UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

***THE ENGLISH PATIENT*: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN ONDAATJE'S NOVEL AND MINGHELLA'S FILM**

por

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Dissertação submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina em cumprimento parcial dos requisitos para obtenção do grau de

MESTRE EM LETRAS

MARÇO /2005

Esta dissertação de **Neide Garcia Pinheiro**, intitulada *The English Patient*: National Identity and Nationalism in Ondaatje's Novel and Minghella's Film, foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

MESTRE EM LETRAS

Área de concentração: Inglês e Literatura Correspondente
Opção: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa

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Florianópolis, 31 de março de 2005.

For Ravilso, Alexandre, Eduardo and Leonardo.

For Dolores, Marilda and all the family.

For Irene because she has been taking care of all of us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank:

The coordinators of the MINTER project who gave me the opportunity to participate in the program.

The team of PGI (UFSC) and Divisão de Mestrado(UNICENTRO).

My advisor, Professor Anelise Reich Corseuil, who promptly assisted me whenever necessary. Her efficiency, support, dedication and friendship were fundamental to the accomplishment of this research.

The members of the examining committee, Professors Maria Lucia Milleo Martins and Mail Marques de Azevedo, whose suggestions enriched this research.

The Professors of PGI, whose image of committed professionals will guide my teaching practice.

My family and friends for all the support they provided me.

My parents, who are not here anymore. However, because they guided me in my first steps, they are responsible for this accomplishment.

ABSTRACT

THE ENGLISH PATIENT: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN ONDAATJE'S NOVEL (1992) AND MINGHELLA'S FILM (1996)

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2005

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The objective of this study is to analyse how Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992) portrays issues of nationalism and national identity, and interrelated issues such as boundaries and cartography. The study also aims at analysing how such issues are translated into the film adaptation of the novel. The analysis of *The English Patient* (1996) filmic version, directed by Anthony Minghella, leads to the conclusion that, besides the direct references to nationalism, national identity and interrelated themes, the film is also successful in the portrayal of such issues through the use of filmic elements, namely mise-en-scene, sound, editing and cinematography.

Número de páginas: 83
Número de palavras: 25745

RESUMO

THE ENGLISH PATIENT: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN ONDAATJE'S NOVEL AND MINGHELLA'S FILM

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O objetivo deste estudo é analisar como o romance *O Paciente Inglês* (1992) de Michael Ondaatje retrata questões de identidade nacional e nacionalismo, bem como temas interrelacionados, tais como cartografia e fronteiras. Este estudo tem ainda por objetivo investigar de que maneira tais questões são apresentadas na adaptação homônima para o cinema, dirigida por Anthony Minghella, em 1996. A análise leva à conclusão de que além das referências diretas a nacionalismo e identidade nacional, o filme aborda esses conceitos através do uso de elementos cinematográficos, tais como som, mise-en-scene, cinematografia e edição.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

"Right from the start I was aware that it was a very political book" (72). Thus, as cited by John Bolland in *The English Patient a Reader's Guide*, Michael Ondaatje defines his novel *The English Patient.* Written in 1992, this novel is one of his most successful works to date, being the winner of the Canada Governor General's Prize, the Trillium Award, and co-winner of the Booker Prize in 1992. In the endorsements page of the Vintage edition of *The English Patient,* Toni Morrison describes the novel as "Profound, mysterious, and heart-quickening." Nevertheless, despite its great success, and perhaps due to it, there have been diverse responses to the novel, whose very distinct features make it a complex work of art.

Ondaatje first wrote poetry. Some of the issues he explored were the values of community, the source of these values set against the historical past, and the power of myth. Many of the thematic and aesthetic concerns of his poetry are reflected in his later fictional work, including *The English Patient.* Whitney Balliet, quoted in Bolland, declares that the novel has "passages of such finesse and vividness that they become part of us" (77). Contrasting to Balliet's appraisal of the novel's language, Nicholas Spice, as cited by Bolland, comments that the novel's images are unsuccessful, "since for figurative language to succeed it must work at the level of ordinary meaning as well as allusion" (77). Bolland himself disagrees with Spice asserting he "ignores the role of specific figures within the novel's wider symbolic and thematic structure and in establishing an emotional color and distinctive narrative voice [. . .]" (77).

If the poetic language in *The English Patient* has troubled the critics, the novel's narrative structure is another feature that has received different responses. Ondaatje's novel is notable for the disruption of linear and causal sequence, presenting a very fragmented narrative. According to Hilary Mantel, the novel creates "a still center, to let

the narrative ripple around it: this is a useful, graceful technique. Strangely it is here that grace fails. Ondaatje's narrative becomes uneven, unresolved, unsatisfactory. It is [. . .] as if the power that should belong in the story had drained away "(Cited in Bolland 78). Differently from Mantel's commentary, Tom Clarke argues that the novel is a postmodernist narrative with a complex "layering of structural figures," (Bolland 78) and, as Bolland himself emphasises, such a layering takes place with a "deliberate disruption of linear sequence" (78). Ondaatje also disrupts his narrative with the collage of other numerous discourses such as, for instance, poetry, lyrics, as well as geographic, historic, cartographic and military accounts.

Citing reviewers such as Craig Seligman, Hilary Mantel and Bill Flederus, Bolland comments on the responses to the novel's characterization, as well. Seligman asks, "are the characters supposed to represent individuals, or are they abstractions?" (79) By her turn, Mantel has found the characters under-realized, concluding that they are "wraiths freighted with abstraction, weighed down with portent" (79). Bill Flederus answers these charges, arguing, "But to take Ondaatje's novel on its own terms requires accounting for its allegiance to Arthurian romance and myth. And in many cases characters are secondary to structure in romance " (79).

Arthurian romance and myth is one of the intertexts present in *The English Patient.* Indeed, one of the novel's features is the introduction of a great number of intertexts. In *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics,* Burgoyne et al refer to intertextuality as a term that "began with Kristeva's translation of the Bakhtinian notion of DIALOGISM [. . .] [which is] the necessary relation of any utterance to other utterances" (203). Burgoyne also presents Genette's definition of intertextuality as the "effective co-presence of two texts " (206). In other words, intertextuality assumes that a text has elements that derive from previous texts, namely themes, narrative structure,

or characterization. Thus, as Bolland remarks, intertextuality "challenges the assumption that the author is sole source of the text's meaning " (54).

Bolland comments that the Arthurian legends introduce the character of the Fisher King, who is severely injured and impotent, and whose lands are devastated and sterile. The myth of the Fisher King also relates the ravage of his land and his injury to political and moral guilt. In Ondaatje's novel it is possible to recognize some of the above patterns. For instance, the patient is severely injured, immovable, lying on his bed like a king. He reflects the ravaged landscape destroyed by war. Like the Fisher King, the English patient suffers from political and moral guilt, due to his involvement with the forces of destruction.

Despite its similarities with the Grail legends and myths of fertility common to the Arthurian Cycle, no explicit references to this cycle are made in *The English Patient*. Nonetheless, there are other intertexts to which Ondaatje's novel refers straightforwardly, namely Herodotus' *The Histories* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim.* These two specific intertexts are to be given particular attention in this study of *The English Patient.* The references to Herodotus' work show the importance of history in Ondaatje's novel. *Kim* is "an example of what Edward Said has defined as Orientalism, a style of thought which assumes, as a fundamental ground of knowledge and reality, that there is a distinction between East and West" (Bolland 58). One of the ways in which Ondaatje's *The English Patient* dialogues with *Kim* is through a subversion of the defence of British colonialism in India in Kipling's novel.

Besides all the novel's features presented above, Ondaatje's *The English Patient* also combines different genres. The endorsements page of the novel presents the following definition from the *Chicago Tribune: The English Patient* is "an adventure, mystery, romance and philosophical novel in one [. . .] Michael Ondaatje is a novelist

with the heart of a poet." Thus, maybe the divergent responses to the language and structure of the novel are due in great part to the novel's crossing of generic boundaries, which makes it difficult to establish in what terms one is supposed to judge *The English Patient*. Such crossing is characteristic of Ondaatje's writing. In "(De) Facing the Self: Michael Ondaatje and (Auto) Biography", analysing Ondaatje's previous novel *Running in The Family*, W. M Verhoeven argues, "Ondaatje does not formally distinguish between writing fiction, biography, and autobiography, which accounts for the notorious generic indefinableness of his work" (183). Thus, *The English Patient* is notable for incorporating elements of various genres, namely epistolary novel, historical novel, colonial novel, detective story, and magical realism.

This rejection of following one specific genre, as well as other features of the novel, is probably connected to one particular reason. As cited in Bolland, Geetha Ganapathy- Dore relates Ondaatje's concern with the "international bastards, products of heterogeneous cultural influences, to his rejection of stylistic homogeneity and his exploitation of the diversity of genres and discourses which have always been a feature of the novel as a form" (61). It is possible to infer from the above quotation that the novel's structure and style are linked to central themes developed in the novel. In other words, the complex language, the fragmented narrative, and the rejection of linearity may be intimately connected to Ondaatje's central concern with the figure of the outsider, of the displaced individual, with "all those people born in one place who live in another place, who have lost their source" (Ondaatje as quoted in Bolland 79).

Bolland also remarks that Ondaatje is especially concerned with the individuals who find themselves "in a complex and problematic relationship with a declining British Empire" (79). Indeed, displacement and life in countries with history of British colonization, which figure as themes of the novel, are also part of Ondaatje's personal

experience. Given that, it is particularly interesting to comment on some of the writer's biographical data, although it is beyond the scope of this research to provide a comprehensive account of the influence of Ondaatje's personal experiences in his fictional work.

> Two moves amount to a fire, a Turkish saying goes. Multiple migrations end in the loss of our homes, possession, and memorabilia. When the smoke clears, we are faced with charred pieces of identification, shards of language, burned tongues, and cultural fragments. However, from this site of fire, the phoenix of a transnational, bi- and multilingual literature has arisen. Some of the best contemporary literary works are published by writers writing in a language not their own. (Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* 3)

The above quotation from Azade Seyhan's *Writing Outside the Nation* alludes to migrant writers such as Michael Ondaatje. The writer was born in Sri Lanka, which, in 1943, by the time of his birth, was still a British colony known as Ceylon. Ondaatje's family was the hybrid offspring of European colonial administrators, known as Eurasians. This community formed an important constituent of the Ceylonese elite. Following the divorce of his parents in 1945, Ondaatje moved with his mother to Colombo, the capital city of Ceylon. There he entered Saint Thomas's College Boys' School, which as Bolland remarks, was "largely modelled on British traditions" (10). From Colombo, Ondaatje moved to England to join his mother, and he was never to see his father again. In 1962, Ondaatje left England to Canada, acquiring Canadian citizenship in 1965. Given that, his work is considered as part of Canadian Literature. For this reason, some cultural and literary aspects of Canada, particularly from the 1960s to 1990s are summarized below.

When Ondaatje arrived in Canada, the country was at a significant cultural moment. As Bolland conveys, the 1960s represented a time of inquiring and re-defining concepts such as a national identity in Canada, which, being a bilingual country, once colonized by divergent British and French traditions, began to confront these dominant

traditions. This stage represented an increasing recognition of the importance of marginal groups as “the site of particularly dynamic and significant voice[s]” (Bolland 15). And these significant voices brought the determination to revise Canadian history through the perspective of the marginal groups, such as women, immigrants, and the working class.

During the next decades, a further impulsion to the reassessment of Canadian national identity occurred with the rise of Postcolonial literature and theory, and postmodern aesthetics, which emerged as significant fields in literary studies. Bolland remarks that Postcolonialism may be defined as a term than can “describe ways of theorizing or representing subjective experience and forms of resistance within cultures that have undergone or been affected by colonialism” (15). In “Introduction to Postcolonial Studies,” Deepika Bahri places Ondaatje along with the most prominent postcolonial authors, and remarks, “in a very general sense, it [Postcolonialism] is the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period” (par.1). Nevertheless, it is not possible to easily understand the term postcolonialism, which, Bahri argues, in practice has been used insecurely. In order to better understand the term, it is important to note that denotatively it means a particular historical moment when the former European colonies achieved their independence, chiefly in the twentieth century. However, one of the critiques to postcolonialism is whether it may be used in a genuine sense. Bahri remarks, “the overhasty celebration of independence masks the march of neo-colonialism in the guise of modernization and development in an age of increasing globalization and transnationalism; meanwhile, there are colonized countries that are still under foreign control” (par. 4).

In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, moving from the historical denotation and problems of the term, John MacLeod poses that postcolonialism is concerned with

“relevant intellectual developments in the latter part of the twentieth century, especially the shift from the study of ‘Commonwealth literature’ to ‘postcolonialism’” (10). Commonwealth literature is a term used from the 1950s to describe the literature produced in countries that emerged in consequence of the decline of the British Empire. One of the critiques to Commonwealth literature is that the term may suggest a common set of concerns between nations with different cultural and historical influences. Due to those historical and cultural diversities, as Mac Leod asks, “how, then, could one account for the *common* wealth of these writings?” In addition, Mac Leod argues Commonwealth writings figured more as a sub-set of canonical English, and were “evaluated in terms of English values of timelessness and universality” (14). National specifics appeared as secondary in Commonwealth Literature. This is a mark of differentiation between Postcolonialism and its predecessor Commonwealth Literature.

Besides Commonwealth Literature, the second chief antecedent of Postcolonialism is the rise of theories of colonial discourse that in general explore the ways in which “representation and modes of perception are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule” (MacLeod 17). One of the main concerns of colonial discourses is to call attention to the fact that colonial values are internalised in the minds of colonised peoples, being an effective way of their disempowerment. In other words, theories of colonial discourse assume that the process of colonization does not stop with the formal independence of colonized peoples, remaining deep-rooted in their minds, through the dominant languages of power. One of the prominent figures of the theories of colonial discourses was Frantz Fanon, a psychologist who examined the main psychological effects of colonialism in the minds of the colonized individuals.

Although the ancestry of postcolonial criticism may be traced to the 1960s, to Fanon's voice of cultural resistance to France's African empire, most critics agree that the success of a book entitled *Orientalism* by Edward Said institutionally sensitised and instigated a new generation of critics, encouraging them to new kinds of study about the operation of colonial discourses. *Orientalism* calls attention to the assumption that the West is the place of historical and scientific progress, in opposition to the primitive and unchanged Orient. As MacLeod observes, this is probably the beginning of Postcolonialism, which, emerging in the 1980s, were "dynamic, excitingly new forms of textual analysis notable for their eclecticism and interdisciplinarity, combining the insights of feminism, philosophy, psychology, politics, anthropology and literary theory in provocative and energetic ways" (23).

As it has been presented above, Ondaatje was born in a former British colony, lived in the colonizer country, and moved again to another country with a history of British colonization. In her book *Postcolonial Theory*, Leela Gandhi includes his novels within the context of "the new migrant novel," (153) which she observes is "entirely explicit in its commitment to hybridity" (153). Such writings in Homi Bhabha's words refuse to "oppose the pedagogy of the imperialist noun to the inflectional appropriation of the native voice" (Cited in Gandhi 153). This signifies that the migrant novelist assumes an in between-position, for instance, refusing the simple opposition of binaries such as self/other, nationalism/ anti-nationalism, and nation-less/ nation-ness. This is what Gandhi defines as the double perspective of the migrant.

