

Post-Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*

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**Hsuan Hsu,**

**"Post-Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation  
of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*"**

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**Abstract:** Hsuan Hsu, in his paper "Post-Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*," discusses Anthony Minghella's cinematic version of Ondaatje's novel. In Hsu's view, Minghella and Ondaatje (Ondaatje collaborated on the film script) emphasize in the film the visual and social implications of mapmaking in order to align imperialism with the cinematic apparatus. While the film explores the workings of visual power, it also explores their adulteration by unmapped forces of desire: Almásy's and Katherine's adulterous relationship transgresses marital and national constraints, but also reinscribes them when Almásy desires to possess her body and Katherine dies immobilized looking at illuminated pictures in a cave. However, the film's narrative frame presents a more promising version of apparatus theory: Hana's relationship with Kip involves both a transnational way of loving and an "adulterated" way of seeing. Whereas nationalist ideology links knowledge to the notion of a disembodied and objective gaze, both the film's eroticism and its melodramatic evocation of tears remind us that vision is fundamentally embodied.

**Hsuan HSU**

### **Post-Nationalism and the Cinematic Apparatus in Minghella's Adaptation of Ondaatje's *The English Patient***

Theories of the cinematic gaze, strongly influenced by the work of Lacan and Althusser, often denigrate visual pleasure as a politically compromised response. Christian Metz, for example, links film spectatorship to the pathological practices like fetishism, disavowal, and voyeurism; Laura Mulvey, agreeing that films are fundamentally voyeuristic, calls for the "destruction of pleasure as a radical weapon." Jean-Louis Baudry suggests that ideological manipulations are inherent in the cinematographic apparatus itself: it feeds empty simulacra to mute, immobilized spectators, just as the apparatus composed of flames and silhouettes in Plato's allegorical cave supplies illusory images that dissuade prisoners from pursuing Truth. In this paper, I discuss the notion that such confining models of spectatorship fail to do justice to a particular "mainstream" film such as Anthony Minghella's adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1996). Minghella's film is, simultaneously, pleasurable and politically productive: indeed, it embodies a radical politics of pleasure, an adulteration of vision that undermines nationalist ideology by creating a post-national audience tied together by suppressed flows of "adulterous" desire.

In her study of Latin American national romances, Doris Sommer draws a suggestive connection between marital and national desire (on nation and gender, see also Imre <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss1/6/>>). While moving their readers to desire the union of a central pair of lovers, national romances produced simultaneously in them a yearning for the sort of nation in which such a union could be realized: "The unrequited passion of the love story produces a surplus of energy ... a surplus that can hope to overcome the political interference between the lovers. At the same time, the enormity of the social abuse, the unethical power of the obstacle, invests the love story with an almost sublime sense of transcendent purpose. As the story progresses, the pitch of sentiment rises along with the cry of commitment, so that the din makes it ever more difficult to distinguish between our erotic and political fantasies for an ideal ending" (Sommer 48). Sommer implies that, in the case of these "foundational fictions," the ideological strategy of blurring the distinction between erotic and political desires was a means justified by their end: the creation of communities of readers, and hence the establishment of self-determining nations, in Latin America. *The English Patient*, however, takes place in Europe during World War II, when nations themselves initiate and justify enormous abuses of power: its plot hinges on the political interferences that nationalism throws in the way of the illicit lovers, Count László de Almásy and Katharine Clifton. When Almásy walks from the Cave of Swimmers to El Taj to fetch help for the injured Katharine, British soldiers detain him as a German spy, and Katharine dies alone. Afterwards, as he is flying her body back to civilization, German machine gunners shoot down his British plane. The lovers, it seems, could only have been united on the "earth without maps" that Katharine imagines in her dying moments. In the Latin American colonies described by Sommer, marriage provided 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"; it also channeled eroticism into reproductive relationships which would populate newly consolidated nations (Sommer 19). *The English Patient*, however, derives its libidinal force from adultery rather than marriage. If marriage represented alliances between cultures, classes, and races in national romances, Ondaatje and Minghella's filmic post-national romance employ extra-marital bonds as metaphors for *inter* national alliances. Geoffrey Clifton's statement that he and Katharine "were practically brother and sister before we were man and wife" (Minghella, *The English Patient*; all quotations are from the film) links intra-national marriage to incest implicitly and suggests an introverted form of society that precludes external ties. Almásy, Katharine, Hana, and Kip embody and enact desires that transgress both national and familial boundaries.

