The Oriental as Absence in Minghella's The English Patient

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Abstract

This paper deals with the relationship between Michael Ondaatje's novel The English Patient (title typed in italics) and the film version of it directed by Minghella. In his film version of "THE ENGLISH PATIENT," Minghella changes the story radically. Indeed, the film has a different protagonist, a different denouement, and a different resolution from the novel. Far from maintaining Kip's role as protagonist of the novel, the film reduces him to a peripheral character. Moreover, the novel's major theme, namely, Kip's ability as an oriental to admire certain elements in Western culture, then review his encounter with that culture, and finally repudiate it, is hardly brought to the fore or allowed to be a significant theme in the film. Such manipulation of the content of a novel by film makers is characteristic of the orientalists' trend to reserve the role of the hero for the White Western Man and represent the Oriental Man as devoid of any significant or effective cultural presence.

Keywords: protagonist; Oriental; Orientalism; Eurocentric; Western culture; hegemony; repudiate; Sikh identity; atomic bomb; denouement

Every film director has a choice as to how much of the printed text to include, how much to cut, and how much to add when making a film from a novel. Such decisions result in films which vary from the printed text in either major or minor ways. The Merchant-Ivory team, for example, often creates film versions of stories that are astonishingly faithful to the text.

What Minghella has done in the film version of Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient changes the story so radically that the film actually tells a different story. The film has a different protagonist, a different denouement, and a different resolution from the novel. Whereas the novel written by Michael Ondaatje provides a delicately nuanced multicultural world view culminating in a caustic appraisal of Western hegemony, the film retains a Eurocentric world view never given the devastating critique to which it is subjected in the novel. The character of Kirpal Singh who moves in the novel from apprentice to master of the art of defusing bombs, upon discovering that the hierarchy of nations of his respected teachers have perfected a gigantic bomb beyond his own wildest imagination, and dropped it on civilian targets, confronts his mentors with a fiery speech of repudiation, and returns to his own country. All the important characters still alive at
this final stage of the novel concur in the justice of his analysis. Kirpal Singh becomes the dominant character in the denouement of the novel: his analysis is acquiesced in by Almasy, Caravaggio, and Hana. Which makes it all the more surprising that this dominant character is essentially absent from the film.

When a novel is translated into the medium of film, it must be adapted to the target audience. That The English Patient was successfully adapted to the majority in a highly militarised Western capitalist cinematic audience – the white male – is confirmed by the many Oscars it garnered in the first months of its release. But the original text contains at its heart a devastating criticism of Western culture. And this criticism is delivered by an Oriental belonging to a religious minority. Apparently the producers of the film realized early on that the film had to be shorn of its political content in order to be acceptable to its target audience. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam demonstrate in their essay on “The Cinema After Babel,” “discourse is always shaped by an audience, by what Tzvetan Todorov calls the allocutaire—those to whom the discourse is addressed—whose potential reaction must always be taken into account.” (Shohat 116).

It seems to me that a fairly obvious reading of the novel sees it as a postcolonial kaleidoscopic many layered narrative in which Western culture is surveyed by an Oriental in the person of Kirpal Singh and found wanting. Set in Italy in the final months of the Second World War, the novel focuses on the lives of four characters who have been variously shattered by the war, huddled together in or around the ruin of a grand historic Villa, a ruined survival of the Italian Renaissance. Each of these survivors has in his own way “stepped away” from the war. Kirpal Singh is that last of the characters to step away from the war, and when he does so, his denunciation is total and devastating.

The Oriental in the novel, Kirpal Singh, is a Sikh, the point of view character, and his picture in the film version is mostly left on the cutting room floor or distorted out of all recognition. In an important essay on the film version of The English Patient, “Twice Repressed: The Case of Ondaatje’s Kip,” Nikki Singh responds from a Sikh perspective to the incongruity between the representation of Kirpal Singh in the film as compared with that in the Ondaatje text. “Twice Repressed: The Case of Ondaatje’s Kip” first published in 2004 was reprinted in December 2010 for the occasion of the selection of The English Patient, a novel first published in 1994, by sikhchic.com as “Book of the Month” for December 2010. The study includes a detailed comparison between the novel and the film informed by the author’s Sikh background and by the reading of Edward Said’s Orientalism (first published in 1978, reissued in 1994).

