

film of which [he], at least, was not conscious," but are undoubtedly there; see Koch, *Casablanca*, 26.

4. See Harmetz, *Making of Casablanca*, which chronicles all this information.

5. Quoted in Harmetz, *Making of Casablanca*, 75.

6. Richard Corliss, "Analysis of the Film," in Koch, *Casablanca*, 186-87, briefly discusses the possible legitimacy of a political reading of the film that was current sometime before 1973, although he does not attribute it to anyone. (He even hints at a philosophical one: he refers to Rick's "vigorous stoicism.") He mentions that *casa blanca* is Spanish for "white house" and that Rick is like President Roosevelt, "a man who gambles on the odds of going to war until circumstances and his own submerged nobility force him to lose his casino (read: partisan politics) and commit himself—first by financing the Side of Right and then by fighting for it. The time of the film's action (December 1941) adds credence to this view, as does the irrelevant fact that, two months after *Casablanca* opened, Roosevelt (Rick) and Prime Minister Winston Churchill (Laszlo) met for a war conference in Casablanca." How Corliss correlates Winston Churchill with Victor Laszlo is puzzling, although not incomprehensible.

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 126.

8. The screenplay in Koch, *Casablanca*, 36, says that in this scene Renault speaks to Strasser "courteously, but with just a suggestion of mockery beneath his words." The Epsteins' stage directions indicate that "It is very hard to tell whether [Renault] is being servile or mocking"; consider Renault's introduction of Major Strasser to Rick: "Major Strasser is one of the reasons the Third Reich enjoys the reputation it has today" (Harmetz, *Making of Casablanca*, 47).

9. There is a story I have heard of President Franklin Roosevelt's giving an address to a national gathering of the Daughters of the American Revolution with the shocking (to them) salutation: "Fellow Immigrants!" I do not know whether or not the story is apocryphal.

10. Virtually everything one finds in the most fashionable twentieth-century French philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida—in a word, postmodernism—has its roots in Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thinking.

11. Harmetz, *Making of Casablanca*, 238.

12. The story of the making of *Casablanca* really does border on the miraculous. The rights to the film, based on the play, "Everybody Goes to Rick's" (in some ways similar, in other ways decisively different from the screenplay "Everybody Comes to Rick's" and certainly from the final film) were purchased before the outbreak of the war (for the United States, that is; a point that I, a Canadian, feel compelled to make). The film began production on December 8, 1941, the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was completed in August 1942, but its general theater release in January 1943 corresponded with the announcement of the Casablanca conference between President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. It won an Academy Award for Best Picture in the spring of 1944, as the allies were preparing for their imminent invasion of Europe (Harmetz, *Making of Casablanca*, 14).

CHAPTER 4

SEDUCTIVE BEAUTY AND NOBLE DEEDS: POLITICS IN *THE ENGLISH PATIENT* AND *CASABLANCA*

MARY P. NICHOLS

Casablanca and *The English Patient* have similar settings—northern Africa during World War II—and involve similar themes—how passionate love threatens friendships, national loyalties, and all human obligations. By exploring *The English Patient's* treatment of these themes in the 1990s, we can better appreciate the achievement of *Casablanca*, a film made over fifty years earlier. Count Laszlo Almásy (Ralph Fiennes), in the more recent film, lets nothing stand in the way of his love of Katharine Clifton (Kristin Scott Thomas), even turning over British documents to the Germans so that he can return to her. *Casablanca's* Rick, in contrast, tells his beloved Ilsa Lund that she should remain with her husband Victor Laszlo, for he needs her support in his fight for the Resistance. Thus *The English Patient* is generally understood as locating individual fulfillment in love regardless of political costs, whereas *Casablanca* appears to valorize personal sacrifice for the sake of a noble cause. The one privileges love over politics, the other politics over love.

I argue that this dichotomy between love and politics is too simple to shed light on the differences between these films. In the first place, *The English Patient* does not romanticize love to the extent that is often thought. Although the film depicts the beauty and seductiveness of passion free from all political loyalties, it also shows the dangers of such an infinite love. *The English Patient* leaves us with the tragic conflict between the limits that seem necessary for human life and humanity's unbounded desire for transcendence. *Casablanca* is no less complex because of its patriotic fervor. It answers *The English Patient* by demonstrating that passionate love need not lie beyond political loyalty as it does for the English patient, but can preserve itself by deriving strength from a noble political cause. The protagonists' political choices are inseparable from their love for each other. Only because Rick and Ilsa leave each other to serve the fight against Hitler will they "always have Paris." Beauty, when experienced as nobility of soul and expressed in noble deeds, mediates between individual

happiness and moral and political obligations. *Casablanca* thus offers the middle ground that *The English Patient* lacks.

LOVE IN THE DESERT

Anthony Minghella's screen adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* opens with slow brush strokes drawing lines in the sand. The music is foreign, unfamiliar, yet haunting and compelling. We learn later that it is a Hungarian folk song, one sung to the film's protagonist Count Laszlo Almásy when he was a child in Budapest. From the outset we are drawn into a strange, exotic, mysterious world. Only slowly do we recognize that the brush might be forming human figures: when the arms appear extended, and then the head, we see the original line as a body. We understand only in time, as parts are revealed from which we can infer a whole. But what are the figures doing? And who is painting them? They seem suspended. Later, Almásy and his international team of explorers find similar figures on the wall of a cave in the desert. The drawings prove the existence of an ancient oasis, for the figures are swimmers. Water in the desert indicates relief in two senses. It is both necessary for survival, and makes swimming possible, a playfulness and joy not immediately connected to survival, a superfluity or abundance perhaps in its own way equally necessary, if not to life, at least to human life.

When Almásy's expedition is disbanded due to the oncoming war, his British friend Madox (Julian Wadham) comments about their exploration of the desert: "We didn't care about countries, did we? Brits, Arabs, Hungarians, Germans. None of that mattered, did it? It was something finer than that."¹ War suspends their work, and it is countries that lead to war. At their farewell dinner, they toast "The International Sand Club," using the name with which Geoffrey Clifton (Colin Firth) has jokingly christened them. A rather drunk Almásy accuses the world in which nations demand allegiance: "Mustn't say 'international,' Dirty word. Filthy word. His Majesty! Die Führer! Il Duce!" To him, all nations seem equal, and equally culpable.

That "something finer"—beyond nationalities—to which the explorers devote themselves is represented by ancient drawings in the cave of the swimmers. The film shows their joy—and awe—at the discovery of the drawings. The beauty they experience transcends their national differences and can be owned by no one, even if powerful men leave their names on maps as a result of such discoveries. Such freedom from nations is what the dying Katharine Clifton longs for—to be with Almásy, "with friends, an earth without maps," in other words, a world with friends but no enemies. Katharine and Almásy's love for each other, an English woman whose husband works for British intelligence and a Hungarian count who seems to have no political loyalties of any sort, also transcends the lines drawn on maps. Almásy's exploring is connected with his love, just as his love of the desert is connected with his love of Katharine.² Soon after they discover the cave figures they acknowledge their love.

Katharine has read Almásy's monograph on the desert and is impressed, she

admits, by such "a long paper with so few adjectives." "A thing is still a thing, no matter what you place in front of it," Almásy tells her, offering examples of a big car, a slow car, and a chauffeur-driven car, which are still cars. Even a broken car is a car, Almásy claims when Geoffrey offers it as a possible exception. Still dubious, Geoffrey points out that a broken car is "not much use." Katharine appears to take the side of her husband, offering examples of love—romantic, platonic, filial—"quite different things, surely?" Yet she has read Almásy's monograph and wants to meet the man who has written it. She is British and longs for familiar rainy climates and her garden and home by the sea yet is fascinated by the desert, as she will soon become by Almásy himself.