*The English Patient* dramatizes the way in which foundational fictions, while producing national desire by means of libidinal and geographical mapping, give rise to various marginalizations and

exclusions or foundational "frictions" simultaneously. Marriage, with its insistence on productive and sanctioned eroticism, suppresses adultery, along with homosexuality and other unmapped forms of sexual satisfaction. In addition to frustrated adulterous and homosexual relationships, *The English Patient* also includes several instances of non-genital eroticism, such as a close-up of the Patient's mouth receiving a plum from Hana and the surrogate "love scene" in which Kip swings Hana, suspended in a harness, around the upper walls of a church. The film's governing metaphor for all these unsanctioned pleasures is adultery, perhaps the most common form of extra-marital love. Whereas marriage is public and official, adultery is by definition private and illicit, a violation not just of societal laws, but of vows voluntarily undertaken. Moreover, adultery, unlike marriage, is ideally unproductive: this contrast is evoked when, after Katharine swoons at the Christmas party in order to be alone with Almásy, a solicitous English woman responds by assuming that she must be pregnant. Nevertheless, 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. Adultery -- whose etymological derivation from *ad-alter* connotes a tendency "towards an Other" -- comes to embody an ethical imperative to resist the restrictive boundaries of marriages and the nations they help to build.

Perhaps the film's most extreme form of nationalism is carried out, ironically, by members of the International Sand Club, a group of desert explorers with ties to Britain's Royal Geographic Society. Although Almásy considers his exploration to be an apolitical scientific pursuit, the maps he makes of the desert become powerful political weapons when war breaks out in Northern Africa. The film exposes the ways continuously in which cartography contributes nationalist and imperialist projects of territorial partitioning and appropriation. These geographical partitionings, in turn, inform several metaphorical acts of "mappings," including not only the maiming and appropriation of human bodies, but also the "cuts" and framings of the camera itself. Several sequences implicate not only Almásy, but the camera and cinematic audience as well, in the colonial violence carried out by means of the cartographic gaze. Almásy views cartography as a science that has nothing to do with politics: when his partner, Madox, tells him the British government has ordered "all international expeditions to be aborted by May 1939," Almásy is both baffled and annoyed: "What do they care about our maps?" Even when Madox explains that "In a war, if you own the desert, you own North Africa," he responds with scornful incredulity, "Own the desert!"; elsewhere, he tells Katharine that the thing he hates most is "ownership." Yet his maps become crucially involved in the battle between Britain and Germany for power over North Africa. Moreover, a closer look at both the dynamics of the cartographic gaze and his behaviour toward Katharine suggests that Almásy's pursuit of geographical knowledge is deeply implicated in imperialism's visual practice of cutting up, appropriating, and dominating landscapes.

Aerial cartography involves a distanced, panoramic gaze that levels off the landscape in order to quantify and plot its features. This process of quantifying requires a grid or screen that mediates between the eye and the terrain. This model -- omniscient eye, mediating screen, and object of vision--incorporates the structure of the disembodied, transcendental "gaze" which Jacques Lacan distinguishes from the "look" (81-135). In *The Threshold of the Visible World*, Kaja Silverman gives the following account of a diagram which Lacan uses to represent the field of vision: "In it, the subject is shown looking at an object from the position marked 'geometrical point.'" He or she seemingly surveys the world from an invisible, and hence transcendental, position. However, the intervening 'image,' which coincides with the 'screen' in diagram 2, immediately troubles this apparent mastery; the viewer is shown to survey the object not through Alberti's transparent pane of glass, but through the mediation of a third term. He or she can only see the object in the guise of the 'image,' and can consequently lay claim to none of the epistemological authority implicit in the perspectival model" (Silverman, *Threshold* 132). The "image" or screen that intervenes between viewer and object occupies the position of the cartographic grid, which mediates between the aerial eye and the land being "surveyed." *The English Patient*, however, dramatizes Lacan's point that the purely objective gaze represents an ultimately untenable position: ocular mastery is always only apparent, and Almásy employs the cartographic grid not so much to claim epistemological authority as to lay claim to landscapes and bodyscapes. The eye may aspire toward the

gaze, but its striving for transcendence is always tainted, or adulterated, by the fact that the look is "always finite, always embodied, and always within spectacle, although it does not always acknowledge itself as such" (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity* 134).

