OUT OF AFRICA

A novel, a film, a woman’s story

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1. Critical Summary

Out of Africa by Karen Blixen aka. Isak Dinesen

This novel, Out of Africa, is an autobiography of Karen Blixen’s life in Eastern Africa from the very beginning of the First World War to the early 1930s. The novel starts with a close description of the region she lived in, the Ngong Hills, which means the reader is straight away settled in the atmosphere and scenery which will be present all the way until the end of the novel. Throughout the book, the author insists on describing the exotic landscapes as well as the many memorable events she encountered. She also extensively depicts the many international friendships (from the African natives to her European friendships) she made as well as those who visited her farm in Africa and who affected her the most.

There are two men who play an important part in Karen Blixen’s life: her husband Baron Bror Blixen and her lover Denys Finch Hatton. Her husband is a big game hunter and is rarely home which could explain the fact that Blixen does not describe him much in her novel. Nonetheless, their marriage, his title and her wealth enabled Blixen to move to Africa and save her from the reputation of being a spinster. Denys Finch Hatton, her lover, is thoroughly described all the way to his death. He is also a big game hunter and trader and later gives safaris to tourists. Blixen writes of him with great adoration and it is easy to understand the nature of their relationship. She spent a lot of time with him out in the wild, either on safari or on his biplane. Both men are very independent and are free to travel whenever they wish to, whereas Blixen is forced to stay and run the farm. We feel this restrained environment in which Karen Blixen is bound to live. The fact that she receives
many guests in her African farm and rarely moves to visit people herself reinforces this idea. Her overall entourage is also mainly masculine and this emphasises her loneliness and the fact that European women rarely travelled outside their continent.

The way she defines her friendships is very interesting because she only seems to describe them in good ways and rarely talks about her foes or opponents. The best example which illustrates this idea would be her husband, Baron Bror Blixen. To my surprise she scarcely mentions his name and never specifies that he is her husband. The type of relationship she has with Denys Finch Hatton is also never explicitly defined. She portrays him at numerous occasions but never clearly tells the reader that she had a love affair with him. Blixen relies on her style and very obvious positive sketches of the man, which puts the reader in doubt. She barely tells the reader about her background and her personal issues which creates a certain distance between the reader and the author although the reader sympathizes with Blixen and her wonderful and touching experience in the foreign country. Moreover, Blixen interferes during her retelling and gives her opinion on general life matters and speaks in a very philosophical and educated manner.

To conclude with, the main criteria which characterizes Karen Blixen’s memoir is the fact that she writes in an implicit way, which means that the reader has to carefully scrutinize her descriptions. Overall, Karen Blixen is a very poetical, independent, strong-minded and persistent lady as we know for a fact that she went through some critical life experiences (syphilis, failed marriage). She therefore represents an unordinary woman of her time.
2. Introduction

This research paper consists of understanding Danish author Karen Blixen’s journey through the works of her novel and the adapted film of her story. Karen Blixen narrates part of her life in Eastern colonial Africa in her autobiographical novel Out of Africa, published in 1937. Karen Christenze Dinesen was born on 17th April 1885 and died on 7th September 1962. As mentioned above, Out of Africa is a memoir of her life in Africa and how she dealt with it. She moved to Kenya in 1914 after marrying her Swedish second cousin, Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke, and came back to Denmark after the failure of her coffee plantation and the death of her lover, Denys Finch Hatton, in 1931. She began her writing career after coming back from her life in Africa. She wrote her first novel “Seven Gothic Tales” under the pen name Isak Dinesen. It won great success both on the Northern American continent and European continent. Her second published novel Out of Africa confirmed her reputation as an author and caused her to become an emblematic figure in Danish culture. She pursued writing and publishing tales in a traditional style of storytelling and won many awards for her work. In 1985, an American film adaptation of Karen Blixen’s Out of Africa came out, directed by acclaimed director Sydney Pollack along with a famous collaboration between Meryl Streep, who plays Karen Blixen, and Robert Redford, who plays Denys Finch Hatton.

This paper consists of analyzing two significant sequences of the film and comparing them with the novel. This enables one to understand the ideas hidden behind many aspects, such as camera movements, light, sound, atmosphere and the appearances of the actors, which define each sequence. By doing this analytical work, one also seizes the main characters’ personalities as well as the ideas they defend. Both cinematographic and literary skills were hence required. Finding out about European occupation during the First World War was likewise beneficial to the understanding of the environment in which Karen was in. In this paper, the representation of gender in both works is discussed. Karen Blixen plays an important role in the representation of feminism and of the striking differences set for men and women of her time. Her life in Africa reflects an independent woman who did what she had to in order to flourish her life and her wills. This was very rare at the time. Women’s opinions never mattered and what they wished was hardly ever questioned. A whole chapter is dedicated to this subject in this research paper. In all, the hereby research paper takes a look at two different works which recall Karen Blixen’s life in Africa. The cinematographical analysis of two film sequences predominates the paper.
3. First Sequence: Storytelling (28’40”-31’18”)

This first sequence happens quite early on in the film. Karen Blixen, Denys Finch-Hatton and Berkeley Cole are having dinner at Karen’s house in Kenya, Africa. One of Karen Blixen’s houseboys also makes a quick appearance in this sequence.

Karen has already met the two men, but this dinner enhances their friendship as this scene is all about sharing and getting to know each other. We notice that both men start to admire and appreciate Karen’s literacy and poetic skills as well as her general knowledge. Indeed, she manages to startle them by inventing a rich and well-narrated story that takes place in a country she has never even once stepped foot in.