Singh quotes Ondaatje as saying in an interview with Eleanor Wachtel on CBC (Singh 2) that he had not really planned the character of Kirpal Singh when he began to write The English Patient. He asserts that he himself was surprised when this character suddenly appeared. Ondaatje tells Wachtel
I started to investigate Kirpal Singh, trying to find out who this person was, what his job was. And that became, in a way, a new part of the book, a new character whose presence fills one-quarter of the novel. (Michael Ondaatje qtd. by Nikki Singh)

Noting that we seldom find Sikh characters in postcolonial literature, Singh points out how a-typical Kip is from other Orientals in contemporary fiction - defusing rather than exploding bombs - and argues that Kip’s character unfolds in the narrative to reveal a person increasingly rooted in his own religious faith (Singh). Such a portrait of a deeply spiritual Oriental male is particularly needed in post 9/11 fiction, Singh believes:

Such an introduction is desperately needed in our dangerously divided and polarized world. Since September 11, several hundred Sikhs have been victims of hate crimes in America. In the mind of the attackers, Punjabi Sikhs are the same as Afghani Muslims and Afghani Muslims are the same as al-Qaeda terrorists. In Phoenix, Arizona, a Sikh gas station owner was murdered in that blinding rage. It is urgent that we in the West learn about our Asian neighbors and begin to respect them (Singh 2):

And though a film version could have provided an opportunity to realize and celebrate such a learning experience, in fact its director Anthony Minghella chose instead to confirm the stereotype of the “raghead” instead of finding it possible to provide space for the dignified, deeply ethical Oriental depicted by Ondaatje. In the novel, Kip takes great care to wash his hair and launder his white turban, as Singh points out, “[I]n the film, Kip’s turban, the emblem of Sikh pride, is carelessly tied” and “shabby” (Singh 2). “Ironically,” Nikki Singh points out, the subject who frees himself of British colonialism in Ondaatje’s novel becomes in the film an object of American racial and sexual obsessions” (Singh 2).

The binary opposition between “them” and “us” which Edward Said made us so conscious about years ago, infects the 1996 Miramax production. Even though Ondaatje’s Punjabi sapper comes to Europe during World War II, and warmly embraces Catholic frescoes in Italy, the Canadian Hana, the Hungarian Almasy, and the Italian thief, Minghella and his crew reshape him and recast him in a very different meaning – as Said would say, in one of its deepest and most recurring images of the “Other.” (Singh 3)

The process employed by Hollywood to effect this transformation is typical of the cultural obduracy that forbids the depiction of an Oriental as manifesting the dignity and maturity actually belonging to this character. Here Singh quotes from Said’s Orientalism:

... the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist’s presence is enabled by the Orient’s effective absence (Said 1994 208 qtd. by Singh 4).
In order to keep Kip from rising in the film to his true stature as protagonist and hero of the novel, the director had to alter many more or less subtle relationships and to omit significant passages from the text altogether. As Singh points out, “by erasing the spaces where Kip grows up socially, culturally, and religiously, Hollywood not only dislodges Ondaatje’s hero to the periphery but also makes him a momentary and insubstantial figure” (Singh 4). At times in the novel, Kip is forced by circumstances to assume enormous responsibility, to communicate to his dwindling team all the accumulated technical expertise of a whole tradition of sappers as, one after the other, they fall victim to bombs made more intricate and more lethal by the Germans in their retreat north through Italy.. Absent from the film are reflections like “he knew he contained more than any other sapper, the knowledge of Lord Suffolk. He was expected to be the replacing vision” (EP 208), and he has cultivated an austere tolerance for solitude since he worked among men “who would not cross an uncrowded bar to speak with him when they were off duty”; nevertheless “he knew he was for now a king, a puppet master, could order anything” (EP 209). The film omits the real technical mastery and courage through which Kip has won pre-eminence among his British military peers. Instead, as Nikki Singh demonstrates, Hollywood keeps Kip infantile and undeveloped. The camera, she says, “captures Kip’s body, his mystery, his sexuality; it exoticizes his “oriental” body and coloring and features” (Singh 7). Such Oriental stereotypes are designed in the film to contrast with and “reinforce the Whiteness, rationality, masculinity, and adulthood of the West” (Singh 7).