Despite his professed antipathy toward "ownership" and his pursuit of visual objectivity, it becomes clear that even Almásy's map-making is tainted by desire. Minghella draws several visual connections between landscape and bodyscape early in the film: the opening credits depict a brush painting shadowy bodies on a flesh-colored parchment, then make a smooth transition into an aerial shot of the desert, which also resembles a body; the first flashback sequence shows Almásy interrogating someone in Arabic about "a mountain the shape of a woman's back." This image recurs later when, staring at Katharine's back, he begins to see her body as an object of possession as well as desire: "I claim this shoulder blade -- no, wait -- I want -- turn over [he indicates the indentation of her throat, which he later learns is called the "supersternal notch"] I want this! This place -- I love this place -- what's it called? This is mine! I'm going to ask the king permission to call it the Almásy Bosphorous." When Katherine temporarily stops sleeping with him, he tells her that "I want to touch you. I want the things which are mine, which belong to me." Almásy's urge to name and possess parts of Katharine's body combines fetishistic and colonial desire, both of which involve violent processes of partitioning. Both at the farewell dinner and at the earlier Christmas party, Almásy watches Katharine through gridded screens -- analogues of those of the map maker's. His room, where the two first make love, has similar windows which cast shadowy grids on their bodies, transforming them into erotic complements to the maps hanging from Almásy's walls. These cartographic grids are transferred ironically onto Katharine's body itself when she dies after the cuckolded Geoffrey tries to kill her, Almásy, and himself in a plane crash: she is wearing a grid-patterned dress. Also, a subjective shot at the beginning of the movie shows Almásy's view of the world through the grid of a reed mask that the Bedouins who rescue him have placed over his charred and disfigured face. When he is brought to a hospital in Italy, a British officer immediately attempts to determine his nationality: when the officer labels Almásy an "English patient," the map maker ends up being all but mapped to death himself.

Cartographic violence is even more intense in the case of David Caravaggio, a Canadian agent working with Geoffrey in Tobruk. After Rommel's troops have taken the city with the help of maps acquired from Almásy, a German interrogator has Caravaggio's thumbs amputated in the film's most gruesome scene, ostensibly in order to punish him for committing adultery. Since the sequence begins with an overhead shot of the interrogation scene mediated by a gridded screen, the metaphorical violence of both the cartographic gaze, with its aerial partitioning of space, and the cinematic gaze, organized as it is by framings and "cuts," is literalized in the cutting off of Caravaggio's thumbs. Cartographic boundaries and cinematic frames alike regularly cut bodies into pieces precisely by seeing them through a mediating screen or grid: "cinema represents itself as a twentieth-century continuation of the cartographic science" (Shohat 46). The technology of film is also implicated in the photographs which enable the Germans to identify him: Caravaggio tells Almásy later that, before tracking down the man who handed the maps to the Germans, he found and killed both the interrogator and "the man who took my photograph." Yet the amputation scene, with its excessive violence, its close-up of Caravaggio's fingers, and a scream that continues beyond the visual cut away from the hand, also incites viewers to identify with the subject of torture, and thereby bypass the cartographic grid. Caravaggio's pain, coupled perhaps with the spectators' guilt at their own complicity in it, enables an identification which traverses the mediating screen: after seeing the razor sink into his thumb, one checks to make sure one's own thumbs are still there. While the cartographic gaze is an instance of the human eye attempting to attain the position of the transcendental gaze, *The English Patient* recalls constantly vision to the body by means of eroticism and pain. If cartography, by drawing the boundaries of nations, also inscribes marriage as a set of boundaries for desire, adultery represents one way of escaping, or reconfiguring, the organizational grid. But for the most part, the film depicts only failed attempts and unfulfilled desires to transgress social and national boundaries: only the "frame story" -- which consists of the nurse Hana's relationships to the dying Almásy on the one hand, and the Sikh explosives expert Kip on the other -- results in an escape from the national and marital grids.

