

Will the Real Almásy Please Stand Up! Transporting Central European Orientalism via *The English Patient*

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Locating Austrian Orientalist discourse within the larger context of the German-speaking world recalls the protracted and sustained national debates on the nature or very existence of a distinct Austrian identity, carried out over the last several decades. Initially the result of the Allied decision to encourage nationalist Austrian resistance to foreign German occupation during the final phase of World War II, twentieth-century Austrian cultural emancipation from the German Other is now deeply ingrained in the collective psyche of the nation. Along with the claim of Austrian victimhood during the twelve-year rule of the Third Reich in Central Europe, the assumption that the Habsburg emperors never exercised colonial power ranks high on the list of historical myths supporting the nation's innocence with respect to the major Western crimes against humanity committed during the past century.¹

Edward Said's lengthy, self-reproaching explanation for excluding German Orientalism from his 1978 study highlights the fact that his approach assumes a "protracted, sustained *national* interest in the Orient." The absence of a German equivalent "to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa," and the fact that German Orientalism was almost exclusively scholarly—interested largely in the classical period—seem to exonerate both the scholars and artists of the German-speaking world from direct involvement in the Orientalist project.² But does this argument hold true for Austria? Could the Turkish Siege of Vienna in the early sixteenth century, the protracted existence of an Oriental frontier between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires during the following four centuries, and the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1878) at approximately the same time that the British were taking over Egypt (1882) from the Ottomans have led to the "*national* interest in the Orient" considered necessary by Said in order to portray Austria's scholars and artists as Orientalist accomplices?³ Establishing or rejecting the authenticity of a uniquely Austrian—and later Austro-

Hungarian—Orientalist tradition will lay the groundwork for this study of *The English Patient* and the real person on whom the title character of Michael Ondaatje's novel and Anthony Minghella's film was modeled.⁴ This strand of inquiry will be pursued throughout the following pages.

László Ede Almásy (or Graf Ladislaus Eduard von Almásy, as he often referred to himself) was an Austrian monarchist, test driver, pilot, adventurer, and descendent of minor Burgenland-Hungarian nobility. The historical reality of this individual, and the incorporation of this "marginal" figure out of the past into a non-historical genre,⁵ offers an opportunity to illustrate how denizens of a defunct multinational state viewed the Orient and portrayed it in their own research, travel writing, explorations, and academic publications. Indeed, in comparison to various more recent fictional attempts to profit from the "brand-name recognition" of the commodified Almásy,⁶ the novel and film versions of *The English Patient* maintain the unity of the Austro-Hungarian mindset through their comparatively accurate portrayal of the essence of Almásy, along with his fellow traveler, the leftist-liberal, Jewish, Prague-German intellectual, Dr. Richard Bermann,⁷ and various other characters gleaned from the historical record.⁸

Michael Ondaatje specifically acknowledges three historical sources used while researching European exploration in the Libyan Desert during the interwar period, namely Bermann, Hassanein Bey, and Ralph Bagnold.⁹ Steven Totosy de Zepetnek cites Ondaatje as confirming that neither did he use other English sources than those acknowledged in his novel, nor was he aware of the extensive German and Hungarian literature by and on Almásy.¹⁰ Cryptically, Ondaatje also refers to "other explorers" in his acknowledgment. Considering the immense historical and cultural significance of the authors he mentions, it cannot easily be ruled out that the use of these sources could have enabled him to draw a relatively clear picture of the historical Almásy's

approach to Orientalism, as well as the role he played in the North African theater during World War II. By comparison, Anthony Minghella, the director of *The English Patient*, admits that he used a wide variety of resources while researching in preparation for the writing of his screenplay.¹¹ Various alterations from the novel, such as allusions to the homosexuality of various expedition members, indicate that he was able to introduce quite relevant insights during the film's production.

Although both Ondaatje and Minghella clearly represent the Orientalism of *The English Patient's* mysterious main character, the fictional (literary and cinematic) Patient's appreciation of Arab and Muslim culture has received little attention in the decade following the publication of the novel. And it is actually on this point that the three Almásys can be best compared. Almost all of the controversy surrounding the book's and film's hero has concentrated on whether the historical Almásy was a Nazi sympathizer—even as early as the mid-1930s—or merely an opportunist desert adventurer in search of a new sponsor after being kicked out of Egypt by the British colonials in 1939.¹² Much has been made of his purported attempts to save Jewish neighbors, as well as refugees completely unknown to him, in the final months of fascist rule in World War II Budapest.¹³ Considering the current lack of proper authentication of many sources on the last years of Almásy's life, and the hearsay nature of much of the journalistic material produced following the success of the film in 1996, it might make sense to lend more credence to what (and especially how) his Jewish friends, especially Richard Bermann, wrote about him in the late 1930s.¹⁴ Consequently I will emphasize those literary sources which shed light on Almásy's character, his highly apolitical worldview, and his understanding of the Middle East and its people in particular.

Furthermore, considering Michael Ondaatje's claim that his and Minghella's hero in *The English Patient* is only loosely based on the historical original,¹⁵ it will be necessary to test his contention by comparing the details of the real count's life to those portrayed in the novel and the film. Calling on Homer, Shakespeare, and Arthur Miller to shield him from attack because "the potentially explosive implication of the protagonist's historical background was not paid attention to"¹⁶ hardly seems appropriate when Ondaatje's literary Patient so closely parallels the apolitical, daredevil character of the historical Almásy. The novel even includes a scene in which the Canadian counter-intelligence officer, David Caravaggio, comments appreciatively on the military skills of Hitler's North African commander and banners—almost playfully—with the Patient about their mutual attempts to dupe their respective opponents during the German thrust towards Cairo and the Suez Canal (253–4).¹⁷

As will be demonstrated in this paper, it is the movie version of *The English Patient* that distorts the historical Almásy's total disregard for global affairs. Minghella's Patient seems almost apologetic for accepting aid from the Germans, whereas the real Almásy wore his Wehrmacht uniform proudly, thus demonstrating, according to Zsolt Török, professor of cartography at Eötvös University in Budapest, that he was not a German spy but rather a but rather a "desert expert" in Rommel's Afrika Korps.¹⁸ Thus, there seem to be three distinct Almásys, all considerably different from each other in significant details. The second goal of this study will be to determine to what extent these three Central European counts share the same view of Arabs and the Middle East, and if not, whether their embeddedness in their respective narratives impacts each Almásy's Orientalism.

The popularity of the Almásy cult indicates that Ondaatje has struck a nerve. A blossoming cottage industry over the past eight years has included numerous translations and reprints of French, English, Egyptian, German, Italian, and Hungarian desert travel and exploration literature; renewed interest in a spectrum of related topics from rock art and cave painting to war in the eastern Sahara and Egyptian geology; as well as a wide variety of "English Patient" tours, suited to every pocketbook and level of trekking experience. The fact that the real Almásy's history is so typically, indeed tragically, Austrian and Hungarian has led many Central Europeans to reflect on the broader significance of this short life (spanning the first half of the twentieth century) in the context of twenty-first-century global society. Almásy's monarchist dream of a united Danube region is gradually coming true under the auspices of the European Union. However, the Patient's utopian "earth without maps" is still far from being realized. Is the postcolonial, egalitarian world called for at the end of both the novel and the film just a reflection of late-twentieth-century multicultural aspirations for the millennium, or does it also represent the essence of a uniquely Central European, fin de siècle longing for a better world, beyond the confining, multiethnic, nineteenth-century "boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men" (*Screenplay*, 172), such as Emperor Karl I of Austria and King Karl IV of Hungary?¹⁹

Almásy's grave in the Salzburg Municipal Cemetery (*Kommunalfriedhof, Feld 75*) was refurbished by a Hungarian aviation club (Magyar Aviatikai Alapítvány) in 1994 and now includes illustrations of the legendary Egyptian "swimmers in the desert" and a symbolic representation of the adventurer's airplane. The myths surrounding his life include the assumption that Almásy was openly gay, that he came into contact with the race-car fanatic Bertolt Brecht while working as a test driver for the Steyr automobile works (Steyrwerke) in the late 1920s, that he

traveled in circles frequented by prominent intellectual Jews and homosexuals, that his brother, János, was—along with Adolf Hitler—courted by the British aristocrat Unity Mitford, and that his father, György, as one of Hungary’s leading Orientalists, was a close associate of the prominent Swedish explorer and Nazi apologist, Sven Hedin.²⁰ Totosy de Zepetnek’s writing on this topic is particularly significant because he has based his critique of *The English Patient* on a wealth of Hungarian and German sources, long left unconsulted by most other scholars. He seems to have correctly characterized the ambiguity of Almásy’s fringe personality when stating that “the Hungarian ‘count’ is marginal to the point where we cannot be absolutely certain about his Nazi sympathies.”²¹

With respect to Central European Orientalism, two sets of distinctions will be drawn in this study: German(ic) Orientalism as distinct from the British and French (as developed by Said); and Austrian Orientalism as opposed to that prevalent in the German Reich. As shall be illustrated below, Austrian Orientalism is in some ways similar to the British and French variants, although clearly the stakes were quite different. However, as in the case of Germany, Austrian Orientalism underwent significant historical shifts leading up to the assassination of the Habsburg heir apparent in Sarajevo, near the long-standing, common Oriental frontier that Austria-Hungary shared with the Ottomans.

In the initial part of this study, the unique character of Austrian Orientalism will be analyzed. The significance of this Central European gaze towards the East will be tested and related to the recently reissued writings of the historical László Ede Almásy. After establishing that this Hungarian-Austrian count was a child of his epoch and culture, and thus that his Orientalist perspective was typical of his generation, the two fictional English Patients will be portrayed as manifestations of the English literary tradition and its well-known post-colonial approach to Orientalism. It shall be demonstrated that the authors of the novel and film versions of *The English Patient*, while successfully critiquing British and American imperial ambitions in the East (India and Japan, respectively), fall short of truly understanding the experience of Central Europeans vis-à-vis their eastern neighbors.²²

The Oriental Frontier: Orientalism in the Habsburg Empire

Based largely on the research of Johann Fück, Veronika Bernard, and Leopold Hellmuth, I will attempt to illustrate the view of the Orient as seen from Vienna during and especially immediately prior to the lifetime (1895–1951) of László Ede Almásy.²³ This specifically Austrian gaze will then be juxtaposed with German Ori-

entalism, as described by Said. This initial “contrapun-tal” approach will help lay the groundwork for a comparison of the Orientalism of the three Almásys, the historical, literary, and cinematic.

