilates all who spend a long time there: “We disappeared into landscape” (139). In the film, a scene that echoes this notion is the farewell scene between Almásy and Madox. The latter deplores the necessity of abandoning the International Sand Club – “We didn't care about countries. Did we? Brits, Arabs, Hungarians, Germans. None of that mattered, did it? It was something finer than that” (SP 135) – and as a memory token of this ‘ideal’ time picks up a handful of sand as a symbol of this international group of people and puts it in his pocket (cf. SP 136).

In line with this idea is Darryl Whetter's observation, that in Ondaatje's novel, the desert functions as a body, a “character”, and an “unfinished companion” which encourages a “communal identity” (Wetter 446f.). His description is somewhat

vague, but the striking amount of references to the desert, its characteristics and how it affects the people who live in it indeed lend it a prominent status. There are certainly also instances where the desert is personified, like in the following: “Was I a curse upon them? For her? For Madox? For the desert raped by war, shelled as if it were just sand?” (257), and “the desert pulled down planes” (9).

Whetter also notes that in the novel, the Patient’s body is “frequently conflated with landscapes”, particularly a “desert landscape” (Whetter 446).⁶² But it is especially his emphatic love of and occupation with the desert, his solitary nature, and his hate of ownership and nations that create his association with this landscape. In the film, where his body is not black but the natural colour of skin – or sand – it can certainly evoke desert landscapes, and does so especially in the scene where Hana washes his chest, which lies open and is focussed on in close-ups.⁶³

However, it is Katharine who is predominantly associated with the desert landscape in the film. A visual connection between her and the desert is often created, which is certainly due to the fact that the shapes of the dunes can be easily matched with the curves of the female body. In the second love scene in Almásy’s room in Cairo, her naked body (he is wearing a shirt!), stretched out on the sheets and lit by a yellowish light, resembles the dunes of the desert and especially recalls the sensuous aerial images from the opening sequence. The fact that he, the desert explorer and mapmaker, ‘claims’ parts of her body further underlines this notion. As Stenberg observes, in this scene “Katharine’s back [also] resembles a mountain against the landscape of white sheets. This image recalls Almásy’s translated description ‘a mountain in the shape of a woman’s back’ as a plane descends bringing Katharine to the desert for the first time” (Stenberg 257; the description is an invention of the film). Sharyn Emery (211) also notes this description and its association with Katharine. She interprets it as a translation of the novel’s body/landscape theme, as it appears for instance when Almásy talks about Katharine saying, “How do I explain

⁶² E.g. “the hollow below the lowest rib, its cliff of skin” (4), and “He traces his black hand along the Nuni River till it enters the sea at 23°30’ latitude. He continues sliding his finger seven inches west, off the page, onto his chest; he touches his rib” (167).

⁶³ Hair and nipples gone in the fire, his flat, even chest also recalls the parchment onto which the swimmer is drawn in the opening sequence.

her to you? With the use of my hands? The way I can arc out in the air the shape of a mesa or rock?” (235). For even though Katharine’s element is water, she is paralleled to the desert in the novel too, namely in her relation to Almásy, since he loves them both (“I described the desert as purely as I would have spoken of her” [241]) and ‘maps’ them both in spite of his declared hate of ownership. Even when there is no discernible connection between a shot of the desert and Katharine’s body, John Seale’s photography is obviously designed to present it in all its stark beauty, thus making the spectator admire it like Almásy admires the beautiful Katharine. Note also that Kristin Scott Thomas is blonde, whereas in the novel no mention is made of the colour of Katharine’s hair. It is the hair of Almásy, the desert man, that is the colour of straw (cf. 153).

The novel draws a strong analogy between Katharine and the oasis Zerzura.⁶⁴ Thus, a great point is made of her relation to water, as she is “constantly described as a moist, wet creature, characteristics of femininity” (Emery 211): “But she was a woman who had grown up within gardens, among moistness [...]. She was always happier in rain, in bathrooms steaming with liquid air, in sleepy wetness, climbing back in from his window that rainy night in Cairo and putting on her clothes while still wet, in order to hold it all” (170). Even though the oasis Zerzura and thus Katharine’s association with it have been omitted in adapting the novel, Minghella preserved her association with water and gardens. The notion expressed in above quote from the novel, especially Katharine’s love for bathrooms, is transformed into a comment by Clifton in the film: “She’s in love with the hotel plumbing. She’s either in the swimming pool – she swims for hours, she’s a fish, quite incredible – or she’s in the bath” (SP 42). Another example is an invented scene that – like the dance in the rain – serves several purposes for the film’s narrative. Thus, the scene in Almásy’s bathtub figures as a substitute for the novel’s description of the bathing Arab woman after whom the oasis was named (cf. 153). In the same scene, to Almásy’s question