Geoffrey's example of "uxoriousness" or "excessive love of his wife," as his "favorite kind of love" is ominous. So too is Almásy's immediate conversation with Madox as to whether Clifton might be a useful member of their team. He is recommended by the Royal Geographic Society, according to Madox, and "a ruddy good pilot," who can make "aerial maps of the entire area." If one could explore from the air, Almásy observes, "life would be very simple." Geoffrey's aerial vision, at least the low-flying one useful for photographs, gives him the distance to see the differences between things and thus to distinguish between better and worse examples of their kind. Almásy seeks a greater immediacy that he supposes will allow him to bypass what is unessential. When his nurse Hana (Juliette Binoche) later comforts the dying Almásy by placing a ripe plum in his mouth, he expresses his appreciation by calling it simply "a plum plum." His adjective adds nothing to what it is.³

So too nothing qualifies for Almásy his love of Katharine—not her husband, for example, or her Britishness or her wartime loyalties. It is his own perspective, ironically, not Clifton's, that "makes life very simple." And when the men at the camp toast their wives—their absent wives (which applies to most of them), their present wives (which applies to Clifton), and their future wives (which is meant to apply to Almásy, who alone of the group is unmarried), all their different adjectives notwithstanding—they toast the only woman present. Given her developing love for Almásy, Katharine is becoming Clifton's past wife and Almásy's future "wife." Their love makes past and future a timeless present for them. And it is Katharine's forgetting of time—her and Geoffrey's first anniversary—that leads to her husband's discovery of her affair with Almásy.

Soon after the Cliftons arrive at the desert camp, Katharine entertains the group around a campfire by reading a story from Herodotus's history, a story of the ancient king Candaules, whose wife is the most beautiful of women. Not content to enjoy her beauty alone, Candaules insists that his servant Gyges spy on his wife naked.⁴ The queen becomes aware of her husband's transgression, summons Gyges, and threatens him with death "for gazing on that which [he] should not," unless he kills her husband and takes his place. Gyges accepts her offer. "Let that be a lesson to you," Madox warns Geoffrey. Madox does not see that he should warn Almásy as well, at least, not until it is too late.⁵ Almásy gazes on Katharine as he should not, and she becomes aware of it. When Geof-

frey agrees to go to Cairo to take pictures for the British army and decides to leave his wife at camp, Almásy questions whether it is appropriate, "for the desert is tough on women." But like Candaules, Geoffrey does not understand what he is doing, its effect on his wife, or the implications for his future.

It is when Clifton is absent that the scouting team locates what they call the Cave of Swimmers. When a car accident necessitates that part of the group remain behind while others go for help as a devastating sandstorm approaches, Almásy and Katharine take cover in one of the cars. A broken car, it turns out, Geoffrey to the contrary, can be of use, even if it does not serve the use that cars were built to serve. When the couple are practically buried in sand, their survival at issue, Almásy passes the time by relating stories of terrifying winds, such as whirlwinds in southern Morocco that inhabitants defend themselves against with knives, or the red wind that carries red sand so dense that it produces showers mistaken for blood. When Katharine claims Almásy's stories are mere fiction, he appeals to her friend Herodotus as witness.

It is not clear, however, that Herodotus is their friend in the same way or that he is their friend at all. Through the story of Candaules, Herodotus teaches the dangers of transgressing limits, of looking, for example, at another man's wife. Katharine does not heed such lessons, however, and even uses Herodotus's story, as we see in her glances at Almásy during her recounting it, as a means of seduction rather than warning. By comparing Katharine's telling of the tale with the original, we see that she leaves out Gyges' initial rebuke to Candaules when he proposes that Gyges look upon his wife that "we must look only on our own." And Katharine adds a line not found in Herodotus's text: when Candaules' wife stood naked before Gyges, she was "more lovely than he could have imagined."⁶ Whether consciously or not, Katharine modifies Herodotus's text to fit her situation, converting the warning of the story into enticement.

Almásy's Herodotean stories of the winds, in contrast to Katharine's story of Candaules, involve the wonders and terrors of nonhuman nature rather than of human passion.⁷ Like Herodotus, Almásy travels and looks, but, unlike Herodotus, he does not understand the possibility of transgression and the need to resist not only natural terrors such as the winds but human terrors that arise from unbounded passions, such as Candaules'. Commentators who see a postmodern perspective in *The English Patient* refer to Almásy's ragged copy of Herodotus, which he "employs as a physical and emotional scrapbook," filled with "primary text, marginalia, and pasted-in cuttings" to exemplify "the textual and subjective nature of history."⁸ But it is at least as plausible that the materials that Almásy has added to Herodotus's text indicate that he has made it his own in such a way as to simplify its complexity and to neglect those aspects that might serve as a warning or a reproach to his own desires.⁹ Herodotus is not merely what we make of him, but rather lurks in the background as the explorer who knows both the attraction of beauty and its dangers.

We see those dangers when the explorer becomes lover. He tells Katharine that he most hates ownership, and being owned, and that when she leaves she should forget him. But Almásy is no more able to forget Katharine than

Katharine is able to forget him. They become consumed by their love: "I can't work. I can't sleep," Almásy admits. Although he hates ownership, he "claims this shoulder blade," as he looks at and touches Katharine's naked body. He changes his mind when he turns her over and sees the hollow under her throat, "This place, I love this place,"—"this is mine!" Becoming like those explorers who give their name to things, he will ask the king's permission to call the hollow under Katharine's throat the Almásy Bosphorus.

Later, when the war is about to break out and the work of the "International Sand Club" is suspended, Madox is concerned about the whereabouts of the explorers' expedition maps, which belong to "His Majesty's Government," and "shouldn't be left around for any Tom, Dick, and Harry to have sight of." Madox knows in a war that "if you own the desert, you own North Africa." But Almásy does not grasp what Madox is talking about, for he thinks that no one "owns the desert." He is concerned only with whether Madox can tell him the name of that hollow under a woman's throat—the very place he claims as his own. Indeed, he claims Katharine as his own, for after she leaves him, he returns for "the things that are mine. Which belong to me." His love alone seems to give him title and even to confer innocence, an innocence highlighted by the corruptions of war: "Betrayals in war," he writes, "are childlike compared with our betrayals during peace. . . . The heart is an organ of fire."

Katharine, in contrast to Almásy, is torn by their love. Whereas Almásy quickly betrays his hatred of ownership, Katharine cannot bear to live with the lies and deceptions she hates.¹⁰ She is not just a woman, but a married woman. She worries that her affair will devastate her husband. She yields to her passion for Almásy at the embassy Christmas party, while Geoffrey entertains dressed as Santa Claus. Afterwards, she pleads with her husband to take her home, to England, where "green, anything green, or rain" offers an alternative to the heat, and the passion, of North Africa. But for Geoffrey, the war (or its threat) complicates his loyalties. They can't go home, he tells her, for war may be coming. And Geoffrey works for the British government under the cover of working for the Royal Geographic. "You do so love a disguise," she tells him. "I do so love you," he corrects her. Geoffrey's lies or disguises are more benign than Katharine's, for he knows who he is and who and what he loves. And he would not betray them. In fact, it is his betrayal by others that drives him to his last desperate act. His playing Santa Claus is the disguise that reveals the man he is or, at least, the man he would like to be.