Austria, Hungary, Poland, and the countries of the Balkans share an occidental *reconquista* mentality that can be appreciated only by the denizens of countries that, at some time in their collective past, have been successfully invaded by Arab and/or Muslim forces. The term *Abwehrhaltung* (aggressive approach to defense) is generally used when describing not only the defeat of the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also the struggle against the Italian and Yugoslav attempts to occupy parts of southern Austria following World War I and, more recently, the nativist, rearguard defense policies of Austria’s ultra-right, who have called for an end to the *Überflutung* (inundation) of their cities by Muslim guestworker immigration from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey, Macedonia, and Kosovo. The significance of the historical importance of a shared Oriental border with the Ottomans has been developed at length by Andre Gingrich.²⁴

As is illustrated in great detail in Leopold Hellmuth’s “Traditions and Major Aspects of Oriental Studies in Austria in the 19th Century,” Turkish and Muslim proximity was seen as a mortal and economically taxing threat during the period between the second siege of Vienna in 1683 and the final peace agreement between the Austrian and Ottoman imperial neighbors in 1791. Thus, according to Hellmuth, Habsburg Orientalism from its very inception, as early as the 1480s, had an “eminently political component.” Whereas:

in other European countries Orientalism as a modern scientific discipline had largely developed from biblical exegetic studies, in which Arabic had been regarded as a Hebrew dialect up to the 18th century, the study of modern Oriental languages in Austria was at first, and for a long time, exclusively undertaken for practical reasons. This practice-oriented attitude was to prevail until the 19th century and constituted a strength in terms of language skills and familiarity with the contemporary Orient, but also a weakness in philological and methodical terms.²⁵

Founded in 1754 during the rule of Empress Maria Theresa, the Vienna *Orientalische Akademie* was set up in order to research the legal and economic traditions, languages, and religious practices prevalent in the lands of the Ottoman Empire. The gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the south and the rapid rise in importance of Austria’s highly industrialized, colonialist neighbors to the northwest made the empire’s emphasis on the Orient obsolete by the mid-nineteenth century. Hellmuth emphasizes, “In 1870, the geo-political changes inspired plans to establish a training college for the consular service.” Ironically, at the very moment that

Orientalism was progressing from an academic exercise to a science in the service of colonial domination—as Said would have it—the Orientalische Akademie closed its doors, to be reopened as the K.u.K. Konsularakademie in 1898. The K.u.K. Polytechnikum (later to become the Technische Universität Wien), which offered courses in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, for “political and commercial considerations” and in order to ensure the “linguistic superiority of Austrian engineers in the Orient,” gradually phased out its Oriental languages courses by the late 1860s. Indicative of the shift from the economic, political, and technical to a culturally based interest in the Orient, the study of Middle Eastern languages was taken over by the K.u.K. öffentliche Lehranstalt für Orientalische Sprachen, an imperial language institute set up by the Ministry of Culture and Education.²⁶

Austria’s leading role in the field of academic Orientalism, Semitism, and Islamic studies, established by Josef Frieherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856) in the early nineteenth century, also began to wane during the latter half of the century. “When Theodore Nöldeke was living in Vienna in 1856/57, he gained the impression that now that Hammer-Purgstall had died, there were ‘no more Orientalists’ in Austria,” writes Hellmuth.²⁷ However, the work of such scholars as the Bohemian Eduard Glaser, the Galician David Heinrich Müller, the Moravian Alois Musil, and the founders (in 1894) of the Museum für Österreichische Volkskunde (Ethnology Museum), Wilhelm Hein and Michael Haberlandt, reestablished Vienna as a centre of academic Orientalism by the beginning of the twentieth century. The topics of interest highlighted by Austrian Orientalism also shifted during the nineteenth century, away from a Romantic preoccupation with Persian poetry to (often life-threatening) fieldwork in the Arabian Middle East and Gulf region.²⁸

In a parallel to the academic neglect of the European Orient (i.e., regions of the continent demonstrating a lasting Ottoman influence), late-nineteenth-century Austrian artists also showed a preference for the Middle East, and surprisingly almost exclusively for Egypt. As Martina Haja points out, “Apart from many common features between Austrian, French, and British Orientalist painting in the nineteenth century, the Austrian variant is characterized by its obvious preference for Egypt above all other Oriental countries, both as a destination and as a supplier of themes.” During the first third of the century, the Balkans and Turkey were accepted as a “second grade alternative” to the Middle East. There were various reasons for this. Metternich had severely restricted Austrian expeditions to the Orient, travel remained dangerous and expensive until the international port in Trieste opened a reliable door to the Middle East, and finally, Austria’s traditionally good

contacts with the Porte in Constantinople made travel to the Northern Levant a relatively low-risk endeavor.²⁹

Haja has demonstrated convincingly that as soon as the Eastern Mediterranean became accessible, “the central figure of Austrian Orientalist painting, Leopold Carl Müller, not nicknamed ‘Egyptian Müller’ without cause, unequivocally preferred the country on the Nile for his sojourns and his work.” All “his friends of the same age and most of his students followed his example. Therefore, the majority of Austrian Orientalist paintings show Egyptian themes,” ignoring not only Turkey and the newly acquired province of Bosnia, but also the Maghreb, Palestine, and Syria. During the Realist decades of the late nineteenth century—contrary to the French variant—the “Austrians lacked the explicitly voyeuristic element, which is inherent in representations of harems, slave markets, executions, human corpses, etc.” There was a distinct attempt to portray the “real reality” of the Orient. In summary: “motifs mainly taken from the contemporary life of Islamic Egypt, little moving but complex compositions, warm-toned coloring largely modeled on natural lighting, and, very often a contemplating aura—these are the unspectacular but charming ingredients of Austrian Orientalist painting that specifically distinguish it from other schools.”³⁰

The genre most closely related to the story of the real Almásy, and the fictional portrayal of his character as developed in *The English Patient*, can be found in the Austrian travel literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fortunately, Veronika Bernard’s recently published *Austrians in the Orient* provides the reader of German the opportunity to compare in great detail the Austrian reports and reflections on the empire’s newly acquired Oriental colony of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the one hand, and the Austrian gaze towards the British- and/or Ottoman- controlled Arab territories further east, on the other. For a study of *The English Patient*, Egypt is of particular importance. Typically, the nineteenth-century Austrian traveler, and presumably also the Hungarian, viewed the Orient as a region defined especially by its cultural, but also political, ties to “Turks,” i.e., the Ottoman Empire. According to Bernard, “The word *Turk* or *Turkish* referred to the Islamic religious community under Turkish rule and did not necessarily signify Turkish ethnicity.” Culturally, therefore, the “Orient” was seen as those parts of the world that were still under Ottoman rule or that had been relinquished by the Ottomans at some time during the nineteenth century. The Austrian travel writer could access the “Orient” either by the land route through Dalmatia, or by the sea route via the international port in Trieste. It included the entire Balkan Peninsula, and thereby also the Slavic and Greek Christians, although the Venetian colony of Dalmatia had been occupied by the Habsburgs as far back as 1797.³¹

A comparison of nineteenth-century Austrian travel literature on Bosnia and Egypt illustrates the significance of the imperial gaze with respect to the former. Prior to the Turkish invasion of the region, Bosnia—like many Slavic regions further north—had been under the control of the Magyars. In 1463, Hungary “lost” the region to the Ottomans. Bosnian revolts in the second half of the nineteenth century led to war between Russia and Turkey. The Congress of Berlin legitimized the Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, although the region remained formally part of the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of the twentieth century. Bernard summarizes the Austrian view of Bosnia as follows: “The backward state of the region is portrayed as being the result of centuries of Islamic and Turkish rule, although the population is seen as having great potential, especially the Balkan Christians. The low developmental level of the Turkish state is seen as the result of the negative role that Islam plays in society, which can only be overcome through an increased Austrian involvement in the region.”³²

The Austrian portrayal of its role in Bosnia seems to run parallel to similar French and English literature and thus—using Said’s understanding of Orientalism—seems to indicate a unique Austrian form of Orientalism, because of the protracted and sustained “national” interest demonstrated by the multiethnic Habsburg empire vis-à-vis the Balkans. The following paraphrased compilation of statements, gleaned from Bernard’s groundbreaking study, accentuates the ambiguous nature of Austrian Orientalism. Nineteenth-century travelers described Bosnia as being “on a different continent from the rest of Europe,” and blamed Islam and an uncritical belief in the Koran for the negative image of women in the region, as well as for female oppression. Turkish and/or Muslim civilization was portrayed as being generally artificial, decadent, superstitious, and indolent, and an almost insurmountable hindrance to the cultural and economic development of the population. The fact that women seemed to enjoy more liberties in Bosnia than in the rest of the Ottoman Empire and that the Bosnian Muslims enjoyed drinking slivovitz, the potent local plum brandy, as much as their Christian neighbors was seen as evidence of the weakened hold of Islam on the Bosnians. On the other hand, travelers praised the beauty of the region’s scenery, its picturesque towns and cities, and colorful folk culture.³³

Bernard informs us that, similar to the French approach to Algeria or the English mission in Egypt and Sudan, Austrian travelers called on their newly established occidental occupation forces to eliminate the detrimental control of Islam over Bosnian society and thus pave the way for progress “im Sinne abendländischer Cultur und Civilisation.” This occidental cultural and civilizing mission was portrayed as already bearing fruit

by the end of the century, especially among the more accessible Christian populations. The imperial administration of Bosnia was encouraged to take advantage of the “progressively minded” Christians, who could be used to help overcome the dominant role of religion in the former Ottoman lands, thus paving the way to the occident. Overall, the Austrian occupation was understood as a civilizing force, enabling the economy to flourish and the population to access the benefits of European society.³⁴ Drawing parallels to Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden” would not seem totally unjustified.³⁵

Paraphrasing the subsection of Bernard’s study on Austrian travel literature related to Egypt (*Ägypten: Exotisches Land im Schatten Mohammad Alis*), an interesting transition becomes evident. One of the first nineteenth-century Austrians to travel extensively (1815–19) in Egypt, Giovanni Battista Belzoni, portrayed both the people and their culture in an exceptionally negative light. They were “crafty and dishonest,” “cared only for their own advantage,” “were on the lowest possible level of civilization, especially as far as their cuisine was concerned,” “demonstrated an excessive contempt for Christians, supported by the Ottoman authorities,” and their women “were so coquette towards foreigners that they could easily compete with their sisters in any European capital.” Belzoni considered the upper class in Egypt to be “driven by a desire for luxury and consumption.” Reports written later in the century, especially as of the opening of the Suez Canal, were much more positive, emphasizing the Egyptians’ hospitality, tolerance towards Europeans, their “naturally upright character,” “incredible patience,” and the beauty of the country’s cities and landscape. Many reports concentrated on the fascination with the Oriental Other, including the usual list of palm groves, mosques, erotic women, Oriental architecture, belly dancers, beggars, hashish smokers, dervishes, camels, deserts, and exotic Oriental nights. Present at the opening of the Suez Canal, members of the Austrian nobility commented on the general improvements in Egypt’s infrastructure, but complained that its cultural attractions were being converted into “tourist traps” [*Touristenstall*], comparable to the situation at home.³⁶

Like their contemporaries in Bosnia, Austrian travelers to Egypt viewed political Islam, and the dominant role of religion in society, as a state of affairs “similar to damnation.” The Muslim Orient was juxtaposed with the Christian Occident, the latter being “rational, progressive, and lively,” the former being “totally overwhelmed and driven by their leaders towards their ruin.” The dominant role enjoyed by “typically Oriental despots” was seen as part and parcel of the regional ethnic culture. Significantly, the consensus seemed to be that “the Orientals would not be able to regenerate their so-

cieties on their own."³⁷

Because of his role in the life of the real Almásy, as well as in those of the literary and cinematic English Patients, Richard Bermann is of some importance to an understanding of the Hungarian-Austrian count's Orientalism. Although Bermann is best known for the travel literature and articles he published during the interwar period, his career as a writer began much earlier and includes various descriptions of the Austrian Orient prior to the collapse of the empire in 1918. The following excerpt from his autobiographical fragment, *A Ride on the Cataract*, illustrates his detached and ironically critical writing style, reflecting both his dissatisfaction with the ruling elites and his identification with the Central European values he supported as an assimilated Central European Jewish intellectual. In this text, Bermann combines impressions gathered during pre-World War I journeys to India and the Middle East with his gaze on the Austrian Orient during his years as a war correspondent with the imperial forces on the eastern and southeastern fronts.