In order to make the analysis of the sequence as complete as possible, here is a chart dividing the sequence into 45 shots listing the camera angles, the camera movements as well as keywords summing up the content of the shots. For this particular sequence, the various types of shots used are very significant. They tell us a lot about the characters’ feelings for one another as well as their thoughts. Technically speaking, there are also a few very aesthetic camera movements such as pan, different focuses and tracking shots. In terms of sound, part of the film soundtrack is used at a very subtle moment: when Karen Blixen starts her storytelling (see part 3.3). The role of light and the different aspects that characterize the warm atmosphere of this scene are also analysed further on.
## Division of the shots

KB = Karen Blixen  
FH = Denys Finch Hatton  
BC = Berkeley Cole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shots</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Shot</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Camera Movements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28'40''</td>
<td>Three main characters seated at dinner table</td>
<td>High angle camera (slightly)</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28'46''</td>
<td>Servant lets the bottle slip</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28'47''</td>
<td>KB looks at servant</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28'48''</td>
<td>FH’s comment</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28'51''</td>
<td>KB’s face again</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>28'52''</td>
<td>Three main characters seated at dinner table</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>28'55''</td>
<td>FH’s comment on literature</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>28'59''</td>
<td>KB’s attention</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>29'01''</td>
<td>FH continues</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>29'03''</td>
<td>BC’s facial expression</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>29'04''</td>
<td>KB’s stare goes from BC to FH</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>29'06''</td>
<td>FH keeps going</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>29'12''</td>
<td>KB replies to FH</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Reverse shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>29'20''</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29'21''</td>
<td>KB begins rhyme with ‘foot’</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>29'26''</td>
<td>BC’s smile</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>29'27''</td>
<td>FH’s agreement</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>29'28''</td>
<td>KB smiles</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>29'30''</td>
<td>FH asks for story</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>29'33''</td>
<td>KB looks at both FH and BC</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>29'36''</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>29'38''</td>
<td>KB and storytelling at home</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>29'43''</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>29'44''</td>
<td>BC smiles</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>29'46''</td>
<td>KB ‘absolutely anything’</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>29'48''</td>
<td>BC’s eyes</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>29'50''</td>
<td>FH begins the story</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Light

The light in this sequence is always the same and plays an important role. Karen Blixen, Berkeley Cole and Denys Finch-Hatton are all seated around a dinner table in a very low-lit room. We know for a fact that the light is artificial but if we dive into the characters’ perspective, the light sources are the candle, the fireplace and a few lights scattered around the room. This not only means that viewers perceive the shadows of the characters but it also gives a colour theme to the whole scene. Indeed, the lighting makes the
furniture and the room seem dark and the recurring colours are brown, red and dark red, black and a bit of yellow. All these colours create a comforting atmosphere and are linked to the theme of fire and passion, which viewers cannot help but notice in the three characters’ eyes during Karen’s storytelling. The candle symbolizes simplicity, light and joy, whereas the fireplace represents warmth and comfort.

3.2 Camera Movements

On rare occasions, the camera gives us a medium shot on the three characters (shots 1, 6 and 45) and these are the only times when the angle is at a slightly higher level than eye level and makes viewers feel as though they stood up in front of the characters’ table. The many intimate close-up shots make viewers feel as though they were trespassing and witnessing a peaceful moment.

As you can see in the chart, the only times when the camera ‘travels’ are when it focuses on the candle (shots 38 and 42) and the fireplace (shot 43). During the rest of the sequence, the camera never moves. This effect brings stability and tranquillity to this motionless scene. If the camera had moved more and made more travelling shots, it would not have made much sense, since the characters are seated and never move during the whole scene. This way, the scene illustrates a typical social and peaceful moment in Karen Blixen’s life and, therefore, camera movements are avoided.

Transition between shots 42 and 43: Both main light sources, the candle and the fireplace, are pictured at the same time. The camera links one moment to another by focusing on the candle, then on Denys’s attentive face to then focus on the fireplace.
As mentioned previously, the candle is highlighted twice in this sequence and also plays an important role of transition between the shots. It first appears when Karen Blixen tells the story and the music score has just started. The camera moves in order to have the candle centred and also blurs Karen Blixen’s face in order to focus on the candle, which is then surrounded by darkness. This particular camera movement restrains the space around the characters which makes the scene an even more peaceful and precious moment. After this, there is a cut and a medium shot on the concentrated face of Denys Finch-Hatton. The candle appears for a second time after a cut between its preceding shot. Renewing the shot was probably found necessary in order to avoid too much lingering. This time, the camera moves horizontally from the candle to Denys Finch-Hatton’s pleased and captivated face. There is also first a focus on the candle and then a focus on Denys Finch-Hatton just as for the first time. This effect emphasizes Denys’ close attention. It is also an aesthetic effect.

The candle is crucial to the sequence because it links Karen Blixen and Denys Finch-Hatton. The first time in shots 38 and 39, it is used to go from Karen’s face to Denys’s and it is again used to focus on Denys listening to Karen Blixen in shot 42. This effect empowers the fact that Denys is in full admiration towards Karen and that the two are going to be romantically involved later in the film. If the candle had been used to go from Karen to Berkeley’s face, the effect would not have been the same and the viewer might not have suspected the future romantic liaison between Karen and Denys.

Close to the end of the sequence, there is a close-up shot on the fireplace. The camera then moves swiftly to Denys Finch-Hatton who is sitting at ease in the living room with a glass of wine in his hand. We observe that the characters have moved and this action has not been shown with camera movements but by a fading effect between shots 42 and 43. This was done in order not to bore the viewer with a tedious and too lengthy scene. This effect is very subtle and well used because it tells the viewer that the men have been listening to Karen for a long time. They have finished their dinner and moved to the living room. Therefore, this effect gives a time reference and hints at the length of this precious moment.

3.3 Sound

The sound is a very interesting aspect to discuss. We have a few diegetic sounds. In shot 2, there is the slipping of the bottle and in shot 45 the men clap. We also hear plates and wine being poured. These few diegetic sounds make the scene peaceful and enhance the
fact that the characters are bound up with one another and are about to start a journey -
the story which Karen Blixen is about to tell - together. These diegetic sounds are there
for a purpose and that is to make the scene seem as realistic as possible.

The score begins at 30’15” and plays a very catchy yet slow and peaceful piano solo. This
music commences when Karen Blixen begins her story and also ends when she ends her
story. During the playing of this music, the viewer is left to observe the faces of the two
men listening to Karen Blixen attentively. The fascination and passion perceived in their
eyes is emphasized by the music and the otherwise stillness of the scene. Only the viewer
hears the music and as the music plays, the telling of Karen’s story speeds up a bit.
Showing the telling of a whole story from the beginning until the end in a film is almost
never done as the scene is then clearly too slow and boring for the viewer. That is why
music takes the lead and it enables the shortening of the sequence. It also, as said above,
allows the viewer to perceive the close attention and admiration on the men’s faces. The
music also adds to the peaceful atmosphere along with the camera focuses and travelling
shots on the candle.

In all, various sound effects are present all the way through this scene. Whether these
sound effects are diegetic sounds or simply the film soundtrack, they all have a specific
purpose. They do have one thing in common, which is that they make the scene more
realistic and lively. Viewers perceive the characters’ emotions more closely thanks to the
soundtrack and they also connect to the scene due to diegetic sounds.