⁶⁴ For instance, both need to be found/conquered, and while Zerzura is called the “City of Acacias” (135), Katharine’s bones are compared to acacia twigs (175).

what she loves most, Katharine's first answer is "water" (SP 80).⁶⁵ In addition, at the Christmas dinner, she asks her husband: "Aren't you dying for green, anything green, or rain" (SP 86). Stenberg also notes that the pearls she often wears associate her with the sea (Stenberg 256).⁶⁶ In the Tuscany narrative, the association remains, and when the Patient, the lover of deserts, says he is "dying for rain. I'm dying anyways, but I long for the rain on my face" (SP 88) this longing is in fact an expression of his longing for Katharine.

The novel, which generally assigns Almásy to the desert and Katharine to water, makes a point of connecting the two by means of symbolism and imagery. Thus, the desert is often termed the "Sand Sea" (5, 135, 150, 163), and the shared characteristics of sand and water, desert and sea figure in several passages, for instance, "I came out of the air and crashed into the desert, into those troughs of yellow, all I kept thinking was, I must build a raft... I must build a raft. And here, though I was in the dry sands, I knew I was among water people" (18), and, "Here in the desert, which had been an old sea where nothing was strapped down or permanent, everything drifted" (22). What links the two seeming opposites is their elemental force, their timelessness, and their lack of boundaries and demarcation.

In the film, too, the Cave of Swimmers attests the presence of a lake in prehistoric times. Furthermore, the significant opening sequence draws a connection by including the superimposition of a swimming figure on the wave-like ripples of sand dunes. Thus a symbolic union of the two (seemingly) contrary elements, which represent the two sexes, is created here as well, at least in these two instances.

⁶⁵ Other functions include pointing out Almásy's hate of ownership. When Katharine asks what he hates most, he replies: "Ownership. *Being owned*. When you leave, you should forget me" (SP 81, my emphasis). That Almásy's idealistic hate of ownership is in fact one-sided is made at least as explicit in the film as in the novel, and is again thematised in the second love encounter in his room: "I claim this shoulder blade – no, wait – I want – turn over – I want this! [...] This place, I love this place, what's it called – this is mine! I'm going to ask the king permission to call it the *Almásy Bosphorous*" (SP 92). And Katharine replies teasingly: "I thought you were against ownership?" (ibid.). This scene is a transformation into dialogue of the novel's passage, "This is my shoulder, he thinks, not her husband's, this is my shoulder" (156). Note that what is only called "Bosphorus" in the novel (236) becomes *Almásy Bosphorus* in the film to underline his desire to own Katharine.

⁶⁶ Examples include her earrings in the dancing scene and her prominent double necklace at her walk across town with Almásy (cf. the stills in the screenplay, SP 45 and 94).

8 The Dramatisation of Love in the Film

Up to this point, we have in many instances observed that while some aspects and themes of the novel have been reduced or even eliminated, the theme of love and passion is emphasised in the film version of *The English Patient*. However one may evaluate this alteration, it seems now fruitful to have a closer look at how the filmmakers used the options and techniques of film to achieve this. Bronwen Thomas notes an alteration of the screenplay, namely that the Cliftons did not meet in college as is the case in the novel, but have been friends since childhood. As Thomas points out, this subtle change means that “their relationship is couched in a kind of innocence, like brother and sister, thereby throwing into sharp relief the fervent, often violent passion shared by Katharine and Almásy” (204). This observed, a closer look at two exemplary scenes from the film will now show in more detail how love and passion are dramatised in the film. Both were chosen for their visual and/or auditory prominence. In addition, they do not, or not directly, appear in the novel. As a result, even though connections will be drawn to the novel, the issue of what has got ‘lost’ or altered in this particular episode does not get in the way of focussing on the specifically cinematic techniques.