I had never been to Bosnia before and found the country intoxicatingly beautiful. Its exceptional Austrian administration had turned Sarajevo into a modern city, which means it had a hotel that was free of lice, a few soberly modern buildings, schools in which Austria had educated the young Bosnian revolutionaries who were responsible for the assassination of 28 June 1914, and a garrison that was intended to keep them under control. The city had stores in which one could purchase Viennese products, and coffee houses whose selection of newspapers included the *Neue Freie Presse*.

But just take one step off the main boulevard and the most colorful of Orientals began. Fountains could be heard splashing in the courtyards of the city's mosques. Sitting in the narrow alleyways of the bazaar, clothed in picturesque costumes, the Eastern Jews were selling nobly crafted copper and brass vessels as well as their marvelously soft Bosnian carpets, a product of Sarajevo. I spoke with these Jews in their mother tongue, the antiquated Spanish of Cervantes. Everyone else in the bazaar wore similarly colorful costumes. Those in the know could distinguish the Roman Catholic Croats from the Serbian Orthodox based on their fez, Turkish trousers, and vests; and again distinguish them from the Serbian-speaking Muslims, who here were referred to as Turks, although they had stopped being so long ago. The "Turkish" women were deeply veiled when in public, a scene I had observed in Cairo and Delhi.

I had already visited many Islamic countries, but none had appeared as genuine to me as Bosnia still was in

the middle of World War I. Here you did not find the Negroid-Arabian Islam of Egypt or Morocco, but rather that of the traditional Turks, enjoying their status as overlords in the midst of their subjugated Christian peoples; with tolerant arrogance, warlike traditions, and despite their casual grace, conservative to their very souls. They had got along well with my fellow Austrians and had proven to be extremely loyal to our aging emperor, who had formed an alliance with the Turkish sultan. In their eyes this entire war, which had begun with the shots fired on a bridge in Sarajevo, was nothing more than an attempted rebellion instigated by their traditional subjects, the Bosnian Christians.³⁸

Bernard has illustrated convincingly that, prior to Hammer-Purgstall, Austrian travel literature based many of its literary conventions on British and French models, which were abundantly available by the beginning of the nineteenth century. As of the 1820s, however, a uniquely Austrian tradition began to develop, which integrated both the predominant Western traditions and the Central European experience of the Oriental frontier. She postulates that the Austrian view of the Orient diverged even further from that of the French and British with the beginning of increased interest by the Viennese power elite in maintaining the last vestiges of Ottoman control in the Eastern Mediterranean, so aptly described in Bermann's brief description of Sarajevo during World War I.³⁹ Gingrich has coined the term "frontier Orientalism" to describe the uniquely Austrian dual narrative in which the Oriental Other is both the "bad Muslim," attacking and seriously endangering the Occidental civilizational frontier, and the "good Muslim" (i.e., the Bosniaken, heroically defending the very same frontier against threats emanating from the Eastern Orthodox Serbs and Russians.⁴⁰

Reports on desert exploration represent a specific genre within the broader category of travel literature. Despite Mary Louise Pratt's insistence that descriptions of European colonial exploration were based on a "monarch-of-all-I-survey" mentality, exemplified by Richard Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, which appeared in 1860 and achieved considerable renown in that prolific and highly competitive era of travel writing, this does not seem to hold true for various reports on the deserts of northern Africa.⁴¹ Among Almásy's many role models, he mentions sources as diverse as W. G. Brown's *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria*—published in London in 1806—and the works of Syrian Musa Ibn Nusair, whose travel reports were most likely written in North Africa between AD 698 and 699. Of more recent origin, Almásy highlights the prominent Egyptian explorer, A. M. Hassanein Bey, whose work was published in German translation as *Rätsel der Wüste* by Leipzig's Brockhaus Verlag in 1926, and Gerhard Rohlfs, whose

1875 *Drei Monate in der libyischen Wüste* (*Three Months in the Libyan Desert*) portrays the first scientific exploration of the region in modern times. Both Hassanein Bey and Rohlf's reveal a sober, detached, and basically sympathetic approach to their field of study and could easily have impacted Almásy's style of writing, along with his prominent literary friend, Richard Bermann.

Returning to the juxtaposition of Austrian and German Orientalism proposed at the outset of this study, the portrayal of nineteenth-century Austrian linguistic, theological, and cultural research, as well as Orientalist painting and travel writing on the Orient, indicates that the Austrian gaze was indeed ambiguous. Austrians shared the German “intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture” that both had in common with the British and French.⁴² This is particularly significant when considering the Austrian obsession with all things Egyptian. On the other hand, the German population of Austria—along with the Habsburg's Magyar and Central and Southeastern European Slav subjects—would seem to have inherited a legitimate claim to *Abwehr*—the need to repulse Oriental armies from the very gates of their capital—considering the “Oriental” expansionism that plagued the Habsburg Empire throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As of the eighteenth century, Austrian Orientalism was directly tied to colonial counter-expansion down the Balkan Peninsula and, in the early twentieth century (in cooperation with Germany and the Ottoman Empire), potentially threatening French and British interests in the Middle East. Alois Musil's journeys to present-day Syria and Iraq in 1914–15 and again “on official business to the Orient in 1917, in order to protect the interests of Austrian citizens in the region” exemplifies the Orientalist fusion of science, art and the “politico-economic and politico-cultural” power struggles of the early twentieth century.⁴³ Here, parallels could be drawn between the military adventures of the Moravian Alois Musil (1868–1944) and his Austro-Hungarian Burgenland contemporary, Count László Almásy (1895–1951).

In summary, although Austrian Orientalism does not share the detached, “exclusively scholarly,” and classically oriented “study of texts, myths, ideas, and languages” gleaned from the libraries and museums of the “real” (i.e., “Saidian”) Orientalists in London and Paris,⁴⁴ its Orientalist *realpolitik* is limited to the Habsburg colonies in the Balkans. Austrian academics, painters and travelers in the Middle East and North Africa did lack the link to *national* colonial power so typical of their own activities in Bosnia and that of their Anglo-French co-colonialists in Algeria and Egypt. This detached, almost voyeuristic view of the Arab world must certainly have affected the manner in which Almásy experienced Sudan and Egypt upon his arrival there, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. In-

deed, Almásy's fascination for the Orient of the Other, the British-dominated Orient of North Africa as opposed to the European Orient of the Austro-Hungarian “backyard,” is typical of the Austrian Orientalist gaze of his generation.

His primary interest in desert exploration tended to detach him even further from the power politics of Central Europe. Like his illustrious German, Egyptian, and British predecessors, Almásy proved to be impatient with all attempts to limit his scope by subjugating his exploration to the (Saidian) “national” interests of a specific government or ethnic agenda. Almásy offers one example that seems to corroborate Russell Berman's continued insistence on the validity of the “identificatory moment” within Central European Orientalism, i.e., that “while the ‘western’ Europeans of France and England frequently could see themselves as carriers of a universal human culture, the Germans—Herderian and post-romantic, rather than post-Enlightenment—had a different sense of particularity. The [negative] result of this [being] the myth of ‘Germans as better colonizers,’ but the [positive] result of this [being] a greater propensity to identify with, rather than denigrate the non-European populations.”⁴⁵

Almásy's Orient: The Making of a Central European “English” Patient

Following the publication of Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* in 1992, but especially after the international success (1996–7) of Anthony Minghella's film by the same name, academics, journalists, and hobby historians in Austria, Canada, Egypt, Hungary, Great Britain, and the United States unearthed a wealth of “facts” and anecdotes about Almásy, only some of which are of direct relevance to an understanding of his Orientalism. This section introduces the historical Almásy, highlighting the specifically Austro-Hungarian nature of his approach to the Orient. This will be juxtaposed to the postcolonial novel and film versions of *The English Patient*. Emphasis will be placed on the great care that was taken to develop the literary and cinematic Patient's relationship to the fictional character of the Indian sapper Kip, while simultaneously ignoring his Orientalist positions on the Middle East.

The “Real” Almásy

László Ede Almásy was born in 1895 in what is today Austria's most eastern state, at Burg Bernstein, in Burgenland. At the time of his birth, his family's castle was located in the most western Magyar province, then called West Hungary. His mother, Illona Pittoni, was a native of the southern Habsburg land of Styria, home of the Steyr weapons and motor industries. His father, György, was acquainted with some of the era's leading

explorers, and hosted a variety of them at the family residence. Thus his two sons, János and László, heard tales of travel to Central Asia and the Far East at an early age.⁴⁶ László Almásy was sent to Graz, the political capital of Styria, to attend boarding school as a boy and completed his secondary education at Harrow in England. As a fourteen-year-old, he built his first glider, only to crash it, breaking three ribs and arousing the anger of his teachers in Graz. In 1912, at the age of seventeen, he acquired an English pilot's license, which secured him a position in his homeland as a volunteer fighter pilot and flight instructor with the 11th Hussars in the Balkan war theater from 1915 to 1918. In 1917, Almásy was decorated for bravery in the face of the enemy by King Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He fought against Italy during the final months of World War I.