3.4 Atmosphere

The atmosphere in this sequence is characterized by its lighting, music, slow speed and
the conversation between the characters. The fact that the characters talk about poetry at
the very beginning of the sequence shows that they are literature-orientated and viewers
strongly perceive this through Karen Blixen’s personality and the way she narrates throughout the sequence but also throughout the whole film. What they talk about and the way Karen Blixen narrates her tale increases the serenity of this sequence. All the above-mentioned aspects play an important role and emphasize the intimacy between the three people.

3.5 Setting

It is always good if viewers understand where in space and time characters in a film are in and therefore analysing the aspect of setting is crucial. Usually, the setting is closely thought of by the film crew. In this particular case, many props and light effects indicate the time of day in which this scene is taking place. By further analysing those props, viewers are also reminded of the historical background behind the scene.

As mentioned earlier, the room is low-lit and this gives a hint about the time of the day. We can tell that this scene takes place in the evening and that the characters are having dinner. The candle reminds the viewer that electricity was a luxury and not yet a feature of everyday life at the time and especially not in Africa. The room is rich with objects that define the early nineteenth-century lifestyle.

We know precisely that the characters are at Karen Blixen’s having dinner. They then move to the living room to finish the story which Karen is telling. The scene lasts a bit less than three minutes (2’38’’) but if this scene was to take place in real life it would have lasted a few hours, until late at night.

Many props are placed carefully in this scene. The fine and expensive cutlery, the wine glasses and the china are just as the book describes them. Old fashioned and mostly wooden and dark furniture surrounds the characters. This particular furniture is typical early twentieth-century North-Western European furniture. All the objects used for this scene are compatible with the era and the time the whole film is based on. Not only do these props make the scene more realistic but they also make it cosy. This is an important detail because Karen Blixen is a wealthy woman who can afford such beautiful and expensive belongings and furniture. These props match well this specific scene also because it is a storytelling scene which means comfort is a key element. In real life, when one tells a story to another, one likes to sit at ease in a cosy room.

Moreover, there is a noticeable contrast in the characters’ dinner. They are eating pineapple, a very southern-hemisphere type of fruit, and drinking what seems to be rosé
wine which is European. Karen did not just import her Limoges but also her European wine along with her furniture. This detail unquestionably reveals signs of colonisation and the impact Europeans had on Africa with their customs.

Altogether, this scene takes place on an evening during dinner time. It is set in Karen Blixen’s dining room and later on, in her living room. Many props give viewers hints about the setting but also about Karen Blixen’s wealth and her love for commodities, which is later discussed in the film. Besides, the props and furniture also correspond to the era in which the whole film is set. This makes the scene even more historically realistic. Viewers realise that Karen made herself at ease and if the location in Kenya had not been specified, one could easily have thought this scene to have taken place in England.

3.6 Appearances of the Actors

First of all, the two men in this sequence are well-dressed compared to what they are used to wearing on a day-to-day basis. Karen wears a white silky gown. We can imagine that in real-life, at the time, people would make sure to dress well when having dinner with friends. The attention put into the costumes makes the whole scene realistic.

The actors also wear a few accessories. For instance, Karen Blixen is wearing a bracelet, earrings and a flower in her hair. It is fair to say that she is very elegantly dressed. She is also wearing proper make-up that she could have worn in real-life. These details make her look seem further realistic and in coherence with the era.
Denys and Berkeley are both also well-dressed but in darker colours. As for the houseboy, he wears the typical colonial-Africa outfit for servants. The red cap, which he wears, was a common accessory for servants working in colonies. This detail, of course, makes the scene historically realistic, too. We also notice that the servant is wearing white gloves, a fact certainly due to the wide-spread racism of those days. In the scene, viewers notice that the servant is not used to wearing gloves as he accidentally lets the bottle slip. It was an obligation for servants working for white people to wear gloves at the time. These gloves are therefore also a sign of wealth of the owner of the house.

3.7 Comparison with the novel

Spotting the differences between the scene of the film and the descriptions of the novel is always an interesting thing to do. It enables one to understand the true value of information about the setting or a character for instance. In this case however, it is important to point out that the differences between the novel and the film are quite minor and depend on small details. For example, it is said in the novel that only Denys Finch-Hatton liked listening to Karen Blixen’s storytelling but in this sequence we can see that, although it is Denys who asks for the story, both men are happy to hear it told. We could comment on the fact that Berkeley Cole, in this sequence, is silent compared to Denys Finch-Hatton. This may suggest his little interest in the story.

In the novel, there are also great descriptions stressing both men’s appreciation of Karen Blixen’s wine, tobacco and china. In her novel, Karen mentions that “they took the greatest
pleasure in [her] Danish table glass and china” (Blixen 184). She also adds that “[Denys Finch Hatton and Berkeley Cole] kept the house up to a high standard in wine, tobacco, and got books and gramophone records out from Europe for [her].” (Blixen 183). These two details are less highlighted in this scene and in the film in general. Nonetheless, the film does contain a few scenes where one can understand Denys’s interest in classical music as he is shown listening to his gramophone with Karen on several occasions (e.g. The scene involving a monkey and the gramophone at 1 hour 21 minutes and 55 seconds).

The way Berkeley Cole is described in the novel vaguely corresponds to what he looks like in the film. In the film, he has brown hair but in the novel, Karen describes him as “small, very slight, red-haired, with narrow hands and feet”; she also adds that “Berkeley carried himself extremely erect” (Blixen 185). The performance of Michael Kitchen who plays Berkeley Cole in the film corresponds to the above-mentioned description. Viewers may feel the fact that he “carried himself extremely erect” in the film when he gives the impression of a proud and important man as well as of a close friend of Karen who enjoys having a good time. In both novel and film, Berkeley plays an important part in Karen’s life but not as important one as Denys.

Denys Finch Hatton is described many times in the novel. Readers feel a certain admiration for him. The first time Karen mentions him in her novel she talks about how he would visit her after his long expeditions “starved for talk” and how they would talk until the “small hours of the morning” (Blixen 141). After reading this part, one clearly understands that Denys was very dear to Karen. The author does not describe Denys’s physical traits in great detail. All she says about his looks is that “he would have cut a figure in any age, for he was an athlete, a musician, a lover of art, and a fine sportsman” (Blixen 186). In the film, Denys definitely corresponds to this description as he has an athletic body which corresponds to his daily activities: hunting expeditions and going on safaris. He also seems to be a very open-minded and cultured man in the film.