Also omitted from the film are passages in which Kip's inclusive cultural vision is expressed: “For him there were the various maps of fate, and at Amritsar’s temple all faiths and classes were welcome and ate together” (EP 289). Having omitted all of Kip's reflections on his religious concerns, Singh observes, the director turns Kip into a feminized sexual fetish through the parallel drawn cinematically between the scopophilia whereby the camera caresses Katherine’s body, making it the object of the male gaze of Almasy, and the long hair of Kip. Cinematic metonymy elides Kim’s long hair and brown skin by photographing him analogically with shots of Katherine against the undulating desert sands, both perceived as passive objects of sexual desire.

Thus, Singh points out, rather than marking his Sikh identity, Kip’s long dark hair is fetishized in the movie. Such a representation facilitates the division between the viewing subject and the viewed object, and converts a religious person into a knick-knack for sexual gratification. With his hair on display, the Asian is no more than an interesting spectacle, and each time his hair is shown, the upper part of his body is also bare. (Singh 8)

This sexual fetishization is further enabled by the omission of the many markers of Kip’s spiritual side. Nikki Singh stresses the deletion from the film of long verbal journeys
in the novel during which Kip takes Hana to visit the sacred places of his Sikh religion, the magnificent temple at Amritsar, the Harmandar, the central Sikh shrine in Punjab, scenes in which “we see the structure of the shrine inlaid with gold and marble lifted by the shimmering waters surrounding it” (Singh 4), even though it would have been so easy “to flash an image of the Harmandar – even for a second” (Singh 4). As Singh points says:

But the film utterly omits this sublime vision and thereby categorically conceals Ondaatje’s pluralistic perspective in which the Sikh shrine is linked with the Desert and with the Villa Giralamo. These are three important spiritual locales [in the novel] which nurture and bring out the best of humanity. Great religious figures like Moses, John the Baptist, Christ, the Desert Fathers, Prophet Mohammad were all attracted to the Desert. It was in that open and limitless space and silence of the shimmering sand that they carried on their communication with the Divine. Ondaatje’s early-twentieth century explorers in the desert also acknowledge the presence of the Divine in their midst. (Singh 5)

By thus feminizing Kip, by neutralizing his masculinity through the camera, Minghella reinforces the Orientalist stereotype of the feminization and passivity of the East. Thus Singh argues, by fetishism and scopophilia, Hollywood succeeds in “shifting the threat of the Other to a control and power over the Other” (Singh 8). There is a definite feminine side to Kip, as he is perceived by Hana as dissolving the male and female dichotomies, his hair reminding her of a Hindu goddess and thereby connecting him to many other goddess images in the novel—his resting beside the statue of Mary, his sighting his rifle on the light-bulbs in the halo of the Queen of the Sea, his empathy with the sad Queen of Sheba in the painting in a church. Such associations would suggest the kind of balance between animus and anima of which Jung would approve.

But Hollywood must reduce this complex imagery to a banal stereotype to evade the threat represented by this mysterious “Other,” even though this requires overlooking the fact that Kip is perceived as a “warrior saint” by Hana who visualizes him like a medieval knight going off to his perilous work each morning: “It was the moment he left them all behind, the moment the drawbridge closed behind the knight and he was alone with just the peacefulness of his own strict talent” (EP 290).

This image of the warrior-saint finds its vindication in Sikh history. Most readers of the novel, like viewers of the film, probably come to the work with little knowledge of the Sikh religion and its history, although the novel appeared only eight years after the notorious storming of the Golden Temple at Amritsar called “Operation Blue Star” by Indira Gandhi’s military with its tragic loss of life and the subsequent demands of Sikh separatists for an independent state in Punjab. But Ondaatje would have crafted his story not only with this recent crisis but with a more comprehensive overview of Sikh history, especially the conflicted relation of the Sikhs to British colonialism—an important element in his still somewhat mysterious title “The English Patient” when the supposed
English patient turns out to be Hungarian. According to V.S. Naipaul in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), the Sikh religion first arose in about 1500 as the embodiment of an illumination of Guru Nanak, which was “the quietist one that there was a middle way: that there was no Hindu and no Muslim, that there could be a blending of the faiths” (Naipaul 421-22). Recounting Sikh fierceness at the siege of Lucknow, a famous battle at the time of the 1858 Mutiny, Naipaul says:

In the Sikh fierceness at the battle of Lucknow there would have been a wish to get even with the ‘Pandies’ who had helped [the British] to defeat them [the Sikhs] less than 10 years before. There would have been a more general wish as well to get even with the Muslims. And it was historically fitting that the Sikhs should have helped to bring about the extinction of Muslim power in Lucknow and Delhi, because it was out of the anguish caused by Muslim persecutions of Hindus that the Sikh religion had arisen. (Naipaul 421)

What had happened 10 years before was the ultimate surrender of the Sikhs to British forces after several years of viciously fought battles. The most implacable resistance fighters against British hegemony over India, they became in defeat the staunchest of British-India’s defenders. In Naipaul’s analysis, it had been the fifth of the ten Sikh Gurus, Gorband Singh, who had built the Golden Temple at Amritsar and, in reaction against persecution, had given the Sikhs their militant character (Naipaul 491-92).