In the novel, Almásy and Katharine’s affair is described as very passionate: “They were bent over like animals” (149); “She always had the desire to slap him, and she realized even that was sexual” (150). In the film, the lovemaking scene at the Christmas party is a good example of how cinematic techniques can be used to stage passion. Walter Murch informs us that Minghella gave very detailed instructions to the actors, so that they could concentrate on the acting, not having to invent or compose the movements themselves (cf. Ondaatje 2002: 306). The juxtaposition of shots of the noisy party in bright sunlight in the courtyard and the dim interior space where nonetheless the sounds from outside are still audible establishes the location of their encounter as a semi-public place. As Murch notes (ibid.), this creates great

tension, since they are always on the verge of being caught, which would be a disaster.

The complexity of the physical geography of the party is accompanied by a similarly complex soundscape (cf. *ibid.*), made up of an orchestral love theme, Arabic music, and people singing Christmas carols, improbably, in Cairo, all to be heard at the same time. Sometimes, one is more powerful than the others, so that, as Ondaatje observes, “we *hear* the shift in the power structure of the various emotions” (2002: 304, original emphasis). The music is carefully edited to underline the growing intensity of their passion. At first, only a very faint Arab singing is heard that still leaves the small sounds of their movements, like the rustle of clothing, audible to highlight the almost hypnotic silence between them and create a growing tension. When the singing of “Silent Night” sets in, it not only creates harmonic dissonance; this European song for a Christian holiday contrasts with the Arab music and location, with the time of day (“Night”), and with the emotional and sexual arousal of the couple (“Silent”). Its religious nature also marks them as ‘sinners’, a notion also expressed in the novel: “Sinners in a holy city” (154). All these contrasts serve to emphasise their dangerous breach with social rules. The orchestral theme sets in the moment when Almásy pushes Katharine’s skirt up her leg, thus marking the ‘point of no return’. Murch points out that he came up with the idea to include the sound of a cupboard banging because it “accentuates the rhythm of the lovemaking, but also adds an element of danger – they are making a sound that can be heard” (Ondaatje 2002: 306). Visually, a stroke from Katharine’s shoulder across her collarbone, shown in close-up, conjures up earlier images that associate her body with the desert landscape, like the opening sequence, the scene after the sandstorm when Almásy runs his forearm across her neck, and the second love scene in Almásy’s room, where he ‘claims’ parts of her body. Like in the latter two scenes, the gesture draws attention to her suprasternal notch, the “Almásy Bosphorus”, an important motif in the film (taken from the novel [cf. 236, 241]) that contributes to her association with water and – in the film’s visual language – the curved dunes of the desert. At the same time, as pointed out earlier, it is a marker of Almásy’s desire to ‘own’ her. This urge to possess is obvious in this scene also for the fact that we always see *him*

touching *her* skin (emphasised by close-ups), not vice versa, the strongest gesture being when he almost violently sticks his thumb into her mouth. As becomes clear when Clifton joins her afterwards, Almásy has even left his mark in the form of marzipan in her hair.

One of the film's aesthetic tableaux that stay in mind is the sequence that shows Almásy carrying Katharine from the plane to the cave (cf. also Thomas 198). Underlined by dramatic orchestral music, the camera shows the couple in mostly medium long shots from different angles, setting off the white parachute Katharine is wrapped in against the ochres of the rock. The white cloth, blowing behind in the wind and later covering her in the cave, is both bridal dress and shroud, and the long walk on the ledge of the rock massif, Almásy carrying his lover in his arms, simultaneously invokes a walk down the aisle and a funeral train. Thus, the cave becomes both church and tomb, and prefigures an eternal union in death that is later suggested in the concluding flight sequence over the desert at the moment of the Patient's death. The scene recalls the novel's passage, "I carried Katharine Clifton into the desert, where there is the communal book of moonlight. We were among the rumour of wells. In the palace of winds" (261).

The novel presents us with quite a different image of the plane flight in one of its most poetic passages, when the falling-apart of Katharine's body evokes a sense of separation and transience: "She collapses – acacia twigs, leaves, the branches that were shaped into arms uncoiling around him. Limbs begin disappearing in the suck of air [...] He is old. Suddenly. Tired of living without her. [...] He has no one. He is exhausted not from the desert but from solitude. Madox gone. The woman translated into leaves and twigs" (175). As Emery observes, however, her falling apart and disappearing make her body at the same time become "an eternal part of the desert's landscape". Ironically, "the body he [Almásy] sought to own is now part of a land he believed could never be possessed" (Emery 212). What the novel makes clearer than the film, then, is the notion that what Almásy realised about the desert, that it could never be owned, holds true for people as well. Even though he "believed he owned her body, her heart, and her name, yet he was as foolish as those he condemned for

thinking they could own the desert. He could no more own his beloved Katharine than he could the desert that he also loved” (Emery 213).