According to Bolland, although Ondaatje's writing may be placed within Postcolonial literature, in her study *The Canadian Postmodern,* Hutcheon includes Ondaatje in the postmodern aesthetics, which she links to the new forms of political and national consciousness that emerged in 1960 in Canada. She also refers to the double

perspective in writers like Ondaatje, using the term ex-centric, which in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* she describes as follows:

Like much contemporary literary theory, the postmodernist novel puts into question that entire series of interconnected concepts [. . .] autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totalization, system, universalization, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, uniqueness, origin. As I have tried to argue, however, to put these concepts into question is not to deny them - only to interrogate their relation to experience [. . .]. (57)

Ondaatje himself seems to recognize this ex-centric position, since he says in an interview, "I grew up in Sri Lanka and lived in England for about eight years, and then came [to Canada] [. . .]. I don't feel much of 'England' in me. I *do* feel I have been allowed the *migrant's double perspective* (my italics), in the way, say, someone like Gertrude Stein was 're-focused' by Paris " (Quoted in Bolland 10).

Postmodernism is a term that cannot be straightforwardly defined. In *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry reminds us the term was first used in the 1930s. However, currently it can be said that it began with Jean François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarrative" (Quoted in Barry 86). In other words, postmodernists are incredulous to narratives that presumably have great generality and represent a final and absolute certain truth. As cited by Barry, Lyotard argues that Postmodernism describes a condition of "loss of faith in themes such as the right of every individual to freedom through education and knowledge, or the Marxist belief in the emancipation of the people from class domination" (16).

Historiography is one area that may illustrate the disbelief in metanarratives. As Hutcheon states, "[no] longer is history to be accepted as 'how things actually

happened' [. . .] [but] as a construction, as having been made by the historian through a process of selecting, ordering and narrating " (Cited in Bolland 14-15). As she argues in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, this process presupposes "a notion of 'end' [which] suggests both teleology and closure" (62), and, as Hutcheon continues, "both of these are concepts that have come under considerable scrutiny in recent years, in philosophical and literary circles alike" (62). This new vision of historiography, which in Hutcheon's words "is no longer considered the objective and disinterested recording of the past" (64), seems to be central to *The English Patient*, in which history appears as unstable and provisional.

In sum, due to its commitment to discussions about the effects of British colonialism, Ondaatje's work may be seen as a postcolonial novel. Moreover, *The English Patient* may be seen as a postmodernist work that questions issues such as homogeneity, centrality, teleology, and the like. It is within this context of postcolonialism and postmodernism that national identity and nationalism appear as important concepts in the novel. One of the aims of this research is to analyse how the novel presents such concepts. Given that, what follows are some remarks concerning national identity and nationalism, which, as *human constructs* (my italics) have challenged the scholars. The italics are to emphasise that first and foremost national identity and nationalism are not natural occurring phenomena, but human creations. They are related to the concept of nation, which by its turn is not easy to define. As quoted by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, Hugh-Setton Watson claims, "Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no scientific definition of the nations can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists" (6).

Anderson offers a provisional definition of nation as "an imagined political community" (6). His definition points out that the sense of communion is an essential

element to the existence of a nation. In other words, in order to be a nation a community must share a number of components, which Anthony Smith's workable definition of nation in *National Identity* may illustrate: "Nation is a named population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (14). It is possible to conclude from these various elements that nation is a multifaceted and complex construct. In addition to its complex composition, nation has a complex history.

In *Beginning Postcolonialism,* John MacLeod remarks*:* "Most commentators agree that the idea of nation is Western in origin. It emerged with the growth of Western capitalism and industrialization [. . .]" (68). The nation, as it is known currently, emerged in Western Europe during the age of Enlightenment and of the revolutions, and this model of nation has put forth a large influence on the formation of modern nations. In opposition, a new model of the nation rose particularly in Eastern Europe and Asia. The two rival models differ from each other especially due to their different emphasis. Known as the ethnic model of the nation, the Eastern model emphasizes genealogy, i.e., the community of birth. As Smith explains, "whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were for ever stamped by it" (10). While genealogy is essential to the Eastern model of nation, contrarily, the Western or civic model of nation is "predominantly territorial or spatial," (17) as Smith observes.

The Western territorial conception of nation "suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong" (Smith 9). In other words, the territorial conception of nation presumes a mutual sense of belonging to a land. As Smith observes, "people and

land must belong to each other" (9). However, in Smith's view, "the land cannot be any land, but the land of the ancestors, the historical land, the repository of historical memories, the unique homeland" (9). This feeling of belonging to a land, in a political community, allows the establishment of boundaries, which may be seen as symbols of a people's right over their own lands. Besides their role in the construction of ideas of ownership, boundaries are fundamental to the construction of identity, since people from inside the nation identify themselves in relation to the otherness of the peoples outside the nation.

Nevertheless, like nation itself, boundaries are subjective human constructions, not natural occurring phenomena. Due to its subjectivity, "the construction of the nation's borders is a process fraught with difficulties, and has all too often been its undoing," (74) in Mac Leod's words. For instance, concerning the division of Africa between the Western powers, it is interesting to note that arbitrary boundaries were drawn around the continent. These boundaries were designed according to the interest of the Western colonizers, with no accounts to the interests of the indigenous inhabitants. Thus, as MacLeod remarks, the anti-colonial movements for national liberation "were working with the map of the world drawn by the colonizers" (76).

Mapping is one of the tools for the establishment of boundaries. However, maps are more than simple represtantions of geographic locations. As Anderson points out, "the appearance of naturalness and objectivity [. . .] masks the function of maps as representations of space that suit particular interests and projects" (44). Maps have also functioned to shape colonial domination. As Deepika Bahri argues, "Maps and geographical representation have influenced the power relationship between European nations and their colonies and have likewise revealed the nature of these power relationships. As such, maps play a significant role within postcolonial theory and

postcolonial novel" (1). As Bahri states, "Creating accurate maps was essential to colonial powers in order to chart trade routes or establish colonies beyond the familiar boundaries of Europe" (2).

In sum, nation is a multifaceted concept formed by a number of different elements, which are themselves complex as well. As a consequence of this multifaceted feature, national identity also becomes a complex construct. Bolland remarks, "identity does not emerge from a spontaneous essential selfhood, but [. . .] it is largely determined by the relationship between self and other" (30). The individual identifies himself/ herself as member of a group or nation in relation to perceived differences from an outsider, a foreign. Thus, national identity, or the individual's identification with a specific nation, is a collective identity, filling in a number of different functions.

One of the most obvious functions of national identity is the provision of bonds of solidarity between the individual classes. Values, symbols and traditions such as national anthems, flags, coinages, national heroes and saints are some of the possible linking elements between the individuals within the unit we call nation. Another function of national identity is the provision of a sense of self-definition and location of individual selves in the world. This function enables us to identify with a collective and unique culture, and to "know who we are," (17) in Smith's words. Nevertheless, as Smith himself adds, this is the most confusing of the functions of national identity. Doubts and scepticism involve this function, especially due to the fact that the multifaceted nature of nation may generate many kinds of national selves.

Being interrelated to nation and national identity, nationalism, as Smith defines, is "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation" (73). One of nationalism's propositions is the division of the world

into free and safe nations, each of them representing a source of political and social power. In addition, nationalism's doctrine presupposes that, in order to be free and to know whom they are, human beings must have a national identity. Here it is possible to identify a problem with nationalism. If it is possible to question national identity as the means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, certainly this scepticism may be extended to nationalism.

There is nothing wrong with the identification of individuals with a nation. This may be seen in the patriotism of individuals in events such as a football game, or in tragic events in which the individuals are bonded through shared commotion and solidarity, and the like. This is the benign side of nationalism and national identity. Nevertheless, nationalism and national identity also have a non-benign facet. If, on the one hand, nationalism has advocated a world of free and autonomous nations, on the other hand, many individuals have chosen to die and to kill in the name of national identity and nationalism. As Smith's remarks illustrate:

The ideal of nation, transplanted across the globe from its Western heartlands, has brought with it confusion, instability, strife and terror, particularly in areas of mixed ethnic and religious character. Nationalism, the doctrine that makes the nation the object of every political endeavour and national identity the measure of every human value, has since the French Revolution challenged the whole idea of a single humanity, of a world community and its moral unit. Moreover, the dream of a single humanity has been dropped out for nationalism itself. (17-18)

Provided the communion of a number of elements, namely territory, culture, history, traditions, which presuppose a sense of stability, autonomy and centrality, it is possible to infer that the concepts of nation, and national identity are founded on ideas of homogeneity. This seems to be true to nationalism as well, which, as seen above,

assumes the maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity of the individual nations. These assumptions are some of the issues that postmodernism questions, and that Ondaatje's *The English Patient* attempts to undermine, as a postmodern work.

In 1996, *The English Patient* was turned into a film of the same title, written and directed by the British filmmaker Anthony Minghella. The film was acclaimed worldwide, receiving nine Academy Awards, including for Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Supporting Actress for Juliette Binoche. Nonetheless, some reviewers of the film, such as Raymond Aaron Younis, as cited by Bolland, have suggested that the novel's lines of action are narrowed down in the film, as it concentrates more on the love affair between Almásy and Katharine Clifton. Given that, in Younis' view the other characters and their lines of action are undermined, and the film seems to be underdeveloped. Given this criticism, and considering the importance of the novel's political implications, the aim of this research is to explore the relation between *The English Patient* novel and film, especially concerning their representation of issues of national identity and nationalism. With this purpose, Chapters I and II of this research will respectively analyse the novel and the film in their specific realms. Simultaneously to the film analysis, Chapter II will provide a comparative analysis between the novel and the film. Chapter III will provide the final remarks. It is important to emphasise that the film is to be analysed not as a plain illustration of the novel. The analysis expects to observe elements that contributed for the film to be seen as an autonomous work. As quoted in Bolland, Ondaatje's own remarks concerning the adaptation of his novel may better illustrate the aim of this thesis.

> What we have now are two stories, one with the 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 vision deepens the other and what is most interesting to me about the film is how scenes and emotion and values from the book

> emerged in a new way, were reinvented, were invented with totally new moments, and fit within a dramatic art that was different from the book. (81)

Very clearly, the novelist's statements above highlight the material differences between novel and film. Thus, Ondaatje's statements correspond to contemporary criticism on film adaptation. For instance, emphasising the material differences pointed out by Ondaatje, in James Naremore's *Film Adaptation*, Robert Stam, reminds us of the complex production of a film in comparison to the production of a novel. Stam argues that to produce a novel it is necessary pen and paper and generally a single individual to write. Novels may be written anywhere. On the contrary, the production of a film involves at least a camera, a crew, locations, and so forth. Considering the differences of medium, it is appropriate to quote Stam's own words:

> The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel which has only words to play with, to a multitrack medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written or spoken), but also with theatrical performance, music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest the undesirability of literal fidelity. (Naremore 56)

Ondaatje also refers to the filmmaker and the novelist's different visions. As any reader, the filmmaker has a personal and subjective response to the literary work, which may or not coincide with other readers' responses. It is also necessary to consider that many viewers of the film may not have read the literary work. For this reason, and for the material differences between the two media, an analysis of a film adaptation should avoid the limits imposed by questions of fidelity. As Stam argues, "film adaptations can be seen as a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts" (67). Thus, what is expected in this study is an analysis of the film that is, as Stam suggests, "less moralistic, less panicked, less implicated in unacknowledged hierarchies, more rooted in contextual and intertextual history" (75). Furthermore, due to the specificity of the film medium pointed out by Stam, cinematic devices such as mise-en-scene, editing, sound and

photography should also be considered, for the purpose of this research. The theoretical concepts about each of these devices will be provided along the analysis of the film, whenever necessary.

Similarly, further theoretical concepts necessary to the analysis of Ondaatje's *The English Patient* will also be presented along chapter I, which concerns the analysis of the novel. Chapter I is dedicated to the exploration of the novel's questioning of national issues, which is done through different strategies, namely, the ex-centric subject, the problematizing of history, intertextuality, and the disruption of narrative. In addition, such questioning is made through a number of interrelated themes such as mapping and boundaries. These formal practices and thematic issues contribute to the undermining of the concept of a homogeneous cultural identity, on which nationalism and national identity have been based.

CHAPTER I

ONDAATJE'S *THE ENGLISH PATIENT*: THE QUESTIONING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN THE NOVEL

In the introductory chapter, important concepts related to national identity and nationalism were discussed. One of the conclusions concerning these concepts is that they have foundations on ideas of stability, centrality, and homogeneity. Ondaatje's novel seems to question such concepts by foregrounding the notion that nationalism is one of the causes for the collective and individual suffering imposed on people of various nations during World War II. Overall, the novel seems to question the basis of nationalism and national identity through a number of different strategies, namely, the presentation of themes such as boundaries and the motif of mapping, the presentation of ex-centric subjects, the problematizing of history, the use of intertextuality, and a fragmented narrative. All these strategies will be examined in this chapter, which, for a matter of contextualization, will first introduce a summary of the novel's plot, main events, characters and setting.

Multiplicity, which seems to be one of the proper words to describe The *English Patient*, may be related to the intention of the novel to question ideas of a stable, single, and homogeneous centre. This strategy seems to be a recurrent feature in Ondaatje's writing. In his previous novel *In the Skin of a Lion,* a character states*:* "Never again will a single story be told as if it were the only one" (Bolland 65). Corroborating this idea, *The English Patient* introduces various lines of action. As a result, there are multiple central characters, living and acting in multiple locations and time. In each of these lines of action, it is possible to identify elements suggestive of national issues, as the following summary will reveal.

The English Patient begins in the Italian Villa of San Girolamo, near Florence, in the final year of World War II. The novel introduces Hana, a nurse that has volunteered for war service, and is posted to Italy with the Canadian Infantry Division. Albeit still very young, Hana experiences many losses during the war. She has an abortion. The child's father also dies in combat. In addition, as a nurse, she has seen death around her in the various dying patients she takes care. The following statements from the novel reveal the impact of the horrors of war on Hana: "Nurses too became shell-shocked from the dying around them [. . .]. They would carry a severed arm down a hall, or swab at blood that never stopped, as if the wound were a well, and they began to believe in nothing, trusted nothing" (41). Finally, when Hana receives the letter about her father's death, she almost goes through a nervous breakdown. When the rest of her division continues advancing up Italy, she decides to stay at the villa to take care of a severely injured patient, perhaps as a consecration to her own father, and as a means of salvation from the sufferings of war. Along the narrative, there are accounts on her time in Italy, travelling with her division, before meeting the English patient. At the end of the novel, Hana is seen in Canada.

As a result of a plane crash in the desert in 1942, the patient of whom Hana takes care is severely burned. His body resists any identification. Besides, he suffers from amnesia. As the novel describes, he is "A man with no face. An ebony pool," (48) which the other characters fill in with a possible English nationality. This assumed nationality is due to the patient's quotations of English stereotypes, such as Kew Gardens, "flowerbeds in Gloucestershire," (Ondaatje, *The English Patient* 163) trout streams, and the like. However, as Kip, one of the other characters in the novel states, the patient "must have been raised elsewhere. The English don't suck this way" (177). Elements of uncertainty involve the main facts of the patient's life, and as the narrative

develops, his story and possible identity as the Hungarian count Lazlo de Almásy is reconstructed. *The English Patient* draws on some historical sources. Thus, aspects of the fictional Almásy are based on historical records about the actual Almásy[1]: his work as explorer of North Africa, the discovery of the Cave of Swimmers[2], the mapping of the Lybian desert, his collaboration with the Nazi Germany. The use of historical figures, one of the features of Ondaatje's *The English Patient,* is to be further discussed in this chapter in relation to the novel's strategy of problematizing history.

As it has been pointed out above, like his actual historical counter part, the fictional Almásy works in international archaeological expeditions to the desert of North Africa. In 1936, during one of these expeditions, he meets the Cliftons, an aristocratic newlywed British couple. Despite an initial animosity, Almásy and Katherine, Clifton's wife, soon develop an adulterous passion. Their relationship comes to an end some time before the beginning of World War II. However, the end of the affair does not avoid the personal and the public consequences of the couple's adultery.