Geoffrey and Katharine fly to pick up Almásy after he packs the camp at the Cave of the Swimmers. The maddened Geoffrey, long aware of wife's affair, finally tries to crash his plane into Almásy. Perhaps he intends to kill all three of them. Instead, he kills himself and badly injures his wife. Even for Geoffrey, as for Almásy, loves triumphs over all else. Almásy has no choice but to leave the injured Katharine in the cave, promising to return for her. She has just enough water and food for the three days it will take him to walk to El Taj and the three hours to return in a car. "Although, given all the traffic in the desert these days," he muses, he is "bound to bump into one army or another." Obviously, either

army will do, when it comes to saving Katharine's life.

Arriving at El Taj, exhausted and frantic, Almásy insists on being given a car, a doctor, and morphine. He attacks a British soldier who insists on seeing "some form of identification" and finding out his "nationality" and is imprisoned. It is a world of only friends and enemies, not neutrals. It never occurs to Almásy to explain that it is an Englishwoman whose life he is trying to save, the wife of a British intelligence agent. Instead he refers to Katharine as his wife. She has become his own, just when he is losing her, when her being "Mrs. Clifton" might have saved her.¹¹ He is in need of Geoffrey's aerial view.

Almásy eventually escapes from the British and sells the Royal Geographic's maps of the desert to the Germans in exchange for the fuel to fly Madox's old plane back to the desert to rescue what is now Katharine's corpse. When flying away with her body, his plane is shot down by the Germans, for he neglects to replace the British markings on Madox's plane.¹² Who you are matters, the side to which you give or refuse your loyalties matters, and at last burned beyond recognition he attains for a moment the anonymity he once held as his ideal. Lest we be so attracted by the beauty and power of Almásy and Katharine's love as to blame their tragic end on a world with limits and boundaries that allows no place for their infinite love, Minghella shows us that Almásy escapes from the British only by brutally murdering a young private, who at the time is showing Almásy a kindness.¹³ And, prior to his murder, the camera reveals that the young man is reading a book while guarding the prisoners. Those who read Minghella's published screenplay know that the book is Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Like Almásy himself, the youth carries with him a book of travels and adventures to strange lands, even one by an Irishman that is critical of British politics, and yet the young man is a soldier, a patriot.

LOVE IN THE ITALIAN MONASTERY

The foregoing account of Almásy and Katharine's love is one pieced together from Almásy's memories, from his flashbacks, as he lies dying. Rescued after the plane crash, cared for by bedouin tribesmen and then handed over to Allied forces in southern Italy, Almásy at first cannot remember who he is. He doesn't know his nationality, although he can speak German. He "remember[s] a garden, plunging down to the sea," and "a cottage . . . right on the shore, nothing between you and France," perhaps his or his wife's. He thinks he was married. His memories indicate only his desires—he was never married, and as far as we know never in England—the home "on the South coast of England" that he remembers as his own recalls the one where Katharine told him she wanted to be buried ("in the garden, where I grew up, with a view of the sea"). Presumably he was heading there with her body when his plane crashed. As he nears death, he yearns not for the desert, but for the sea—and for rain: "I'm dying for rain—of course I'm dying anyway—but I long to feel rain on my face." His longings are a reproach to his past. The examining officer records him as an "English patient."

The dying man is cared for by a Canadian nurse and member of the Allied forces, Hana, who insists on staying behind with him, because he is too feeble to be moved. They stay in an Italian monastery, abandoned and ruined by bombing. There they are joined by Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a Canadian and spy for the Allies, who has been hunting for Almásy, a man whom he believes to be a German spy, whose maps led the Germans through the deserts to Cairo. Finally, assigned to remove bombs planted by retreating Germans, the Indian Kip (Naveen Andrews), a Sikh lieutenant in the British army, and his English friend Sergeant Hardy (Kevin Whately) set up their tents on the grounds of the monastery. As Almásy jokes when Hana tells him about the visitors who have moved in, "we should charge." The film's present constitutes another international society.¹⁴

It is not at first obvious that the man who lies dying is the same Hungarian count whom we meet in his memories. But he does come to remember his past before he dies—with the help of his copy of Herodotus, of Caravaggio's prodigings, and of his conversations with Hana. In spite of Hana's unconditional care for him, who he is does matter. The film is about the identification of the English patient as Almásy.

The English patient does not simply remember who he is, however, but he learns other things from Caravaggio—the way his acts were seen by others and their effects on others' lives. When Caravaggio accuses him of getting Rommel's spy across the desert into British headquarters in Cairo, Almásy does not deny it, but tries to explain—"I had to get back to the desert. I made a promise. The rest meant nothing to me." Caravaggio, however, has the better of the argument, for "it was not just another expedition" that Almásy took with the Germans, for "there was a result to what he did," a result that Caravaggio demonstrates by holding up his maimed hands. Almásy's expeditions had sought knowledge for its own sake, a beauty without consequences, but those expeditions and the maps they made possible were put to other uses—the Germans' drive into Cairo and Almásy's rescue of Katharine's corpse.

When Caravaggio tells him that his turning maps over to the Germans might have led to the deaths of thousands of people, Almásy comments that "thousands of people did die, just different people." Caravaggio again gets the better of the argument by mentioning that Madox was one of those people who died: "he shot himself, your best friend, when he found out you were a spy." Madox is not simply one of thousands of people; he has a name, and he was Almásy's friend. Almásy cannot be indifferent to his death. Almásy may literally speak the truth when he denies that he was ever a spy for the Germans, insofar as that suggests commitment to their cause, but Almásy performed the actions of which Caravaggio accuses him that prompted Madox's suicide. The circumstances of Madox's death is one of the significant changes Minghella made from Ondaatje's story, in which Madox commits suicide simply because of the war. As Ondaatje writes, "Madox returned to Somerset, where he had been born, and a month later heard the sermon in honour of war, pulled out his desert revolver, and shot himself."¹⁵ Minghella thus converts an act of protest

against war and against appeals to the honor of war into a protest against betrayal. The betrayals in war are not merely those of love, but of friendship and of the distinction between right and wrong. Minghella's Madox, in contrast to Ondaatje's, dies as a friend and a patriot.¹⁶ As a consequence, his suicide can have a greater effect on Almásy, for Almásy was implicated in it. The betrayals in war are not childlike.

When Caravaggio accuses Almásy of killing the Cliftons, he first denies it, but then as he remembers more of the past he acknowledges that "maybe I did." Having heard his story, Caravaggio no longer desires to kill him. Perhaps he realizes that Almásy died years ago, as the patient sadly observes. Almásy's story seems to have put Caravaggio's anger and bitterness to rest. Almásy's fondness for Hana, Kip, and even Caravaggio, to say nothing of his shock on the hearing of Madox's suicide, all qualify his statement that other than his promise to Katharine "the rest [means] nothing to [him]."

The English patient notices and encourages Hana's growing fondness for Kip: "you like him, don't you?" He observes, "your voice changes." Hana comes to accept her love, in spite of her fears that she will lose Kip in the war, as she has lost both her sweetheart and her best friend, and that she is a curse to anyone who loves her. As a gift to Hana, Kip shows her the paintings in an Italian church. By means of a pulley, he elevates Hana so that she is able to see the Renaissance frescoes up close. A flare Kip gives to her illumines the paintings in the dark church, just as the explorers' flashlights illumine the drawings in the cave. In both instances there is a sense of wonder and beauty, which serves as a precious and elevating moment in the lives of the lovers. Commentators have noted parallels: "When Hana is suspended in the cathedral, she seems to be floating and swimming as a shadowy echo of the figures in the Cave of the Swimmers."¹⁷ In contrast to Almásy and Katharine's love, however, theirs requires no betrayal. The beauty they appreciate together arises in the Renaissance; it is not prehistory, precivilization.