During the rule of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, he served as an officer in the Hungarian automobile corps, one of the military units that helped the autocratic Hungarian leader, Miklós Horthy, overthrow the Communist government in Budapest. Almásy remained an enthusiastic anticommunist and monarchist his entire life. In the spring of 1921, he drove the limousine of the deposed Austrian emperor and Hungarian king to Budapest, in an attempt to reestablish the rule of Karl IV. This coup ended in a fiasco, and Almásy was forced to seek refuge in his family castle in West Hungary, which was occupied, formally annexed, and renamed Burgenland by the neighboring German Republic of Austria several months later. Almásy had fallen into disgrace with the reactionary dictatorship in Budapest and therefore directed his burning interest in all things technical towards his mother's native Styria. Hired by the Austrian Steyrwerke as a sales agent, as well as a respected mechanic capable of testing their postwar line of automobiles for affluent consumers, he was able to win various car races in the 1920s. But the effects of the Depression as of 1929 forced the Steyrwerke to lay off most of its employees, including its renowned test driver, László Almásy, an event he described as one of the saddest moments of his life.⁴⁷

By the time Almásy was forced to look for resources beyond the confines of Central Europe, he had already established a promising second source of income. The Steyrwerke, originally the centre of the Habsburg's war industry, had been first and foremost known for its quality weaponry, and only after the war primarily for its cars and bicycles. As was to become his trademark, Almásy combined several goals on his first trip to Egypt in 1926, accompanying Prince Antal Esterházy on a hunting expedition to Sudan, test driving the mass-produced six-cylinder, fifty-horsepower Steyr automobile ("Typ VII"), and creating exotic ads for the Steyr hunting rifle, Mannlich-Schönauer. Returning to Egypt for the 1927 Automobile Fair, Almásy helped his em-

ployer compete with its main rival in the Middle East, Citroën, by driving a Steyr automobile to the oasis of Baharia. He returned to Egypt for purposes of exploration, to hunt, and test drive cars in 1929 and again in 1930.⁴⁸

During one of Almásy's numerous visits in the 1920s, the Egyptian jet-setter and polo champion, Victor-Mansour Semeika, introduced him to the Egyptian princes Hussein Kemal al-Din and Youssef Kemal (his cousin, a descendant of Viceroy Mohammed Ali). It was through these contacts that László Almásy was able to help his brother János set up hunting expeditions for the Egyptian elite in the forests bordering the grand estates of post-World War I Hungary. Many of these Oriental nobles enjoyed the Almásys' hospitality in the Budapest family home, Semeika recalling that its walls were covered with the trophy heads of over forty animals shot during various hunting expeditions in Africa.⁴⁹

Although most of Almásy's writings and personal papers were destroyed during World War II, both András Zboray and Kurt Mayer have closely studied what has survived in Burgenland and Budapest. According to Zboray, during the 1920s Almásy was "just one of the drifting young Hungarian nobility, looking for sense and purpose in life in a world that had turned completely upside down." Prior to his mid-1930s scientific explorations, he seems to have been interested in only three things: hunting, all things mechanical, and relieving his chronic lack of funds. Even during those expeditions which were dedicated specifically to research and exploration (April 1932, March-May 1933, October-December 1933, and April 1935), Almásy remained quite the sportsman. According to the eminent German scientist Hans Rhotert, who (along with Leo Frobenius and the artist Elisabeth Pauli) utilized Almásy's services to study the rock paintings in the Libyan desert in the fall of 1933, "Almásy was more interested in pursuing the waddan up the slopes than looking for more rock art sites." According to Zboray, Almásy's approach was typical of an "adventurer turned explorer," whose discoveries were "not the result of any systematic scientific planning or study, [but] rather the fact that he was really the first to go to some areas." Many of his supposedly scholarly writings are "full of errors and misconceptions, it is clear that he [exerted] very little, if any, effort to immerse [himself] in the subject, he was not aware of the literature available at the time."⁵⁰

Before turning to the Zarzura writings of spring 1933, on which Ondaatje maintains his portrayal of the Patient is largely based, it will be necessary to consider whether Almásy's support of the Nazi war effort in North Africa was in any way indicative of his understanding of the Oriental Other, in particular of Arabs, and by implication also Jews.⁵¹ In preparation for the 1997 reprinting of the 1939 edition of *Unbekannte Sa-*

bara (*Unknown Sabara*), the Innsbruck Haymon Verlag requested that the Salzburg Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Social and Cultural History look into the speculation that the German edition, published by Brockhaus in Leipzig at the outbreak of World War II, in some way reflected the potentially fascist tendencies of the historical Almásy. Going beyond the purely colonialist,⁵² e.g., an assumption that European culture had a civilizing mission in Egypt, the attempt was made to discover traces of either clearly racist positions, along the lines of German National Socialism, or an approach to the Middle East that could be seen as supporting an ethnically based understanding of corporatism, similar to the policies prevalent in Mussolini's Italy. Furthermore, the original Hungarian version of Almásy's *Az ismeretlen Szahara* (Budapest: Franklin, 1934) was compared page by page with the German *Unbekannte Sabara*, which was edited by Hansjoachim von der Esch, about whose loyalty to the Third Reich there is no doubt.⁵³ The results of this detailed comparison demonstrate that, with a few minor exceptions, there were no major alterations introduced in the von der Esch edition. Significantly, the German publication mentions no translator, which allows the possibility that Almásy simply rewrote his own book.

According to Adrienne Kloss-Elthes, who not only compared the Hungarian and German *Unknown Sabaras* but also translated the three chapters missing in the Leipzig Brockhaus edition for the recent Austrian reprint, there is no evidence in Almásy's Hungarian original of any form of racism whatsoever. Both the Hungarian and German editions do contain a number of questionable terms and characterizations, such as *Neger* (Negro), *Volksrasse* (ethnic race), *Männer, die im Dienste ihres Vaterlandes gerne ihre Pflicht tun* (men who gladly do their duty and serve their fatherland), and *kluge Kolonialregierung* (intelligent colonial government). These must, however, be judged by their contemporary usage, i.e., as terms common prior to the atrocities committed during World War II. The only term that seems to have been introduced by von der Esch, without the knowledge of Almásy, is the word *inferior* with respect to mixed races, as in, "By intermarrying with female slaves that had been imported from the south, an inferior [*tieferstehende*] racial mix was produced, resulting in skin colors ranging from coffee brown to the deepest Negro black."⁵⁴

Finally, a twenty-four-page section of the comprehensive Richard Bermann biography, published in 1995 in connection with the historical exhibition *Ausstellung des Deutschen Exilarchivs 1933–1945*, can shed some light on just how cynically disinterested Almásy seemed to be. The expedition to discover "Zarzura, the Oasis of Tiny Bird," on which Almásy had invited two of his Jewish friends, the German photographer Hans Casparius, and the internationally renowned Bohemian-Austrian travel

author Bermann, began weeks after Hitler was appointed chancellor of the Weimar Republic. It was therefore not surprising that the expedition's participants were uncomfortable about being cut off from the outside world.⁵⁵ An entry into Bermann's diary in the spring of 1933 demonstrates just how exasperatingly apolitical he found his Hungarian friend: "After dinner a long dispute with Almásy about the next war. Almásy is for the extermination of all mankind with the exception of the peasants. Afterwards he plans to lead a Robinson-like existence in the rubble. He hopes to paint images of automobiles and airplanes on the walls of caves."⁵⁶

According to Kloss-Elthes, Almásy's portrayal of the Arabs and Muslims of his day in *Unknown Sabara* seems to be totally in character with his monarchist worldview. The disillusioned, post-World War I Hungarian nobility placed many of their hopes for national revival in the Magyar peasantry. Almásy appears to have transferred that respect to the inhabitants of the Libyan Desert.

If one were to attempt to locate Almásy's worldview in this book, then it would seem that it is based on a reserved, but deeply held faith in God [page 200, "Ich liebe die Wüste" in the 1997 edition], his pride in his Hungarian homeland, and a highly amicable relationship with his Arab companions, his drivers, cooks, and servants, as well as a deep commitment to the well being of his fellow man, irrespective of their position in life. He appears to judge the people he writes about solely based on his appreciation of the quality of their individual character.⁵⁷

Kloss-Elthes also points out that Almásy tends to write in a highly personalized manner when referring to his Egyptian staff, mentioning them by name in the Hungarian edition. For whatever reason, von der Esch edited out this personal association with Arabs in the German edition of 1939.⁵⁸ Zboray shares Kloss-Elthes's assessment of Almásy's view of Arabs, confirming that he "was by no means a racist and, by 1920s standards, could even be considered a multiculturalist."⁵⁹

Ondaatje's Patient

The introduction of the historical figure Almásy into a literary format in 1992 seemed to cause little uproar, when compared to the filming of the novel three years later. Ironically, the literary Patient contains all the politically controversial elements of the real Almásy, including a detailed discussion of his cooperation with Erwin Rommel in 1942. Michael Ondaatje uses his Hungarian count to make a point about the detrimental effects of nationalism. He also illustrates how desert exploration can free individuals from their tribal allegiances, much as the real Bermann had commented on the international nature of the Zarzura expedition of 1933.⁶⁰ Almásy recalls, "Looking for Zarzura. ... Just the

Bedouin and us, crisscrossing the Forty Days Road. There were rivers of desert tribes, the most beautiful humans I've met in my life. We were German, English, Hungarian, African—all of us insignificant to them. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states" (138).

As was described above, the real Almásy, at least in his Hungarian publications, used great personal detail when describing his Egyptian counterparts. Ondaatje's Patient, however, experiences Arabs much as he does the other animals of the region. "Forty-day journeys, after the birds were caught by slaves or picked like flowers in equatorial gardens and then placed in bamboo cages to enter the river that is trade. They appear like brides in a medieval courtship" (145).⁶¹ Even members of the Egyptian elite serve merely as backdrops, the violation of their would-be bourgeois respectability serving to heighten the sense of otherworldliness: "On Hassanein Bey's lawn—the grand old man of the 1923 expedition—she walked over with the government aide Roundell and shook my hand, asked him to get her a drink, turned back to me and said, 'I want you to ravish me.' ... Within a month I was her lover. In that room over the souk, north of the street of parrots" (236). The juxtaposition with Islam is of equal significance, although anybody who has experienced the following scene themselves knows how potent it can be: "Sometimes when she is able to spend the night with him they are wakened by the three minarets of the city beginning their prayers before dawn. ... The beautiful songs of faith enter the air like arrows They are sinners in a holy city" (154).

Ondaatje does, however, seem to leave the Arab characters in his novel intentionally under-, if not completely un-developed. The real confrontation between the rulers and the ruled is located somewhere else completely, in the interaction between the Indian sapper, Kirpal Singh, and the dying Patient. Kip, his name reminiscent of both Kipling and his great novel *Kim*, is invited by the Patient to join the pre-nationalist, cosmopolitan cause championed by the count's generation: "Kip and I are both international bastards—born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere. Fighting to get back to or get away from our homelands all our lives. Though Kip doesn't know it yet. That's why we get on so well together" (176–7). Like the real Almásy, the Patient longs for a Europe that is now dead and despises the primitive tribalism of both the Allied and Axis powers. The relationship between the Patient and Katharine signifies this backwards-oriented longing of the Old World elite: "We die containing the richness of lovers and tribes I want all this marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography ... not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. ... All I desired was to walk upon an earth

that had no maps" (261).