Colonialism's cartographic gaze involves a dialectical deployment of the activity of transgressive, international map-makers. On the one hand, their work is prerequisite to the production of maps; on the other hand, those very maps depict nomadic travelers as subversive to their totalizing project. Michel de Certeau claims that the totalizing map excludes tour describers and "the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition" (121). *The English Patient* dramatizes this process by which the itineraries which cross and connect different geographical places are systematically effaced. The map forms "states" of erotic as well as geographic knowledge and renders ground-level desires illegitimate, if not illegible. "Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer" (Certeau 95). Adulterous, homosexual, and other ungraspable desires proliferate in both the flashback and the frame narratives of the film, until most of them are frustrated or incorporated by the cartographic gaze. Although both he and Geoffrey Clifton are geographers, Almásy insists that aerial maps are too far removed from their objects: "You can't explore from the air," he tells his friend Madox: "if you could explore from the air, life would be very simple." The next thing he says, while priming the propeller of his plane, is "Contact." As in the torture scene, where Caravaggio's pain evokes a bodily identification across the cinematic screen, this scene implicitly prefers intimate "contact" to the aerial map-maker's distanced gaze. Ironically, Almásy advocates ground-level exploration only in order to produce more accurate maps. This replicates the contradiction in his love life: his adulterous affair with Katharine undermines the boundaries drawn by marriage, but only so that he can reinscribe a fetishistic and quasi-imperialistic claim to the "place" at the base of her throat. Lying in Almásy's bed, Katharine also reinscribes the very discursive terms she is trying to escape, musing that "here I am a different wife." In addition to the literally adulterous affair between Almásy and Katharine, *The English Patient* includes several other instances of adulteration more loosely conceived. "To adulterate" is to move toward the other, to "corrupt, debase, or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance" (*Webster's* 30). When Almásy pastes notes, and journal entries, and Katharine's paintings into his volume of Herodotus, and when, dying alone in the Cave of Swimmers, Katharine writes in the same book about the dissolution of boundaries between bodies and countries alike -- they are literally adulterating the *Histories*. Similarly, international romances -- whether between Katharine (British) and Almásy (Hungarian), Hana (Canadian) and Kip (Sikh), Gioia (Italian), and Caravaggio (Canadian), or Bermann (German) and Kamal (Egyptian) -- are relationships of mutual adulteration. Bermann, describing his homosexual relationship with Kamal, wonders, "How do you explain, to someone who's never been here, feelings which seem quite normal?" The deictic, "here," likens his emotional state to a geographical locale, a place that's indescribable because it falls outside of conventional boundaries. When a drunken and frustrated Almásy toasts the International Sand Club as "Misfits, buggers, fascists and fools," he suggests that homosexuals, presumably because their relations are seen as "unnatural" or "unproductive" -- comprise one of the stereotypes against which British nationalism defines itself. Continuing his toast -- "His Majesty! Der Führer! Il Duce!," Almásy blurs the boundary that justifies the war in the first place, intimating that the British are no less despotic than the fascists they are fighting. Finally, he observes that "The Egyptians are desperate to get rid of the Colonials": the insertion of "buggers" into a political polemic links the demarcation of sexual boundaries with the "fascist" project of colonialism.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that "by boxing the life of the child up within the Oedipus complex, by making family relations the universal mediation of childhood, we cannot help but fail to understand the production of the unconscious itself, and the collective mechanisms that have an immediate bearing on the unconscious" (48-49). In other words, Freud's Oedipal family romance is an "iron collar," a mediating grid which limits and disfigures the very desires it purports to map. They propose two alternatives to this "molar" map of heterosexuality: "We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense" (70). Their rendering of these molecular desires thus echoes the sentiments of Almásy's perverse political outcry: "the outcry of desiring production: we are all schizos! We are all perverts! We are all libidos