As mentioned before, Denys’s love for the arts is strongly perceived in the film and is expressed many times in the novel. Karen Blixen talks more personally of Denys in her novel than her character does in the film. For example, on page 194, she explains what she loves about Denys by saying that “he had a trait of character which to [her] was very precious; he liked to hear a story told.” (Blixen 194). This part proves that Karen was attracted to Denys not just for his good looks but also for his love of literature, which makes their relationship an intellectual one as well. Sharing is important for both Karen
and Denys and that is mainly why she falls in love with him. Many scenes in the film, including this sequence, picture these significant moments. In Karen’s novel, readers learn that Denys’s friends back in England “always wanted him to come back, they wrote out plans and schemes for a career for him there, but Africa was keeping him.” (Blixen 186). This shows that Karen and Denys also shared the same love for Africa and its people.

Moreover, Denys has no home other than Karen’s house both in the novel and in the film. This detail most certainly proves how close and intimate Karen and Denys are. There is this one sentence in the novel which portrays Denys as a free man who would come and go whenever he wanted to: Karen informs that “Denys Finch Hatton had no other home in Africa than the farm” and that “he lived in [her] house between his safaris, and kept his books and his gramophone here”(Blixen 193). The sentence also portrays Denys as a man with few belongings unlike Karen who brought her Limoges and furniture all the way from Denmark. This difference between the two characters is apparent in the novel and the film although it is more visible in the film. Throughout the course of the film, the two characters argue several times on the meaning of owning objects to someone and the necessity of it all. Denys clearly does not find it important to possess things or people whilst, on the other hand, Karen seems to need this concept of property in her daily life. Karen surprisingly ends up agreeing with Denys as she sells all her belongings before definitively heading back to Denmark in 1931.

Karen Blixen’s love affair with Denys Finch Hatton is never explicitly declared in her novel. She talks about the safaris she went on with him and the times she spent with him talking about life, meanings and, of course, about the stories she would tell him. She even confesses that she would write stories down while he was away so that she would be ready to tell them to him when he came back. In the film, it is needless to say that this relationship was bound to be exposed. Both the intellectual relationship between Karen and Denys and the physical relationship are expressed in the film.

In all, the film logically expresses fewer details than the novel and it is up to the viewer to interpret the meanings behind the objects and the characters’ conversations. There are no major differences concerning this sequence between the novel and the film. It is fair to say that the director and the cast have stuck to the ideas and the appearances which Karen Blixen describes in her novel. Only tiny differences occur such as Denys Finch Hatton’s nationality, which, in the novel, is British but is American in the film. The importance of
storytelling and sharing is correctly exposed in the film and corresponds to what Karen Blixen asserts in her novel.
4. Second Sequence: The Provisions (44’49’’-47’26’’)

The First World War has freshly been declared and Karen Blixen is travelling with her herdboys and Farah to Lake Natron, Kenya, where her husband, Baron Bror Blixen, is staying at a camp. Men from the British colony are based at this camp and it is crucial to understand that colonies are fighting to maintain the boundaries in Africa. Bror asks Karen to send someone for additional provisions but Karen decides to bring the supplies herself.

This specific sequence starts at the end of Karen’s second day of travelling in the wilderness of Kenya. Karen is washing herself in her tent when suddenly she hears a lion roar in the distance. She gets scared and scurries to where Farah and the herdboys are sleeping around a campfire. It is interesting to point out the fact that Karen is sleeping in a tent and that her herdboys are sleeping outside. A certain social phenomenon is noticeable: the wealthy European woman sleeps in a tent whereas the tribal African men sleep outside around the fire. The difference between European and African customs is therefore very prominent in this scene. Karen realises that she is in danger and starts to worry. Farah reassures her by telling her that “God is great” (45’33’’). This answer to Karen’s anxiety shows the importance of religion for these Africans. Karen laughs at this reply, as though she finds it ridiculous, but her facial expression then shows that Farah might be right and that hope is still there nonetheless.

The second half of this sequence is set the next morning when Karen and her herdboys are coincidentally awoken by Denys Finch Hatton and Berkeley Cole. Both men are surprised to find her in the middle of nowhere and Berkeley Cole warns her about the dangers of travelling for a woman in these circumstances. Indeed, Karen Blixen is lost and does not know where to go at that moment. Berkeley is noticeably worried about her and orders her to go back home where she would be much safer. Denys Finch Hatton does not agree with Berkeley Cole and clearly thinks that the fact that Karen Blixen is a woman does not mean that she cannot find her way like a man. This shows that Denys Finch Hatton defends women’s wish for independence and their equal rights. There are several moments in the film where he takes time to listen to Karen Blixen’s opinions and ideas even though he does not always agree with her. Historically speaking, women at the time were not quite considered as equal to men and Denys Finch Hatton is therefore a forerunner of some form of feminism along with Karen Blixen.
The sequence ends after Denys gives Karen a compass that will help her find her way to Lake Natron.

Here is a chart dividing this sequence into 45 shots followed by a detailed analysis of all the unmissable aspects which make this sequence so distinct.

**Division of the shots**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shots</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>KB = Karen Blixen</th>
<th>FH = Denys Finch Hatton</th>
<th>BC = Berkeley Cole</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Shot</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Camera Movements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>44'49&quot;</td>
<td>KB travelling</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunset</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>44'55&quot;</td>
<td>Farah</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>44'57&quot;</td>
<td>Farah waiting for KB</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunset and fire</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45'02&quot;</td>
<td>KB on horse</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunset and fire</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>45'08&quot;</td>
<td>Camp fire</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>45'12&quot;</td>
<td>KB washing herself in tent and lion roars</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Light from lamp</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>45'21&quot;</td>
<td>KB exits tent</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Camp fire</td>
<td>Slight tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45'33&quot;</td>
<td>KB sets her sleeping bag and talks to Farah</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Camp fire</td>
<td>Slight tracking and cut to next shot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>45'59&quot;</td>
<td>Next morning : landscape and rainbow</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>46'02&quot;</td>
<td>KB and herdboys sleeping</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>46'05&quot;</td>
<td>Horse riders appear</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>46'13&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing down</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>46'15&quot;</td>
<td>KB and herdboys waking up</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>46'16&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>46'18&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>46'22&quot;</td>
<td>KB and herdboys getting up</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>46'23&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>46'24&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>46'26&quot;</td>
<td>Riders rushing</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>46'27&quot;</td>
<td>Horses’ legs</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Close up shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>46'28&quot;</td>
<td>FH and BC arrive</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>46'33&quot;</td>
<td>KB stares at them</td>
<td>High angle from FH and BC’s view</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>46'34&quot;</td>
<td>FH and hat</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>46'36&quot;</td>
<td>KB</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>46'37&quot;</td>
<td>BC gets angry</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>46'39&quot;</td>
<td>KB replies</td>
<td>High angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>46'41&quot;</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>46'43&quot;</td>
<td>KB packs</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>46'47&quot;</td>
<td>KB and horse</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Long shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>46'48&quot;</td>
<td>BC arguments</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>46'50&quot;</td>
<td>KB on her horse</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>46'52&quot;</td>
<td>BC wants FH to talk to her</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>46'56&quot;</td>
<td>KB listens to FH</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>46'57&quot;</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>High angle from BC’s view</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>46'58&quot;</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>47'00&quot;</td>
<td>KB listening</td>
<td>Low angle</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>47'02&quot;</td>
<td>BC gives up and FH gets off his horse</td>
<td>Eye level</td>
<td>Medium shot</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Light