Hana nevertheless loses Kip, not to death, but apparently to his own fear of loving and losing someone—the very fear that Hana has overcome—for he withdraws from her after his friend Hardy is killed by a bomb the Germans left behind. Hana begs Kip to talk to her, but he does not respond. In Minghella's published screenplay, Kip asks Hana to come with him to India. When she hesitates, he understands her reaction to be due to the racial differences that separate them: "I know, here I am always a brown man, there you would always be a white woman." Whereas Almásy would allow no differences, or conventions, to qualify his love for Katharine, Kip allows them to have too much sway. Almásy rejects adjectives, and Kip lets them determine too much.

Hana loves both men. Earlier, when Caravaggio appears at the monastery, a man who lived two blocks from Hana in Montreal, she tells Almásy when "there's a war, where you come from becomes important." But with Kip, she sweeps the racial differences he mentions aside, saying, "I'm thinking about your heart, not your skin, and how to reach it. I don't think I can."¹⁸ If race separates them, it is because such difference and the conflict it brings highlight and

intensify the fragility attaching to their temporal lives. And Hana's own love for Kip demonstrates the courage to risk loss in the face of such fragility.

In Ondaatje's novel, a radio announcement of the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has a momentous impact on Kip: his visions of "the streets of Asia full of fire," "the tremor of Western wisdom," leads to outrage.¹⁹ The film's omission of all reference to the atomic bomb, and consequently Kip's passionate reaction to it, has been denounced by film critics, who applaud the novel as a criticism of Western imperialism. Elizabeth Kella, for example, argues that the novel criticizes "the ways in which humanism has historically been made to serve imperialist and racist agendas." The changes made by the film, such as the excision of the bombing of Japanese cities, "all shore up the representation of war as a timeless human tragedy rather than to question it."²⁰

Moreover, without the atomic bombing of Japan and Kip's dramatic reaction, the climax becomes the narrative closure of Almásy's romance rather than Kip's racial awakening. Thus, the film is personal, the novel is political.²¹ Whereas the novel suggests that "there are multiple subjectivities located in myriad and simultaneous loyalties to structures such as family, nation, and race," the film "constructs and fetishes an essential interior self," implying that "the self is located in a person's ability to love and is evidenced by acts inspired by such sentiments" and that the lover is "the true subject," set against other fleeting and mutable identities.²² Indeed, the novel according to these critics deliberately leaves open the English patient's identity, whereas the film clearly identifies him.²³

Although Minghella's changes are as significant as critics argue, there is an alternative account of their import. When Minghella replaces the bombing of Japan by the United States with Hardy's death from a German bomb as the catalyst for Kip's leaving Hana, he is not turning from politics to the simply personal. German imperialism, not Western imperialism, is the target, as is the devastating, tragic effect it has on human life. Minghella's omission of an opportunity to condemn American aggression and Western imperialism is therefore not a sign that for him love "overwrite[s] politics" and that, being "timeless and essential," love "possesses the ability to justify almost anything."²⁴ To the contrary, the film is clearly critical of "a love that knows no bounds."²⁵ The film accomplishes this by means of Caravaggio's maimed hands and Almásy's murder of the British private, as well as Caravaggio's reference to "thousands of people" who could have died as a consequence of Almásy's attempt to keep his promise to Katharine. In the words of Caravaggio, Almásy's expedition with the Germans "wasn't just another expedition." Nor was Madox's death just another death, not even for Almásy. The film does not show that love justifies any of these events.

Almásy's coming to understand who he is, moreover, does not fix the lover as the true subject, with all other identities mutable and fleeting, but, rather, fixes his responsibility for his actions. That his memories flow from Caravaggio's prodding does not indicate that they question the historically real and are only a product of Caravaggio's investment in Almásy as the object of his hunt.

Rather, Caravaggio prods in order to find out whether the patient is in fact the man responsible for what happened to him. Caravaggio seeks to know the truth before he punishes, even though the truth dissipates his anger and hence his desire to do so. To assign and accept moral responsibility does recover an essential self that bears that responsibility, but it also indicates that that self is constituted by moral obligations flowing from its myriad relations—such as Almásy's obligations to Katharine's husband, to his friends, and, most fundamentally, to the civilized human life that the war defends. Contrary to what most critics purport, the film does echo Ondaatje's critique of human essence in the form of Almásy's humanism, but not in order to demonstrate the underlying despotism of Western ideals. Rather, essence cannot be stripped of all the particulars that constitute character and on the basis of which we can make judgments about things. Almásy's love for Katharine is in a sense a broken love, as broken as the car in the desert in which it was first acknowledged.

Consider the scene in which Kip reads to Almásy from Kipling's *Kim*. Kip confides to Almásy his objection to Kipling's message "that the best destiny for India is to be ruled by the British." When Almásy tells Hana that "we have discovered a shared pleasure, the boy and I," she supposes that it lies in "arguing about books," but Almásy jokingly indicates that it lies in "condensed milk—one of the truly great inventions." The film indicates Kip's fondness—in spite of racial and political differences—for the man he still supposes to be an English patient, by his tender smile and offer to get him another tin of condensed milk. It is when Kip goes on this errand that Almásy encourages Hana to pursue her growing affection for Kip. In other words, the film's allusion to Kipling serves less as a reminder of British imperialism and of Almásy's naive complicity in it²⁶ than as an indication that differences need not undermine affection and respect. Kip, after all, is British educated and a lieutenant in the British army. He tells Hana that "the Patient, Hardy—they're everything that's good about England. I couldn't even say what that was." Kip sadly couples the English patriot killed by a German bomb with the man who gave British maps to the Germans. Almásy is neither English nor represents everything good about England. Kip is mistaken about the English patient. He nevertheless knows both that everything about England is not good and that there is something about England worth admiring.

At the end of the film, Kip leaves to join his unit, his job in the area completed. When he tells Hana good-bye, their farewell is awkward. "I'll always go back to that church," Hana says, to "look at my painting." But without Kip, Hana will never have the close-up vision Kip's pulley offered her, nor will her vision have anything but a memory of their love to give it meaning. Kip says that he too "will always go back to that church," but we have no reason to think that when and if they do they ever will meet there, as Hana says they will. The beauty of the frescoes that they share and that was Kip's gift to Hana does not sufficiently touch their lives to keep them together. Hana appears to see beyond the frescoes in her love for Kip, and that in fact is why she can imagine returning to the church. But just as Kip cannot articulate just what it is he admires in

Hardy and the English patient, Hana is not able to communicate to Kip why they should stay together. That to which the frescoes in the Italian church points, paradoxically, is more difficult to define or articulate than the freedom or boundlessness represented by the swimmers in the cave.

After all his past has returned to him, Almásy asks Hana to administer a lethal dose of morphine. Because Hana earlier insisted that as a nurse she must keep him alive, the rightness of her compliance is ambiguous. If Almásy is at last assuming responsibility for his acts, all the more ironic is Hana's reading to him Katharine's last words of love as he dies: "We are the real countries, not the boundaries drawn on maps."

After her patient dies, Hana too leaves the monastery to rejoin her unit. Caravaggio is also summoned to service by the Allies, where he is called to interpret at trials, although he is "allergic to courtrooms." The man who suffered when his torturer dismissed the limits imposed by the Geneva convention and who came to the monastery to seek revenge against Almásy will now acknowledge the limits that law imposes and the proper place of law in pursuing justice. The possibility of redemption through politics, hinted at but left ambiguous in *The English Patient*, takes center stage in *Casablanca*, where the "Marseillaise" drowns out the German soldiers and their pro-German song.