The historical circumstances of Sikh tradition provide a context for Ondaatje’s deployment of Kirpal Singh’s character in the novel without an awareness of which the reader misses an important level of meaning. Unlike Kip’s mirror image Kim in Kipling’s novel (out of which Hana sees Kip as emerging into their life at the Villa), Kip has no amulet proving him to be a Sahib and therefore superior to the Indians around him. Instead, Kip has his turban, his steel bracelet, and his knife as Naipaul says, “every day, with these intimate emblems, a man would be reminded of what he was” (Naipaul 492). But this identity is effectively omitted from the film. The main reason why Kip must stay within the Orientalist cliché in the film is to prevent audiences from glimpsing the real threat of an Oriental who judges and rejects the West, a powerful denouement which is at the heart of Ondaatje’s narrative. Such a motivation constitutes the “final cause” of the plot in Aristotle’s sense, in terms of the rational intentionality of the protagonist. If (as the film implies) Kip’s real reason for leaving the Villa to return to India is his depression at the death of his friend Hardy, the last remaining sapper besides Kip, this would tend to confirm his femininity. In this view, Kip would be seen as lacking a mature motivation of his own and so unable to continue this arduous work without his friend. Therefore, the most serious distortion in the film is the misrepresentation of Kip’s actual reason for leaving the Villa to return to India. In the novel, the real crisis that forms the climax of the novel and determines Kip to leave is the dropping of atomic bombs on two Japanese
cities by the Americans. On the day Kip learns from his wireless radio that the bombs have fallen on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this is the scene: from Hana's perspective:

She sees him in the field, his hands clasped over his head, then realizes this is a gesture not of pain but of his need to hold the earphones tight against his brain. He is a hundred yards away from her in the lower field when she hears a scream emerge from his body which had never raised its voice among them. He sinks to his knees, as if unbuckled. Stays like that and then slowly gets up and moves in a diagonal towards his tent, enters it, and closes the flaps behind him. . . . Kip emerges from the tent with the rifle. He comes into the Villa San Giralamo and sweeps past her, moving like a steel ball in an arcade game, through the doorway and up the stairs three steps at a time, his breath metronomed, the hit of his boots against the vertical sections of stairs. (EP 300).

Kip enters the bedroom and stands at the foot of the English Patient's bed. His confrontation with Almasy and Caravaggio -- totally left out of the film -- constitutes the knight's single combat with the enemy and the climax of the novel. He fires the gun at the fountain painted on the *trompe d’oeil* wall of the bedroom and plaster flies onto the bed:

I sat at the foot of this bed and listened to you, Uncle. These last months. When I was a kid I did that, the same thing. I believed I could carry that knowledge, slowly altering it, but in any case passing it beyond me to another. I grew up with tradition from my country, but later, more often, from your country. Your fragile white island that with customs and manners and books and prefects and reason somehow converted the rest of the world. . . . . You and then the Americans converted us. With your missionary rules. And Indian soldiers wasted their lives as heroes so they could be pukkah. You had wars like cricket. How did you fool us into this? . . . . listen to what you people have done. (EP 301)

He throws down the gun and puts the radio earphones on Almasy, “One bomb. Then another.