World War II causes all the expeditions to be officially aborted. For this reason, Almásy goes to the desert to collect equipment. Clifton flies to the desert with Katherine, and, in the attempt to kill his former rival, he throws the aeroplane over Almasy. Clifton had discovered his wife's infidelity, perhaps due to his contacts with the British Intelligence, although this is not clearly stated in the narrative, but may be suggested, for instance, through Almásy's friend Madox's references to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and its story of romance and deceit:

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[1] The character depicted in *The English Patient* as a desert explorer with enigmatic origins is based on a real-life Hungarian who served German military intelligence in World War II and then apparently spied for the Soviet Union.

[2] As Andre Zaboray reports in his webpage, the actual Almásy discovered the main painted caves in October 1933 during the Frobenius expedition. They contain the little 'swimmer' like figures that inspired the fictitious cave of swimmers in the movie *The English Patient.*

> Half Moscow and Petersburg were relations or friends of Oblonski. He was born into the circle of people who were, or who became, the great ones of this earth. A third of the official world, the older men, were his father's friend and had known him from the time he was a baby in petticoats [. . .] Consequently, the distributors of the blessings of this world were all friend of his. They could not pass over one of their own [. . .] It was only necessary not to raise objections or be envious, not to quarrel or take offence, which in accordance with his natural kindliness he never did. (237)

As a result of the plane crash, Clifton dies, and Katherine is severely injured. Almásy takes her to the Cave of Swimmers, a site found in the desert by Almásy's expedition. Leaving her in the cave, he starts a journey through the desert in search for help. When finally he arrives at a British outfit, he is refused help. The Allies suspect Almásy is a spy to the Germans because of his family name and Hungarian nationality. In addition, he does not tell the Allies Katherine's family name, the proof of her British nationality. As a consequence, the Allies arrest Almásy, and without help Katherine dies in the cave.

Escaping from the Allies, Almásy turns to the Germans, and due to his deep knowledge about the desert's cartography, he collaborates with the German spy Eppler in the enterprise of guiding troops through the desert. This allows the Germans a strategic controlling position in the North African desert. After three years of collaboration with Eppler, Almasy returns to the cave to rescue Katherine's body. The plane he uses to leave the desert with the corpse catches fire and falls over the desert. The Bedouins rescue and heal Almásy, who, after some time, is sent to the British base of Siwa. Now a burned and unrecognisable individual, presumably an Englishman, Almásy's only reference is a copy of Herodotus' *The Histories*. From Siwa he is sent to a hospital in Italy, where he meets Hana.

Another character to arrive at San Girolamo is David Caravaggio, an Italian immigrant to Canada, who is back to his homeland. He is a thief, whose abilities are turned official by the Allies by making him a spy during the war. Captured by his own

countrymen, who were allied to the Germans, he has his thumbs cut-off in a session of torture. He escapes, and while recovering from his injuries in a hospital in Rome, he hears about Hana and her burned patient. Hana's father was Caravaggio's friend in Canada. Thus, Caravaggio decides to leave the Hospital for the villa in Tuscany to meet her. It is Caravaggio who attempts to dismiss the burned man's identity as an Englishman, playing a significant role in the patient's (re) construction of identity as Almasy.

The last character to join the group in the villa is an Indian sapper. His name is Kirpal Singh. He is from Punjab[3], India. By his Sikh[4] family's tradition, he should be a doctor, while his older brother should engage the army. Nevertheless, the sapper's brother is a radical nationalist, who is arrested because of his refusal to join the British Army. Given that, Kirpal Singh leaves his family, and engages in a Sikh regiment of the British Army. The novel portrays Kirpal Singh's past in England to where he is sent in 1940, and where he spends some time, working in bomb dismantling. There, he meets Lord Suffolk, who commands a group of bomb disposers. Like a father, Suffolk befriends Singh. In England, Kirpal Singh becomes simply Kip. After Suffolk and his companion's tragic deaths, the Indian sapper departs to Italy. The narrative shows his journey through Italy. In the villa, he develops strong bonds with its other inhabitants, especially with Hana with whom he has a love affair. After hearing the news about the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip turns into a radical nationalist, starts

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[3] According to the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, the name Punjab means land of five rivers, which are referred to in *The English Patient.* The region came under British rule when the East India Company annexed the Punjab 1849. Nowadays The Punjab is split between India and Pakistan, since they gained independence of the British Rule, after World War II. Thus, nowadays there is the Indian Punjab, with Chandigart as capital city, and the Pakistani Punjab with Lahore as its capital city.

[4] The online encyclopedia *Wikipedia* refers to Sikhism as a religion founded by Guru Nanak, in 1469. This doctrine shares beliefs with both Islam and Hinduism. Its doctrine position is fairly simple despite Sikhism origins in two very different faiths. The coherence of Sikhism is attributable to its single central concept – the sovereignty of the One God.

making racial generalizations, and leaves his friends in the villa. At the end of the novel, he is presumably in India as a doctor.

As the above summary reveals, the characters are all victims of war. As a result, they endure physical or psychological wounds. As the war is portrayed in the novel, one can infer that its causes are based on nationalistic issues, which involve the conflict among national identities at the same time that the characters themselves can barely confirm a homogeneous national self. The real national identity of two of the major characters can be barely comprehensible but is at the basis of their suffering, the English patient and Caravaggio. Thus, nationalism and national identity are implicated in the characters' sufferings. It is not the intention of this research to provide a comprehensive historical account of World War II. Neither it seems to be Ondaatje's intentions to provide a documentary about the war. However, a brief historical speculation concerning the inter-war period may possibly help to understand the characters' attitudes towards or against nationalism, especially the patient's incredulity on such concepts.

In his book *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Eric J. Hobsbawn refers to the period from 1918 to 1950 as the apogee of nationalism. As Hobsbawn observes, the various treaties that followed the end of World War I, including the Treaty of Versailles[5], divided the European continent into a "jigsaw puzzle of nation-states" (131). As defined by Smith, while the nation presupposes cultural bonds, the state consists of bureaucratic and legal ties. Provided that, most of the new nation-states, which emerged from the old Empires of Central and Eastern Europe after World War I, were "prisons of nations," (133) as Hobsbawn observes. Such definition is due to the

[5] According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the Treaty of Versailles was signed in June 28, 1919 in France. The treaty between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany was criticized by the German government and people and by many people in other lands as being 'dictated'. Actually it was imposed on a defeated enemy, but no opportunity had been allowed for verbal negotiations.

diversity of peoples and cultures that the new states encompassed. Given that, the after war attempts to apply the Wilsonian[6] principle of a logical division of such empires into coherent states, each with ethnically and linguistically homogeneous inhabitants, would reveal itself impracticable. This designing of new nation-states mostly meant turning upside down entire societies, dislodging former governments, humiliating and impoverishing, through economic and political sanctions, the nations defeated in the war. Then, not surprisingly, severe scars of the post-World War I period would invariably cause an increasing nationalism, which may figure as one of the causes of World War II.

Coincidentally, or not, although the character of Almásy claims for the erasure of his nation, it is known that he comes from Hungary, which was one of those nation-states that emerged from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A rapid speculation of the political and geographic situation of the country during the pre-World War II period provides some important references. As a multinational state, Hungary was composed by a number of different national cultures: Magyars, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats. These accounts on Almásy's 'erased' nation may contribute to our understanding of his ideas about nation-states. As this example of Hungary shows, the boundaries of the nations not always coincide with the boundaries of the states, since, sometimes, cultural, linguistic, social, and national differences between peoples have serious implications. Thus, within this context, Almásy's statement in the novel "we are deformed by nation-states" (138) seems to be perfectly understandable.

In addition, at the time that is being depicted by the novel, Hungary was undergoing problems concerning national borders. Hungary collaborated with Germany

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[6] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that the Wilsonian principle, which owns its name to the American President Woodrow Wilson, dominated the peace treaties after World War I, producing twenty-seven states in Europe. The Wilsonian principles consisted of 14 points, as great moral objectives for peace.

during World War I. For this reason, in 1920, one of the various treaties that followed the Great War, the Treaty of Trianon[7], punished Hungary with the loss of part of its territories and inhabitants to adjacent countries. In 1930, Nazi Germany asked for a revision of the treaty, and Hungary recovered part of its lost territory, just to lose it again after World War II. It is possible to note from this brief historical account that Almásy's nation was 'slipping across borders.'

Departing from the above historical speculation, it is possible to perceive in the character of Almásy a reflection of Hungary's problems concerning the establishment of national boundaries and national allegiances, to the point that his praising of the desert and its tribes can be seen as a critique of all the official borders separating nations, and as an authorization of his border life in the desert: As he says, "After ten years in the desert it was easy to me to slip across borders" (139). The subjects of allegiances and boundaries will be further examined as follows.

Nationalism and national identity are also implicit in the problems of identification and allegiance caused by the characters' heritage. For instance, the aristocratic Cliftons may represent the solidness of British identity. The novel states, "he [Geoffrey Clifton] had a family genealogy going back to Canute" (237). However, those who are familiar with the history of the formation of British people certainly recall the fact that the genealogical line back to Canute include a number of individuals not properly English. Moreover, even Canute himself was a foreigner to England, as the following passage from A. G. Eyre's *An Outline History of England* reveals.

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[7] According to the *Encyclopaedia Brittannica*, the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary signed The Treaty of Trianon, after World War I, on June 4, 1920. The following data provided by the Encyclopedia reveals the magnitude of the territorial restrictions imposed on Hungary: " The territorial provisions of the Treaty liquidated the ancient historic state of Hungary, which had been a multinational one. According to official Hungarian calculations, the area of the state was reduced from 282.870 sq. km to 92.963 sq. km . . .The census of 1910 had given the population of Hungary at that date as 18.264.533 plus 2.621.954 in Croatia Slavonia. Calculated from these figures, Hungary retained only 7.615.177 under the treaty. (460-61)

> Under the weak king Ethelred there was trouble once more. Fresh waves of fierce Danish fighters attacked the south. Instead of fighting them, Ethelred collected a tax and paid them to go away, but each year they wanted more. The poor were ruined by this tax and even the rich suffered. No wonder that, when he died, the council invited the Danish leader Canute to become their king. (4)

The quotation on Clifton's genealogy may allude to the heterogeneity of the British people. However, the problem of allegiances caused by heritage is clearer seen in the character of Almásy. These are some of his claims in the novel: "Erase the family name" (138). But I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from" (139). Actually, even the narrative contributes to the accomplishment of his willingness, and nothing is revealed about his family. Unlike the other characters that constantly have childhood memories, Almásy definitely erases his origins. However, when he arrives at the British outfit in the desert, he is simply refused help because of his 'wrong' heritage. This may reveal how problematic is the idea of family name, as well as national identity in the individuals' life, especially during wartime.

The other way in which nationalism and national identity are possibly connected to the characters' sufferings is exemplified by the conflicts between the individuals' personal commitments and the allegiances to nationalities and states. These conflicts are embodied in the novel through the theme of betrayal. One of the most evident betrayals in the novel is the adulterous relationship between Katherine and Almásy. They betray Clifton at the personal level. However, the significance of their betrayal may be extended to the public level, since they threaten the social boundaries of the expatriate society of Cairo. Furthermore, their adulterous relationship achieves a wider dimension in Almásy's later allegiance to the Germans. By its turn, Almásy's allegiance influences on the course of war, allowing the Germans a strategic controlling position in the desert.

The lovers' personal betrayal also parallels other betrayals in the desert, such as those involving Clifton and the group of archaeologists. Clifton becomes involved in

betrayals, since, as the novel states, he "was a man embedded in the English machine" (237). He is not only the innocent photographer interested in innocent aerial maps of the desert for the Geographic Society. He has connections with the British Intelligence, which due to the eminence of a war considers the desert an important controlling position. Given that, Clifton is interested in trekking the group of archaeologists in the desert. Thus, Clifton's loyalty to the group of archaeologists is overwhelmed by his commitment to the state's interest.

The individuals' disloyalties may also be observed in the whole team of archaeologists. Firstly formed by "men of all nations," (Ondaatje, *The English Patient* 133) the group does not resist its members' change of allegiance as a result of war. The bonds of solidarity and friendship surrender to the nationalistic allegiances of the individuals, as the following passage from the novel reveals: "Everywhere there was war. Suddenly there were teams. The Bermans, the Bagnolds, the Slatin Pashas – who had at various times saved each other's lives – had now split up into camps" (168). In other words, the bonds of solidarity and friendship developed in the desert become less important than the individuals' commitment to nationhood.

So far I have explored the ways in which nationalism and national identity may be related to the characters' sufferings and allegiances. In the rest of this chapter, I will explore other thematic and formal ways through which the themes of nationalism and national identity are questioned in the novel, such as the correlation between boundaries and mapping, which contributes to the construction of national issues in *The English Patient*. These issues can be associated with the novel's geographical locations, as it may be seen in the description that follows.

Although the novel is constituted by different geographical locations, this study will focus specifically on two of them: the Italian Villa of San Girolamo and the desert.

In addition, it is important to the analysis of these locations, to understand their performance in metaphorical ways. In *Elements of Literature*, Robert Scholes remarks that the word metaphor is “used both as a general term for all kinds of poetic linking of images and ideas, and as a specific term for such linking when the thing and image are not presented as a direct analogy but by discussing one in terms of the other” (539-40).

Of San Girolamo it is known that from being an ancient nunnery, it becomes a stronghold to the Germans during the war. After the German’s retreat, the Allies turn the Villa into a hospital. Finally, San Girolamo becomes the refuge for some individuals attempting to heal their physical and psychological war wounds. Like the characters, the villa is also devastated. The destruction is so deep that “some rooms faced onto the valley, with no walls at all [. . .] Doors opened into landscape” (13). The limits of the villa, which are represented by its walls and roofs, become porous in consequence of the destruction, blurring the line that divides the building from the landscape. As another passage of the novel portrays, “There seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth” (43).

The above description of the Villa reveals its history as a refuge, a place of healing for the soul and for the body. Members of different nations form the group in the villa. The existence of such assembly becomes possible by the group’s abandonment of boundaries. As a consequence, the Villa’s walls may be seen in a symbolic level as the nations’ borders, which, as human constructions, may be destroyed. It is under these conditions that the characters can be healed. This presentation of the villa supports the English patient’s argument that there ought to be no borders, and that boundaries and borders are the reasons for international instability and pain.

Symbolically, the desert may also be connected with the ideas of a world without boundaries. Contrary to the villa, which is a manufactured setting, the desert is a natural and unstable setting, constantly changed by the winds, which makes ideas of boundaries senseless to the point that the patient states: "after ten years in the desert it was easy to me to slip across borders" (139). In addition, in *Writing Themes about Literature*, E.V. Roberts states, "nature has not been, and is not now, completely understood. As a result, writers have often seen the land, the wind, and the sea as forces that are wild, indifferent, unpredictable, and mysterious [. . .] burning deserts [. . .] [are] often presented as manifestations of Nature's hostility to human beings" (76). And, as Roberts continues, "The progress of civilization has been largely a process of overcoming and taming natural forces" (76). Thus, it appears that the desert's role in *The English Patient* is quite ironic, since men do not overwhelm the desert, which from immemorial times has overcome men and their enterprises of mapping and ownership, as the following passage from the novel suggests:

> There is a whirlwind in southern Morocco, the *aajej*, against which the fellahin defend themselves with knives [. . .]. There are other, less constant winds that change direction, that can knock down horse and rider and realign themselves anticlockwise. The *bist roz* leaps into Afghanistan for 170 days – burying villages [. . .]. Herodotus records the death of various armies engulfed in the *simoon* who were never seen again. One nation was so enraged by this evil wind that they declared war on it and marched out in full battle array, only to be rapidly and completely interred. (16)

Roberts also states, "even the wild and dangerous places of the earth may become the setting of quests for identity, and for comparisons between the vastness of God and the smallness of man" (76). The desert has a great influence on Almásy's thoughts about nation and his questioning of identity. It is during the Archaeological expeditions that Almásy reveals his willingness to be nation-less. It is in the desert that Almásy's resistance to ideas of nationalism, national identity and boundaries takes place. He seems to appreciate the way of life in the desert, as the following passage from the

novel shows: “ Just the Bedouins and us, crisscrossing the Forty Days Road. There were rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful human beings I’ve ever met in my life” (138). Actually, Almasy’s reverence for the desert and its inhabitants become so great that any conception of national identity and nationalism appears senseless to him: “We were German, English, Hungarian, African – all of us insignificant to them” (138). And he claims: “Erase nations” (138).