The filmmakers, in many instances besides the ones examined here, prove a high level of proficiency in effectively utilising the technical means of film to emotionally engage their audience through the effects of visual and musical aesthetics and dynamics.

V Conclusion

If one is adapting a novel characterised by a highly poetic *language* into a medium in which language is primarily restricted to dialogue, it goes without saying that the applicability of the ‘fidelity principle’ is very limited. In the theory section we have gained an overview of what can only in inverted commas be described as film’s ‘language’. And the filmmakers of *The English Patient* clearly tried to exploit the range of visual and auditory possibilities of film to a large extent in order to create not a ‘literary’ film with excessive use of dialogue and voice-over but a truly *cinematic* one. In this context, the comparison with the novel has revealed that many of the changes made in the process of scriptwriting, production, and editing resulted from the necessities of the medium, and specifically the genre of melodrama that was chosen. Central problematic fields in film adaptation in general and the adaptation of Ondaatje’s novel in particular have become apparent.

The aspects of structure and perspective, connected to the thematisation of the nature of memory, the process of remembering, and the relationship between past and present are prominent features in this particular novel, and accordingly the issue of how and to what effect they are reflected in the film was examined closely. With regard to framing, the film’s emphasis on the Almásy-Katharine love story becomes obvious in the very first sequence, which, as opposed to the novel, shows the couple flying over a sensuous desert landscape, and is repeated at the end of the film. It is arguable whether emotional involvement is more important in film than in literature

and if so whether this is due to its higher immediacy or to viewing conventions. In the case of the film *The English Patient*, at any rate, much effort was put into drawing the audience into the love story emotionally, and doing so from the very beginning and throughout the film by using the memory/flashback structure to create a sense of nostalgia and by employing the effects of visual and musical aesthetics.

It was to be expected that the unusual formal features of Ondaatje's novel would not go unscathed in the process of screen adaptation. The different mode of reception makes a non-linear narrative structure more problematic in film, so that the fragmentation caused by the flashback structure, alternating between two narrative strands, is probably as much complexity as a mainstream audience can be exposed to without risking box office failure, especially if the film is not a low-budget production. There are, after all, still more than forty time transitions in the film (cf. Ondaatje 2002: 129). To make up in part for smoothening out the narrative structure, however, specifically cinematic techniques were employed. A prominent instance are the meticulously worked transitions between events in Egypt and Italy, using dissolves, graphic matches, and sound bridges. In the novel, hints as to what triggers a specific memory are usually not given, which adds to the text's fragmentary nature and invites the reader to discover connections and parallels on the levels of content and imagery themselves. The filmmakers, on the other hand, acknowledging the reduced room for reflection given a cinema audience, chose instead to imitate the process of conjuring up memories and draw direct connections between the 'present' and 'past' of the film's narrative. The use of imagery and sound is also noteworthy in that respect. Visual and auditory motifs were employed analeptically or proleptically to blend the boundaries between past and present, producing a sense of continuity that we also observed in the novel, or across the two diegetic levels to establish links between them.

While Caravaggio's missing thumbs explicitly figure as enigmatic makers of personal experience and historical context in the film, the role of the body motif in placing the love story of Almásy and Katharine in the context of human history is reduced in favour of stressing the significance and intensity of their love. The

Patient's body is due to the visual unambiguousness of film as fixed as his remembered self Almásy, in contrast to the novel's elusive title character.

The novel's multiperspectivity had to be sacrificed in the film in order to concentrate on the central love story and the Tuscany narrative. Film techniques are used effectively to reproduce Almásy's and Hana's point of view. Especially the sequence after the plane crash at the beginning does so to a very high degree, thus reproducing some of the sense of disorientation that is transported in the novel's corresponding passages.