that are too viscous and too fluid" (67). The family romance prescribes heterosexual marriage, instituting a morality of morality which denigrates adultery, homosexuality, and molecular, transsexual desires as "immoral." Silverman calls this prescription "the ideology of the family," the dominant fiction of sexuality and society that "not only offers the representational system by means of which the subject typically assumes a sexual identity, and takes on the desires commensurate with that identity, but forms the stable core around which a nation's and a period's 'reality' coheres" (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity* 41). *The English Patient* includes several instances of unmappable sexuality: an eroticized opening shot of the smooth, flesh-like desert; a close-up of Almásy's ruined lips receiving a skinned plum from Hana; Hana's affection for the dying Almásy, which Caravaggio calls "love"; and Kip's feelings for his friend Hardy (trying to describe them, he realizes that "I don't even know what I'm talking about"), which Hana calls "love." Madox even seems to love the molecular sand of the desert, scooping a handful into his pocket when he leaves for Britain. But once again, most of these trajectories of desire are either frustrated (Hardy and Almásy die) or complicit in colonialism (Madox appropriating a pocketful of sand, Hana using Almásy to recover from her own emotional "war wounds"; even Bermann's homosexual love for the young Kamal, mentioned earlier, can be interpreted as metaphor for invasion).

Perhaps the only "lines of flight" which escape sexual and geographical maps entirely are those followed by the extra-marital lovers, Kip and Hana. Kip, who discharges German mines for the Allies, removes potentially violent traces of imperialism. A mine, after all, is the most intense and paradoxical of proprietary claims: like Almásy, who demands the parts of Katharine that are "mine" after he has lost her, mines keep on asserting that land is "mine" long after those who planted them have left. Practical only in the planter's absence -- only for a retreating army -- mines (again like Almásy's utterances of the word, "mine") are mechanisms of disavowal which claim ownership of always already lost objects, and, if successful, destroy the very objects that they claim. By defusing these--more specifically, by "clearing the roads of mines" (my emphasis) -- Kip reopens the way for both civilian and libidinal traffic, for desires that do not impose cartographic grids or "the names of powerful men." His undoing of identity is even more explicit in the bomb he defuses in one of the film's tensest scenes: he does not realize when he reads off the serial number -- *KIP* 2600 -- that the bomb literally has his name on it. This defusing also suggests Kip's swerve away from his namesake, Rudyard Kipling, whose colonial sympathies he criticized incisively earlier in the film. Hana's line of flight from the cartographic gaze is even more complex than Kip's, and requires a detour through recent theorizations of the cinematic apparatus.

In 1945, André Bazin celebrated the disembodied status of the photographic gaze, drawing attention to the French word for the photographic lens, *objectif*: "originality in photography as distinct from originality in painting lies in the essentially objective character of photography. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man" (Bazin 13). The camera, that is, effaces the subjectivity of vision, calling for what Christian Metz terms "primary identification" -- the spectator's identification with the camera's gaze, "with himself as a pure act of perception" (Metz 49). It follows that films portray a "hermetically sealed world" wherein "the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation" (Mulvey 201). Organized largely by the cartographic gaze, *The English Patient* seems to confirm such models of cinema as an experience structured by an un-crossable boundary separating audience from screen. Jean-Louis Baudry, in an influential essay entitled "The Apparatus," compares the cinematic apparatus to the allegorical cave described in book VII of Plato's *Republic*. Plato's prisoners, immobilized both by actual chains and by their internalized need for illusion, passively submit to the spectacle projected before them: "It is true they are chained, but, freed, they would still refuse to leave the place where they are" (Baudry 302). The apparatus -- a fire placed behind and above the spectators which projects the silhouettes of sculpted puppets -- prevents the captive audience from moving, from even wanting to move: "it is their motor paralysis, their inability to move that, making the reality test impractical for them, reinforces their error and makes them inclined to take for real that which takes its place, perhaps its figuration or its projection onto the wall/screen of the cavern in front of