In a film, light is always a great time indicator. It also helps viewers to plunge into the atmosphere of a particular moment. Light sources vary from being natural to artificial (the sun, a candle, a fire or lightning from the set for example).

In this sequence, the sun plays a crucial part. It is a natural source of light and it is used for this sequence in two different ways. The first time, the sequence begins at sunset and the cameramen played with the sun in order to show Karen’s figure ridging on her horse. This has a very aesthetic effect. At 45'08'', the camp fire is introduced and this hints at the setting of the camp and the place where Karen is going to spend the night. Another special effect appears with the fireplace. In the second shot, which is a close-up shot of Farah, viewers distinguish the light of the fireplace on his face. The addition of his smile and the light of the fire symbolises happiness and confidence. Later on, in shot 6, a lamp is shown in front of Karen.
The next morning, the light source is the sun but viewers understand it is morning since there are still big patches of shade on the ground. Between shots 26 and 27, there is a sudden cut and the characters are positioned differently. Berkeley is on the ground talking to Karen whilst she changes from her sleeping clothes to her riding clothes. Viewers do not see Berkeley get off his horse nor Karen Blixen change. This jump cut saves time and does not prevent the viewer to imagine what happened. Because of this jump in time, the shady grounds are not there and the time of the day seems to be closer to early afternoon than morning. This detail, of course, makes the sequence even more realistic and lets viewers believe that Berkeley Cole insisted and argued for a long time.

On the whole, the main light sources in this sequence are natural sources: the sun and the fire. One exception would be the lamp in Karen’s tent at 45°12’ which symbolises privilege on behalf of Karen Blixen. The fire predominantly has an aesthetic effect on the characters’ bodies and faces, so is the sun at the beginning of the sequence. Moreover, the sun is used as a time indicator for viewers. It helps pointing out whether it is night time, late morning or early afternoon.

4.2 Sound

Various types of sounds were used in this sequence. Since this sequence was mostly filmed outdoors, one can easily guess that most of the script was recorded in a studio. Therefore, non-diegetic sounds are even more important in order to make the scene as realistic as possible.
The sequence begins with typical African singing which slowly fades away (44’07’’) and is replaced by the crackling of the camp fire. This non-diegetic sound is also accompanied by the whipping of the cattle which is a diegetic sound. The combination of both sounds does not bother the viewer at all and actually helps to set the calm atmosphere of the night. At this point, Karen’s second day of travelling is coming to an end and therefore few sounds were needed to express Karen’s exhaustion. As the first part of this sequence moves on, only diegetic sounds can be perceived such as the roaring of the lion (45’16’’), Karen’s steps as she rushes out of her tent to join Farah (45’20’’) and Karen killing an insect on the ground with her hand (45’55’’). Since this first part takes place at night time, there are few dialogues and when Karen speaks to Farah she whispers to him. The whispering and the diegetic sounds (whipping, campfire, steps, crickets and lion roar) match perfectly the setting of this first half.

For this particular sequence, the cut between shots 8 and 9 means that new sounds are needed since it is a new day for the characters. The viewer has to fully sink in the atmosphere of this new setting. It is for this reason that the scene starts with hardly any sounds at all except for birds whistling in the distance. Just as viewers are introduced to the horse riders in shot 11, the sound of their bells are heard. Then, the horses’ stampede takes over starting from shot 12. As Berkeley Cole and Denys Finch Hatton appear and get closer to Karen Blixen, the diegetic sound of this stampede slowly fades away and becomes secondary. This is due to the fact that the riders are rushing further away from the camera but it is also due to the fact that viewers need to hear the conversation between the three characters.

The cut between shots 26 and 27 ends the stampede definitively. The many horse riders are gathered around Denys Finch Hatton, Berkeley Cole and Karen Blixen which means the following diegetic sounds can be distinguished right until the end of this sequence: steps on the ground, birds, horse movements, saddles and bells. The rest of the sequence is all about the conversation between the three main characters hence no other sounds appear.

In conclusion, mainly diegetic sounds characterize this sequence. It goes without saying that all these diegetic sounds make the sequence more realistic and trustworthy. At the very beginning of the sequence, the African singing reminds the viewer of the general setting of the film. It also fits perfectly with the sequence since Karen is travelling with
native Africans and therefore reminds viewers of the flourishing relationship between Karen and her herdboys.

4.3 Atmosphere

The atmosphere in a sequence is defined by many different aspects and viewers are able to understand it thanks to light sources, sounds and of course thanks to the acting. The beginning of this sequence is set at night in the middle of nowhere in Kenya, and therefore, the atmosphere is peaceful. No dialogue and few sounds start the sequence and make the atmosphere serene. Karen’s loneliness is also rightly characterized in the opening of this sequence. She is seen washing herself with a very concentrated and thoughtful look in her eyes. Viewers imagine her thinking or reminiscing, which adds to the peacefulness of the scene. In addition, she is sitting alone in the tent whilst the African men are sleeping outside. She is separated from the African men not only because she is a woman but also because she is European. This highlights the fact that it was rare for European women to venture outside their homes.

![Image]

*Shot 6: Karen Blixen washing herself after a long day of travelling. The lamp on the left highlights Karen's wealth and privilege compared to her herdboys, who sleep outside. Loneliness is also represented in this particular shot.*

Viewers may sympathize with Karen’s vulnerability as she scurries out of her tent after hearing a lion roar in the distance. She states to Farah that they are literally lost and that she has no idea which direction they should take, and viewers want to support her in her extraordinary quest.