The history/historiography motif is subordinated to the love theme as well. Even though Herodotus's *Histories*, supplemented by Almásy's own contributions, remains in the film, it does so primarily in physical form. The work's content is only hinted at when he talks about the different storms. More importantly, it is not mirrored in the structure of the film itself as is the case in the novel, where this double image stresses the point that history is not solely about the stories of great men or great events, nor is it linear or can once and for all be fixed in a definite discourse, but is rather made up of myriads of individual fates whose memories emerge in fragments, and their order and meaning is constructed. Historiography, and narration in general, is presented not as a means of *fixing* the 'truth' but as an ongoing process trying to *uncover* it. The result of the film's linearised structure, then, is that it contributes to expressing an altered view on history and memory.

Thematically connected to the uncovering of the past and its meaning is the construction of identity. In the film, too, the Patient does not know at the beginning who he is and what he experienced, but the linearity with which the pieces of his past come back to him, along with the omission of the novel's repetitions and digressions suggests they were not as deeply buried after all, and that their cohesion is inherent and simple. No effort seems to be required for constructing an identity out of incoherent experiences, bits one has read, places one has seen, and people one has met. The prolepsis of the flying sequence at the opening of the film and the determinacy of the visual image further reduce the Patient's enigma, since his remembered self is physically established before he has even assumed his role of 'rememberer'.

A crucial obstacle in adapting a novel for the screen is length. To make a 150-minute film (already much longer than the average) based on a 300-page novel inevitably requires drastic abbreviation, be it regarding story events, dialogue, commentary or descriptive detail. As the chapter “Making of” described and various sections in the analysis illustrated in detail, *The English Patient* is no exception. That something had to be omitted is beyond question. But there is always an infinite number of possible choices of what is left out and what is not, and they have very different effects. What is the result of the specific narrative omissions that were made in this particular film? The filmmakers obviously followed the conventions of narrative film for the adaptation of literature in deciding on a *central narrative*, in this case the Almásy-Katharine romance, and another, the Tuscany narrative, placed as ‘frame’ around it (cf. Forshey 92). Including more narratives would have meant sacrificing much detail on the individual diegetic levels, which is problematic especially if the aim is strong emotional involvement.

We have looked in detail especially at the omissions regarding the character Kip, since they are the most obvious and drastic. Of the novel’s main characters, he is the one representing a colonial subject and ethnic Other torn between loyalty to the colonists and love for their culture on the one hand, and an awareness of cultural difference, prejudice, and unequal treatment on the other. To reduce the role of this character means to omit Ondaatje’s postcolonial comment, silencing one of the “supplementary [voices] to the main argument” (119) that form the structure at the heart of the novel. The point that is made by the film’s portrayal of his relationship with Hana (and also Bermann and Kamal’s) is – less complex and in line with its overall thematic focus – that love can overcome cultural and racial boundaries, a message that is visualised for instance by the sharing of condensed milk and olive oil, and in the chapel scene.

Naturally, due to the visual nature of film, the Arab Orient is always in the frame when events take place in that setting, and as a result references may not be as subtly woven into the fabric of the narrative as is the case in the novel. It serves as an exotic backdrop for the central love story that is designed to satisfy the desire for a

“pseudonostalgic longing for a time and place other than one’s own” (Huggan qtd. in Ty 19).

The reduction of the embedded tales and memory fragments of the other characters of the novel to the single one of the Patient, along with the fact that the vast majority of flashbacks are clearly marked as memories, not narration, moves the novel’s metafictionality to the background as the centrality of the narrative act is subdued. In the novel, where one of the Patient’s functions is to embody an allegorical storyteller (an “Opener of Ways” mirroring the novel’s Narrator, cf. Haswell & Edwards), it is lifted to the foreground in several instances.⁶⁷ It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the film includes a few instances of metafiction in its own way. Since film does not have a narrator in the sense that literature does, who can emerge like on the closing pages of Ondaatje’s novel, it makes indeed sense to refrain from attempting fidelity and develop an alternative, film-specific strategy. The combination of the cartography motif with a framing and editing that replicates the cinematic gaze, along with a few interfilmic references may be more difficult to discern than the novel’s metafiction, but is nonetheless an adequate strategy since it makes use of what cinematic specificity offers.