them and from which they cannot detach their eyes and turn away. They are bound, shackled to the screen, tied and related -- relation, extension between it and them due to their inability to move in relation to it, the last sight before falling asleep" (Baudry 303). Katharine's death in the Cave of Swimmers involves a strikingly similar apparatus: immobilized by her broken ankle and ribs, she watches painted silhouettes of swimmers illuminated by the fire; though "horribly cold," she refuses to move toward the light: "I really ought to drag myself outside, but then there'd be the sun"; earlier, injured in the plane crash, Katharine begs Almásy, "please don't move me." While she is dying, Katharine writes in Almásy's "scrapbook" (his volume of Herodotus's *Histories*) the lyrical passage that represents the film's thematic and melodramatic climax: "My darling, I'm waiting for you. How long is a day in the dark? Or a week? The fire is gone now and I'm horribly cold. I really ought to drag myself outside, but then there'd be the sun. ? I'm afraid I waste the light on the paintings and on writing these words. We die, we die rich with lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have entered and swum up like rivers, fears we have hidden in like this wretched cave. I want all this [the saffron she wears in a thimble] marked on my body. We are the real countries, not the boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men. I know you'll come and carry me out into the palace of winds -- that's all I've wanted, to walk in such a place with you, with friends: an earth without maps. The lamp has gone out, and I'm writing in the darkness."

The light by which Katharine looks at the paintings is analogous to the light projected on the screen: as it fades -- as the film's illusion ends -- Katharine experiences the blurring of temporal ("how long is a day in the dark?") as well as geographical boundaries. Completely dependent on light, she dies simultaneously imagining a world without maps and reinscribing "countries" by requesting that her body be "marked." Katharine's death allegorizes the frustration of adulterous desire, the process by which the cartographic gaze has killed her, projecting its grid of molar morals -- literalized in the grid pattern on her dress -- upon her body. But Almásy -- he stands generally at the other end of the cartographic gaze, looking at Katharine through grids -- fares no better. Caught in the networks of voyeurism (watching her without being seen) and "fetishistic scopophilia" (laying claim to her supersternal notch), he also ends up immobilized and afraid of light and movement. He declines a position in the window because "I can't bear the light, anyways"; and Hana settles with him in the monastery until his death because he "hates to be moved"-- one might add, emotionally as well as physically. Instead of sunlight, he prefers to observe his own dreams: "I can already see. ? I can see all the way to the desert. Before the war. Making maps. ? I can see my wife in that view." Almásy's dreams recall his map making faithfully, but distort his adulterous affair so that he believes he was married. In addition to Plato's cave, Baudry also links cinema with dreams as theorized by Freud: like Plato's subterranean prisoners, dreamers undergo a regression to a state of immobility, a state in which real perceptions cannot be distinguished from fantasy (309). Almásy's dreams express his identification with nationalist ideology, his occupancy of a prescribed position: in them he is both the map-maker he really was and the husband he never became. As Silverman puts it, the cinematic illusion -- the "given-to-be-seen" -- "depends for its hegemonic effects on the slotting of the eye into a particular spectatorial position -- into a metaphoric geometral point. The latter can then best be defined "as the position from which we apprehend and affirm those elements of the screen which are synonymous with the dominant fiction" (Silverman, *Threshold* 179).

In addition to Baudry's models of spectatorial regression, the film of *The English Patient* dramatizes also Metz's voyeuristic model of cinema. Metz argues that "cinematic voyeurism, *unauthorized scopophilia*," is much more voyeuristic than theatrical drama as a result of "the spectator's solitude in the cinema" and the "*segregation of spaces*" that renders the filmic space "utterly heterogeneous" to the audience, with which it cannot communicate (63-64). Completely alone, seeing without being seen, Almásy as both stalker (following Katharine to the Cairo marketplace, secretly watching her at parties and dances) and map-maker indulges in unauthorized scopophilia. Indeed, the film frames adultery itself in voyeuristic terms, since the earliest exchange of gazes between Katharine and Almásy occurs when Katharine retells the following story from Herodotus: "The king insisted he would find some way to prove beyond dispute that his wife was fairest of all women. "I