The desert has a great influence on Almásy’s (de) construction of his identity, and his rejection of national identity as a means of locating individual selves in the world. Almásy wishes to remove any connection to nations, as the following statement from the novel suggests:

> All of us, even those with European homes and children, in the distance, wished to remove clothing of our countries [. . .] Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught these things by the desert [. . .] But I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from. By the time war arrived after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not belong to any one, to any nation. (139)

Almásy’s willingness has its great manifestation in his subsequent physical erasure. He turns to be the unrecognisable patient, which somehow resembles the unmapped and unnamed desert. The patient’s physical erasure may be symbolic of the individual’s erasure in consequence of the collective national identity. Then, he makes what seems to be one of the strongest statements provided by the novel to undermine the concept of national identity: “Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation- states. Madox died because of nations” (138). This quotation clearly undermines nation, national identity and states, revealing these are causes of the individual’s deformation and death, of which he and his friend Maddox are great representatives.

As it has been discussed along this chapter, the use of metaphors in Ondaatje’s novel is noticeable in the case of the patient’s physical resemblance to the bared desert.

Another example of the metaphoric relationship between environment and characters may be seen in the following passage from the novel. It compares the destroyed books and environment to the characters' destroyed lives, especially the patient's missing memories.

> So the books for the Englishman, as he listened intently or not, had gaps of plot like sections of a road washed out by storm, missing incidents as if locusts had consumed a section of tapestry, as if plaster loosened by bombing had fallen away from a mural at night.
> The villa that she and the Englishman inhabited now was much like that. Some rooms could not be entered because of rubble. One bomb crater allowed moon and rain into the library downstairs – where there was in one corner a permanent soaked armchair. (78)

As Scholes remarks, poetry places a stress on metaphor, which is a "crucial dimension of [poetic] language,"(538) Probably as a reflection of Ondaatje's initial career as a poet, the descriptions of the villa and the desert, and the presentation of the characters reveal the powerful metaphors presented above. Indeed, the novel itself emphasises such use of metaphorical language, when, for instance, the patient says, "Words, Caravaggio, they have power." (234)

The poetic language in *The English Patient* deserves at least a whole chapter for discussion, if not an entire work. Nonetheless, due to the aims and limitation of length of this thesis, only some examples of Ondaatje's poetic use of language in the novel are to be considered, especially those examples that may be related to the political ideas that have been discussed in this study. Such powerful poetic language emerges in the very first chapter, through the novel's portrayal of the relationship between Hana and her patient, as the following passage illustrates:

> Every four days she washes his black body, beginning at the destroyed feet. She wets a washcloth and holding it above his ankles squeezes the water onto him, looking up as he murmurs, seeing his smile. Above the shins the burns are worst. Beyond purple. Bone. (3)

The above passage introduces the religious imagery of the patient as a Christ, and Hana's gesture of washing his feet resembles the same gesture of Magdalena when she washed Christ's feet. The imagery is confirmed just a few lines later when the narrative states: "Hipbones of Christ, she thinks. He is her despairing saint."(3) Such imagery contributes to the development of the theme of redemption, which is one of the ideas discussed in Ondaatje's novel. However, it is precisely in this chapter that the figure of the patient as a redeemer is transformed. This transformation is visible when he first recalls the accident in the desert. As he states "I fell burning into the desert . . . .The leather helmet on my head in flames . . . I had broken the spareness of the desert . . . It was the time of the war in heaven"(5).

Such narration of the accident in the desert deserves a careful examination. When describing the accident, the patient refers to " the time of the war in heaven" (5). This statement connects Ondaatje's novel to various passages from the Bible, including the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, and their temptation and fall. Such story from the Bible is obviously related to the story of betrayal carried out by Almasy and Katherine. However, it is also possible to infer from the biblical story that the temptation and fall was caused by Satan or Lucifer and his attempt to be as powerful as God. Such inference gives the allusion a wider dimension, transposing the personal level implicit in the relationship between Katherine and Almásy. Thus, the allusion may refer to Almásy's commitment to the forces that brought destruction during World War II, i.e., the Western nations. The patient is involved in both personal and public levels of the allusion, since he was part of the causes that changed the course of the war. Thus, like Satan, who falls from heaven to hell, the patient falls on the desert, as a kind of punishment, and even such punishment acquires a wider dimension in the voice of Isaiah that echoes in Ondaatje's novel.

> The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage. (*The English Patient* 290)"
> For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment. And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worms shall eat them like wool. (*The English Patient 295)*

Thus, the allusion to the stories of the Bible, in conjunction with the imagery of bombs and fire, creates an apocalyptic atmosphere of end of civilization brought about by Western forces, which the novel itself emphasises, through its description of the various types of bombs that include the Satan bombs. The imagery of bombs and fire has its climax when the narrative refers to the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as "this tremor of Western wisdom" (284) This statement clearly makes the western nations responsible for creating mass destruction weapons, which cause a "war in heaven" that brings death and destruction.

Another important point to consider in relation to the allusion to the stories from the Bible is that they are also part of one of the greatest epics in English Literature, Milton's poem *Paradise Lost.* The possible relationship between *The English Patient* and Milton's famous work emphasises Ondaatje's concern with poetry. *Paradise Lost* is built upon the stories and myths of the Bible and classic tradition through which Western men and women have sought to understand the meaning of their experience of life. Like Ondaatje's novel does, Milton's poem draws upon, and departs from, other versions and interpretations of those stories of the Bible.

It is possible to connect the discussion of nationalism, nations, and national identity in the novel to its own features, such as, for instance, the poetic language as illustrated above. Furthermore, as presented in the introductory chapter of this research, the novel questions the homogeneous cultural identity, on which nationalism and national identity are founded. The novel undermines such homogeneity through a number of strategies associated with Postcolonialism and Postmodernism, namely the

ex-centric subject, the problematizing of history, intertextuality and fragmented narrative. All of these strategies are examined as follows.

Ex-centricity may be taken as a rejection of simple oppositions between binomials such as nationalism/ non-nationalism, self/other, East/ West, and so on. The character of the patient/ Almásy, as well as the character of Kip, may be considered as ex-centric subjects. As Bolland remarks, "neither Kip nor the patient represent a unified, homogeneous self" (32). In Kip it is possible to see many faces: the non-nationalist sapper, converted at the end to an abrupt nationalism; the character who contradictorily directs racial generalizations against the West; one of the individuals that tries to construct a cross-culture community, which he abandons for the sake of nationalistic purposes. The interpretation of Kip's character has challenged the critics, especially in relation to his final change of allegiance from non-nationalism to a radical nationalism.

Before being a member of the group in the villa, Kip was part of another group in the novel, formed mainly by British people: Lord Suffolk, Miss Morden, and Mr Hart. Since Kip is Indian his relationship with the British may be representative of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. "Although he is a man from Asia who has in these last years of war assumed English fathers, following their codes like a dutiful son" (217). During his time in England, "he stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were the prodigal returned, offered a chair at the table, embraced with conversations" (189). These two quotations from the novel are suggestive that the colonized individual is childish and needs the support of the colonizer, who is presumably superior.

However, the character of Kip may also represent the voice of the colonized individuals set against colonial values. For instance, despite his position as a dutiful son to the English, by having a white assistant, Kip seems to challenge the colonialist sense

of order. This sense may be better illustrated by Mac Leod's history about the Trinidadian writer Sam Selvon's recalling of an event he witnessed in Trinidad, when he was a child. Selvon recalls an Indian fisherman called Sammy, who, for his partial paralysis, was ridiculed by the children. One day, Sammy employed a white man as assistant. This seemed to young Selvon contrary to the way life should be organised: the Indian should be the servant, not the white man. Selvon refers to the fact that colonialism is retained in the minds of people, even of the colonized individuals. Colonialism is retained in Kip's mind since as the novel states, He [Kip] sensed he would be admired easily if it were not for his race" (188). Kip assimilates some British habits, becoming an anglophile. The result is that Kip occupies a position between two antagonistic cultures. His feeling of disorientation may be metaphorically implicit in the fact that he places his tent in the gardens, and, as the novel reveals, "removed from his barracks, Singh had no idea of his location" (190).

At this point, it is important to bear in mind the character of his unnamed nationalist brother, which alerts Kip to the fact that the British are simply using the colonized individuals for their own interests. The following are his brother's thoughts about the relationship between Britain and its Asian colonies as reported by Kip: "One day, he says, I will open my eyes. Asia is still not a free continent, and he is appalled at how we throw ourselves into English wars" (217). Caravaggio buttresses Kip's brother's role, stating: "The English! They expect you to fight for them but won't talk to you, Singh" (138). Kip's success as a brilliant sapper gives him some privileges. He becomes an officer. Nevertheless, the following statements from the novel reveals that Kip's brother's words have echo in Kip's own feelings in his adopted country: "He knew he was for now a king, a puppet master, could order anything, a bucket of sand, a

fruit of pie for his needs, and those men who would not cross an uncrowded bar to speak with him when they were off duty would do what he desired" (198).

After leaving England, where it is possible to observe he is exposed to the effects of colonialism, Kip travels through Italy with the sappers' division, dismantling bombing for the allies. During his trajectory in Italy he is exposed to some popular religious traditions, such as the procession of the Virgin Mary near Naples. For other times in the novel Kip refers to religious images and symbols. In *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Eric Hobsbawn denominates such religious manifestations as "popular proto-nationalism," (46) which, as he argues, may be seen as "certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on the macro scale which could fit in with modern states and nations" (46). Thus, Kip's life in England, his trajectory through Italy and exposition to proto-nationalist manifestations provide clues to his final conversion to a radical nationalism, which is complicated by his ideas of racism. Like in England, in the villa Kip continues to think of himself as being of another race: "He was accustomed to his invisibility. The self-sufficiency and privacy Hana saw in him later were caused not just by his being a sapper in the Italian campaign. It was much a result of being the anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world" (197). Thus, not surprisingly, at the end, when he hears about the bombing against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip makes racial generalizations: "American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman" (286).

Kip may be also seen as an example of challenge to orientalist views, which as Edward Said defines is a style of thought that assumes a distinction between the Orient and the Occident, with the latter assuming a position of superiority in relation to the former. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is a novel that functions at the level of intertext to

Ondaatje's *The English Patient.* Kipling's novel has been considered one of the greatest examples of orientalism. Kipling's *Kim* dialogues with Ondaatje's novel in various ways. One of them is through the character of Kip, who, in the middle of two cultures, has problems of identification, which is also central to Kipling's novel.

In sum, Kip is a complex character, which is between two antagonistic worlds, the British and the Indian cultures. At the same time, he likes condensed milk and whistles western songs, and retains Sikh habits. Kip fixes his tent in the garden, which may figure as willingness for distance of the Western cultures. He himself feels as member of another race, an anonymous individual. At the end, he abandons the group in the villa. Assuming his identity as Indian and Sikh, he goes back to India. His nationalism overwhelms the bonds of solidarity, friendship and love developed in the villa.

Concerning Almásy, it is important to note that he is a cartographer, committed to the Western enterprise of mapping and owning the desert: "We were a small clutch of a nation between the wars, mapping and re-exploring" (136). This is significant, if it is taken into account that Anderson refers to map as an institution of power that together with other institutions such as the census and the museum, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion" (164). Thus, the patient/ Almasy's position may figure as a in –between position, since at the same time he is committed and questions the Western enterprise of mapping, as the following statement from the novel shows:

> The ends of the earth are never the points on a map that colonists push again, enlarging their sphere of influence. On 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)

Emphasising that mapping is used as tool for colonial domination, Almásy's words are suggestive that maps are subjective instruments of division between the East

and West, between those that have power and those who do not. Almásy's words also question the idea of an assumed superiority of the white man in relation to indigenous peoples. The European man is capable of 'discovering' landscapes that the indigenous individuals are supposedly unable to 'discover' by themselves. A good example of such colonialist reasoning may be seen in the book *De-Scribing Empire Post-Colonialism and Textuality,* in which Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson refer to the reach of the Mount Everest's summit in 1953. As Tiffin and Lawson relate, the event occurred during the eve of the coronation of Elizabeth II, and there were great manifestations in Britain about the glorious achievement of Edmund Hillary. Such event would certainly be regarded as symbol of the British endeavour. However, paradoxically, there were no acclaims to the indigenous guide that helped Hillary to reach the top of the mountain, as the following transcription of Tiffin and Lawson's text illustrates:

> Although Tensing [the guide] and Hillary both reached the top, it is Hillary who is declared 'the new Elizabethan' [. . .]. The guide, by definition, has knowledge or travelling skills, which enable the exploration to proceed. Nevertheless, the paradigmatic account of such voyages has the guide leading the European to some place or some thing, which the European then 'discovers'. But the European can discover the place only if it is not already known, so the indigenous guide must know and yet not know [. . .]. The guide has the practical knowledge to reach the goal, but not the conceptual knowledge to see its 'true' significance and thereby pre-empt the European discovery [. . .]. He [the guide] cannot 'conquer' the mountain the comprehensive way the European can. (2-3)

The patient/Almásy's ex-centricity may be also observed in the reconstruction of his identity, presented through his fragmentary memory, which generally is recovered with the help of Caravaggio and morphine. Moreover, the patient/Almásy's identity is reconstructed through his jottings in Herodotus' *The Histories*, which helps in the construction of another of the novel's aspects, i.e., its problematizing of history. Herodotus was born at Halicarnassus, a Greek city in Southwest Asia Minor at that time under Persian rule. He is the author of a history of the Persian Wars, and, as it is defined

by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, his work “is not only an artistic masterpiece; for all his mistakes (and for all his fantasies) he remains the leading authority not only for Greek history of the particular period with which he is concerned, but for much of that of Western Asia and of Egypt” (11: 512-13). By setting the patient’s personal history against the public and official history provided by Herodotus’ accounts the novel questions authoritative versions of the past, and points toward the blurring line between fact and fiction.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* also addresses Herodotus’ wish to describe “the political situation at the relevant times of the many Greek cities later involved in the Persian Wars” (11: 513). However, *The Histories* are structured by a collection of different stories as, for instance, when Herodotus reports the episode in which the Persian queen Atossa approached her husband in bed and supplicated him to annex Greece and prove to the Persians that a man was their ruler. Quoted by Thomas Harrison in the online *Classics Ireland*, Peter Derow argues, “I do not suppose that Herodotus knew what transpired in bed between Darius and Atossa. Nor does he seem to see this as a problem.”(par.19) This story emphasizes the problematic distinction between fact and fiction. Thus, as Bolland remarks, “As a historian Herodotus poses the distinctively, postmodern question about how history is related to fiction, and the difficulty of distinguishing between fact and fiction, something which the Western tradition has cared not to recognise” (49). In Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* such difficulty may be clearly seen in the novel’s references to various historical figures.