LOVE IN CASABLANCA

Whereas *The English Patient* opens with a view of the unbounded desert, *Casablanca* opens with a map of Axis-occupied Europe in December of 1941, distinguishing the Allied powers, the Axis powers, and neutral nations. The latter, a voice over tells us, include French Morocco, where Casablanca serves as a resting station for refugees on their way to freedom, especially to Portugal, where flights from Lisbon bring them to America. A bold line appears on the map, tracing their route from Paris to Marseilles on the French coast, to Casablanca, to Lisbon. Lines between countries are pushed back by military might, while others are drawn by the routes of the refugees to safety. As in *The English Patient*, boundaries between countries are fluid, and the film's characters attempt to slip through them. But the goal of the refugees is America and the freedom it represents. One cannot live free from nations, as Almásy tries to do, for nations make possible freedom and its defense.

In the corrupt city of Casablanca, life is cheap, and the opening scenes tell us of pickpockets, bribery, and murders. A pickpocket warns the couple whom he is about to fleece that "the scum of Europe has gravitated to Casablanca." There are those who are desperate for exit visas and those ready to take advantage of them. The opening shots of Casablanca reveal another international sand club of sorts, peopled by native Arabs, members of the Free French Resistance, German sympathizers, disparate refugees, and criminals preying on whomever they can. French police shoot a fleeing suspect who falls beneath a poster of Marshall Pétain, head of Vichy France, inscribed with his words, "I keep my promises, just as I keep those of others." When "the whole world crumb[es],"

the film thus questions, can a person's word be trusted? While it is Almásy's promise to Katharine to return for her that leads to his collaboration with the Germans, Ilsa's marital promise leads her to leave Rick in Paris and later influences Rick to insist that she leave him in Casablanca. For the protagonist of this film, war does not confer innocence on betrayal. One must do better than Marshall Pétain. It is Rick who keeps his promise to do the thinking for both him and Ilsa and ensures that Ilsa keep hers to her husband as well, for he needs her, Rick believes, in his work against Hitler. Promises are more complex for Rick, because loyalties are more diverse and the good to be achieved broader in scope than for Almásy.

French Captain Louis Renault, who nominally governs the city, reflects the diversity of Casablanca itself—a Frenchman who caters to the Germans, a womanizer not above bribery who is also friendly with Rick. A plane soars over Casablanca at the beginning of the film, as one does over the desert in *The English Patient*. Whereas Almásy is trying to rescue Katharine's body from the cave, in *Casablanca* a European couple imagines the plane is bringing refugees to safety in Lisbon. Their hopes too are disappointed, for the camera reveals the plane's German markings. While the British markings on Almásy's plane ironically conceal his collaboration from the German gunners below, there is nothing misleading about the markings on the plane in *Casablanca*. It is bringing Major Strasser of the Third Reich to Casablanca to ensure that the recent murderer of two Germans carrying transit papers will be apprehended and punished.

At the center of life in Casablanca is Rick's Café Américain. Rick is reputed to be above politics and national loyalties, reminding us of Almásy. Rick claims to be "a drunkard" when Major Strasser inquires of his nationality. Renault interprets this to mean "a citizen of the world" and "completely neutral about everything." Asked by Strasser whether he "cannot imagine the Germans in their beloved Paris," Rick responds that "it's not particularly my beloved Paris." As to the Germans occupying New York City, Rick helpfully warns that, "there are certain sections of New York, Major, that I wouldn't advise you to try to invade." Among Rick's most characteristic lines in the film are "I stick my neck out for nobody" and "I'm the only cause I'm interested in." His indifference seems to apply to women. Early in the film we see Rick send home a young Frenchwoman, Yvonne, who is apparently smitten by him. Renault observes to Major Strasser that Rick's neutrality extends to women as well as politics.

In our first view of Rick in the film, he is playing chess—alone. He moves the pieces for both sides, overseeing their struggle. We see his hands before we see his face, handsome, bland, aloof. Almásy is also handsome, but his face seldom bland, and he does not long remain aloof. Almásy encounters Katharine shopping in Cairo's bustling marketplace, just as Rick meets Ilsa in Casablanca's. But in the later film's parallel scene, Almásy continues to follow Katharine. His desire not to be obligated, which he expresses when Katharine offers him drawings she made of the figures on the wall of the cave, is short lived. It is not obligation, however, that best expresses Almásy's feelings, except

perhaps later toward Hana. Rick, in contrast, recognizes any number of obligations, although they are not distinct from his affection, such as to his piano player Sam (Arthur "Dooley" Wilson)²⁷ and to his waiter Carl, as we see when he provides for them when he finally sells his café. As the murderer of the German couriers discovers, in *Casablanca's* war-torn world one cannot successfully play both sides. But, then, Rick never really tries to do so, except on the chess board, and we see that his obligations to human beings are inseparable from his principles.

Early in the film, there are hints that Rick's indifference is not as great as he claims. Major Strasser is suspicious of the neutrality of a man who "ran guns to Ethiopia" in 1935 after it was invaded by Italy (in violation of Roosevelt's 1935 Neutrality Law) and then fought in Spain against Franco the following year. At the beginning of the film, we see Rick bar a German banker from entering his private game room and lets the banker know that he is lucky that his cash is good at the bar. Rick is characteristically the protector of boundaries, although he allows Ugarte, black market dealer and now apparently the murderer of the German couriers whose letters of transit he now possesses, to slip through the door of the game room. It is precisely because Ugarte knows that Rick despises him, he says, that Rick is the only one to whom he trusts the letters for safekeeping. Ugarte may be despicable, but he understands that Rick's indifference to exploiting others is the flip side of his integrity. Rick's integrity, however, eventually demands more than his safekeeping of the letters—their use in the service of a cause. As we saw in the case of Almásy and the British maps of North Africa entrusted to his safekeeping, neutrality is difficult to maintain, whether one uses what one has in one's possession for good or ill.

Rick seems to fit into none of the categories that define the city's teeming population, insofar as he is neutral to both sides in the war and also lacks the desires for safety, women, or money that move others. He cares not even for an honest profit, inasmuch as he continually resists selling his café to black-market king Signor Ferrari. When the frustrated Ferrari proposes instead to buy for his own club Rick's piano player, Sam, Rick insists that he "does not buy or sell human beings." And while he rejects Yvonne's advances, we see him try to make her stop drinking and to get her safely home. That there is more to Rick than Renault's words to Strasser indicates, however, is suggested most poignantly when he intervenes to thwart Renault's exploitation of a young Bulgarian woman, Annina, who is trying to get exit visas for herself and her husband.

Indeed, Annina is so young that, as Rick observes, she should not be allowed in Rick's club. She is there with her husband, Jan, who is trying to win enough at the roulette table for their exit visas, and with Renault, who offers her another way to get them. But is Renault's word to be trusted, she asks Rick, as she contemplates breaking her marital vows. She asks Rick even more: "if someone loved you very much, so that your happiness was the only thing she wanted in the whole world, but she did a bad thing to make certain of it, could you forgive her?" Like *The English Patient*, *Casablanca* raises the question of the limits to what one should do for love. Whereas Almásy sells British maps—

and therewith thousands of innocent lives—to the Germans, Annina is contemplating selling herself to Renault. She is trying to escape from political oppression (in Bulgaria “a devil has the people by the throat”), not indifferent to it. Because she knows it is “a bad thing” she is considering doing, she is torn.