will hide you in the room where we sleep," says [Candaules]. Candaules tells Gyges that the queen has the same practice every night. She takes off her clothes and puts them on the chair by the door to her room -- "and from where you stand you will be able to gaze on her at your leisure." And that evening it is exactly as the king told him: she goes to the chair and removes her clothes one by one until she is standing naked in full view of Gyges, and indeed she was more lovely than he could have imagined. So far, the story matches every detail of cinematic scopophilia as described by Metz and Mulvey: the woman is mute, passive, and objectified, while Gyges wields his secret gaze in an act of spectatorial rape. But then the story's conclusion suggests that the "segregation of spaces" stressed by Metz and the "hermetically sealed world" described by Mulvey do not adequately describe spectatorship in, and of, *The English Patient*: "But then the queen looked up and saw Gyges concealed in the shadows, and although she said nothing, she shuddered. ... And the next day she sent for Gyges and challenged him. And hearing his story, this is what she said -- [Geoffrey interrupts bantering], 'Off with his head!' -- she said, 'either you must submit to death for gazing on that which you should not, or else kill my husband who shamed me and become king in his place'." So Gyges kills the king and marries the queen, and becomes ruler of Lydia for twenty-eight years. When the spectacle returns the voyeur's gaze, the expected decapitation/castration is not the only option. The alternative is to cross over the "threshold of the visible world," engage the spectacle erotically, and produce, in this case, a political transformation leading to an unusually stable twenty-eight year regime. As a politically productive alternative to voyeuristic models of the apparatus, *The English Patient* offers a cinema of radical movement and heteropathic contact.

In Baudry's "Apparatus" essay, dreams are not as hopeless a cinematic model as Plato's cave. Baudry argues that dream-perceptions, and perhaps film as well, may produce not merely second-hand simulacra, but a more-than-real: waking from his first dreams of the desert, Almásy asks "Is there sand in my eyes? Are you cleaning sand from my ears?" The inability to distinguish hallucinations from reality informs "the specific mode in which the dreamer identifies with his dream, a mode which is anterior to the mirror stage, to the formation of the self, and therefore founded on a permeability, a fusion of the interior with the exterior" (Baudry 311). *The English Patient* moves towards just such a permeability, a mode of identification either anterior or posterior to the mirror stage, unfastened from the formation of the self. Baudry's notion of passing through the screen offers an alternative to the sedentary spectatorship imposed by Plato's cave, a cinema in which vision does not aspire towards the transcendental gaze, but instead affirms its basis in the body. Commenting on the way in which Roland Barthes's look "irradiat[es] otherwise insignificant -- or even culturally devalued -- details" in *Camera Lucida*, Silverman describes "a wayward or eccentric look, one not easily stabilized or assigned to preexisting loci, and whose functioning is consequently resistant to visual standardization" (Silverman, *Threshold* 183). Vision, Silverman suggests, can be simultaneously embodied and nomadic: traveling along unpredictable itineraries, the wayward eye transports the body along with it. "The adulteration of vision," then, describes not only the adulteration that happens to vision when *more-than-real* objects impose themselves upon it, but also the adulteration of the body by heterogeneous memories and experiences that vision precipitates. Silverman goes on to imagine a visual text that "would displace me from my self, as well as from the geometrical point. It would do so by enlisting me in an act of "heteropathic recollection." It would factor into my mnemonic operations not only what resides outside the given-to-be-seen, but what my *moi* excludes -- what must be denied in order for my self to exist as such" (Silverman, *Threshold* 185). Silverman's example of heteropathic recollection -- a woman's voice reading from letters sent by the protagonist of *Sans Soleil*, "speak[ing] his memories" (Silverman, *Threshold* 186) -- anticipates one of *The English Patient*'s many flashback devices: Hana reads texts that Katharine has already read or written into Almásy's book, their voices alternating as the film passes from one diegetic level to another. The entire film can be seen as a process of instilling Almásy's traumatic experiences (which at first even he cannot remember) into Hana's memory--and into the audience's as well, since Hana generally stands in as a sort of Ideal Spectator of the flashback scenes--by means of heteropathic identification.