As discussed in Chapter I, Canadian Historiography from the 1960s has been concerned with the hidden marginal figures of history. In an article entitled Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient, History, and the Other*, Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek recognizes “readers of fiction – or viewers of films – are voraciously interested in the

real story or fictionalised persons and events." (par. 1) This seems to be the case of *The English Patient* both novel and film. Ondaatje's work is full of historical figures, whose hidden histories somehow advance the narrative. For instance, after the news about the nuclear bombing against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip claims: "You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have the fucking Harry Truman of the USA" (287). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, these are some of King Leopold's biographical data:

> During the occupation of Belgium in World War II, Leopold was taken prisoner. When the Allies liberated Belgium, parliament in Sept. 1944 named Leopold's brother, Prince Charles, regent of the realm until the King should return. After his return from exile in July 1950, Leopold agreed to relinquish the royal prerogatives to prince Baudouin, who took power on Aug.11, 1950. He abdicated in favour of the prince, who ascended the throne on July 17, 1951. (11: 512)

A rapid speculation about the historical figure of King Leopold reveals that some events in his life are controversial. For instance, the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* refers to the fact that during World War II, when the German army invaded Belgium, the Nazis quickly surrendered King Leopold and his army. This fact generated the controversy about his loyalty to Belgium. In his exile in Switzerland he was exonerated of the accusation of treason. Nevertheless the controversy continued, and the king abdicated in favour of his son to avoid tearing his country apart. It is possible to perceive in King Leopold's controversial history a reflection of the actual Almásy's own history. Similarly to the historical figure of King Leopold, the actual Almásy is what may be called a marginal and controversial historical figure. There are accounts on the actual Almásy's collaboration with the Nazi Germany during World War II. Nevertheless, as Zepetnek also comments, there are a number of accounts on a possible connection of Almásy in the sheltering of Jewish-Hungarian families during World War II. Thus, the controversy about him abounds. The actual Almásy's possible connections with the Nazi Germany have generated an impact on the reception of Ondaatje and

Minghella's fictional works. Zepetnek reports the opinion of Elizabeth Pathy Salett, published in the *Washington Post* in the issue of Wednesday 4 December 1996. As Zepetnek comments, Sallet's conclusion from her father's encounter with the actual Almásy in Cairo is that "he [Almásy] had worked for whoever paid best" (par 21). And, concerning the fictional work, the following is her argument.

> *The English Patient* calls itself a work of fiction. But in fact, what the film's director-writer does is to take a real story and a real person, minimize the meaning of his activities and recast him as a passionate, loving hero. *The English Patient,* which was constructed as a beautiful, romantically lyrical film, is amoral and ahistorical. The film's presentation of a moral equivalence between the Germans and Allies trivializes the significance of the choices men like Almásy made and the enormous consequences of their actions and alliances. (par. 21)

As Sallet's statements above clearly illustrate, the controversy concerning the actual Almásy has generated some opinions that, for his Nazi allegiance, the fictional work should not have glorified such a figure. The argument of such critiques is that the novel and the film diminish the atrocities made by the Nazi, trivializing the serious implications of the choices and allegiances made by men like Almásy during wartime. As quoted by Zepetnek, Ondaatje himself responds to the criticism concerning the ethical dimension of his work:

> *The English Patient* is not a history lesson but an interpretation of human emotions – love, desire, betrayals in war and betrayals in peace – in a historical time [. . .] If a novelist or dramatist or filmmaker is to be censored or factually tested every time he or she writes from historical event, then this will result in the most uninspired works, or it just might be safer for those artists to resort to cartoons and fantasy. (par. 21)

Moving from the discussion of the controversy about the implications of the historical figures on the fictional work, Zepetnek refers to the construction of a fictional individual, "who is in-between and peripheral and the consequences of this locus, namely Almásy's rejection of homogeneity, national self-referentiality, and its exclusionary results" (par. 20). In other words, what Zepetnek seems to praise in the

fictional Almásy is exactly his ex-centric position, his marginality, his displacement, and his discussion about concepts such as nation and interrelated ideas such as national identity and nationalism, which may have exclusionary effects in the individual's life. According to Zepetnek, this is one of the most interesting aspects of Ondaatje's novel, and it is precisely such aspect that the present research attempts to analyse.

Herodotus' *The Histories* and the several of the novel's intertexts contribute to the construction of a fragmented narrative, which is another of the novel's features that questions stability, centrality, autonomy and homogeneity. In *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, Burgoyne, Stam and Fliterman Lewis state that narrative "can be understood as the recounting of two or more events (or a situation and an event) that are logically connected, occur over time, and are linked by a consistent subject into a whole" (69). One of the components of a narrative is the fabula or story, which is "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors [. . .] Events, actors, time and location together constitute the material of a fabula" (Bal as cited in Burgoyne et al 71). In the beginning of this chapter, I have provided a description of the elements of the novel's story, i.e. its events, happenings, characters and setting. The plot, which is the other component of a narrative, may be defined as the way in which the story is organized and manifested. Plot is the refashioning of the "basic armature of fabula events [. . .] into an aesthetically satisfying form through the use of artistic devices such as *in medias res* construction, retardation, parallel plots, ellipsis, and others" (Burgoyne et al 71). For instance, an author may choose to present the events and happenings of a story in a straightforward chronology. When the events are presented out of their chronological sequence they are called anachronies, which are of two types: analepses and prolepses. Analepses, which are also known as flashbacks, refer to events previous to the primary narrative. Prolepses or flashforwards concern the

presentation of events, which are future to the primary narrative. These are some of the possibilities offered by the plot, which in *The English Patient* is not straightforwardly presented. One of the strategies presented by the discourse in Ondaatje's novel is the disruption of conventional narrative form: beginning, development and ending. The novel has a complex discourse, which, as observed in the previous chapter, may contribute to the undermining of concepts of a homogeneous cultural identity.

The fact that *The English Patient* does not follow a linear sequence to introduce the events is not surprising for an author that argues, "I don't believe stories are told from A to Z any more" (Cited in Bolland 65). The reader is first introduced to a present time in the Italian Villa. As the plot advances, the novel becomes even more complicated for the interruption of the narrative's flow by frequent analepses, as in the case of the patient's recalling of fragments of memories, in which he slowly reveals himself. The analepses may also be observed in the case of the full-scale biography of Kip, or in Caravaggio's accounts of his espionages. In addition, during the time of the analepses itself there is a rejection of chronological sequence, what emphasises the fragmented feature of the novel. Thus, reading out The *English Patient* requires a constant filling-in of gaps in the plot. The novel itself makes this clear, as the following passage suggests:

> So the books for the Englishman, as he listened intently or not, had gaps of plot like sections of a road washed out by storm, missing incidents as if locusts had consumed a section of tapestry, as if plaster loosened by the bombing had fallen away from a mural at night [. . .] She was not concerned about the Englishman as far as the gaps in plot were concerned. (7- 8)

Besides the rejection of strict chronological and causal sequence, Ondaatje's novel has a constant shifting of narrative point of view. As Bolland remarks, "traditional forms of narration such as the use of the third person anonymous, omniscient narrator suggest that reality is being represented from a stable center."(69) Clearly, in the novel,

such shifting of narrative point of view is connected to ideas of heterogeneity and instability, in a way that confounds the own reader, as illustrated by the following thoughts by Caravaggio: “Who is speaking as now? ”(243-4)

Another strategy to introduce the idea of the unstable, heterogeneous and non-linear subject is the novel’s favouring of collage, i.e. the development of plot through fragments of narrative, namely historical, geographic and religious accounts, technical accounts on bomb disposal, popular songs, poetry, and the like, as the following example illustrates. Kip is dismantling a huge bomb when the narrative is interrupted and the novel introduces the following technical account:

> If a man’s life could be capitalized as X, the risk at Y, and the estimated damage from explosion at V, then a logician might contend that if V is less than X over Y, the bomb should be blown up; but if V over Y is greater than X, an attempt should be made to avoid explosion *in situ*. (212)

Although it consists of technical accounts on bomb defusing, the above fragment enhances the suspense of the scene. Other fragments also play a significant role in the novel. The following fragment is from Kipling’s *Kim*, which Hana reads to the patient some time before Kip’s arrival at the villa. Thus, the passage describes Lahore, and anticipates the entrance of Kip in the story. As it has been seen above, as the narrative advances, Kip introduces customs, the history and the politics of Lahore from his own perspective, and so he provides a rereading of *Kim*:

> He sat, in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun ZamZammah on her brick platform opposite the old Ajaib- Gher – the Wonder House, as the natives called the Lahore Museum. Who hold ZamZammah, that “fire – breathing dragon,” hold the Punjab; for the great green- bronze piece is always first of the conqueror’s loot. (93)

These and other pieces of narrative contribute to the fragmentation of the novel, thus challenging homogeneity. Such fragmented structure can be associated with the unstable identity of most characters in the novel, as well as with the shattering violence of the wartime *The English Patient* depicts. Within such context of instability and

suffering, Ondaatje's novel questions national identity and nationalism. It seems that the novel presents the bad effects of nationalism and national identity on the individuals' lives. At the same time, some characters attempt to fix roots, become nationalists, and some of their attitudes emphasise the importance of national identity. As a consequence, it is possible to infer that, although there is an interrogation of national issues, the novel does not deny them. On the contrary, it emphasises the fact that despite all the problems generated by concepts such as national identity and nationalism, they remain as strong concepts. The following chapter consists of the analysis of Minghella's *The English Patient.*

CHAPTER II

MINGHELLA'S *THE ENGLISH PATIENT*: THE QUESTIONING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN THE FILM

As it has been discussed in the introductory chapter, critics and public acclaimed *The English Patient* film adaptation. Nevertheless, the success of Minghella's film did not avoid negative views of the film in comparison to the novel, as the following statements by Patrick Deer in *Defusing The English Patient* may illustrate: "the film adaptation of *The English Patient* is at once a faithful transposition of elements of Michael Ondaatje's book, and a systematic betrayal of its dominant obsessions. The film not only defuses the anti-imperialist critical charge of the novel, it also bleeds Ondaatje's text of color and drains it of its historical specificity" (208). Although acknowledging that film and novel "reveal to an extraordinary degree the complicity of both medium [. . .] in shaping and re-envisioning narratives of war and of empire for the global culture markets," (215) Deer dedicates a whole chapter of his book to analyse the 'fault lines and wounds opened up by the passage from book to film" (208). Some of the revisions to which Deer refers in his book concern the film's approach to themes such as nationalism and Englishness. According to him, "yet it [the film] blurs the question of nationality by celebrating the internationalism of Almásy's expeditioners; Englishness, in the film, becomes a nebulous aura that can include the demotic Geordie Sergeant Hardy and the Hungarian aristocrat Almásy" (225).

However, similarly to the novel's reception by the critics, the film has also received diverse responses. For instance, while Deer seems to consider political themes such as nationalism in the film as being underdeveloped, in an article entitled "Post - Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation of *The English*

Patient," the scholar Hsuan Hsu examines how cinematic elements contribute to the undermining of nationalist ideology. Contrarily to Deer, Hsu's hypothesis is that "Minghellas's film is simultaneously pleasurable and politically productive" (1).

Provided such diverse criticisms, this chapter aims at analysing the film's portrayal of issues such as nationalism and national identity. Some of the procedures applied to the analysis of the novel may also be applied in relation to the film. Thus, this analysis will focus on aspects of the film's narrative such as events, characters, setting, and themes such as mapping and boundaries and their possible relation to national issues. Nevertheless, due to the specificity of the film medium, as described in the introductory chapter, it is also important to consider cinematic devices as well, namely mise-en-scene, editing, sound and photography, since these elements contribute immensely to the development of filmic narrative.

Considering such specificity, it is appropriate to introduce the following comments by Ondaatje on film adaptation. In *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Film Editing*, Ondaatje says, "a film is born three times – in the writing of the script, in the shooting, and in the editing. With *The English Patient* there were, in fact, four births, because there was also a book as the source" (xix). As Ondaatje suggests, the novel is part of the process of creation of the film. Actually, the film retains a number of the novel's events and characters, as well as part of the novel's setting. However, it is possible to note the importance of considering a film in its own terms, as Ondaatje continues, "it is interesting to chart how variable those births were" (*The Conversations*, xix). The writer illustrates this variability comparing one specific sequence of the film with the corresponding scene of the book, in which Caravaggio, a Canadian thief and spy for the allies, first recalls his traumatic torture. What follows is the transcription of the scene from the novel.

> He crouched down to watch the dog drinking and he rebalanced himself too late, grabbing the table, upsetting the carafe of wine.
> *Your name is David Caravaggio, right?* (Italics in the original)
> They had handcuffed him to the thick legs of an oak table. At one point he rose with it in his embrace, blood pouring away from his left hand, and tried to run with it through the thin door and falling. The woman stopped, dropping the knife, refusing to do more. The drawer of the table slid out and fell against his chest, and all its contents, and he thought perhaps there was a gun that he could use. Then Ranuccio Tommasoni picked up the razor and came over to him. *Caravaggio, right?* He still wasn't sure. (58-59)

As it is possible to observe, the scene in the book is rather short, about two paragraphs long. Caravaggio looks at a dog, which is the catalyst of his memories that come much like a dream. As Ondaatje remarks, Caravaggio vaguely recalls the events, for actually he does not want to face his past. In the novel, Caravaggio is haunted by his past, but, except for the above scene, his torture is not presented in detail. However, as the writer states, this scene in the script "went on for about four pages of sharp and frightened dialogue [. . .]" (Ondaatje, *The Conversations* xix). Minghella, who was the writer of the screenplay, turns the dreamy memories from the book into a scene full of tension, "with the interrogator casually circling around to catch Caravaggio by surprise" (Ondaatje, *The Conversations* xix). In addition, differently from the novel, the script clearly points out Almásy as responsible for Caravaggio's torture, thus linking him to the patient's crimes, as Caravaggio says: "The man who took my thumbs, I found him eventually. He's dead. The man who took my photograph, I found him too. That took me a year. He's dead. Another man took that man across the desert to Cairo. Now I intend to find him " (Minghella, *The English Patient Screenplay* 93).

Having compared the novel with the screenplay, Ondaatje moves to the next birth, which corresponds to the shooting of the scene. The writer comments that Minghella went a "step forward from the written screenplay" (Ondaatje, *The Conversations* xx). One of the filmic elements that play a significant role in this sequence is the mise-en-scene. In *Film Art*, Bordwell and Thompson refer to mise-en-scene as "the director's

control over what appears in the film frame" (169). Mise-en-scene includes aspects of lighting, costumes, make up, and behaviour of the characters. In other words, mise-en-scene is what is being filmed. The mise-en-scene in the sequence of Caravaggio's torture is so powerful that it is not possible to forget the astonishing sequence: the interrogation being recorded by a typist, a razor opening, Caravaggio handcuffed to a table, a fly landing on his thumbs, a telephone that rings, the typist's horror, the sheer light on Caravaggio's face at the moment he is threatened with the possibility of having his thumbs cut off. Quoted by Ondaatje, Willem Dafoe, the actor who performed Caravaggio, says, "We shot the hell out of the scene" (Ondaatje, *The Conversations* xx). As Deer himself recognizes "Caravaggio's screen persona is given an extra aura of potential danger by Willem Dafoe, an actor who has played both Jesus, in Martin Scorcese's controversial *Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), and haunted drug-takers, in *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986)" (217). We are to return to this sequence later on in this chapter.

Finally, Ondaatje comments about the film's next birth, i.e., the editing stage. Editing may be defined with Bordwell and Thompson as, "the coordination of one shot with the next [. . .] with shot being defined as one or more exposed frames in a series of continuous length of film stock" (Bordwell and Thompson 271). In *The Conversations*, Walter Murch, the editor of *The English Patient*, states that editing could easily be called "film construction," (10) and he compares this construction with the orchestration of a symphony. The notes of such symphony may be coordinated or put together through a number of ways, of which the most common is the cut. It is also possible to join two shots through optical effects, namely fades, dissolves and wipes.