With Rick’s help, Annina’s husband wins enough at roulette for the exit visas. Annina tries to thank Rick, but he tells her that her husband is “just a lucky guy.” Rick’s noble deeds require no thanks, and when disclaiming his obvious intervention in the wheel of fortune, he speaks truly in another sense. Fortune has blessed Jan in his wife. As Rick cynically observed when Annina asked him about the dilemma of a woman who loved someone so much that she would do “a bad thing” for the sake of his happiness, “Nobody ever loved me that much.” The waiter, Carl, who keeps his eye on all that goes on in the café and who is later revealed to work for the Resistance, tells Rick that he has done “a beautiful thing.” Renault is of course not entirely pleased at the outcome, but concedes to defeat. It is with some begrudging admiration that he reproaches Rick for being after all “a rank sentimentalist.”

When Victor Laszlo and his wife Ilsa arrive in Casablanca, and soon thereafter at Rick’s Café, we learn even more about Rick. Not only has he fought for freedom, he has been in love. Ilsa’s appearance at his café awakens his memories of his past with her, memories he has been trying to forget. Like Katharine Clifton, Ilsa is a beautiful and striking woman. And while both women are fond of their husbands and do not want them hurt, neither is passionately in love with them. Katharine married her childhood sweetheart, whose loyalty to her over the years was steadfast. And Ilsa confides to Rick that Victor Laszlo is a great and courageous man about whom she had heard for years and whom, when she met him, she came to “worship . . . with a feeling she supposed was love.” Like Geoffrey Clifton, Laszlo is a patriot, in fact, he is the Czech leader of the Resistance to Hitler, a man whose work will affect “the lives of thousands and thousands of people.” And, like Katharine, Ilsa discovers that love takes many forms, which are “quite different things.” Like Katharine, she falls passionately in love with someone else.

When Ilsa met Rick in Paris, shortly before the German occupation, she had been told that her husband had died in a concentration camp. Her marriage had to be kept secret for her own safety, given how much she knew of her husband’s work; and when she learns that he is indeed alive, ill, and in need of her, she leaves Rick, unable for everyone’s safety to tell him the truth. What looks like a failure to keep her promise to him—to leave Paris with him—is actually her keeping her marriage vows. When Rick learns the truth, he also learns of Ilsa’s enduring love for him: “I’ll never have the strength to leave you again,” she tells him, and also that “I don’t know what is right anymore; you’ll have to think for both of us, for all of us.” The camera cuts, leaving them in each other’s arms. In the next scene, Victor arrives at the café with Carl, seeking safety from the police who have broken up their Resistance meeting. Just before Renault arrives to arrest him, he appeals to Rick to adopt the cause that was once his and also to use the letters of transit he suspects Rick has to take Ilsa away from Casablanca.

He knows, he says, that his wife is in love with Rick. He is no Geoffrey Clifton, and his intended sacrifice for the sake of the happiness of the woman he loves will be repeated in another form by Rick at the end of the film. Victor Laszlo inspires not only Ilsa but Rick as well.

The stirring ending of the film is well known. Rick sells his café to Signor Ferrari, tells Renault his plan to leave with Ilsa, and gets him to free Laszlo, whom Renault is holding in jail for the opportunity of apprehending in possession of the letters of transit. Renault agrees to help, observing that “love, it seems, triumphs over virtue.” At this point, it is not clear to the audience what Rick intends. While it seems inconceivable that the man we have to grown to like would in effect hand Laszlo over to the Germans, is Rick intending to help Laszlo leave alone for Lisbon, as Ilsa believes, or help Laszlo and his wife to leave together, as Laszlo now supposes?²⁸ We do not know, but the film does show Rick noticing Ilsa’s horrified look when Renault suddenly appears to arrest her husband as accessory to the murder of the German couriers and her move to his side. Rick pulls out his own gun on Renault, and they all race to the airport where the plane to Lisbon is waiting. Renault watches Rick put Ilsa on the plane with her husband, telling her that Victor needs her to carry on his work. Besides, if she does not go with him and stays with Rick, she will regret it, “maybe not today, and maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of [her] life.” As to their love for each other, Rick and Ilsa “will always have Paris,” which they had lost but now recovered.

As Laszlo and Ilsa prepare to board the plane, Rick tells him that Ilsa had pretended that she was still in love with him in order to obtain the exit visa for him, but that he knew it was over long ago. Like Annina imagined herself doing, Ilsa in Rick’s story is willing to do “a bad thing” for the sake of the man she loves. Rick’s story twists the truth, for, while Ilsa is willing to do a bad thing for the sake of the man she loves, the man she loves is Rick, not Laszlo. Rick prevents her too from the deed, and like Annina she also tries to thank him as she leaves with her husband, saying, “Good-bye, Rick. God bless you.”

Major Strasser appears, picks up the phone to stop the plane from leaving, and pulls his gun on Rick. The man we saw playing chess for both sides at the beginning of the film draws his gun and kills Major Strasser. He now stands clearly on one side of the struggle. Chess pieces differ only in their color; not so the players in World War II. Renault, also moved by all he has witnessed, makes a choice. “Round up the usual suspects,” he tells the police when they arrive. Rick is not only a “sentimentalist,” Renault observes, but he has become “a patriot.” So too has Renault. The pair walk off together, with plans to leave Casablanca to join the Free French forces, with the music of the “Marseillaise” in the background. Love does not triumph over virtue, as Renault earlier thought, but in fact sustains virtue. It is, after all, when Rick feels betrayed by Ilsa in Paris that he becomes cynical about politics and adopts his “wise foreign policy,” in the words of Renault, looking out only for himself. And now when he has recovered his love for her, his political ideals are reawakened. Rick believes that Laszlo’s love for Ilsa also supports his work against Hitler: she must leave with

her husband, he tells her, for "You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going."

It is not, however, that virtue triumphs over love in *Casablanca*. In the end Rick acts not simply as patriot but in the only way in which he could be true to his and Ilsa's love. Inasmuch as Ilsa would eventually regret leaving her husband, they would have lost Paris again. Rick's insisting that Ilsa leave with Laszlo preserves Paris for both of them. They love each other for who they are. Love and virtue are inseparable for them. Rick's love for Ilsa is reawakened when he learns the reason she left him in Paris—to return to her husband, and to the cause to which all three of them were devoted. The Ilsa he loves is the woman who made the choice she made in Paris. Ilsa too comes to see that her love for Rick is for a man of a certain sort, as she reveals when she supposes that he is no longer that man: "Last night, I saw what has happened to you. The Rick I knew in Paris, I could tell him [about her marriage to Laszlo] he'd understand. But [not] the one who looked at me with such hatred." The Rick she loves is not a man who would urge the wife of Victor Laszlo to leave him, no more than he is one for whom love could triumph over virtue. Rick has come to see that and shows it to Ilsa as well.

Rick tells Ilsa that "I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world." But the problems of these three people, the film itself testifies, do amount to a hill of beans, and so much more. It is the choices that these three people make, and the ways in which they resolve their problems, that ennoble the cause for which they fight as much as that cause ennoble them. Ilsa and Rick do not sacrifice themselves for a greater cause; they remain true to themselves and to their love.²⁹

While Renault's statement that love triumphs over virtue does not apply to Rick, it applies to Almásy. As critics who contrast the two films point out, for Almásy and Katharine "the problems of the world, and the millions of people threatened by Nazism, don't amount to a hill of beans."³⁰ Although the film does not condone such an attitude but shows its tragic consequences, it lacks that understanding of nobility on the basis of which *Casablanca* suggests a resolution of those conflicts. The difference between the films lies not in the choice of the personal over the political, or the political over the personal, but in the understanding of beauty and its place in human life.