In the midst of Metz's psychoanalytically inflected study of *The Imaginary Signifier*, a few seem out of place. One of these describes a form of identification that is neither primary (identification with the camera's gaze) nor secondary (identification with individual characters): "What I have said about identification so far amounts to the statement that the spectator is absent from the screen *as perceived*, but also (the two things inevitably go together) present there and even "all-present" *as perceiver*. At every moment I am in the film by my look's caress. This presence often remains diffuse, geographically undifferentiated, evenly distributed over the whole surface of the screen; or more precisely *hovering*, like the psychoanalyst's listening, ready to catch on preferentially to some motif in the film, according to the force of that motif and according to my own fantasies as a spectator, without the cinematic code itself intervening to govern this anchorage and impose it on the whole audience" (54). "My look's caress," a geographically undifferentiated spectatorial presence, describes an alternative to the gaze, which originates from a fixed, transcendental point. (Incidentally, the phrase resonates with one reviewer's enthusiasm about the way in which Minghella's "cameras caress the landscape" [Hobson 6]). Metz sketches a theory of individual cinematic response, an alternative to his usual implicit model of passive and impersonal cinematic subjection to the governance of primary and secondary identifications. In the second anomalous passage, Metz crosses the boundary of gender in order to describe his *presence* at a film: "Like the midwife attending a birth who, simply by her presence, assists the woman in labour, I am present for the film in a double capacity (though they are really one and the same) as witness and as assistant: I watch, and I help. By watching the film I help it to be born" (Metz 93). With their emphasis on an embodied spectatorial presence, these two passages indicate a potential line of flight leading out of Metz's voyeuristic model of spectatorship.

In one of *The English Patient*'s most memorable sequences, Hana and Kip make love without so much as touching one another. The sequence -- in which Hana swings from wall to wall in a church, looking at their frescoes, on a rope counterweighted by Kip -- stands in for a love scene, placed as it is between a courtship by candlelight and a naked conversation in bed. Hana's spectatorship provides an optimistic contrast to Katharine's death in Plato's cave: far from immobile, she moves literally from picture to picture; far from passive, she contributes actively to the spectacle, illuminating each image as she approaches it with her flare. Hana is hovering and swinging to whichever painting she and Kip prefer, bringing (like a midwife) each one to light by her very presence. The sequence involves erotic as well as physical "transport": Hana calls out Kip's name as she rises into the air, then thanks him enthusiastically when she alights. Giuliana Bruno, describing a cinema based on transport rather than an oppressive apparatus writes: "If we believe that 'whatever its particular fiction, the film produces a pleasure akin to that of the travelogue,' we can go further and assert that cinematic pleasure is more than the unique product of a textuality produced in the enclosed darkness of the apparatus -- Plato's cave; it literally belongs to a wider territory. Breaking out of the cave, film theory should acknowledge that forms of *transito* lie at the root of cinematic pleasures, and place these pleasures in the context of journeys of the gaze through topographies" (Bruno 56). Instead of colonialist travelogues, which gaze unseen upon foreign geographies in order to gain knowledge and power over them, a transitorial cinema caresses and illuminates its objects without denying the embodied nature of its own look: it travels through unmapped landscapes and leaves them unmapped. As the film shuttles through time and space, between northern Africa in 1939 and Italy in 1945, its spectators can cross boundaries not only vicariously, but actively and physically helping to produce the very images they experience on the screen. This erotic, embodied look effectively dissolves the boundaries between self and other: "And so looking has force: it tears, it is sharp, it is an acid. In the end, it corrodes the object and observer until they are lost in the field of vision. I once was solid, and now I am dissolved: that is the voice of seeing" (Elkins 45). *The English Patient* concludes with a generalized dissolution of boundaries: Hana's voice blends with Katharine's as they read the letter, Hana's piano theme blends with Almásy's song in Hungarian, and Hana emerges from the monastery, riding in a truck, staring at the sun in tears. In the audience's tears, the film produces a physical and more or less collective and collaborative trace, and its images cross the boundary between the screen and viewers' eyes. The cinematic apparatus based a voyeuristic command of vision dissolves before --

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or within -- our very eyes as they become filled not with visual pleasure but with emotions of love and grief, not with cartographic desire but with an awareness of their own blindnesses.

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