Kip, along with his Canadian lover, Hana, belongs to Ondaatje's multiculturalist, future millennium, not the Patient's Central European, fin de siècle, cosmopolitan past. Almásy says, "I can talk with you, Caravaggio, because I feel we are both mortal. The girl, the boy, they are not mortal yet. ... Do you realize neither of us has children?" (253). Kip, however, is not willing to accept the Patient's offer to relinquish identity for the sake of tolerance, especially not in a world so clearly mapped by racial boundaries. In the Hiroshima sequence in the novel, so revealingly missing in Minghella's film adaptation, Kip rejects the idea that race doesn't matter: "He isn't an Englishman. American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. No. Not him. Mistake. ... He would say that doesn't matter, Hana says. ... [Caravaggio] knows the young soldier is right. They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (285–6).

The death of the Patient parallels the death of Orientalist hegemony, even in its most positive form, as embodied by Almásy: "The sapper walks out of the room He has left the three of them to their world, no longer their sentinel. ... Let the dead bury the dead. ... The death of a civilization." Only Herodotus remains unburied, as if to offer a link even further back on the civilizational timeline: "Those few callous words in the Bible. They will bury everything except the book. The body, the sheets, his clothes, the rifle" (286).

Seen in comparison, Ondaatje's condemnation of the British in India or the United States in Japan stands in stark contrast to his seemingly intentional underdevelopment of the Arab Orient. By so doing Almásy's rich relationship to the Middle East is wasted. Considering the author's personal background in British India (today's Sri Lanka), his decision to deal in depth with one Orientalism at the expense of another is, however, understandable.

Minghella's Patient

Discussing his participation in the reworking of *The English Patient* narrative with Gary Kamiya in November 1996, Michael Ondaatje maintained that he gave the screenplay writer and director a free hand because "I don't know film." Pressed in February 2002 by Sara Dowse to admit that film "has made a more conscious impression on his writing than on most," he admitted, "Well, yes. I've edited a documentary, and have come to have a great respect for the craft." In a winter 1997 interview with Willem Dafoe, Ondaatje stated: "I have made a couple of documentary films, and I edited those films, that was what I really enjoyed, ... the microscopic timing."⁶² What role the author actually played in the writing of the screenplay remains unclear. Anthony Minghella writes, in the foreword to *The English Patient*

screenplay, that Ondaatje “presided over the process with neither indifference nor contempt” (ix–xii). Producer Saul Zaentz reveals that “Michael Ondaatje came to California after each draft to collaborate with us” (xiii–xiv). Both director and producer agree that the published text of the screen play differs from the script because, Zaentz writes, a “part of this script was created during production.”

Ondaatje demonstrates his remarkable understanding of the transition from literature to film in the Kamiya interview when he states: “So the choices made here aren’t so much about the politics of the movie-makers, they’re about the technical limits of film—a medium that can also give us something quite devastating by saying less. Anthony, obviously, was very aware of this and he took some of the stuff that he couldn’t put in and worked it into the fabric of the other characters. A lot of Almásy’s stuff is drawn from other parts of the book.”⁶³ Despite obvious discrepancies, the cinematic Patient does not change nearly as much as do the people with whom he interacts, particularly the film’s marginal Arabs. Although the Hiroshima scene was most likely dropped because of “the politics of the movie-makers,” Kip’s cinematic “*Kim/Kipling scene*” is able to make the point effectively that “the message everywhere in your book—however slowly I read it—that the best destiny for India is to be ruled by the British” (*Screenplay*, 79). Minghella’s Patient no longer admits to having worked for Rommel, but he does introduce the issue of German and Italian fascism in the farewell for the International Sand Club, saying “The International Sand Club! Misfits, buggers, fascists, and fools. God bless us, every one. Oops! Mustn’t say International. Dirty word. Filthy word. His Majesty! Der Führer! Il Duce!” (125). This anti-nationalist position is amplified in a further scene towards the end of the film, part of which did not end up in the final cut. Madox says, “It’s ghastly, it’s like a witch hunt—anybody remotely foreign is suddenly a spy, so watch out. ... We didn’t care about countries, did we? Brits, Arabs, Hungarians, Germans. None of that mattered, did it? It was something finer than that” (148).

The greatest divergence from the original Almásy can be found, however, in the almost total underdevelopment of the Egyptian characters in the film. Because of the nature of cinema, Minghella can not relegate them to the role of providing an otherworldly milieu, as was done in the novel, presumably to make an alternative, postcolonial point through the character of Kip. In the film, Arabs are constantly in front of the camera, albeit in obviously subservient, often ridiculous roles. Even the Egyptian member of the International Sand Club, Fouad, only goes into action to sing “Silent Night” at the British Christmas party. Instead of allowing this character—who incidentally shares his name with the Egyptian king of his day—to make an allusion to British

colonial arrogance, as is the case in Kip’s “*Kim/Kipling scene*,” Minghella has the Patient speak for him while Fouad looks on silently: “And the people here don’t want us. You must be joking. The Egyptians are desperate to get rid of the Colonials ... (*to an embarrassed Fouad*) Isn’t that right, Fouad? Some of your best people down on their hands and knees begging to be spared the knighthood” (125).

The juxtaposition of the exotic, Islamic Other and Western forbidden sexuality is emphasized by the sound of a muezzin in the background of all three love scenes between the Patient and Katharine. (This musical accompaniment is, incidentally, not mentioned in the screenplay.) Katharine accentuates the Orientalist experience when she states: “This is a different world—is what I tell myself. A different life. And here I am a different wife” (101). The assumed colonialist/Orientalist permissibility of things forbidden at home is further developed with the introduction of the issue of homosexuality, which is unique to the cinematic version. As previously stated, Minghella’s Patient refers to the International Sand Club as a group of “buggers” (gays). The following scene accentuates the cinematic Bermann’s sexual orientation.

Bermann looks uneasily at Almásy. He wants to tell him of his passion, his absolute love for Kamal, but he daren’t.

Bermann: How do you explain? To someone who’s never been here? Feelings which seem quite normal. (65) It should be mentioned here that although Almásy, Bermann, and other members of their entourage are rumored to have been gay, neither Bermann nor Almásy brought up the issue of sexuality in their writings.

Minghella, presumably with the acquiescence of Ondaatje, does introduce one scene in which an Arab plays an active role, covering seven pages of the screenplay. The Canadian spy Caravaggio has his thumbs removed in Tobruk by a Muslim nurse (“She is Arab, unbearably young, pure. Her head is covered.” *Screenplay*, 114), the punishment Minghella’s Germans assume is generally carried out in the Orient against men who commit adultery. The Libyan nurse goes about her business as if this were something she did every day:

Muller: I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. This is your nurse by the way. She’s Moslem, so she’ll understand all of this. What’s the punishment for adultery ... is it the hands that are cut off?

Caravaggio: Don’t cut me. Come on. ... I’ll give you names. Please—please—oh, please—I promise. Jesus Christ!” (115–17; “Jesus Christ!” is not contained in the published screenplay)

When comparing the three Almásys, it is only the historical character who truly grapples with the realities on the ground in the Middle East. Minghella’s English Patient narrative, in particular, stands in stark contrast to the real Almásy, who, though incredibly cynical and

apolitical, had a deep appreciation of the people of Egypt, especially those Arabs with whom he was in constant contact. These included both the Egyptian elite as well as simple craftsmen and nomads. Although an anti-nationalist, Almásy did display a deep-seated love for his native Hungary combined with a rejection of the fascist experiment so popular with many in Central Europe. Elements of these beliefs can be found in the fictional portrayals of the Patient, particularly in the novel. In Minghella's screenplay, on the other hand, Orientalist stereotypes abound, not only in the portrayal of the Patient's relationship to Arabs, but also through the director's inability to give the "natives," necessarily present on screen, more well-rounded characters.

Finally, the historical Almásy's profound abhorrence of bigotry is reflected in one of the more problematic scenes in Minghella's film. When confronted by Caravaggio, the English-Canadian spy that the Patient has helped the Germans track down, the screenplay's version of the historical Austro-Hungarian Graf Ladislaus Eduard von Almásy defends his support for Rommel's Afrika Korps:

Caravaggio: What did you say?

The Patient: The rest meant nothing to me.

Caravaggio: There was a result to what you did. It wasn't just another expedition. (*Holds up hands*) It did this. If the British hadn't unearthed that photographer, thousands of people could have died.

The Patient: Thousands did die, just different people. (147)

The Patient seems to be engaged in a form of historical revisionism here, suggesting that German and Italian suffering in World War II was as important as that of the British and French. Indeed, it is English jingoism (and historical animosity against all things German) that makes it impossible for both the literary and cinematic Patient to save his injured lover. Thus—towards the end of both the novel and the film—Lady Katharine and the fictitious Hungarian count are united in a crypt-like cave, which poetically envelops their respective deaths.⁶⁴ The callousness of historical reality on the North African battlefield hereby accentuates the tendency of tribal affinities to destroy love that dares to cross the ethnic divide. This seems particularly significant, considering the special role that historical expressions of Central European racism play in determining early-twenty-first-century discourse on ethnic and religious stereotyping, discrimination, and exclusion.

The tragic end of Katharine and the Patient can be interpreted as a signifier of their unique triumph "over the boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men" (*Screenplay*, 172). Although walking "with friends, an earth without maps" (*Screenplay*, 172) would seem to be an unusual desire for a cartographer, the historical Almásy was no ordinary explorer. In his 1930s

autobiographical writings he described himself as "a technician turned geographer, who was driven by the fascination of placing himself at the mercy of the tiniest parts of a machine, the fact that one's fate depends on the exact measurements of an instrument panel, ... on the edge, where nothingness ends and the eternal void begins."⁶⁵

According to Almásy's own account, republished in *Swimmer in the Desert*, he saw himself confronted by a struggle with the effects of Western science and technology on the unspoiled mysteries of North African nature and society. Here he attempts to balance his recognizably European desire to finally expose the remaining secrets of the Orient with his respect for "the vicinity of the creator, the being, which stands above us all," a greater entity that he claims to have discovered in the desert.⁶⁶ By—as he put it—doing his best not to do violence to his research object, i.e., the Libyan Desert and its people, he hopes to have reconciled the sacred and the technical: "Now, that I observe the lines that I have drawn on the maps once merely blank spaces, I am convinced that my tire tracks have not desecrated these previously untouched territories, that I have not violated it by unveiling the mysteries kept secret for thousands of years."⁶⁷

The authors of the literary and cinematic versions of *The English Patient* do not pick up on Almásy's struggle with the effects of technology on the Orient. However, they do go one step further in another area, by taking liberties with their Patient's romantic life. As far as the public record and his personal papers are concerned, the historical Almásy did not transfer his unfulfilled sexual fantasies onto the Orient. In both the novel and the film, however, the Patient turns personal defeat in love into a triumph over empire, nation, and tribe. The Patient transports this universal message of the victory of individual suffering and emotion over the temporal powers, be they democratic or dictatorial, thus transcending the limitations of "historical time."⁶⁸ In this sense they do unify the fictional Patient and his historical counterpart. Though he died alone and unheroically, of a protracted case of dysentery, in a Salzburg sanatorium over half a century ago, fragments of Almásy's true story have caught the imagination of a postmodern, twenty-first-century Central European generation as easily as they once fascinated audiences in interwar Austria, Hungary, England, Egypt, and France.