As Ondaatje reveals in *The Conversations*, the editing of the sequence of Caravaggio's torture has much to do with Murch's knowledge about the works of

Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online refers to Malaparte as "pseudonym of Kurt Erich Suckert, journalist, dramatist, short-story writer, and novelist, one of the most powerful, brilliant, and controversial of the Italian writers of the fascist and post-World War II periods." Coincidentally, such as the actual Almásy, Malaparte had complex allegiances, and, probably, because of his early connections with fascism he does not rank with writers such as Kafka, Dali, Picasso or Becket. Obviously such speculations would require a further study, which is not the purpose of this research. It is important to note that through his readings of Malaparte's writings, Murch became aware of the fact that the Nazis hated any demonstration of weakness. Such information helped the editor in the construction of the sequence of Caravaggio's torture, as the following statements in Ondaatje's *The Conversations* show.

> At one point Caravaggio/ Dafoe says, before he even sees the razor, "Don't cut me. He says it once. Walter has the interrogator pause in his questioning when he hears this, extending the time of his response. He has threatened the spy with the idea of cutting off his thumbs, but only in a casual, not serious, way. When Caravaggio says, "Don't cut me," the German pauses for a second, a flicker of disgust on his face. The interrogation continues. Walter found *another* (italics in the original) take of Dafoe's line, this one with more quaver in the voice, and decided to put it in again, a few seconds later. So Dafoe repeats his fear. And now time stops.
> We see the look on the German. And now we know he has to do what he was previously just thinking about. To emphasise this, Murch, at that very moment, pulls all the sound out of the scene, so there is complete silence. . . Something terrible has been revealed by the spy, about his own nature, and now something terrible is going to happen. (xx)

From Ondaatje's remarks it is possible to note that the sound is another filmic element that plays significant role in the sequence. During the specific moment in which Caravaggio reveals his weakness to the torturer, it is exactly Murch's choice of pulling the sound out that provides an increasing suspense to the sequence. Murch, who was also the editor of the film's sound, reveals his mastery in a previous sequence in the film. Hana (Juliet Binoche) and the patient (Ralph Fiennes) are in his room in the villa.

She gives him plums, which he swallows slowly. At the same time, almost imperceptibly, a sound of bells in the distance may be heard. Indeed, the sound is so distant that probably many spectators are not aware of it. However, this sound becomes significant since it may be the indication that something in the distance, such as the patient's past, is to be revealed. Metaphorically the sound may be related to an opening door to the patient's story. The patient's first flashback occurs just a little after the sequence of the plums.

The opening credits of the film, a brilliant creation of the filmmaker, also allow one to associate the desert to the erasure of identity. In the opening credits, Minghella works visually such idea of erasure. The sequence introduces a painter's hands in close-up. The unknown artist is painting the figure of a human body swimming on a flesh coloured wall. It is known in the novel that the figure of the swimmer is an allusion to the fact that the arid desert was in ancient times a place of abundant waters. In the film, the figure turns into a shadow, which suggests the idea of mutability, and, possibly, the obliteration of the patient's own identity. Such shadow turns into an aeroplane flying over the desert dunes, which resemble a number of unknown human bodies.

So far I have commented about the processes of transposing a novel to screenplay, the film's shooting and editing. Such processes reveal the complexity of the construction of a film. In addition, the above comments reveal the intimate relationship between the diverse filmic elements and the narrative itself, such as, for instance, the sound of bells that anticipates the patient's first glimpse of his past. In the attempt to consider also these filmic elements in the current analysis, it is time to move to the film's discussion about national issues in Minghella's *The English Patient*.

Minghellas's *The English Patient* has been criticised for giving emphasis to the story of the patient/ Almásy. As a result, in the critics' view, the other characters' roles

are reduced in the filmic version. It is not possible to deny that there has been a condensation in Minghella's *The English Patient*, and the film focuses on the affair between Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas) and Almásy. Thus, instead of criticizing the film for its focus, it is interesting to chart the possible relationship between national issues and the two characters' love affair. In his article "Post-Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation of *The English Patient*," Hsuan Hsu cites the works of Doris Sommer concerning Latin American romances. As quoted in Hsu, Sommer refers to marriage's role in providing a "means of bourgeois consolidation that filled the 'relative vacuum of social structures' to construct a social organization preliminary to public institutions including the state itself" (par. 2). In other words, marriages help to build self-determining nation-states. The relationship between Almásy and Katherine is adulterous, thus opposing the institution of marriage. Given that, their extra-marital bonds may be suggestive of international alliances, while the relationship between Katherine and Geoffrey (Colin Firth) "suggests an introverted form of society that precludes external ties," (par. 2) as Hsu states. The subject of international alliances in the novel is to be approached later on in this chapter.

Hsu also points out that marriage channels "eroticism into reproductive relationships which would populate newly consolidated nations" (par. 2). In other words, marriages provide members for the 'imagined communities,' through a sanctioned and productive eroticism. Thus, marriage is by definition publicly and officially protected by societal laws. Given that, adultery signifies a violation of these societal laws. In addition, contrarily to marriage, as Hsu observes, "adultery is ideally unproductive" (par. 3). This contrast between marriage and adultery is made clear in the sequence of the Christmas party in which, to be alone with Almásy, Katherine pretends a swoon. An English lady promptly assumes Katherine is pregnant. However, as Hsuan

poses “the film appropriates adultery as a productive figure for freedom from marital and national constraints, from the imperative to produce children for the sake of an arbitrarily imagined national community [. . .] resist[ing] the restrictive boundaries of marriages and the nations they help to build” (par. 3).

While marriage and its eroticism are publicly and officially acceptable, adultery is illicit, private and treacherous. In the sequence of the Christmas party, Almásy and Katherine are making love in a complex physical geography at the party. They are in a room that is adjacent to the place in which the celebration of Christmas takes place. There is danger in the situation. At any moment the couple may be discovered. The soundtrack in this sequence is quite complex. There are Christmas Carols, Arabic music, and a love theme being played simultaneously. There is a mixture of cultures, while the couple transgresses marital, familial and even religious boundaries. Moreover, considering the implications of marriage to the establishment of nations discussed above, it is also possible to say that the illicit relationship between Katherine and Almasy also challenges national boundaries.

Although, understandably, the film presents a number of alterations in relation to the literary source, similarly to the novel, the film’s story also takes place during World War II, which, as it has been seen in the preceding chapters, is the heyday of nationalism. Given that, it is possible to infer that the plot of the film also hinges on nationalism’s political interference in the lives of the characters, especially Katherine and Almásy, the adulterous couple. Like the novel, the film introduces the characters’ allegiances and sufferings both as a result of nationalism, and as a cause of the characters’ attitudes towards or against national issues. The following sequences of the film may illustrate such political interference on the characters’ lives.

The affair between Katherine and Almásy causes Clifton’s attempt of suicide-

murder in the desert. Clifton flies to the desert and throws his plane on Almásy. As a result Clifton dies, and Katherine is severely injured. Almásy survives and takes Katherine, still alive, to the Cave of Swimmers. Leaving her there, he starts his journey through the desert in search for help. However, after three days trekking through the desert, he arrives at a British outfit, and is arrested for suspicion of being a German spy. After escaping from the allies, Almásy arrives at the cave, but it is too late. Katherine is already dead. In an old plane, he attempts to fly from the desert with her body. German machine guns shoot down the British plane when it passes over a ridge. This event suggests that the illicit relationship between Katherine and Almásy must be restricted to the desert. Because the relationship between the two characters transgresses the social boundaries of the expatriate society of Cairo, even Almásy's attempts to return with Katherine's body to civilization are frustrated, and they fall on the desert, a world without nations, 'the earth without maps,' as she writes in his copy of Herodotus in her final moments.

Nationalism may be seen as a problematic subject in the various betrayals that occur in the novel. This same reasoning may also be applied to the film. Almásy and Katherine betray Clifton, who betrays the group of archaeologists, since in the film he is also a spy to the Intelligence. In addition, the film also introduces the consequences of the relationship between Katherine and Almasy in public terms. The love affair results in Almásy's alliance to the Germans. As a consequence, the course of the war is changed, and the German Army advances up North Africa, resulting in the death of a number of innocent people. Moreover, Almásy's attitude causes the imprisonment and torture of Caravaggio. Provided that, it is possible to infer that Almásy is punished for his own position between two antagonistic nations. His physical erasure reflects the obliteration of his own national identity. Like the desert, he becomes unmapped.

Nevertheless, national identity is something that seems to be pervasive in the individual's life. Thus, in a hospital in Italy to where the burned man is sent, his anonymity is ironically filled in with a possible nationality, and he turns out to be the English patient.

The interference of war in the private lives of the individuals occurs not only in relation to Katherine and Almásy, but also in relation to Hana and the other characters in the villa. Hana is a nurse that, after the tragic deaths of her boyfriend and of her friend Jan, decides to take care of the burned patient. Both spend some time in a Monastery. Secluded from the violence of war, they start a process of healing their wounds. During the process, David Caravaggio, another victim of wartime violence, joins the group in the villa. After some time with the group, Caravaggio dismisses the patient's English identity. The assembly at the villa is complete with the arrival of the Indian Kip and his British assistant Hardy, whose aim is to defuse bombs for the Allies.

In addition, similarly to the novel, the film also associates nationalist, as well as imperialist projects, to other themes such as ownership. One of the most significant forms of nationalism is implicit in the group in the desert. Fenelon Barnes, a member of the archaeological expedition, names the group as "International Sand Club," which, despite its internationality, is part of the Western enterprise of constructing knowledge about the East. Furthermore, historically, it is known that North Africa was not an exotic and remote site subject to an innocent exploration. In his website concerning expeditions to the African desert, András Zboray, refers to the importance of North Africa in the case of war:

> By the mid –1930s, the Libyan Desert was no longer the free for all unexplored expanse that lured the early explorers. The desert, at least in broad terms, had been surveyed and mapped, and interested parties were laying their claims. Egypt, nominally independent, was finally under British influence [. . .] To the West, Italy occupied Kufra [. . .] By 1932, the Italians have set up a small garrison at Ain Doua, and at Sarra well, both lying inside

> the “Sarra Triangle”, a wedge of barren desert nominally a part of Sudan, thrust between Italian and French territories. (1)

Thus, the group of archaeologists may be an allusion to nationalist and imperialist aspirations carried on by the European projects to own the desert. In the film, the presence of Europeans in Cairo emphasises the desire of ownership. The very well organized mise-en-scene and behaviour of the characters in the sequence of the farewell dinner in the Shepheard’s Hotel, contrasts with the chaotic atmosphere in the market place in Cairo. The Shepheard’s Hotel sequence is suggestive of a little British world inserted in Cairo. In this sequence, Almásy’s discourse mocking the internationality of the group is mixed with anti-colonial aspirations.

> ALMÁSY. I believe I'm rather late.
> MADOX. (ignoring the drama of this entrance)
> Good, we're all here? A toast to the International Sand club -may it soon resurface.
> THE OTHERS. The International Sand Club!
> ALMÁSY. (raising his glass)
> Misfits, buggers, fascists, and paedophiles. God bless us every one.
> The others drink, trying to ignore his mood.
> ALMÁSY. Oops! Mustn't say International. Dirty word. Filthy word. His Majesty! Die Führer! Il Duce.
> CLIFTON. Sorry, what's your point?
> ALMÁSY. (ignoring the remark)
> And the people here don't want us. Are you kidding? The Egyptians are desperate to get rid of the Colonials. (to an embarrassed Fouad) isn't that right? Their best people get down on hands and knees begging to be spared a knighthood. (to his host, Sir Hampton) Isn't that right? (Minghella *The English Patient Screenplay* 93)

From Almásy’s words it is possible to understand that the International Sand Club is an allusion to international alliances. As discussed in chapter I, the club is dissolved because of the war and the resulting nationalism of each of the group’s members. Thus, nationalism overwhelms any idea of internationalism. Moreover, Almásy’s states that international is a dirty word, which is probably an allusion to the alliances made during the war, namely those of Il Duce and Die Fuhrer, i.e., the Nazi Germany and the Fascist Italy, whose results are well known. Almasy’s statements in the film are also suggestive

of the alliances between Britain and its colonies and ex-colonies, like Egypt. For instance, although the Egyptians publicly tolerate the British presence, their desire to erase the Western influence in the country. Almásy's statements also make clear that he places the British government at the same rank as the Nazi, and Fascists, revealing that for its colonial enterprise Britain is despotic as well. This is a very straightforward critique made by the film to colonialism and its enterprise of ownership. The novel also introduces such critique to imperialism in general, through the character of Kip. When he hears the news of the nuclear bombing against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip attempts to shoot Almásy. When Hana interferes, saying that the patient is not English, Kip responds by placing different nation's interests at the same level: "American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman" (Ondaatje, *The English Patient* 286).

In Minghella's *The English Patient,* the theme of ownership is also connected to the themes of mapping and boundaries. The maps of the desert in the film become powerful political weapons, especially concerning wartime. Almásy is a mapmaker. Surprisingly, he says to his friend Madox, "Why do they care about our maps?" Almásy's statement is suggestive of his idea of mapping as something that has nothing to do with politics. His incredulity on the political role of mapping as instrument of power and ownership seems to be only apparent. This is suggested by the behaviour of his character when he says contemptuously, "Own the desert." Such words also point towards the impossibility of owning the desert. Almásy's statements suggest the arbitrariness of mapping and ownership.

Similarly to what happens in the novel, the subjects of mapping and ownership are interrelated in the film with the motifs of body, and eroticism. It is interesting to note how Minghella's version works this idea in visual terms. For instance, the opening

credits establish a possible connection between the landscape and the body through the smooth transition of the body drawn on the flesh-coloured wall into an aerial shot of the desert dunes, which resemble human bodies. This same idea is expanded later on in the sequence when Almásy talks to an Arab man about a "mountain with the shape of a woman's back." Coincidentally, or not, when Almásy says these words, a plane is landing on the camp. Katherine, the character linked to eroticism, arrives. Furthermore, Clifton, through whom the film introduces aerial photography, is also in the plane.

The ideas of mapping, ownership and the body are to be repeated in other sequences of the film. For instance, when Almásy and Katherine are together for the first time in his hotel room in Cairo, they talk about their likes and dislikes. Katherine asks him: "What do you hate most?" He answers: "ownership." However, in another sequence in the same hotel room, Almásy claims parts of Katherine's body: "I claim this shoulder blade . . . no . . . I want this! This place. I love this place. What is it called? This is mine! I'm going to ask the king permission to call it the Almásy's Bosphorus." Almásy's statements make clear his ex-centric position. At the same time that he hates ownership, Almásy attempts to own Katherine's body.

Furthermore, in his claim of Katherine's body, Almásy makes references to an important geographical location, the Bosphorus. The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia describes the Bosphorus as follows: "The Bosporus or Bosphorus (Turkish Boğaziçi or İstanbul Boğazı) is a strait that separates the European part (Rumeli) of Turkey from its Asian part (Anadolu)." Thus, the Bosphorus is the boundary that divides Europe from Asia. Such references to the Bosphorus as boundary between different cultures are emphasised in the same sequence in Almásy's hotel room in Cairo. In this sequence another filmic element, sound, plays significant role. Being a linking element between various shots in the film, sound actively participates in the narrative. While the sound of

Moslem prayers may be heard, supposedly from outside the room, a gramophone plays a folk song. The mixture of these two different sounds anticipates Katherine's attitude. She mistakenly thinks the folk song is Arabic. Actually, the song is Hungarian. The mixture of Arabic and Hungarian sounds and Katherine's mistake emphasise the idea of the blurring of geographic and cultural boundaries that divide East and West, self and other, centre and margins.

In the hotel room sequences it is also interesting to note how Minghella's use of mise-en-scene is suggestive of the ideas of ownership, mapping, and the body. As Hsu observes there are grid screens on the windows, which may be seen as analogous to the longitudinal and latitudinal lines on maps, as his following statements may illustrate, "Almásy's room in Cairo, 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" (par 7). This pattern of grids is recurrent in the film, occurring also in the farewell dinner party and the earlier Christmas sequences, in which Almásy watches Katharine through grid screens.