The second part of this sequence is set on an early morning. The atmosphere is defined by natural quietness. As the unknown horse riders rush down towards Karen's camp
(46’13”), a certain feeling of concern hits Karen and her herdboys. Viewers feel this tension. As Berkeley Cole and Denys Finch Hatton approach on their horses, Karen’s face lights up. Hope and safety are the two words that come to mind and friendliness fills the air. Nonetheless, Berkeley starts to argue about Karen travelling on her own across the bush country of Kenya. Both Karen and Denys disagree with Berkeley and this brings an unpleasant atmosphere to the scene. A clear distinction is made between Berkeley and Denys. It is striking to compare the two men’s behaviours concerning the role of women as opposed to the role of men (see part 5 Feminism in Both Novel and Film). The atmosphere is therefore quite tense among the characters but Denys brings reassurance and confidence to Karen.

In all, the atmosphere in this sequence evolves. Karen’s feelings change throughout the sequence and this has quite a big impact on the atmosphere of the sequence as a whole. At first, she is worried and the more the sequence moves along the more this anxiety of hers vanishes. As soon as Denys appears, the atmosphere changes and becomes more comforting and full of assurance. Moreover, the looks Karen and Denys exchange with one another make viewers forget about Berkeley Cole’s bickering. Other aspects such as the setting define the atmosphere of this sequence. Night time and early morning are both peaceful times of the day and, consequently, add a bit of tranquillity to the atmosphere. The fact that the main character is travelling outside the safety of her home into the unknown makes the atmosphere tenser.

4.4 Setting

This aspect of analysis is always crucial to understand as it is the context and environment of a sequence. It is essential that viewers figure out the setting of a scene to understand the story. One can master the setting by paying close attention to what the actors say and information that is given throughout the film. Props are great time indicators as far as the time in history is concerned and aspects such as light and sound also help revealing the time of the day. For this particular sequence, it is important to consider the scenes before Karen sets off to find her husband as they give information about why she decided to venture into the African wild.

As mentioned a couple of times above, Karen is travelling in the middle of nowhere in Kenya, Africa, in a part of the country she does not know and which is dangerous because of its wilderness and war. Belknap, who runs Karen’s farm, tells Karen that Lake Natron (see map) is part of “Bush country” (42’57”), which by definition, is a rural and
underdeveloped land. Lake Natron is situated on the border of Kenya – occupied by Britain and Tanzania, which is occupied by Germany. He also mentions that “it is no place for a white man” which lets viewers assume it is definitely no place for a white woman. (43’00‘") Before falling asleep, Karen affirms that she should have crossed the Sand River. It is the end of a long and tough day for her and her herdboys. The setting slightly changes between shots 8 and 9 since it is a different day. This difference informs viewers of time passing.

The sequence and most of the film was filmed in Africa and this fact has a big impact on the effect of the setting because it makes it real and believable. That way, viewers not only understand the characters’ situations but also get to discover new landscapes and connect with the characters. In terms of history, Africa is in a difficult situation as World War I has just broken out. Occupying European countries are fighting to keep the boundaries stable in Africa. Karen’s husband, Bror, is Danish but is fighting with the British Army against the Germans, who occupy Tanzania at the time. Women and children have been asked to move to Nairobi whilst the war is taking place for safety measures. Karen has not obeyed that rule by setting out to a war camp. She is hence travelling alone in a wild and unsafe environment. The incompatibility between the setting and Karen makes her journey exciting and inspiring. The setting is an important aspect because it can be expressed in many different ways and can cause different effects on viewers. If a scene is shot in a
studio, it will not have the same effect as if it were shot outdoors where it will seem a lot more lifelike. This is exactly the case for this sequence.

4.5 Appearances of the Actors

There are two distinguished groups of actors for this sequence: the main characters - Karen Blixen, Denys Finch Hatton and Berkeley Cole - and Farah and the herdboys. In terms of clothing, both groups are dressed in beige, brown and white tonalities. A few differences remain. Karen, Denys and Berkeley are wearing typical colonial clothing which also corresponds to clothing which would be worn on safaris: long leather boots, belt with ammunition, hat, and gun. The Africans in this sequence, represented by Farah, Karen’s herdboys and the assumed Somali horse riders in the second part of the sequence, are all barefoot. Farah is seen wearing a turban on his head and a few herboys are wearing red caps which were typical for Africans working for European colonialists. Karen’s herdboys never speak during this sequence. The sequence clearly indicates that their job is just to take care of the cattle. They are seen helping Karen get on her horse and also holding Denys’s horse whilst he goes up to Karen (46’52”). The African horse riders, which one can see starting from shot 11 all the way until the end of the sequence, are presumably from the Somali tribes as viewers know that Berkeley Cole and Denys Finch Hatton were quite friendly with the Somalis and traded their ivory with them. It is, therefore, possible that the two travelled with them.

Shot 29: Karen Blixen is about to get on her horse and pursue her journey. One of her herdboys helps her out. Thanks to the appearances of the actors, the distinction between Karen’s herdboys and the Somalis is clear. The clothes and crops used for the herdboys and the Somalis are historically relevant.
Whilst Karen is in her tent, having a wash, viewers notice the delicate sleeping gown that she is wearing. The pearl earrings she is wearing are also noticeable. These are a sign of wealth and femininity. The fact that she is having a wash is by itself a sign of wealth and gracefulness. The next morning, Karen’s face and hair are messy and her shirt muddy-looking. This look corresponds to her situation and the fact that she has been travelling in a wild environment. Other props such as sticks, hats, belts and a compass make the scene historically-relevant and make it realistic. The looks of the main characters correspond to the situation they are in: tanned faces, messy hair, sweat and muddy clothes. Viewers are therefore left with no other choice but to believe the situation in which Karen Blixen is in. All these props, which define the characters, also correspond to the setting of the scene. The existence of this coherence is crucial because it enables one to comprehend the scene as best as possible.

4.6 Comparison with the Novel

To begin with, both novel and film explain in great detail the purpose of Karen’s journey. Karen makes it clear that “when the war broke out, [her] husband and the two Swedish assistants on the farm volunteered and went down to the German border, where a provisional intelligence service was being organized by Lord Delamere. [She] was then alone on the farm. But shortly afterwards there began to be talk of a concentration camp for the white women of the country; they were believed to be exposed to danger by the natives” (Blixen 228). This part clarifies Karen’s husband’s absence and the fact that she has to leave her farm during the war. In the film, tiny details differentiate the novel from the film explanations to Karen’s journey. For example, the two Swedish assistants on the farm are never mentioned in the film. Also, a colonel comes over to Karen to tell her to move to Nairobi during the war. Other than that, the description in the novel resembles quite well what is told in the film. This proves that only the less important details were left out in the film.