Concluding Comments

At the outset of this study, the question was posed as to the existence of a uniquely Central European, fin de siècle longing for a better world, beyond the confining, multiethnic, nineteenth-century "boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men." Veronika Bernard states, at the end of her groundbreaking study on

Austrian Orientalist travel literature, that this is indeed the case. She goes as far as to postulate that Austrians, unlike the French and English, and even more than Germans, used their portrayals of the Orient to criticize their homeland (*Heimat*): "The repeated emphasis of the freedom enjoyed in the Orient, as well as praise for its people's self-control, should be seen as a form of rebellion against the specifically Austrian way of life" on the part of Orientalist writers.⁶⁹ The writings of both Almásy and Richard Bermann seem to substantiate this emphasis on the role of the desert as a place that enables the peoples of Austria and Germany to overcome the suffocating mental borders that had stifled the freedom of Central Europeans throughout the nineteenth century.

With respect to the existence of a truly independent Austrian Orientalist tradition, the portrayal above of the effects of the five-hundred-year-old Oriental frontier between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, as well as the duality of Gingrich's "frontier Orientalism"—with its glorification of the noble Bosnian co-defenders of Austria's eastern flank vis-à-vis the Russian and Serbian *Erbfeinde* (eternal enemies)—amply substantiates this claim. Like the French and English, a close partnership did develop between Austrian Orientalists and a "protracted, sustained *national* interest in the Orient" during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, to quote Edward Said one last time. However, Austrian Orientalists were strangely disinterested in their own Orient, and preferred to dabble in the fields of science, literature, painting, and exploration in the more romantic Orient of the Middle East and North Africa. Thus their approach to the region proved to be similar to Russell Berman's German identificatory Orientalism, as described above.

Finally, the comparison of the three Almásys has revealed that the historical Hungarian-Austrian count, along with his Prague-German friend Richard Bermann, were indeed true sons of Central Europe. Their gaze upon the Orient accords with an Austrian Orientalist approach that had developed over many centuries and approached the Muslims of the Eastern Mediterranean both with the detached view of the desert explorer—uninvolved in power politics and ethnic rivalries—and the bemused sympathy of the citizens of a multiethnic imperial state, whose vulnerable southeastern flank was populated by Orientals loyal to their aging Central European monarch.

Both Ondaatje's and Minghella's Patients pale in comparison. The novel's impoverished development of Almásy's appreciation of the Egyptians of the Libyan Desert is only made worse by the film's borderline racism with respect to the portrayal of Muslim rituals and Koranic law. The truly anti-colonialist points are saved for the British and American historical crimes perpe-

trated against the Indians and Japanese. One can only speculate whether Ondaatje is backhandedly taking revenge for the flagrantly discriminatory treatment of modern-day Indian and Sri Lankan domestics and construction workers prevalent in the Middle East.⁷⁰

NOTES

¹This assumption is generally shared by both the mainstream and the critical scientific community in Austria. Attempts to use the logic applied to the English "colonialization" of Ireland to far-flung German-Austrian expansion in Europe, towards the northeast (e.g., Galicia) or southeast (Bosnia) of the empire, are generally rejected. See Horst F. Mayer and Dieter Winkler, *Als Österreich die Welt entdeckte: Expeditionen und Missionen der Kriegsmarine* (Vienna: Edition S, 1991); Anton Holzer and Benedikt Sauer, eds., "Man meint, man müsste sie grad alle katholisch machen können": *Tiroler Beiträge zum Kolonialismus*, special issue, 'scolast' 3–4 (1992).

²"Any work that seeks to provide an understanding of academic Orientalism and pays little attention to scholars like Steinthal, Müller, Becker, Goldziher, Brockelmann, Nöldeke—to mention only a handful—needs to be reproached, and I freely reproach myself. I particularly regret not taking more account of the great scientific prestige that accrued to German scholarship by the middle of the nineteenth century." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 18–20, emphasis in original.

Roman Loimeier points out that the Germans did acquire colonies with a significant number of Muslims in the late nineteenth century, i.e., Togo, Cameroon, and German East Africa, and that both Bismarck's second German Reich and the eastern German Reich (Österreich) of Austria-Hungary had established a zone of influence in the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim countries such as Morocco and Iran by this time. Although the influential German author of trivial (and totally imaginary) Oriental travel adventures, Karl May, was strongly influenced by the writing of the Austro-Hungarian army officer Rudolf Slatin Pascha, the "protracted, sustained, *national*," and Orientalist link between colonialism, on the one hand, and research, art, and travel writing, on the other, did not exist in fin de siècle Germany, if one accepts Said's very narrow definition. Roman Loimeier, "Edward Said und der deutschsprachigen Orientalismus: Eine kritische Würdigung," *Stichproben, Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 1:2 (2001): 63–6.

³Said's use of the term *national* with respect to German, and presumably also Austrian, interests in the Orient is indicative of his lack of understanding of foreign policy discourse in Central Europe. It is important to emphasize here that Said's concept of "*national* interest" should not be confused with the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century "German nationalist" expansionist agenda, which—I will argue below—was rejected outright by Almásy and his fellow travelers on all three levels of his character, to be studied in this essay. Note that of the six "German" nationals whom Said mentions in his justification for not dealing with German Orientalism (quoted in n 2), two are Jewish Austrians: Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) of Szekesfehervar and David Heinrich Müller (1846–1912) of Buczacz.

⁴Because of the limited scope of this article, no attempt will be made to establish whether a distinctly German-Austrian—or for that matter Hungarian, Czech, Galician, Italian, or Jewish—tradition actually existed within the Habsburg Empire. Indeed, such eminent Jewish Orientalist scholars as the Bohemian Eduard Glaser (born in Podboransky Rohozec) and the Galician David Heinrich Müller (Buczacz), as well as the Moravian professor for Roman Catholic theology in Olmouc and later professor for Oriental sciences in Prague, Alois Musil (Rychtrarov, and cousin of the renowned Austrian author, Robert Musil), were all born outside the borders of today's Austria. See Johann Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1955); Leopold Hellmuth, "Traditions and Major Aspects of Oriental Studies in Austria in the 19th Century," trans. Erika Obermayer and Susanne Watzek, in *Orient. Österreichische Malerei zwischen 1848 und 1914*, ed. Erika Mayer-Oehring (Salzburg: Residenzgalerie, 1997), 329–45; Veronika Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient: Eine Bestandsaufnahme österreichischer Reiseliteratur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1996).

On the other hand, the Almásy castle, Burg Bernstein, is located in Burgenland, well within the borders of the truncated Austrian First Republic. According to Wilhelm Brenner, the "English" Patient's father, György Almásy (1867–1933), "führte 1900 eine in Fachkreisen vielbeachtete Forschungsreise nach Mittelasien" and reported in 1903 on this nine-month long exploration in Central Asia in the 700-page volume *Vándorutam Ázsia szívébe* (My Journey to the Heart of Asia). In Hungary he also "wird mit Recht der illustren Gruppe der großen ungarischen Asienforscher zugezählt." Wilhelm Brenner, "Ein Wüstenforscher aus dem Burgenland. Zum 100. Geburtstag von Ladislaus Eduard von Almásy," *Burgenländische Heimatblätter* 57:1(1995): 1.

For reasons of clarity, the historical character will be referred to as "Almásy." The semi-fictional portrayal of the real Almásy by Michael Ondaatje will be referred to as "Ondaatje's Patient." The main character in Anthony Minghella's film version of *The English Patient* will be referred to as "Minghella's Patient." When dealing with both fictional characters, reference will be made to the "literary and cinematic Patients."

⁵Steven Totosy de Zepetnek has provided a valuable overview of the discussion on Michael Ondaatje's reworking of the Almásy story in the novel and in Anthony Minghella's screenplay of *The English Patient*. "Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, 'History,' and the Other," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal* 1:4 (1999), <<http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-4/totosy99-2.html>> (21 September 2004).

⁶Recent additions to the fictional Almásy bibliography include Walter Grond's novel, *Almásy* (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 2002) and the Hungarian novel by Zsolt Török, *Salaam Almásy* (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 1998), whose author began posting parts of an English translation on his website in 2002; <http://lazarus.elte.hu/~zoltorok/almasy/bir_messaha.htm> (21 September 2004). The eminent literary critic and author Karl-Markus Gaus has been especially skeptical about the motives behind the Almásy "groupie" phenomenon. See, for example, "Wiedergänger im Wüstensand," *Neue Züricher Zei-*

tung, 8 October 2002.

⁷One of the most successful travel writers in the German-speaking world during the interwar period, Bermann (alias Arnold Höllriegel) accompanied Count de Almásy during one of his most important expeditions into the Libyan Desert. Bermann's longstanding friendship with Almásy is highly significant when considering the claims that Ondaatje and Minghella were insensitive to the supposed Nazi leanings of the real Hungarian-Austrian count. In his autobiographical fragment, *A Ride on the Cataract*, Bermann portrays himself as a socialist and an assimilated German-Austrian Jew from Prague. Despite their ideological differences, Bermann and Almásy always exchanged notes when one of them returned from an extended journey abroad. See Richard A. Bermann, alias Arnold Höllriegel, *Die Fahrt auf dem Katarakt: Eine Autobiographie ohne einen Helden* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1998).

Writing in the introduction to his own account of the discovery of Zarzura, Bermann reminisces: "I traveled to Cameroon in 1930; in 1931 to Canada and Alaska; in 1932 I traveled up the Amazon for the second time.—When I returned from these journeys I was sure to look up Almásy, often at the Bernstein Castle, the historical palace in Austrian Burgenland, which belonged to his (elder) brother. My *Almásy* would only listen with one ear to the descriptions of my travels in countries without deserts, which seemed to be quite unimportant to him." Arnold Höllriegel, *Zarzura, Die Oase der kleinen Vögel* (Zurich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 1938), 12, emphasis added (unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own). See also Hans-Herald Müller and Andreas Stuhlmann, eds., *Richard A. Bermann alias Arnold Höllriegel: Hollywood—Wien und Zurück, Feuilletons und Reportagen* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1999), 150–4. It could be argued that Bermann was not simply the *Hausjude* (alibi or token Jew) of the supposed Nazi sympathizer Almásy, but rather his close friend and confidant. Indeed, the assumption that Jews can merely be the objects of Gentile opportunism, and are unable to seek out non-Jewish friends on their own accord would seem to deny their historical subjectivity and could be classified as a unique manifestation of Orientalism or even anti-Semitism, similar to the approach the West has taken vis-à-vis Arabs and Muslims, as described by Edward Said. A close study of Bermann's own writings will, in my opinion, bear out my position.