Returning to the sequence of Caravaggio's torture, it is interesting to note how mapping may be implicit in the strong visual images of his torture, and how cinematic devices contribute to the overall impact of the sequence. Cinematography becomes extremely important in this sequence. According to Bordwell and Thompson, cinematography refers to "how" (10) a film is filmed, including, among other aspects, the framing of images. In Bordwell and Thompson's words, frame, which is the border of the image, is important because, "actively defines the image for us,"(226). Describing the famous Lumière's film *The Arrival of a Train in La Ciotat Station* (1895), Bordwell and Thompson show how Lumière's choice of an oblique angle let the train enter the frame from one side, revealing the many aspects of the action as well as its several

planes of action. This result would not be accomplished if Lumière had set the camera perpendicularly to the platform. As Bordwell and Thompson argue, the choice of a "position for the camera makes a drastic difference in the framing of the image and how we perceive the film event" (226). The torture sequence in The *English Patient* begins with an overhead shot of the interrogation scene. This position of the camera, associated with the recurrent pattern of grid screens, provides an image that may be taken as an aerial map. As a result, this scene may be seen as an aerial partitioning of space. Since Caravaggio is focused under the grid screen, again the idea of mapping is connected to the theme of body, this time with violence. Similarly to the other filmic elements, editing becomes relevant in the torture sequence. Besides the moments of great tension implicit in the mise-en-scene, the great numbers of framings and cuts may also imply the idea of cutting and mapping, as a form of collage. In addition such framings and cuts may be metaphorically related to the act of cutting off Caravaggio's thumbs.

As it has been seen it the beginning of this chapter, Caravaggio's torture sequence is gruesome. Such sequence provides an illustration of the sufferings from the violence of war. In addition the sequence is an example of how the film can also expand some meanings of the novel. In Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Ranuccio Tomasoni, who is allied to the Germans, tortures Caravaggio. Thus Caravaggio's identity as Italian does not avoid his torture by his own countrymen. However, in the filmic version, the Germans themselves torture Caravaggio. This may be seen as the filmic expansion of the novel's approach to Nazi atrocities.

There are other sequences in the film that may illustrate the relationship between the characters' sufferings and ideas of nationalism and national identity, such as, for instance, the sequence in which a severely wounded young soldier dies. Unlike the burned patient's face shown in preceding sequences, the soldier's face is intact, and it is

possible to observe that he is very young. This image may emphasise the idea of the cruelty of a war that kills very young people. Significantly, the young soldier's final words are "I'd like to see somebody from home before I go." Suffering from the violence of war, displaced from home, the soldier's statements point out his desire to be connected with his homeland, no matter whether a completely strange person makes such connection. This is suggestive of Anderson's idea of 'imagined communities.' One of the reasons Anderson provides for the idea of nation as imagined is that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). At the same time the soldier's willingness gives emphasis to the idea of an 'imagined community,' it suggests the importance of national identity, especially during wartime. Ironically, the young soldier has forgotten, or even does not know, that he is dying because some human beings attach too much importance to the idea of national identity and nationalism.

Like the dying young soldier, Hana's friend Jan is another creation of the filmmaker. Jan is a nurse, and similarly to the young dying soldier she may be symbolic of youth. In a gesture of donating herself, the young nurse donates blood. However, in a following sequence she reveals herself as a girl also concerned with laces, silk and dresses. It is possible to say that she personifies the dreams that a mine on the road tragically interrupts. The film is very explicit in its portrayal of war wounds. In this sequence, the cruelty of war is visually strong. Jan's face appears severely burned on the screen, paralleling the image of the burned patient in preceding sequences. The burned man, the young soldier, and the young nurse are victims of the war between western nations.

In other sequences of the film references to nationalism and national identity are straightforwardly presented. For instance, a sequence introduces Hana in the vegetable garden at the villa. The act of cultivating vegetables is suggestive of a desire for life. The same soil that may contain mines may also contain life. Attempting to protect the vegetables from the birds, she tries to make a scarecrow with a cross. Her gesture of carrying the cross may be symbolic of her via cruces. She suffers from displacement in a strange land, almost alone, only with a stranger as her company. At this very moment, Caravaggio arrives at the gate, and says in Italian: "Buon Giorno." He announces himself as an acquaintance of a friend of Hana. He also tells her he is from Canada. Again the behaviour of the character of the nurse is significant. Hana, who initially received the visitor with a certain animosity, gives a pleasant smile at the moment she hears about his nationality, allowing him to enter the gate. He enters and greets her again, this time in French, "bon jour." It is not possible to forget that the film presents both Hana and Caravaggio as originally from Montreal, Quebec. The *Wikipedia* refers to Quebec as follows:

> History made Quebec a place where cultures meet, where people from all over the world experience America, but from a little distance and through a different eye. Often described as a crossroads between Europe and America, Quebec is home to a people that have the privilege of being connected to the strong cultural currents of the United States, France, and the British Isles all at the same time.

However, despite the cosmopolitanism implicit in the characters' homeland, the nurse's gestures, as described above, may be suggestive of the importance she gives to national identity, especially because of the wartime. This is made clear in the following sequence when she tells the patient about Caravaggio's arrival at the villa, that he is Canadian, and is to stay at the monastery. The following is the transcription of the speech between the patient and Hana:

> HANA. There's a man downstairs. He brought us eggs. (shows him the omelette) He might stay.
> THE PATIENT. Why? Can he lay eggs?
> HANA. He's Canadian.
> THE PATIENT. (brittle) Why are people always so happy when they collide with someone from the same place? What happened in Montreal when you passed a man in the street- did you invite him to live with you?
> HANA. He won't disturb us then. I think he's after morphine. (she's cut the omelette into tiny pieces) There's a war. Where you come from becomes important. And besides – we're vulnerable here. I keep hearing noises in the night. Voices. (Minghella, *The English Patient Screenplay* 26-27)

Besides Hana's behaviour and speech, it is possible to note a mocking tone in the patient's statements. These statements can be associated with Anderson's 'imagined community,' since they are suggestive of the idea of impossibility for a person to know all her/his nationals: "What happened in Montreal when you passed a man in the street- did you invite him to live with you?" This tone of mockery already occurs in a previous sequence of the film when a soldier in a hospital by the sea is interrogating the burned man. The soldier asks the patient for any identification. However, there is a blurring line between his supposed nationality as English and other possible nationalities, as the patient himself suggests. In this scene, the soldier asks the patient if he is married. The patient's answer is: "I think so. Although I believe that to be true of a number of Germans." And later on in the sequence, he adds: "I've got this much lung . . . the rest of my organs are packing up. What could it possibly matter if I were Tutankhamun?"

The discussion about nationalism and national identity is complicated for their intermingling with imperialist projects. In the novel, a character that is particularly connected to anti-imperialist issues is Kip (Naveen Andrews). Another criticism to the film refers to the condensation of the character of Kip, which as Deer reminds, "provides the novel with its most powerful critiques of colonialism and Englishness" (210). Despite the claims that Kip's role as anti-imperialist is erased from the filmic narrative, the sequence in which he provides a rereading of Kipling's *Kim* to the patient

is a brilliant creation of the film. The canonical colonial text is read in the film through the perspective of the Indian individual. Although the novel also provides a reading of *Kim*, it is Hana that reads Kipling's novel to the patient. The following is the passage from the film in which Kip provides a rereading of *Kim*:

> KIP. "He sat in defiance of municipal orders astride the gun Zanzammah". . . I can't read these words. They stick in my throat.
> ALMÁSY. Maybe you're reading it too fast. You have to read Kipling slowly. The Eye is too impatient. Think about the speed of his pen. What is it? "He sat," Comma, "in defiance of municipal orders," comma, "astride the gun Zanzammah on her brick . . ."What is it?
> KIP. "Brick platform, opposite the old Ajaib- Gher."
> ALMÁSÝ. "The Wonder House," comma, "as the native called the Lahore Museum."
> KIP. It's still there the cannon outside the museum. Made of metal cups and bowls taken from every household as tax. They melted down. Then later, they fired the cannon at my people, comma, the natives. Full stop!
> ALMÁSY. What exactly is it you object to? The writer . . . or what he is writing about?
> KIP. Uncle, you're finishing all my condensed milk. And the message in your book is that the best thing for India is to be ruled by the British.

In addition to his rereading of *Kim*, in the screen, Kip retains his role of defusing bombs and mines for the British Army. As Hsuan argues, "a mine, after all, is the most intense and paradoxical of proprietary claims" (par. 4). To a retreating army, a mine may symbolically mean the possession of the land. It is also possible to note that the words mine as possessive pronoun and mine as noun are similar. Kip works in bomb and mine defusing. Thus, if such weapons can metaphorically mean the idea of ownership and, as consequence, of imperialism, Kip may be taken as removing the traces of imperialism. Maybe the sequence in which such removal achieves the climax is when Kip defuses a huge bomb under a bridge. The bomb has engraved KKIP 2600 as serial number, which clearly refers to the Indian's name and to his age. Kip removes imperialism over himself.

So far I have presented some sequences in which the film is very explicit in its references to nationalism and national identity. In the preceding chapter, I have argued

that Ondaatje's novel interrogates nationalism and national identity through the questioning of their own foundations, which are ideas of a cultural homogeneity. In the novel, such questioning may be seen in the elements of the story, such as the internationalism of the characters, their relationships, and the setting. Moreover, Ondaatje makes such questioning through a number of strategies: the presentation of the ex-centric subject, the problematizing of history, intertextuality, and fragmented narrative. These strategies are to be examined in relation to the film.

As in the novel, the idea of an ex-centric subject in the film may be seen in the character of the patient/ Almásy. His controversial character may convey his position of in-betweeness. Like Almásy in the novel, the screen Almásy is also between antagonistic nations, and suffers because of his position. A sequence in which Almásy's ex-centricity is visually strong is when he flies over the desert in a British plane, but with German gasoline. His in-betweeness results in the shooting of the plane by the Germans, and his physical erasure. Furthermore his ex-centricity may be observed in his treatment of Katherine. At the same time he hates ownership, he himself claims Katherine's body, as it has been discussed previously in this chapter.

The problematizing of history is also present in the film's portrayal of Almásy, which is a historical marginal figure, as chapter I shows. Moreover, the presentation of the intertext Herodotus' *The Histories* as the source of Western history gives emphasis to the problematic relationship between fact and fiction. It is in this book that Almásy and Katherine add passages of their personal histories. Indeed, Katherine writes only once in Almásy's copy of *The Histories*, when she is close to death in the Cave of Swimmers. Such sequence in the film is significant. Before examining this sequence's possible meanings, it is worth to consider Harrison's remarks in "Herodotus and *The English Patient*" concerning Herodotus role as ethnographer, geographer and historian.

Herodotus too in many ways seeks to confound national stereotypes. Though he relapses into clichés of decadent oriental monarchs and their slavish subjects, he is also willing to see good in his barbarians. At times he even seems determined to shock Greek opinion by asserting how much of their culture originates in Egypt. But he is also concerned to map and to order the world. As Almásy puts it, "the histories in Herodotus clarified all societies". He classifies the different peoples in relation to one another, establishing whether they were indigenous, or the descendants of other peoples who had settled far from home. He marks the boundaries between the continents. (par. 11)

Harrison's statements corroborate the notion that Herodotus was the first to introduce ideas of division between East and West, barbarism and civilization. In other words, Herodotus introduced ideas of boundaries between different peoples, and helped to construct the idea of otherness. Returning to the sequence in which Katherine writes her final words in Almásy's copy of *The Histories,* it is interesting to observe that she writes in the book's marginalia. Katherine's gesture symbolically suggests the crossing of such boundaries, and her words, as transcribed as follows, emphasise such crossing.

> KATHARINE. I want all this marked on my body. We are the real countries, not the boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men...I know you will come and carry me out into the palace of winds, the rumors of water... That's all I've wanted - to walk in such a place with you, with friends, on the earth without maps.

Similarly to the novel, the film presents *The Histories* as part of both strategies of problematizing history and intertextuality. As it has been previously discussed in this chapter, *Kim* is one of such intertexts. The film presents it very briefly. However, it is not possible to deny the powerful use of Kipling's novel by the film. In relation to Herodotus' *The Histories*, it is possible to infer that, similarly to the novel, it plays a significant role in Minghella's film. The film brilliantly explores the story of the Lydian king Candaules. There are many parallels between Herodotus' account of Candaules

story and the love triangle of Katherine, Almasy and Clifton. The story of Candaules' obsessive love for his wife is similar to what happens with Clifton in relation to Katherine. In addition, the love triangle of Candaules, his wife, and Gyges has serious political implications. After he kills Candaules, Gyges becomes king of Lydia. This is suggestive of the intermingling of the public and private realms. Such intermingling also occurs in relation to Katherine and Almásy, since their affair results in the alteration of the course of World War II.

In the novel, the story that Katherine reads to the group in the desert foreshadows her own love affair with Almásy, and the implications of such relationship. This is similar to what happens in the film. The film presents the story of Candaules through a careful use of filmic elements. It is night in the desert camp. Katherine stands up in front of the group, and starts telling the story of Candaules. Like Gyges concealed in the shadows, Almásy is concealed near a tent, and the camera deep focuses on him, while Katherine narrates the story. There is smoke in the air. Through his facial expression, it is possible to note that Almásy is disturbed by the story, as Katherine continues the narration. From this sequence, it is possible to anticipate the affair between Katherine and Almásy.

In addition, editing becomes significant in the Candaules sequence in the film. The various cuts in the sequence alternate between the scenes in the desert and in the villa, as Hana and Katherine alternate the narration of the story of Candaules, in the present time of the novel and in the flashback respectively. Such crossing of boundaries between past and present emphasises the meaning of the relationship between Almásy and Katherine as a replication of the Candaules story of betrayal and deceit. Furthermore, the alternation between the voices of Katherine and Hana is suggestive of the film's treatment of narrative point-of-view and focalisation.

In *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, Burgoyne refers to point of view as "one of the most important means of structuring narrative discourse and one of the most powerful mechanisms for audience manipulation" (84). However, the issue of point-of-view has been used to signify a vast range of functions. Such vastness generates great difficulty and confusion in film analysis, since, as Burgoyne comments, the functions of point-of-view may refer to the technical sense of the point-of-view shot, but may also refer "to the general sense of orienting the work through a certain character's perspective, to the attitude of the narrator, to the world-view of the author, to the affective response and epistemic range of the spectator."(84)

Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is notable for a constant change in point-of-view Such changeability also occurs in Minghella's film, as it is possible to observe in the sequence in the desert, in which the Bedouins carry Almasy on a cradle. In this sequence, the camera shows the camels, and the Bedouins, as they carry Almásy through the desert's dunes. However for a moment the camera shows the mask that covers his face, not from the perspective of an omniscient third narrator, but from Almásy's own perspective. The result is that the viewer sees with Almásy's eyes.

As it has been seen in the previous chapter, *The English Patient* is a non-linear novel. The fragmentary nature of the text may be related to the "shattering effect of wartime violence," (214) in Deer's words. The novel begins in a relative short present time during the final year of World War II, and ends with Hana and Kip in Canada and India, respectively. The film differs from the novel in terms of chronology. Instead of beginning with the introduction of the nurse and the patient in the present time in the Italian Monastery, as the novel does, the filmmaker chooses to present separate events before the meeting of the patient and the nurse. Thus, the film alternates scenes in the desert and in Italy. The events in both locations begin separately, but somehow the

audience becomes aware of the relationship between such events. In *The Conversations*, Walter Murch denominates this strategy of introducing separate events as convergence. This process of intermingling scenes in the past in the desert and in the present time in the villa parallels the novel's flow between the characters' different pasts. Given that, although the filmic version may be seen as a more straightforward narrative, both novel and film deal with a complex chronology, which may convey the idea of disorientation and instability provoked by the war.

