

2022

AN

ESSE

29.08.–02.09.

<https://esse2022.uni-mainz.de>

PROGRAMME

JG|U Mainz

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JOHANNES GUTENBERG
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an audience to the limits of unease” (Abbott, 2017) (as with the paralysed children crawling on the floor). On the other hand, the talk also dwells on the symbolic, arguably existential, choice of the director to relocate to London and pursue his career as a British director. This may be seen as a reflection of his desire to “intentionally repress signs of Greekness and utilize instead an allegorical and oblique storytelling style with widely understood rather than culturally specific, references and archetypal conflicts” (Papadimitriou, 2017). The ‘killing’ of the director’s Greekness as a ‘sacred deer’ on the altar of international recognition is considered specifically in terms of contemporary ideas of Britishness and the essentials of British cultural identity.

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Herodotean Echoes in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*

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Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* is characterised by a high degree of intertextuality: passages from the Bible, from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, from Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (which is used to pass secret military messages and codes during the war), from Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, from Stendhal’s *La Chartreuse de Parme*, from Tolstoj’s *Anna Karenina* all intertwine in the course of the narrative. There are also numerous references to ancient history and literature, in particular to *The Histories* by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus: a copy of this book has always been by the side of the English patient, who has added to, cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations — so they are all cradled within the Herodotean text.

The aim of my paper is to analyse the various meanings and functions that Herodotus' *Histories* assume within Ondaatje's novel: the "Father of History" plays a crucial role during the narration, becoming Almásy's guide to the desert landscape, his voluminous work, which Almásy has turned into a "commonplace book" by splicing fragments of his own personal history into the Herodotean narrative, is analogous to the English patient's life, which too becomes voluminous with the stories of his life. Furthermore, the title of Herodotus's book shows that history is only a representation coexisting with other histories, while the story of the vain King Candaules helps to form an intertextual connection with the English patient's life – literally connected with the Greek author since he has merged his own history into the Herodotean narrative. Herodotus is also used as a structuring device, because, just as he skips from one country or city to another, from a century to another in his work, the narration of *The English Patient* glides back and forth from the wartime present of the Tuscan villa to the pre-war days of desert exploration which offers the background for Almásy and Katharine's affair. To conclude, not only does Ondaatje present a postcolonial/postmodern criticism of Herodotus' work, with, among other things, the cultural symbolism the Greek text as the source of Western historiography inserted into the narration through its personal significance for the English patient, but he also uses it to create his own narrative, making *The Histories* part and parcel of his novel.

Federico Prina is a graduate in Foreign Languages and Literature (English and German, 2014) at the Università degli Studi di Milano and in Classics (2018) at the University of Saint Andrews. He is currently working on his PhD dissertation at the universities of Milan and Oxford on Englishness, class and country houses in the novels of Nancy Mitford. His main research interest is interwar English fiction, the country-house novel, the portrayal of the English aristocracy and the reception of the Classics. Main publications include *Country Houses, Stately Homes: The Tallis House between Tradition and Change in Ian McEwan's Atonement* (2021) and the edited book *Vulcani. Tra geografia e letteratura* (2022).

A Matisse Story: A.S. Byatt's "A Lamia in the Cévennes" and the Religion of Happiness

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