With regard to landscape, it is self-evident that symbolic features are often difficult to discern in the film, since (as we also observed regarding the Oriental setting) it is inevitably always in the frame, and mere visual representation tells less about what is displayed than the nuances of verbal description. The connotation of the Tuscan villa’s garden with Eden, however, emphasised by the lush green tones and the inclusion of water motifs, becomes quite clear. The stunning photography of the desert not only sets off its beauty but transports a sense of vastness that echoes the novel’s portrayal of the desert as a symbol of “an earth that had no maps” (261), although this sense is naturally not as fine-grained as in the novel. The notion of anthropomorphism/geomorphology is well adjustable to the visual medium. It is, however, especially realised with regard to the female body, whose shapes can be

⁶⁷ E.g.: “It was important during such evenings to *proceed* into the plot of the evening” (245, orig. emphasis); “*Death means you are in the third person*” (247, orig. italics); “You must talk to me, Caravaggio. Or am I just a book?” (253).

easily parallelised with the dunes of the desert. With regard to the novel's ownership theme, this constitutes an effective reproduction especially in combination with the frequent use of grid patterns. Female sensuousness is, however, highly emphasised by the film in line with its focus on the love story. As Jaireth says, "the film romanticises the 'epic' struggle of a nationless, borderless and nameless explorer" who "loves 'his' woman as much as he loves 'his' desert. For him the two are the same, to be mapped, name and owned. To die for her is to die exploring for inland seas, 'undiscovered' oases, caves, and origins of rivers" (Jaireth 74).

The question of how the film stages its central focus, love and passion, revealed that its makers indeed orchestrated various cinematic techniques quite effectively. For example, visual features of setting and props are used for symbolism (e.g. Katharine's 'shroud/bridal dress' thrown against the relief of the rock massif). The crucial feature of music, that it expresses and evokes emotions, is utilised extensively (e.g. in the Christmas scene). In fact, throughout the film, visual and musical aesthetics and dynamics are employed to emotionally engage the audience.

To conclude by referring back to the quote from the very beginning of this paper, it has become apparent in the comparison that "translations of form and emphasis" (Ondaatje 1997: viii) are inevitable and necessary in any adaptation to a different medium. As Forshey observes, films normally

require a central narrative, characters with clear intentions and images to communicate the ideas and powers within its story – things the novel *The English Patient* did not have. The act of adapting is as much one of the imagination as the act of imagining a new story. Minghella took a central narrative and by adding, subtracting and rearranging, gave his audience a new experience. (Forshey 97-98)

This new experience may suggest that the tragic, exotic, and passionate love story is "the story worth telling, the story Hana remembers and is projected into the young woman's future in an endless dream-world of sentiment" (Shin 231). But one must not forget that a film adaptation can never be anything but a film *based on* a work of literature, to a more or less faithful degree. How exactly a particular adaptation turns out to be is in the end the decision of its makers, dependent on their personal reading

of the novel and the circumstances and aims of the production, and whether it is worth watching depends on the personal taste of the viewers. The comparison of the two ‘versions’ can, however, serve to highlight the specific means of film to narrate, signify, and engage. It can also tell us something about the novel’s degree of literary specificity. An adaptation of a novel characterised by a language as intricate and poetic and a structure as complex as Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* can, it seems, hardly achieve comparable results.

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Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache

Die vorliegende Arbeit vergleicht den Roman *The English Patient* (1992) von Michael Ondaatje mit seiner Verfilmung (1996, Buch/Regie: Anthony Minghella). Zunächst werden als Hintergrundinformation kurze Einblicke in Ondaatjes Biografie und die Entstehungsgeschichte des Films gegeben. Der eigentliche Theorieteil ist in zwei Abschnitte gegliedert. Der erste widmet sich der ‚Sprache‘ des Films, indem er einen Überblick über die wichtigsten Aspekte und Techniken filmischen Gestaltens und Erzählens, sowie ihre Wirkung und Einsatzmöglichkeiten liefert, die in der Analyse eine Rolle spielen werden. Der zweite Abschnitt des Theorieteils befasst sich konkret mit dem Thema Literaturverfilmung. Nach einem Abriss über die Beziehung zwischen Literatur und Film werden die beiden zentralen Prinzipien, die im Vergleich von Filmen mit ihren literarischen Vorlagen im Zentrum stehen, diskutiert: die Werktreue auf der einen und die Spezifität des Mediums Film auf der anderen Seite. Die Analyse vergleicht Film und Romanvorlage im Hinblick auf einige ausgewählte Aspekte. Da Erinnern, auch in Bezug auf die narrative Struktur, eine große Rolle in beiden Werken spielt, wird diesem Thema ein längerer Abschnitt gewidmet, der die unterschiedliche Rahmenstruktur, allgemeine Erzählstruktur, die Verbindung zwischen den Erzählebenen und die Funktion des Körpers als Erinnerungsträger analysiert. Es zeichnet sich hier bereits ab, dass der Film sich stark auf die in Rückblenden erzählte Liebesgeschichte zwischen den Charakteren Almásy und Katharine konzentriert. So wird beispielsweise eine Szene aus diesem Erzählstrang an Anfang und Ende des Films als Rahmen eingesetzt, was im Roman nicht der Fall ist. Abgesehen vom Rahmen ist die fragmentarische, nichtlineare Erzählstruktur des Romans für den Film geglättet worden, was sich einerseits mit dem stärkeren Erzählruck bei der Filmrezeption erklären lässt. Es hat jedoch auch zur Folge, dass die Vergangenheit, wie sie dem Erinnernden erscheint, als eindeutig, festgelegt und verfügbar erscheint, was dem im Roman gezeichneten Erinnerungsbild widerspricht. Die oft gezogenen Verbindungen zwischen Gegenwart und Vergangenheit, im Roman beispielsweise durch sprachliche Mittel, wiederkehrende Motive oder parallele Figurenkonstellationen realisiert, finden sich im Film zum einen in den Übergängen zwischen den Erzählebenen wieder (z.B. Überblenden mit *graphic matches* und *sound bridges*), zum anderen werden vor allem Klangmotive eingesetzt. Die Erzählperspektive ist ein weiterer wichtiger Punkt im Vergleich. Die Ambiguität der Erinnerungspassagen des Patienten ist sprachlicher Natur und lässt sich demnach nicht in filmische Mittel übertragen. Jedoch werden point-of-view-

Techniken eingesetzt, um Fokalisierung zu produzieren. Die Multiperspektivität des Romans ist – aufgrund notwendiger Kürzungen – im Film im Wesentlichen auf Almásy und Hana reduziert. In Bezug auf die Thematisierung von Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung fällt auf, dass zwar einige Verweise auf vergangene Zeiten und den historischen Kontext der Handlung im Film vorkommen; im Allgemeinen ist dieser Aspekt jedoch stark reduziert, was sich vor Allem am Motiv der *Historien* von Herodot zeigt, welches im Film primär als eine Art persönliches Tagebuch dazu dient, die Geschichte einer großen Liebe festzuhalten. Ein sehr auffälliger Unterschied zwischen Roman und Film ist die starke Reduzierung der Figur Kip in der Filmadaption, die vor Allem durch das Wegfallen der Rückblenden in seine Vergangenheit zustande kommt. Dadurch wird der postkoloniale Aspekt des Romans auf ein Minimum reduziert, und die Figur dient primär exotischer Ästhetik und der Darstellung eines idealistisch-friedlichen Umgangs zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen. Auch der arabische Orient dient primär als exotischer Hintergrund, der die Leidenschaft der Liebenden untermalt und ihren Ehebruch rechtfertigt. Die Darstellung und Funktion von Landschaft ist wohl der Bereich, in dem der Film am Meisten glänzen kann, und er tut dies in beeindruckenden Aufnahmen insbesondere der Wüste, die ihre Funktion als Symbol für Grenzen- und Nationslosigkeit unterstreichen. Auch das Verschmelzen von Mensch und Landschaft lässt sich gut in das visuelle Medium übertragen. Hier fällt insbesondere die Parallelisierung von Dünenlandschaft und (Katharines) weiblichem Körper auf, die visuell naheliegend ist und besonders das Motiv der Inbesitznahme seitens Almásys aus dem Roman aufgreift.

Abschließend lässt sich sagen, dass der Film sich einerseits oft um Werktreue bemüht, indem die Handlung der beiden Erzählebenen im Kern mit der Vorlage übereinstimmt und einige Motive und Bilder des Romans direkt übernommen bzw. in die Filmsprache ‚übersetzt‘ werden. Andererseits zeigt sich, dass die unterschiedliche Natur der beiden Medien deutliche Änderungen nötig machte. So waren Kürzungen und eine Reduzierung der erzählerischen Komplexität unumgänglich. Auch speziell literarische Merkmale des Romans, wie beispielsweise das häufige ‚Verwischen‘ von Zeiten und die poetische Sprache lassen sich nicht auf vergleichbare Weise filmisch umsetzen und können nur annäherungsweise durch Klang- oder Bildmotive bzw. eine ästhetische Bildkomposition ersetzt werden.