Concluding, although it presents a number of alterations in relation to the literary source, Minghella's *The English Patient* also introduces political discussions concerning nationalism and national identity, and interrelated themes such as boundaries, mapping, and ownership. Moreover, the film also introduces strategies such as the ex-centric subject, the problematizing of history and the fragmented narrative, and, thus, film and novel share similar ideas. The discussion about national issues in the film is also made possible by the use of filmic elements, which are powerful instruments to convey the film's inquiring of the above concepts. The following chapter consists of the final remarks.

CHAPTER III

FINAL REMARKS

As discussed in this thesis, Ondaatje's novel questions concepts of national identity and nationalism through a number of different strategies. Perhaps one of the most evident of these strategies is the novel's gathering of characters, as group formations, belonging to different countries and social classes. These characters cross cultural, ethnic and social boundaries, which help to constitute national identity and nationalism.

The setting in which such characters act is also significant for the development of the narrative. Two different settings were analysed: the Italian Villa of San Girolamo and the North African desert. These geographical locations are not only backgrounds to the events, but they are also active participant elements in the narrative, working in symbolic ways. For instance, the unstable desert opposes any ideas of established boundaries, which are fundamental to the construction of nation-states. Furthermore the desert's role in the novel may be seen as an ironic comment on any attempt to map it or to dominate it. Despite the fact that the desert is a battleground for foreign peoples that are accustomed to the establishment of boundaries, the constant changes of the desert's surface suggests that borders are illusory. By its turn, the villa has destroyed walls, suggesting the permeability of its boundaries that are crossed by characters from different nations. Thus, both the desert and the villa are suggestive of a 'world without borders or nations,' where the relationships are made through a process of 'affiliation', as opposed to 'filiation.' Said uses the term affiliation to designate relationships based on "social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation" (Said as quoted in Bolland 36).

Adding to the geographical locations, the historical period that is being depicted by the novel is significant. It is an unstable and dangerous time. The characters suffer from the violence of war, a violence that generally erupts from nationalistic aspirations. Thus, nationalism is implicated in the characters' suffering. In addition, nationalism generates certain allegiances, which are discussed in the novel through the theme of betrayal. There are numerous betrayals in the novel. Such betrayals occur at the personal and the public level, showing the influence of each level on the other. Thus, nationalism, as well as the allegiances and betrayals it generates, figures as the cause of the rupture of the groups in the desert and in the villa.

The effects of commitment to nations and states may be observed especially in the character of the 'English patient'. His physical erasure is the reflection of his own rejection of commitment to any nation, as he suffers the consequences of such position. He becomes a character positioned between two antagonistic cultures, and is punished for such in between position. After the British refuse him help, he turns to the Germans, and finally has his identity as Hungarian erased. Thus, the patient's uncertain identity makes him a representative of an unstable self. Such instability is emphasised by the recovering of his memories through the use of morphine. It is under the effects of the morphine that the patient begins to unshed the layers of his old self.

Almásy's character, which is based on the actual and controversial historical figure of Ladislaus de Almásy, may be seen as representative of the novel's rejection of single and great versions of history. In "Ondaatje's *The English Patient* History and the Other", Zepetnek comments that the real Almásy has a history of collaboration with Nazi Germany, although there have been arguments that he also helped Jewish-Hungarian families during World War II. The creation of a fictional character based on such controversial historical figure helps in the construction of the notion that history is

unstable and provisional, emphasizing how the boundaries between fact and fiction are difficult to distinguish.

The problem of national identity and allegiances may also be observed in other characters, such as Kip, which is also representative of the relationship between the colonized individual and the mother country. He goes to England where he has a good relationship with Lord Suffolk, his 'English father.' Lord Suffolk represents the figure of Kip's biological father, which later on will be replaced by the figure of the English patient. Nevertheless, Kip retains the experience of colonization in his own mind and assumes a certain distance from the English, placing his tent in the garden, and feeling his anonymity or invisibility as a member of another race. Thus, not surprisingly, at the end of the novel he makes racial generalizations against his friends in the villa, and becomes a radical nationalist.

Kip's expertise in bomb defusing makes him useful to the Allies, and he opposes his brother who sided whoever was against the English. Through the role of Kip it is possible to observe that the novel criticizes the anonymity imposed on the work being done by colonial individuals and their role during the war. Thus, Kip may figure as part of the hidden history of the war, since he may represent the anonymous individuals of European colonies that played important roles during wartime. Kip is part of the novel's critique to the anonymity imposed on the history of marginal figures. This treatment of history by the novel may be associated with the rejection of grand narratives, i.e., Ondaatje's novel is suggestive of a disbelief in great narratives of the past.

In its treatment of history, Ondaatje's novel has Herodotus' *The Histories* as an intertext. Herodotus describes the war between the Persians and the Greeks, while Ondaatje's novel introduces World War II in his novel. The central reason for the ancient wars between the Persians and the Greeks was the imperialist ambitions of the

Persian Empire, which may parallel the portrayal by Ondaatje's *The English Patient* of imperialist ambitions implicit in World War II. It appears that Ondaatje's novel points towards the fact that human beings since ancient times are to repeat the same mistakes, fight their wars for the sake of ownership, and the ideals of a single humanity are not able to supersede imperialist aspirations.

Such approach of history is one of the novel's strategies to undermine ideas of homogeneity, centrality and stability, which, as Bolland remarks, are also at the foundations of concepts such as national identity and nationalism. Intertextual references such as *The Histories* figure as another way in which the novel undermines ideas of homogeneity, centrality and stability. There are numerous intertexts in Ondaatje's novel, such as Kipling's *Kim,* the Arthurian legends, and histories from the Bible. As discussed in the introductory chapter and chapter I, these and other intertexts in the novel may be suggestive of a rejection of an author as being the sole source of a literary work. Thus, adding to the rejection of homogeneity, centrality and stability, the intertextual references also undermine ideas of autonomy.

Besides its development of themes such as warfare, mapping and boundaries, as well as the treatment of history and the use of a number of intertexts, the novel has a structure that also undermines ideas of centrality, stability and homogeneity. The non-linear structure of the novel, which is achieved through the insertion of numerous flashbacks, as well as of fragments of various discourses such as newspapers, poetry, songs and technical accounts, may suggest the undermining of any ideas associated with teleology, which are common in conventional narrative.

For all the aspects above, the novel foregrounds the theme of postmodern uncertainty, and, as a postcolonial work, it clearly challenges the centre. This challenging is achieved by its different strategies such as the presentation of various

lines of actions, which implies the existence of various central characters, instead of only one. Furthermore, even these various central characters are not homogeneous, since they are not presented as being unified and stable, but fragmented. Another strategy that undermines ideas of homogeneity, centrality and stability is the novel's presentation of characters with a double perspective, which are at the verge of the centric and ex-centric positions. Such battling can be seen as a feature of Ondaatje's work, and is probably a result of his experiences as an immigrant in countries with history of European colonization. Thus, not surprisingly, at the same time that the patient himself claims for the erasure of boundaries, he is also committed with the enterprise of mapping, and Kip, first an anglophile and non-nationalist, turns into a radical nationalist.

In sum, concerning the concepts of national identity and nationalism, as well as interrelated themes such as boundaries and mapping, it is possible to conclude that Ondaatje's novel is structurally and thematically constructed in such a way that the reader empathizes with an ex-centric positionality. In other words, one may assume that Ondaatje's novel questions the alleged authority of the concepts of national identity and nationalism, presenting them as a cause for suffering and pain, and showing them as cultural constructs. However, one may also assume that, far from being dismissed, such concepts are presented in the novel as being still quite strong in our contemporary world, thus deserving our close attention.

In 1992, at the time *The English Patient* was published, the world was witnessing conflicts such as those between Serbs, Croats and Albanians that occurred in the former Yugoslavia, which lie just south of Almásy's Hungary, in the same place that has witnessed the ravages of Rome, the Huns, the Tartars, the Turks, the Nazis and the

Soviets. Milosevic[8] was terrorizing Kosovo under the alleged reason of revenging a battle lost to the Turks in the 14th Century[9]. Actually, Milosevic, was perpetrating an ethnical cleansing of the land, by eradicating the descendents of the Islamic warriors who beat the Serbs 600 years ago.

The *Wikipedia* also points out other events occurring at the end of the 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s. In December 31st, 1991, the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist, and a new world order was established. Following the decline of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union, the national histories "deep frozen and repressed [. . .] could at last emerge and be confronted" (Deer 226). As a result, the world witnessed the re-emergence of the aftermaths of the nationalisms of World War II, as the case of Bosnia and Yugoslavia. Moreover, as Deer poses, there was in Western Europe an obsessive return "to forgotten collaborations with the Nazis during the war, hasty denazification, and accommodation with war criminals" (226). It is within such historical context that Ondaatje's novel interrogates national issues.

Such interrogation of national issues may also be seen in the filmic version of *The English Patient*, although the film was produced within a context that is quite different

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8 As the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* reveals, Slobodan Milošević is a former President of Serbia and of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as well as leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Then emerged in April 1987 as the leading force in Serbian politics. His political positions have sometimes been termed as nationalistic, despite the fact that his ideology was strongly marked by socialism and other leftist viewpoints. His initial appeal to the nationalists stems from a few of his speeches given in front of a Serbian crowd on Kosovo in early 1987, in which he famously exclaimed that "no one is allowed to beat these people". He was indicted on 27 May 1999 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo, and he is currently (2005) standing trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

9 According to the Wikipedia, the Battle of Kosovo was fought in 1389 between the Serbs and the Ottoman Empire. Milošević gave a speech in front of a large crowd on the same Kosovo Field, commemorating the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. In the speech, Milošević said:"we are being again engaged in battles and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot be excluded yet." This speech was widely interpreted to be the official beginning of a Serbian nationalist campaign, one that would be a defining element for the Yugoslav wars a few year later.

from the novel's. In his article *Defusing The English Patient*, Deer refers to what he calls "millennial memory boom," (226) in which, as he continues, the Second World War, "has become an enormously resonant imaginative territory to be fought over and remapped."(226). The first moment of such 'memory boom' refers to the period immediately after the end of the Cold War, as described above. Concerning the second moment of 'memory boom,' Deer points out.

> The second memory boom of the mid- to late 1990s, into which the film version of the *English Patient* triumphantly emerged in 1997, sought to leave national ghosts behind, recuperating the supranational and making the world safe for a new global order [. . .] Here the Second World War could be represented as not merely the site of archaic nationalist violence, but also as a global event in which multinational cooperation, presided over by a benign US superpower, won out over the narrowly sovereign. Despite the rhetoric of globalisation, however, agency remained tightly controlled by a sovereign power acting in the name of the new world order, and masquerading as the true spirit of internationalism. (226)

In the film, the clues for a questioning of nationalism may be subtler. When a British officer asks the burned patient his "name, rank, and serial number," he simply answers, "Sorry." It is up to us to think whether the patient has simply forgotten, or whether he is trying to reject nationalism and national identity, which were the causes of the loss of his love and friends. Another clue may be observed when Almásy plays the old Hungarian folk song for Katherine, and she asks, "Arabic?" "Hungarian," he responds, reminding us about the imaginary nature of the line that divides Europe from Asia, Christianity from Islam, West from East.

Although there are some passages in the film in which the clues are subtler, other passages refer directly and strongly to the questioning of national identity and nationalism, such as the sequence in the patient's room in which Hana tells him about Caravaggio's arrival at the villa. Hana shows the importance of one's nationality during wartime, while the patient mocks the idea of national identity. Perhaps he associates such idea to his own physical obliteration. It was because of his identity as Hungarian

that the British refused to help him. The Germans thought he was an Englishman and shot his plane causing the accident that made him nation-less.

The film also portrays the idea of the supposed internationalism of the desert explorers as being overtaken by nationalistic rivalries and suspicions at the onset of war. For instance, suspecting that Almásy was a spy to the Germans, his friend Madox commits suicide. Clifton also retains his role as a spy to the British Intelligence. Thus, similarly to Clifton's role in the novel, Clifton's role in the screen suggests that nationalist rivalries overwhelm solidarity and friendship. Such idea is emphasised in the sequence at the Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, when Almásy mocks the word internationality, posing it as a dirty word. In the screen, Almásy suggests that the relationships between nations are fragile; that internationality lasts only when national interests are not being challenged. The Shepheard's Hotel sequence also illustrates how, similarly to the novel, ideas about imperialism make the questioning of national issues more complex.

Imperialism is strongly questioned in the film adaptation of *The English Patient*. Kip, who is one of the anti-imperialist characters in the novel, has only one anti-imperialist speech in the film while reading Kipling's *Kim* to the patient. Thus, there have been critiques to the 'condensation' of the character of Kip in the film. However, Kip's short speech about *Kim,* as discussed in Chapter II, is not only powerful, but also emphasised in a later sequence in which the sapper defuses a bomb under a bridge. Such sequence has an elaborate mise-en-scene, which at the same time contributes to the discussion of imperialism, as discussed in Chapter II, and introduces Kip's important role during wartime. Being a colonial individual, Kip defuses the bomb exactly at the moment when the American tank crosses the bridge. His position, under the bridge, as

doing the anonymous hard work, while the Americans celebrate the victory, is suggestive of the hidden histories of the colonials during wartime.

Similarly to the novel, Herodotus' *The Histories* has a significant structural and thematic role in the filmic version. It is the copy of the Herodotus book that the patient brings with him through the fire, becoming a kind of scrapbook in which he pastes photographs, drawings, notes scribbled on Christmas crackers, even a small leaf. These elements provide the signal for a number of flashbacks that throw light onto his past, right up to the climax of the film when, as he dies, and his nurse Hana reads to him, from the book, Katharine's last words written in the book. The use of Herodotus, as a structuring device, is particularly suitable. Herodotus skips from one city or country to another, from one century to another, in a way that is at first puzzling. And so does the film, which goes back and forth from the Italian villa in wartime to the pre-war days of desert exploration that provide the setting for Almásy and Katharine's affair. Moreover, as a suggestion of continuity, after the patient's death, Hana takes his copy of *The Histories* to her new life. Her gesture implies that she is a survivor ready to discover the world.

In spite of obvious differences between the novel and the film, such as its end as portrayed above, a number of the novel's themes and motifs appear within the frame of the film, namely the idea of mapping as analogous to ownership of territory or people. Such idea in the novel is discussed through the association of ownership to the body and to geography. The film works this idea through a careful use of cinematography, sound, editing and mise-en-scene, in sequences such as those of the torture of Caravaggio, the Christmas party, the farewell dinner in the Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, and in the sequence in Almásy's hotel room in Cairo. In all these sequences the position of the

camera and the pattern of grid screens, as discussed in Chapter II, are suggestive of mapping as related to the human body and ownership.

It is possible to conclude that, enriched by the quality of cinematography and all the other filmic elements, the film clearly points towards the culturally constructive nature of the concept of nation and its interrelated issues such as national identity, nationalism, boundaries and mapping. There are numerous similarities, but due to the differences of medium, to the filmmaker's response to Ondaatje's novel, and to the different memory booms described by Deer, there are also obvious differences between the novel and the film. Then, moving away from the discussion about fidelity, what is important is that the interrogation of national issues by both texts provides readers and viewers with the opportunity to reflect about power relations and their positions within this contemporary moment. For instance, departing from the discussion in this study, it is possible to ask whether human beings are still repeating the same mistakes for nationalistic reasons, as we have witnessed in the final decades of the twentieth century. In addition, we may ask whether there is hope only in a world without nations, nationalism and national identity, or, despite all the problems they have generated and the world's globalisation, such concepts still offer hope to humankind.

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