Hiroshima. Nagasaki”. (EP 302). When Caravaggio tells Kip that the English Patient is not English, Hana says “He would say it doesn’t matter” (EP 304) showing clearly that she agrees with Kip. When Kip targets Almasy with the gun, Almasy pulls off the earphones and says “Do it, Kip, I don’t want to hear any more (EP 303). Caravaggio thinks, “He knows the young sapper is right. They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation” (EP 304). Thus Kip has the agreement of the three other adults in the community, each of them deferring to his judgment against Western hypocrisy which, as Nikki Singh points out, “bears a striking resemblance” to the influential postcolonial thinker of our century, Aimé Césaire (Singh 10-11). After delivering this devastating judgment, Kip divests himself of his uniform and military insignia, gets on his motorcycle, and heads south “rewinding the spool of the war” (EP 308), on his way back to India, where “all the hands around the table are brown” (EP 320).
All this is omitted from the film. Nikki Singh says, “The Dream Factory cannot and will not deal with Kip’s disclosure of the dirty deeds of the colonizing West. The camera effortlessly leaves out the empowered Kip and directs out attention to the Englishman’s heroism.” Amidst haunting music and endless sand we see in the centre of the screen an exhausted white man – a Saviour – carrying a burden in his arms, the corpse of the vivacious Katherine. The movie blatantly reminds us of Said’s realization that “the Orientalist’s presence is enabled by the Orient’s effective absence.”

(Said 1994 208 qtd by Singh 12)

In his well-known essay on *The Legacy of Islam* (1931), H.A.R. Gibb reflected on the vagaries of Oriental influence on Western literature, stressing the conditions for such influence to be received. First he says, “there must be a condition of receptivity on one or both sides—a willingness to take what the other has to give, an implied recognition of its superiority in one or another field.” (Gibb 181). Gibb then adds, “There has scarcely been anything approaching a transference of any oriental literary art as a whole into European literature, but single elements of technique and occasionally certain established literary motives have been successfully transplanted. (Gibb 181). Why some such elements have been accepted and other rejected, Gibb says, is a problem largely of national or popular psychology (Gibb 181). Perhaps it was too much to expect that an Oriental hero – whose achievement would be made much more explicit in film than in his less obviously abrasive incarnation in the highly discontinuous, allusive text full of subtle parody and pastiche – could be allowed to be fully realized. This was particularly true at a time when, after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989, there had to be a demonization of Islam and the Orient, to substitute for the icon of “godless communist” the icon of the “Islamo-fascist” as the national *bête noir*. Thus the heroism of the white man had to be foregrounded in the film, while the real hero -- who has the courage to speak “truth to power” -- was turned from a courageous “warrior knight” of an unfamiliar Eastern religion into a “raghead”.

In the 1994 *Afterword* to a new edition of Orientalism, Edward Said notes a trend which was to be dramatically intensified by the events of 9/11:

> ever since the demise of the Soviet Union there has been a rush by some scholars and journalists in the United States to find in an Orientalized Islam a new empire of evil. Consequently, both the electronic and print media have been awash with demeaning stereotypes that lump together Islam and terrorism, or Arabs and violence, or the Orient and tyranny” (Said 1994 346).

Ondaatje’s novel was published in 1992. It seems certain that what H.A.R. Gibb called the “problem of national or popular psychology” required that the actual resolution of the novel in which the extreme violence of the culture was confronted and called by its right name had to be jettisoned in favour of a story of Western adventure and illicit passion. The novel constitutes an intensely intelligent inquiry into human nature, the
history of civilization, and the immorality of war, but it had to be castrated and made into a celebration of the liebestod—love-death theme—sadomasochistic sex with a White Man as suffering hero.

Since Kip had to be infantilized, he is not permitted the mature loving relation with Hana that is clearly visible in the novel, so Minghella cuts that out of the film and adds a completely incongruous scene, one not in the novel, in which Kip and Hana swing like playing children in the Sistine Chapel. Kip has gone there (Hana never enters the Chapel in the novel) to hoist himself up with a series of pulleys using his powerful flashlight to see the face of Isaiah painted by Michaelangelo of which Almasy had told him. The swinging scene reduces Kip to a boy, and trivializes his interest in the sacred art of the Christian Renaissance.

Having excised the climactic scene of Kip’s righteous rage at the atomic bombing of Japanese cities by the Americans, Minghella substitutes another fake scene—in which Kip is reading Kipling’s novel *Kim*, pronouncing each word deliberately like a child. After reading that “the cannon in Lahore was made by melting down cups and bolts from every household,” Kip adds somewhat petulantly, “later they fired the cannon at my people, coma, the natives, fullstop.” (qtd.by Singh 9). In this scene we see Kip as capable of mild annoyance, but the real expression of his anger is omitted entirely from the film. In huge contrast to this rather minor annoyance in the film version, in the novel Kip’s expression of righteous—almost murderous—anger gives us a view of the Oriental as judge like a prophet in his rage. This cannot be allowed in the work of cinematic art to be shown to the audience that matters to the producers of the film of *The English Patient*. In fact, as Nikki Singh points out, there is another scene (not in the text) in which the film substitutes for Kip’s righteous anger an incongruously trivial complaint: in the film Kip is made to say, “what I really object to Uncle is that you are finishing all my condensed milk” a line completely out of keeping with Kip’s character that has the effect of trivializing Kip’s disgruntlement with the British (Singh 9).