⁸Ondaatje lists the following explorers, along with Bermann, in *The English Patient, A Novel* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 135; cited hereafter in text. The most likely historical figure is named after the literary figure. John Bell: John Ball (U.K.); Kemal el Din: Prince Hussein Kemal el Din (Egypt); Bagnold: Ralph Bagnold (U.K.); Madox: H. W. G. J. Penderel, RAF (U.K.); Walpole of the Desert Survey: Orde Wingate (U.K.), an important Zionist who cooperated in Egypt with Almásy; His Excellency Wasfi Bey: Hassanein Bey (Egypt); Casparius the photographer: Hans Casparius (Germany); Dr. Kadar the geologist: László Kádár, later president of the Hungarian Geographical Society (Hungary). Richard Bermann was a citizen of the (German) Republic of Austria as of the end of World War I. It should be noted that Bagnold, who was British, Kádár, who was Hungarian, and Casparius, who was a Jewish German, all accompanied Almásy on at least one of his expeditions.

Mentioned elsewhere, the literary characters Geoffrey and Katharine Clifton are most likely based on Sir Robert Clayton

East and Lady Dorothy Clayton, who were both experienced desert explorers in their own right. Eppler and Operation Salaam refer to the German agents John W. Eppler and Hans Gerd Sandstede, whom the real Almásy, as a Hungarian air force officer on loan to the German commander Erwin Rommel, smuggled into Egypt in 1942.

⁹“I have quoted a passage from Hassanein Bey’s article ‘Through Kufra to Darfur’ (1924), describing sandstorms, and I have drawn from him and other explorers to evoke the desert of the 1930s. I would like to acknowledge information drawn from Dr. Richard A. Bermann’s ‘Historical Problems of the Libyan Desert’ (1934) and R. A. Bagnold’s review of Almásy’s monograph on his explorations in the desert” (*Novel*, 303).

¹⁰Totosy de Zepetnek, “Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*,” 2.

¹¹Anthony Minghella, *The English Patient, A Screenplay* (New York: Hyperion Miramax, 1996), x. Hereafter cited in text.

¹²Pathy Salett, “Casting a Pall on a Movie Hero,” *Washington Post*, 4 December 1996. The London *Daily Telegraph* even cites Saul Kelly as indicating in his book, *The Hunt for Zerzura*, that Almásy—albeit for lack of funds—was “passing his hand-drawn maps to grateful officers of Mussolini’s army in Libya” as early as 1926. “Mix-up at the Oasis,” 3 August 2002, <<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/08/02/1028157839575.html>> (21 September 2004).

The concern that the 1939 Leipzig Brockhaus edition of Almásy’s writings on the Libyan desert reflected the official German mindset of the day was investigated during the preparation of the 1997 critical reprint edition (discussed below). The work that this author carried out at the Salzburg Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Social and Cultural History helped dispel the fears that the Nazis had somehow co-opted Almásy.

¹³The Hungarian Almásy enthusiast, János Kusassek, maintains that postwar court archives prove that Almásy saved the lives of a neighboring Jewish family, as well as an athlete and a young Polish boy refugee. Alex Bandy, Associated Press, “The Real ‘English Patient’ Was No Count and No Nazi Sympathizer,” *Holland Sentinel*, 14 February 1999.

¹⁴Bermann seems to have been very much aware of Almásy’s cynical approach to world politics. He nevertheless described Almásy as a friend as late as 1938 in his account of their 1933 expedition in the Libyan desert (Höllriegel, *Zerzura*), published immediately prior to his forced emigration to the United States and tragic death shortly thereafter. The term *apolitical* will be used in the following to characterize Almásy’s rejection of partisan politics. As shall be illustrated (e.g., in “The ‘Real’ Almásy,” below), Bermann considered his friend’s disinterested approach to politics less dangerous than the attitude of those who were in the process of taking control of Europe.

¹⁵“Michael Ondaatje Responds,” interview by Doug Saunders, *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 6 December 1996, C5.

¹⁶Totosy de Zepetnek, “Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*,” 9.

¹⁷Also see Almásy’s own portrayal of this event: Ladislaus E. Almásy, “Operation Salaam: Tagebuch des Geheimkommandos 1942,” in *Schwimmer in der Wüste: Auf der Suche nach der Oase Zerzura* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1997), 227–53. This material from the War Museum archives in London is the fourth

and final chapter of the book, published for the first time.

¹⁸Zsolt Török, “László Almásy, the Real ‘English Patient,’” <<http://lazarus.elte.hu/~zoltorok/almasy/almasyen.htm>> (26 September 2004).

¹⁹Whereas Minghella has the dying Katharine call for “an earth without maps,” Ondaatje has the cartographer Almásy admit to Katharine’s three-year-old, decaying corpse: “All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps” (*Novel*, 261). I would like to express my appreciation to Lisa Mirabile for producing the highly valuable “An Index to the Vintage 1993 edition of *The English Patient*,” 19 March 2002, <<http://www.birchile.com/epindex.html>> (21 September 2004).

²⁰Samir Raafat, “The English Patient: Egypt’s Celebrated Hungarian Brothers,” *Egyptian Mail*, 7 June 1997, <<http://egy.com/people/97-06-07.shtml>> (21 September 2004), 3; Brenner, “Wüstenforscher aus dem Burgenland,” 1.

²¹Totosy de Zepetnek, “Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*,” 9.

²²I wish to thank the CSSAAME reviewer of the initial version of this text for assisting me in sharpening the focus of this study of Austrian Orientalism, most significantly in asking me to draw further theoretical conclusions from my comparison/contrast exercise among the three Almásys and to better illustrate the similarities and differences between Austrian and German Orientalism.

²³Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa*; Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects”; Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*.

²⁴Andre Gingrich, “Grenzmythen des Orientalismus: Die islamische Welt in Öffentlichkeit und Volkskultur Mitteleuropas,” in *Orientalische Reise: Malerei und Exotik im späten 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Erika Mayr-Oehring and Elke Doppler (Vienna: Wien Museum, 2003), 110–29; Andre Gingrich, “Immigration Politics, Austrian Millennial Festivals, and the Role of Anthropology,” paper presented at the twentieth annual conference of the German Studies Association, Seattle, 10–13 October 1996, <<http://www.univie.ac.at/voelkerkunde/theoretical-anthropology/andre.html>> (21 September 2004).

²⁵Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects,” 329–31.

²⁶Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects,” 331, 336

²⁷Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects,” 337.

²⁸Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects,” 335, 341–2. The Moravian Orientalist Siegfried Langer, for example, was murdered by his Yemeni guides in 1882 while attempting to “penetrate into the interior of Hadhramaut from Aden.” Hellmuth, “Traditions and Major Aspects,” 340. Despite this setback, Austrian Orientalists such as Alois Musil were able to make remarkable discoveries in “hostile territory” in the following years. “Auf D.H. Müllers Antrag von der Wiener Akademie unterstützt, konnte Musil 1898 eine neue Reise unternehmen und dabei mit seinen beduinischen Freunden in fliegender Hast und jeden Augenblick eines feindlichen Angriffs gewärtig, Qusair Amra, das bildergeschmückte Schloß des Kalifen al-Wadin II, besuchen. Das war eine so überraschende Entdeckung, daß Musils Bericht zunächst auf Zweifel and Ablehnung stieß.” Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa*, 261. An interesting parallel to Almásy can be seen in the fact that Musil returned to Jordan in 1901 with the Austrian Orientalist painter Alfons Leopold Mielich, whose “Das Schloß Qusai Amra” provided one of the many pieces of evidence that Musil then used to prove that this palace actu-

ally existed. Erika Mayer-Oehring ed., *Orient: Österreichische Malerei zwischen 1848 und 1914* (Salzburg: Residenzgalerie, 1997), Kat. Nr. 29, 184–5.

²⁹Martina Haja, "Between Dream and Reality: Austrian Orientalist Painters in the 19th Century," trans. Erika Obermayer and Susanne Watzek, in *Orient: Österreichische Malerei zwischen 1848 und 1914*, ed. Erika Mayer-Oehring (Salzburg: Residenzgalerie, 1997), 287–8.

³⁰Haja, "Between Dream and Reality," 293–4.

³¹Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 33–4.

³²Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 60.

³³Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 58–9.

³⁴Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 56–9.

³⁵Unfortunately, I can not deal here with the lively debate on "K. und K. Kolonialismus" and the effects of Austrian imperialism on its culture being carried out by—among others—Ursula Reber, Clemens Ruthner, Markus Reisenleitner, and Andre Gingrich on the website KAKANIEN REVISTED (<http://www.kakanien.ac.at>), as well as at <http://univie.ac.at/spacesofidentity> or <http://univie.ac.at/völkerkunde/theoretical-anthropology>.

³⁶Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 72–6.

³⁷Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 73–4.

³⁸Bermann, *Die Fahrt auf dem Katarakt*, 212–13.

³⁹Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 137–42.

⁴⁰The mytho-historical meta-narrative basically claims: the bad Muslim and Oriental attacked and seriously endangered our frontier, such as in the Turkish wars at the dawn of modernity, to which [the ultra-rightist Austrian Jörg] Haider refers. The good Muslim, however, defended our frontier, such as the Bosnians before and during the First World War. The good and the bad Muslim thus constitute key metaphors in a dual register, inherent to one and the same narrative. At the beginning of modernity, the bad Muslim was a serious rival and threat to 'our' existence. Crushing that rival is portrayed as the decisive precondition for the subsequent rise of Habsburg colonial expansion. At the end of the colonial period, and as a result of that roll-back strategy against the Ottomans on the Balkans, Vienna's rule over Bosnia serves as the ideological raw material to construct the good Muslim, 'our' unwavering ally in difficult times. A second parallel in the paradox therefore displays images of the Muslim as a contrasting device for the ideological construction of an armed border, a frontier. Along that frontier, the Muslim is constructed either as a blood thirsty rival, or as a loyal servant." Gingrich, "Immigration Politics," 3.

⁴¹Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge 1992), 201.

⁴²Said, *Orientalism*, 19, emphasis in original.

⁴³Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa*, 263. Musil's "friendship with Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma (the brother of Empress Zita), with whom Musil had traveled through Northeast Arabia and Southern Mesopotamia in 1912, made him an intimate confidant to the ruling family. He received a request from the General Staff in Berlin to act as a political mediator, a proposal which had the approval of Emperor Francis Joseph. In 1914/15, Musil, who not only disguised himself as a Bedouin on his travels, but also genuinely felt like one, tried with great energy, but ultimately without success, to mediate between the major Arab tribes and the Ottoman government in order to contain the growing British influence in

the Near East. After the coronation of Emperor Karl, Musil, actively supported by the ruling couple via the *k.k. Österreichische Orientgesellschaft*, engaged in a plethora of politico-economic and politico-cultural activities in the last two years of the monarchy. Owing to political developments, most of them did not get beyond the planning stage." Hellmuth, "Traditions and Major Aspects," 343. As will be illustrated below, Almásy had his own close ties to the Austro-Hungarian royals and also specialized in accompanying Central European and Middle Eastern nobles on hunting expeditions in Egypt and Hungary. Furthermore, he proved more than willing to place the results of his vast Orientalist research and desert experience in the service of the general staff in Berlin.