Among the nine Academy Awards received by *The English Patient* was one for best cinematography. Both the physical beauty of the desert and the physical beauty of Katharine are seductive and like the swimmers in the cave suggest the dissolution of conventions and limits.³¹ The film shows the conflict between beauty and moral responsibility. In *Casablanca*, in contrast, the desert exerts no similar pull.³² When Renault asks Rick why he came to Casablanca, he claims that he is there "for the waters." When Renault points out that they are in the midst of a desert, Rick says simply that he was misinformed. The physical character of northern Africa enters the movie only as a jocular subterfuge.

Beauty, in *Casablanca*, in contrast to *The English Patient*, lies in deeds as

well as in physical features, in souls as well as bodies, in political ideals as well as works of art. Although Ilsa is remarkably beautiful, her physical beauty is highlighted by her character—her choice in Paris, her standing by Laszlo as he sings the "Marseillaise," her appeal to what is noblest in Rick. Whereas Almásy and Katharine share a love for the desert and its freedom from limits, Rick and Ilsa share a love for the cause of political freedom. Laszlo's resistance to Hitler "was your cause, too," Ilsa reminds Rick. The woman with whom Rick fell in love was one who would look up to Victor Laszlo with a feeling of admiration she could suppose was love. Laszlo was able to call forth in her the sentiments that moved him and that she and Rick then shared. As Ilsa explains to Rick, "Everything I knew or became was because of him." "He opened up for me," she says, "a whole beautiful world of knowledge and thoughts and ideals." Beauty has a larger range of meaning in *Casablanca* than in *The English Patient*.

As we have seen, Rick's waiter, Carl, praises Rick's intervention in the affairs of the young couple seeking exit visas as a "beautiful thing." When beauty appears in actions, the actions can be called noble. Rick claims that he is no good at being noble, just when his nobility shines through in his deeds. The noble is the middle ground between the cause that demands individual sacrifice and the individual who seeks to do the right thing for its own sake. It is where larger cause and individual meet so that neither is sacrificed to the other. *The English Patient* does not valorize love and the individual subject, as some critics maintain, but it does not offer or even explore this middle ground. Thus Almásy's deeds lead his friend to commit suicide, whereas Rick's evoke in Renault what makes possible "the beginning of a beautiful friendship" between them. It is significant that *Casablanca* does not end with Rick walking off alone to join the Resistance but with his doing so with Renault. "Becoming a patriot" goes hand in hand with forming ties of love and affection.

Casablanca suggests that the experience of the nobility of others will inspire others to like nobility, as Laszlo inspired Ilsa and Rick, and Rick inspired Renault. Just as Renault stages for Major Strasser a demonstration of the efficiency of his administration in apprehending Ugarte, *Casablanca* stages for its audience a demonstration of heroism. The art in the Cave of the Swimmers, in contrast, inspires Almásy and Katharine's forbidden love and betrayals, while that of the frescoes in the Italian church is not sufficient inspiration for Hana and Kip to affect their lives. They may always have those paintings, but their farewell suggests that they may not mean very much. *The English Patient* itself leaves us with a tragic conflict between love and beauty, on the one hand, and moral and political action, on the other. *Casablanca* is art of another sort. It exemplifies art's high calling to support regimes of liberty by encouraging virtue and noble deeds. Not only Rick and Ilsa, but the audience of *Casablanca*, as well, will always have Paris.

NOTES

1. All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the film *The English Patient*, directed by Anthony Minghella (Miramax Home Entertainment, 1996). All quotes from *Casablanca* can be found at: <http://www.geocities.com/classicmoviescripts/script/casablanca.pdf>.

2. In his novel, Michael Ondaatje weaves Almásy's love of the desert even more clearly with his rejection of the distinctions between nations. "We were German, English, Hungarian, African," Almásy says. "Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We were deformed by nation-states." And then, "Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert. . . . By the time the war arrived, after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not to belong to anyone, to any nation" (*The English Patient* [New York: Vintage International, 1993], 138-39). Here Almásy connects the infinite expanse of the desert (where borders become permeable, insignificant) with the essentially human, stripped of all particulars of time and place (family and country). For Almásy, "There is God only in the desert" (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 250).

It is a difficult question as to how far one can refer to the novel on which a film is based to interpret a film. In some instances, light is shed on the themes of Minghella's film by their elaboration in Ondaatje's novel. In other instances, Minghella's changes of events and emphases contribute to the integrity of his own work. Awareness of the changes sometimes sheds light on that integrity. Ondaatje, commenting on the film, observes, "What we have now are two stories, [each with] its own organic structure. . . . [S]cenes and emotions and values from the book emerged in new ways, were reinvented, were invented with totally new moments, and fit with a dramatic arc that was different from that of the book" (introduction in Anthony Minghella, *The English Patient: A Screenplay* [Hyperion: New York, 1996], xvii-xviii). David Thomson notes the close collaboration between Minghella and Ondaatje during Minghella's work on *The English Patient*, but Minghella "[insisted] that the film was his" ("How They Saved the Patient," *Esquire* 127 no. 1 [January 1997]: 39-53).

3. In an earlier draft of the film script, Almásy simply comments, "The plumness of this plum," when he tastes it (revised draft, August 28, 1995). This script can be found at <http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/englishpatient.html>. The change for the film allows Almásy's comment to resonate with his earlier discussion with the Cliftons about adjectives and their avoidance.

4. In Herodotus's story, Gyges is Candaules' bodyguard. In the film, all reference to what his relation is to Candaules is omitted. The omission makes the parallel between Gyges and Almásy easier.

5. Once their affair is consummated, Almásy tells Katharine that Madox keeps talking about Anna Karenina. "I think it's his idea of a man-to-man chat," Almásy says.

6. Herodotus, *The Histories*, I. 8-14. In Ondaatje's novel, neither the omission nor the addition occurs (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 232-34).

7. Ondaatje's presentation of Almásy's reading of Herodotus is more complex than in the film. See, for example, Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 119 and 150. Minghella's presentation of the differences between Almásy's and Katharine's readings of this text is nevertheless suggested by Ondaatje: "I would often open Herodotus for a clue to geography," Almásy tells us in the novel, whereas "Katharine had done that as a window to her life" (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 233).

8. Jacqui Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands: Geographics of Desire in *The English Patient*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 26 (1998): 242. See also Stephen Scobie, "The Reading Lesson: Michael Ondaatje and the Patients of Desire," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 53 (Summer 1994): 92-106. Scobie argues that the image of Almásy's text of Herodotus, filled with cuttings from other books as well as his own observations, is Ondaatje's dramatization of the concepts of supplementarity and intertextuality. Similarly, D. Mark Simpson sees Almásy's text of Herodotus as "a literal foliation of the very notion of intertextuality. . . . a kind of talis-

man for Ondaatje's distressed text, wrought by all means of conflicting and insurgent knowledges" ("Minefield Readings: The Postcolonial English Patient," *Essays in Canadian Writing* 53 [Summer 1994]: 216-37).

9. In the novel, Almásy says of the Gyges' story that he "always skim[s] past that story. It is early in the book and has little to do with the places and period I am interested in" (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 232). Ondaatje recounts that Almásy glued brown cigarette papers "into sections of *The Histories* that recorded wars that were of no interest to him" (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 172). Ondaatje thus suggests not only that we can see in texts what we want to see in them, but that we distort the text when we do so.