Recalling H.A.R. Gibb’s judgment that any kind of transference from one culture to another requires receptivity on one side or both, we can conclude that *The English Patient* represents an intriguing effort at inter-penetration of Western thought by an Oriental insight. Kip listened at the foot of Almasy’s bed for long speeches about Old Testament prophets and about the many paintings of Isaiah at different ages, so that whole passages of Scripture come back to him as he speeds south through Italy at the finale of the novel. Kip had been perhaps overly receptive to the poetry of the Bible, but Almasy in turn never inquires about Kip’s religion or beliefs. It is precisely because Kip found appealing so many English people (like the “holy trinity” of Miss Morden, Fred Harts, and Lord Suffolk who accept Kip as an equal and teach him the dangerous art of defusing bombs) and so many elements of English culture that his final rejection of that culture after Hiroshima and Nagasaki is so devastating. Therefore, while I generally
appreciate the detailed list of Christian myths and biblical allusions listed in David Roxborough’s essay “The Gospel of Almasy: Christian Mythology in Michael Ondaatje’s The English Patient,” I must emphasize the rejection of that culture in Kip’s final judgment at the end of the novel, a repudiation which is all the more painful for him precisely because he has been so fascinated by and attracted to many of its icons like the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and the simple sculptures in Italian churches. As I have said in an earlier essay, “Identity Lost and Found: Kirpal Singh and the Repudiation of Isaiah in Michael Ondaatje’s The English Patient,” it is impossible to read the text without realizing that Kirpal Singh, the intellectual and moral hero of the book, reviews his complex encounter with Western culture as he heads south on his motorcycle heading home to India, and realizes that it was from the same culture whose Renaissance had produced this impressive art that the staggeringly destructive sophistication of the atomic bomb had come. He was riding deeper into thick rain. Because he had loved the face on the ceiling he had loved the words. As he had believed in the burned man and the meadows of civilisation he tended. Isaiah and Jeremiah and Solomon were in the burned man’s bedside book, his holy book, whatever he had loved glued into his own. He had passed his book to the sapper, and the sapper had said we have a Holy Book too. (EP 313) He also realizes that his encounter with Western culture has been largely a one-way affair. Perhaps the time for a more dialogic encounter between East and West is still ahead of us. When it comes, such brilliant works as Ondaatje’s The English Patient will have prepared the way.
كيلبر براتدور

منشأ

يعتبر هذا البحث علاقة رواية (مايكل أونجا تا) "المريض الأنجلزي" با للفيلم المبني على الرواية والذِّي أخرجه (مايكل). بلاحظ من يجعل الفيلم بالرواية الأصل إن مانديلا يثير الرواية إلى حد يخرجها فيه عن سياساتها من حيث المغزى ودور الشخصية الرئيسية وتفاصيل العلاقات بين الشخصيات والأحداث. فمن ناحية (كيب) هو بطل الرواية ولكنه في الفلم شخصية ثانوية. ومن ناحية أخرى نجد أن اللعب يعنون ما تبرزه الرواية من قدرة لدى (كيب) على الإعجاب ببعض جانب الحضارة الغربية والانتقال إلى مراجعة موقفه منها ومن ثم رفضها بعد اكتشافه لمدى العنف والعنصرية فيها. وبهذا يغير الفيلم أحد أهم المغزى الذي تعالجها الرواية وهو المغزى الذي لا يروي لصالح الأفلام السينمائية من أصحاب النزعة الاستشراقية التي تقوم أصحابها إلى تصوير الرجل الأبيض على أنه المرشح الوحيد لدور البطولة في الأعمال الأدبية مثلما أنه المرشح الوحيد لدور القيادة في مسيرة التاريخ والحضارة البشرية.

كلمات مفتاحية: البطل، الشرق، الاستشراق، الحضارة الغربية، الإنسان الأبيض الأوروبي، الهيمنة، الرفض، طائفية، السيء، القنبلة الذرية، حل العقدة.
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