⁴⁴Said, *Orientalism*, 19.

⁴⁵Russell A. Berman, e-mail message to author, 4 February 2004. Berman was responding to criticism of his *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1998) by Carl Niekerk: "In spite of all its critical ambitions, Berman's study follows this pattern of argumentation exactly. Berman's main problem in his attempt to resolve the issue of the Enlightenment's engagement versus colonial abuse is that he tries to resolve it on a discursive level alone, and has little interest in everyday colonial practice." Niekerk, "Rethinking a Problematic Constellation: Post-colonialism and its Germanic Contexts (Pramoedya Ananta Toer/ Multatuli)," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23:1–2 (2003): 62.

⁴⁶Erika Pircher and Eugene Sensenig, "Das Geheimnis der Wüste: Die Welt des 'Englischen Patienten,'" *Kulturelemente* 5 (1997): 1–3.

⁴⁷Brenner, "Wüstenforscher aus dem Burgenland," 1–4; Kurt Mayer/epofilm, "Swimmers in the Desert," Biographies/Almásy,

<<http://www.swimmersinthedesert.com/english.biographien.html>> (29 July 2003; site now discontinued), 1–2; According to rumor, it is during these years that Almásy teamed up with Bertolt Brecht. The famous Bavarian Marxist poet and playwright was known for his weakness for fast cars and was given an automobile as a reward for his poem "Singende Steyrwagen," which praised the qualities of the corporation's new line of products. Michael John, "'Singende Steyrwägen': Zur Produktion und Vermarktung der Automobile aus Steyr," in *Tradition—Innovation: Industrie im Wandel*, ed. Michael John and Roman Sandgruber (Steyr: Museum Arbeitswelt 1998), 5–6.

The political fiasco surrounding the failed attempt to reinstall the king of Hungary seems to have convinced Almásy that political activism was futile. Thus his statements concerning the apparently unavoidable European apocalypse, as described by Bermann below, stand in stark contrast to his early enthusiasm for the partisan monarchist cause. See Hans-Harald Müller and Brita Eckert, *Richard A. Bermann alias Arnold Höllriegel: Österreicher, Demokrat, Weltbürger* (Munich: K. G. Sauer, 1995), 285.

⁴⁸John, "Singende Steyrwägen," 5; Brenner, "Wüstenforscher aus dem Burgenland," 6–7.

⁴⁹Raafat, *The English Patient*, 1–2; Brenner, "Wüstenforscher aus dem Burgenland," 6–7.

⁵⁰ Kurt Mayer, e-mail message to author, 29 August 2003; András Zboray, e-mail messages to author, 29 August and 1 September 2003; Rhotert quoted in Zboray, 29 September. As

an example, Zboray mentions that had Almásy been less of an adventurer, he and Rhotert would have been much more successful: "The magnificent sites that the Belgians discovered in 1968 were a mere kilometer beyond the last site noted by Almásy/Rhotert in 1933, and had they explored a little further, they would have made the discovery of their lives." For a detailed list of Almásy's expeditions see Zboray's website, Fliegel Jezerniczky Expeditions, "The Libyan Desert Home Page," <<http://www.fjexpeditions.com>> (21 September 2004).

⁵¹The most important "witness" to come to Almásy's defense, with respect to the claims that Almásy was pro-Nazi, was the wartime British intelligence officer Jean Howard, who reported that Almásy had first offered his services to Russell Pasha, Cairo's British police chief in 1939, only to be turned down because of his Hungarian background and German connections. The Italians then turned him down, fearing that he was a British double agent. He then left Cairo of his own accord, only to be drafted into the Hungarian air force. "When Hitler sent his expeditionary army to North Africa, Oberstleutnant Seubert of the *Abwehr* traveled to Budapest to enlist Almásy's help. He told Mrs. Howard: Despite his longing for the desert he was reluctant to help us. Only when ordered, as a reserve officer of the Hungarian Air Force, by Miklós Horthy, Hungary's Regent and commander-and-chief, did he join Rommel." Quoted in Gabriel Ronay, "Into Africa, The Hungarian Patient," <<http://www.hungary.com/hungq/no146/p32.html>> (30 July 2003; site now discontinued).

⁵²One of the few clearly pro-colonialist images created during an Almásy expedition is a film by the Viennese cameraman Rudi Mayer, showing Ferdinand von Liechtenstein's 1929 expedition along the Arab slave route, Darb el Arbe'in (Road of Forty Days), from Mombasa to Cairo. Mayer's son Kurt writes: "This film was forgotten for decades and found again in a beekeeping shed near Vienna. The reconstructed film premiered at Vienna's Ethnological Museum in 1996, corresponding to the release of Minghella's English Patient adaptation." Having received excerpts of the film from Austrian public television (ORF), I agree with the Schrott/Farin assessment that "the vast arrogance of the colonial period is revealed in it. Only Almásy acts strangely withdrawn from the camera, somehow perturbed." Raoul Schrott and Michael Farin, "Vorwort, Schwimmer in der Wüste," in Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 9.

⁵³Adrienne Kloss-Elthes, *Unbekannte Sahara, Übersicht der Inhalt zwischen Original von Almásy und Bearbeitung von Esch* (Salzburg: Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institut für Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte, occasional papers, 1997). See Raoul Schrott and Michael Farin, "Vorwort, Schwimmer in der Wüste," 7–20, and Michael Forcher, Haymon Verlag, "Zu diesem Buch," in Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 20–2, for a detailed description of the production of the reprint of Almásy's *Unknown Sahara*.

⁵⁴Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 108. See the footnote on the same page for the editor's comment.

⁵⁵In his own report on the journey to Zarzura, Bermann commented at its outset, on 22 March 1933: "There we were, five Europeans, L.E. von Almásy, Hubert S. Penderel, Ladislaus Kádár, Hans Casparius and I. Two Hungarians, an Englishman, a citizen of the German Reich and an Austrian."

One should not forget that the "Reichsdeutsche" cameraman from Berlin, Casparius, was Jewish. Höllriegel, *Zarzura*, 31.

⁵⁶Müller and Eckert, *Richard A. Bermann*, 285.

⁵⁷Kloss-Elthes, *Unbekannte Sahara, Übersicht*, 5.

⁵⁸Kloss-Elthes, *Unbekannte Sahara, Übersicht*, 5–6. It is important to note here that despite von der Esch's well documented leanings toward the German power elite, his own travel literature does not reveal significantly racist or even clearly pro-colonialist tendencies. Indeed, if one were to place Gerhard Rohlf's *Drei Monate in der libyischen Wüste* (Kassel: Verlag Theodor Fischer, 1875), A. M. Hassanein Bey's *Rätsel der Wüste* (Leipzig: Brockhaus Verlag, 1926), Almásy's *Schwimmer in der Wüste* (texts originating in the 1930s), and Alois Musil's *In the Arabian Desert* (1930) beside von der Esch's own 1941 report on the Libyan desert, one would find only slight differences in perspective. Testing this point will have to remain the product of a future study in Central European Orientalism. See Alois Musil, "Selections from *In the Arabian Desert*," 1 March 2002, <<http://www.iras.ucalgary.ca/~volk/sylvia/Musil.htm>> (21 September 2004); Hansjoachim von der Esch, *Wenat—die Karawane ruft: Auf verschollenen Pfaden durch Agyptens Wüsten* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1941).

⁵⁹Zboray, e-mail message to the author, 1 September 2003. It remains difficult to corroborate many of the statements made by Hungarian journalists and *English Patient* enthusiasts about Almásy because much of this material has not been translated into German or English.

⁶⁰Höllriegel, *Zarzura*, 31; see note 55.

⁶¹Ondaatje is referring here to "Die Strasse der Vierzig Tage" (The Forty Days Road) in Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 25–64.

⁶²Gary Kamiya, "An Interview with Michael Ondaatje," *Salon*, 18 November 1996, <<http://archive.salon.com/nov96/ondaatje961118.html>> (21 September 2004), 4; Sara Dowse, "In the Writer's Eye," *The Age*, 25 February 2002, <<http://www.theage.com.au/cgi-bin/common/printarticle.pl?path=/articles/2002/02/25/1014.3>> (30 July 2003; site now discontinued); Willem Dafoe, "Michael Ondaatje by Willem Dafoe on *The English Patient*," *Bomb*, Winter 1997, 14–19, <<http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/worldlit/canada/interview2.htm>> (30 July 2003; site now discontinued).

⁶³Kamiya, "Interview with Michael Ondaatje," 4–5.

⁶⁴In both the novel and the film, the Patient's Hungarian family name prevents him from saving Katharine. "Are you telling me the English did not believe you? No one listened to you?" ... "I didn't give them the right name. ... I was just another possible second-rate spy. Just another international bastard" (*Novel*, 250–1). Interestingly, in the film Minghella adds a smack of World War I English jingoism. "Almásy: Fritz? What are you talking about? Fritz? Corporal: That's your name innit? Count Fucking Arsehole Von Bismarck? What's that supposed to be then, Irish?" (*Screenplay*, 162–3).

⁶⁵Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 197 and 200.

⁶⁶Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 200. In both the novel and film, the Patient takes a distinctly atheist position. "And I strode away from him [Madox] saying, 'There is no God.' We were utterly unlike each other" (*Novel*, 240–1). "Madox (*in Arabic*): May God make safety your companion. Almásy (*a tradition*): There is no God. (*Smiles*) But I hope someone looks

after you" (*Screenplay*, 149–50).

⁶⁷Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, 198.

⁶⁸Ondaatje, cited in Totosy de Zepetnek, "Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*," 9.

⁶⁹Bernard, *Österreicher im Orient*, 141–2.

⁷⁰See a variety of articles on this topic contained in the special issue, "Non-Arab Women in the Arab World," *Al-Raida Magazine* 101–2 (2003).

reforms hinges on insuring a politically decisive, democratic, and comprehensive Sudanese settlement, more than on any development promises, military interventions, or bureaucratic-authoritarian plans. Sudan needs a ruling establishment that is willing to make peace and committed to a stable democratic transition for the people of Sudan. To salvage the nation from a repetition of the NIF's terrorism, antinational separatism, racism, and ethnoreligious chauvinism, the Khartoum central government's dominance over Sudan's marginal regions must be adjusted to favor the national interests and privileges of the entire population, rather than a group of antidemocratic governing elites. The Naivasha agreements clearly express the yearning of non-Arab as well as Arab Sudanese to enjoy—in political, economic, religious, ideological, and cultural terms—fully egalitarian center-region relations with the government's Arab elite. Ultimately, it is the creative struggles of the Sudanese people that will bring about the permanent peace and good governance of the country via the principled enlargement of the peace protocols to truly represent the nation's multiethnic and multireligious population.