10. In the film, before saying what she most hates, Katharine catalogues for Almásy what she loves (water, the fish in it, hedgehogs, baths, islands, your handwriting, and "could go on all day") whereas Almásy reveals only what he most hates. The difference follows that revealed in their discussion of his monogram. Almásy could not go on all day about what he loves; he can capture it only in a moment.

11. In Ondaatje's novel, when recounting the story, Almásy recognizes this (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 251).

12. In Ondaatje's novel, the plane crashes when Almásy hits a tree and the fuel tank explodes (Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 175). Whereas Ondaatje emphasizes the role of accident in our lives, Minghella uses the crash as an opportunity to highlight the effect of national identity and of Almásy's neglect of it.

13. In fact, the private is honoring Almásy's request to use the lavatory, which is a ruse to facilitate his escape. Again, Almásy is only pretends to be moved by the necessities, unless there are erotic necessities.

14. Elizabeth Kella understands the group at the monastery in Ondaatje's novel to be "a microcosm of the family of man" (*Beloved Communities: Solidarity and Difference in Fiction by Michael Ondaatje, Toni Morrison, and Joy Kogawa* [Upsala, Sweden: Akademisttryck, Edsbruk, 2000], 92). Kella argues that this "small community outside of pre-existing social networks" and "stripped of the claptrap of national identities" resembles the community of "essential selves" Almásy envisions in the desert (Kella, *Beloved Communities*, 92 and 89). Although I believe that she is right about Almásy's vision, it is corrected by the film's attention to adjectives.

15. Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 240.

16. Kella argues that Madox's suicide in the novel, inasmuch as it occurs upon the news of England's declaration of war, "lends weight" to "the concept of a community of essential selves separate from and superior to the politics of nations" (Kella, *Beloved Communities*, 89).

17. Douglas Stenberg, "A Firmament in the Midst of the Waters: Dimensions of Love in *The English Patient*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 26 (1998): 256. See also George Hatza, "The English Patient: Extraordinary Romance," *Reading Eagle/Reading Times* 4 (December 1996): A9.

18. Minghella, *The English Patient*, 145-46.

19. Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, 284-86 and 291. A draft of the screenplay includes the episode, although it was excised from the film (revised draft, August 28, 1995). Jonathan Coe quotes the words of Saul Zaentz, the film's producer, about a conversation he had with Michael Ondaatje: "I told Michael I didn't think the atom bomb thing was right. I was in the war, I was there, nobody knew what the atom bomb was all about" ("From Hull to Hollywood: Anthony Minghella Talks about His Film," *New Statesman* [March 7, 1997]: 39).

20. Kella, *Beloved Communities*, 84 and 81. See also Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands," 245.

21. Sadashige claims to have been seduced by the novel, but betrayed by the film ("Sweeping the Sands," 242; see also 247).

22. Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands," 250. See also Raymond Aaron Younis, "Nationhood and Decolonization in *The English Patient*," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 26 (1998): 5.

23. Scobie argues that the characters in the novel, including the English patient himself, "project a fiction of identity onto the blank screen of his . . . burned body." For example, Caravaggio feeds him sufficient morphine so that he "becomes the central figure in one of Caravaggio's spy dramas. . . . Whether Caravaggio's version of the English patient's identity is true or not scarcely matter," ("The Reading Lesson," 98). See also Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands," 244.

24. Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands," 249. See also Younis, "Nationhood and Decolonization," 5.

25. Sadashige quotes this characterization of Almásy's love from the film's home page as if this meant the film's valorization of such love ("Sweeping the Sands," 248).

26. Sadashige, "Sweeping the Sands," 248.

27. For a good account of the place of Sam in *Casablanca*, at the intersection between "old Negro manners" and "the racial liberalism" arising from American war aims, see Thomas Cripps, "Sam the Piano Player: The Man Between," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Winter 2000).

28. That neither the actors nor script writers knew how the film would end during its production is legend. One ending discussed was Laszlo's death, followed by the union of Rick and Ilsa. One of the script's writers, Howard Koch, recalls Bergman asking him how she would be able to play one of the film's love scenes without knowing which man she was going to end up with (Scott Eyman, "We're Still Looking at You, Kid," *Palm Beach Post* [August 2003]). For an excellent defense of the coherence that its director, Michael Curtiz, gave to the film—in spite of its somewhat chaotic making—see Gary Green, "The Happiest of Happy Accidents? A Re-evaluation of *Casablanca*," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 1, 2 (Autumn 1987): 2-13.

29. Thus I do not entirely agree with Thomas Hurka that in *Casablanca* "Rick sacrifices his love for a larger political cause," ("The moral superiority of *Casablanca* over *The English Patient*," <http://www.broadviewpress.com/writing/PdfFiles/HurkaArticle.pdf>). For similar understandings of the film's message as "the necessity of self-sacrifice for the greater good," see Jack Nachbar, "Doing the Thinking for All of Us: *Casablanca* and the Home front," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Winter 2000).

30. Hurka, "The moral superiority of *Casablanca*." David Aaron Murray also criticizes *The English Patient* for its celebration of lovers whose "troubles don't just amount to less than a hill of beans," but whose "tawdry love affairs and betrayals acquire the drama of armies marching and empires collapsing." In contrasting the later movie with the earlier one, Murray finds that "the fundamental things definitely do not apply" ("The English Patient Plays *Casablanca*," *First Things* [May 1997]: 10-12). Others note this difference with approval: "*The English Patient* is revolutionary in a very important and often overlooked way. This is one of the few war movies in which, to paraphrase another great war romance, the troubles of two little people amount to more than a hill of beans" (<http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/movies/romance/romance2.html>).

31. Stanley Kauffmann finds John Seale, the Australian cinematographer, to be "the hero of *The English Patient*" ("Stanley Kauffmann on Films," *The New Republic* [December 9], 1996: 26).

32. Although *Casablanca* also won an academy award for best black-and-white cinematography, it lacked *The English Patient's* sweeping scenes of the desert. *Casablanca*, in fact, was filmed in Hollywood studios.

CHAPTER 5

AN AMERICAN FANTASY? LOVE, NOBILITY, AND FRIENDSHIP IN *CASABLANCA*

PETER AUGUSTINE LAWLER

What moves us throughout *Casablanca* is Rick's rather consistent moral self-sufficiency, which is only compromised to some extent by love. We want to believe that Rick is the model American—both a rugged individualist and a loving man; and he may well be the most attractive American character in the history of film. We are characteristically anxious that our proud individualism is merely pretentious, but our individualism also leads us to think that love is for suckers. Our radical rebellion against what we've been given by nature and tradition—the habitual or dogmatic skepticism Tocqueville describes—ends up producing a disorienting inner emptiness that causes us to end up embracing a degrading social conformism—what Tocqueville describes as a thoughtless and desperate deference to public opinion. Our relentless pursuit of happiness is at the expense of love and nobility and never produces happiness itself.

But Rick reassures us that personal and emotional isolation need not culminate in hedonism or conformity. He never lives in the eyes of others; he never really denies that happiness is to be found in love or nobility; and he is never really dead to the truth that the secret to human happiness lies in responsible, unselfish devotion, in renouncing the right to the pursuit of happiness. The most moving moment of the film is when he renounces all that is selfish above love; nobility turns love into an idealized memory of a Parisian paradise that perhaps never existed. Rick does fall short—far short, in fact—of the stoic ideal of manly indifference to inevitable misfortune, but we want to believe that even a real man needs and finds love.

RICK'S

Rick never loses the point of view by which he judges and finds wanting his own actions and the actions of others. He is the living refutation of our non-