Karen explains the reason for her journey explicitly in her novel mentioning that “The people down by the border kept on demanding provisions and ammunitions to be sent to them; [her] husband wrote and instructed [her] to load up four ox-wagons and to send them down as soon as possible” (Blixen 228-229). She adds a detail that is not mentioned in the film which is that “[she] must not let them go without a white man in charge of them, for nobody knew where the Germans were” (Blixen 229). However she explains in the film, just before the sequence at 36’45”, the fact that Europeans did not want to involve the
Masai in the war. In her novel, Karen reveals that “the Masai were in state of high excitement at the idea of war, and on the move all over the Reserve” (Blixen 229). It was therefore too dangerous to hire the Masai for war especially to take charge of the provisions.

Karen hires a South African white man named Klapprott to lead the provisions to her husband. She tells that Klapprott was mistaken for a German and therefore arrested (Blixen 229). In consequence, he could not pursue the bringing of the provisions. Karen then has no other solution but to bring the provisions herself. This event is never once mentioned in the film, which changes the plot quite significantly. In the novel, Karen obeys her husband by sending a white man in charge of the provisions. Unfortunately, the white man is arrested and Karen “sees in his arrestation the finger of God, for now there was nobody but [her] to take the wagons through the country” (Blixen 229). In other words, she realises that it is what was meant to be and what is right for her. In the film, however, she decides, without considering any other solutions, that she will bring the provisions herself. As said above, the fact that a white man should be in charge is never indicated in the film.

The comparison between the two versions is interesting to discuss as it highlights a different ‘Karen’ who is less willing to do what is expected from her. In the novel, Karen’s religious and poetic side is exposed whilst in the film she is presented as more of an independent and undertaking person. The idea of leading the wagons to her husband is the first thing that comes to her mind in the film. As a result of this, viewers associate a daring and determined personality with Karen.

Similarities between the novel and the film include the fact that white women had to be evacuated during the war, the danger of the natives during the war, the fact that Bror, Karen’s husband, volunteers to go to war and the fact that Karen ends up travelling with ox-wagons to the camp. The description of the landscape is also thorough in the novel and the film definitely illustrates the African landscapes that Karen travels through. In her novel, Karen mentions the cracking of the whips against the ox and the material they travelled with such as lamps tied under the wagons as well as rifles (Blixen 229). The above-mentioned objects are also seen in the film.

There are many small other differences between the novel and the film, some of which have already been explained above. For instance, Karen reveals in her novel that she was scared of dying in a camp. In the film, viewers only know that she does not want to leave her farm and that she considers being forced to move into a camp as internment (42’18”-
42'30''). She clearly fights for her rights to be treated as men during the war. She does not want to be put aside. Once again, her poetic and philosophic side is expressed in the novel whilst the film insists on showing her fighting-spirit.

Furthermore, the exact length of Karen’s journey is hard to define in the film. In her novel, she suggests that it took her three months to get to Lake Natron (Blixen 229). She also adds that “this safari lived for a long time in the memory of the farm” (Blixen 233). Details as such were not expressed in the film but are shown implicitly through the acting and the setting of the scene. The viewer may not notice that this long and tough journey was an important part of Karen’s life.

The second part of the chosen sequence is never mentioned in the novel. It was invented for the film. It explains how Karen manages to get to her husband’s camp with the provisions and justifies a scene where Denys and Berkeley miraculously appear and save Karen. It enables viewers to see the difference between a man who believes women should stay away from war and that war is only for men (Berkeley Cole) and a man who believes that women should be treated as men’s equals (Denys Finch Hatton). It also enables viewers to see how determined Karen really is and how much of a fighter she is. Thanks to this scene, viewers certainly find themselves even more drawn to Karen Blixen’s courageous attitude.

In conclusion, it is needless to say that the novel contains more details about Karen’s excursion than the film. Nonetheless, in general, what the sequence illustrates corresponds very well to what is described in the novel. The film strictly obeys to details such as the material used - the ox, the whips and the lamps - and the landscape. It has however changed the circumstances surrounding Karen’s decision to lead the provisions herself. The added scene, which is part of the sequence and which is not described in the novel, fits perfectly with the storyline and makes Karen’s excursion more exciting. During this specific scene, viewers notice Karen and Denys getting closer to one another and suspect their future love affair.
5. A Feminist Perspective on Both Novel and Film

The difference between men and women is highly noticeable during the course of both novel and film. The main characters, Karen Blixen, Denys Finch Hatton and Bror Blixen, all represent different types of men and women of the time. In order to understand each one’s values and the image they send out, a description of their background and of their implication in Karen’s life is necessary.

First of all, there is Denys Finch Hatton. He is a British big game hunter and is always on the move. His main occupation is the trade of ivory across Kenya. Later, he takes tourists on safaris. All of the above-mentioned occupations of his prove that he symbolises independence. The fact that he is an expert in hunting and spends a lot of his time out in the wilderness reveals his masculine and adventurous side. Nevertheless, Denys enjoys classic music and literature. The time he spends with Karen is mostly time spent listening to a gramophone, telling stories or talking about poetry, which affirms his interest in culture. His ideas and opinion on life in general are therefore expressed many times in the novel and in the film. As readers read on and viewers watch on, his ideas begin to seem very idealistic. He is against war and wishes the colonies would leave the African tribes alone. Compared to Karen, he does not believe in the idea of belonging to someone or something. When the war breaks out, he clearly does not want to be involved in fighting for the boundaries which European nations imposed on Africans. Moreover, he is always on the move and does not have a proper home. This enhances the fact that, for him, having a home does not mean much. The only belongings he carries around with him are his books and his gramophone records.

Denys Finch Hatton and Karen Blixen in Kenya. They shared their love for the arts as well as their love for African culture.
Although Denys does not agree with Karen on the idea of belongings, there are a couple of times in the film where we see that he stands by Karen Blixen. He is clearly in favour of women’s rights and the right for them to be able to express themselves freely. At the time, it was still rare for a woman to stand up for herself. It was even rarer for one to leave her home country and venture out to run a farm. Denys supports Karen all the way during her stay in Africa.

Baron Bror Blixen is totally opposed to Denys Finch Hatton. Karen married Bror after realising that her fiancé, Bror’s brother, was cheating on her. She was then too old to find someone else to marry and Bror needed her money. Their marriage was therefore an arrangement. Bror is a big game hunter and is known to spend many days out hunting and was rarely at home with Karen. First of all, this shows how much more freedom and independence colonial men had at the time compared to women in their native country. Secondly, this also shows that he did not care much about the handling of the coffee plantation nor about Karen Blixen’s life. He left Karen to deal with the farm on her own which definitely proves his lack of love and care for her. He is also known for cheating on Karen. He does this with no pity in the film and does not seem the least sorry. He gives the image of a selfish man interested in women as objects and nothing more. In the film, it is confirmed to viewers that he is the origin of Karen’s syphilis. In her novel, Karen never mentions her diagnosis of syphilis. She only explains in one sentence that she left Africa for a couple of years and went back to Denmark to live with her mother. She never writes why she left Africa or why she came back. This is probably due to the fact that this was a horrible time for her and talking about it was the last thing she wanted to do. From this event, one concludes that at the time women were easily exposed to sexually transmitted diseases. Nowadays, these diseases are still frequent in developed countries. Syphilis, however, is less of a threat to developed countries but remains one to the underdeveloped parts of the world.

Bror treats Karen totally differently from Denys. When Karen tells him that she may be falling in love with him, he seems completely disinterested and does not act on that possibility. He also keenly volunteers to go to war and proudly defends his country, which is definitely something which Denys would not have done. This affirms his patriotic side even though he is not fighting for his own country. This pride in going to war reveals once more Bror’s manly side. Since it was common during the war for men to leave their home and women to stay at home, this attitude also enhances Bror’s disregard towards Karen. To sum up, Bror is quite negatively sketched. The fact that Karen hardly ever mentions
him in her novel proves that he was not someone she truly shared her existence with. On the few occasions she mentions his name, readers do not know that he is her husband as she never specifies it. Bror gives a stereotypical masculine image of what an unloving husband would have been like at the time.

Karen Blixen is the most interesting character to discuss. In order to fully comprehend her ideas, it was useful to look at an interview she did three months before her death in 1962 (see part 7 for proper reference). When the interviewer, working for a Belgian television channel, asks Karen Blixen if she considers herself a feminist, she answers negatively. She responds that “[she] is not a feminist in the way the actual term is used but that [she] believes that women should do all they can in order to fulfil their wills and appreciate their lives.”

Karen Blixen during her interview for Belgian television in 1962.

At the time, feminists wanted women to have equal rights to men but Karen Blixen did not believe this was necessary. She later reported that “a society where women were equal to men would be a very sad and sterile society.” She therefore did not think women should be considered the same way as men but that they have the right to do all they can to feel good and that should be possible for them to do so. In other words, according to Karen Blixen, women should stand up for themselves no matter what. This corresponds exactly to her journey in Africa. Karen left her home country to manage a coffee plantation and ended up doing this on her own. Nevertheless, she did things that she wanted to do and that fulfilled her wills, such as going on safaris, going hunting or flying on Denys’s biplane. She seems to enjoy life to the fullest neglecting what people thought of or said about her. She undertook the schooling of native African children and before leaving to Denmark, she defended native African tribes’ right to live on her land (from 2 hours 9 minutes and 15 seconds to 2 hours 11 minutes). This scene is a very powerful scene. Karen goes all the
way to the governor of the colony, named Sir Joseph, to ask for his promise to leave the land to the Kikuyu tribes. He does not fully give his word but his wife stands up and assures Karen that she can count on her. The right for women to speak up is clearly illustrated in this scene and so is solidarity. Karen insisted on something she believed was right for her and the Kikuyu and this fits with what she declared in her interview. Moreover, just as the governor is about to send Karen away, Denys Finch Hatton arrives and tells him to let her speak. This confirms Denys’s support of women’s equal rights. A little earlier on in the film, Karen decides she wants to help in the coffee plantation and asks for work on the farm (1 hour 15 minutes and 13 seconds). A few seconds later, we see her collecting coffee grains and sorting them out. By doing this, she defends the idea that it is not because she is a woman that she cannot work and do something that would fulfil her personal goals. Once again, this is exactly what she says in her interview for Belgian television. The second sequence analysed in this research paper illustrates Karen’s will of doing what she wishes, disrespectful to European social sexist conventions, as she decides by herself that she is capable of taking the provisions to her husband.

When the interviewer asks Karen where the woman stands in society back then, she replies that this is not important. What is important for Karen is who women are and not what they do. This means that what matters is the fact a woman considers herself accomplished, having fulfilled her being. These ideas are of course very philosophical but they unveil her intellectual mind. It is known that Karen’s inspirations were the works of many philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Goethe, Nietzsche and Charles Baudelaire.
Karen is also asked in the interview to explain what the best way of living is. She answers that one needs courage in order to live. One also needs the gift of loving in addition to a good sense of humour. In both novel and film, Karen’s personality represents this very well. She takes a risk by marrying a man she does not at first love and another by leaving her home country. Nonetheless, during her life in Africa, Karen Blixen continued doing things which asked for a lot of courage at the time and she almost seemed indifferent to the social and legal limitations linked to being a woman. She cared about what is best for her and her life.

Her novel expresses her love for Africa and, although she presents a feminist attitude, she never explicitly talks about women’s equal rights. However, the foreword of her book is *Equitare, arcum tendere, veritatem dicere*, which is translated literally by “to ride, to shoot, to tell the truth.” This motto is a Greek concept of the ideal life. In her African life, Karen did ride on a horse, which was unusual for women at the time. She also went hunting and by writing her novel she is being honest and telling the truth about her adventure. This quote therefore expresses her life in Africa and what she did there: she ventured out to an unknown life which needed courage, she then experienced it and wrote it down. It basically sums up what she did and who she is: an undertaking, curious and courageous woman.

In conclusion to this chapter, it is needless to say that men are very differently illustrated than women in both novel and film. Because Karen Blixen really existed and really lived in Africa, it was necessary to find extra sources about how she expressed her adventure to others. The ideas that she expresses in her novel correspond to the ideas of her character in the film. Even though she wished women to stand up for themselves, readers do feel loneliness in her novel and the film clearly pictures this, too, despite her numerous friends. She is alone in a sense that she seems to be the only woman who does what she finds will make her who she is as a person. Thanks to this, she can be described as an independent woman. She has her ideas and defends them over the course of the film. Men in both works are very masculine. Both Bror and Denys do as they please and this is most probably what inspired Karen. Bror, is, however more selfish and cares less about Karen than Denys. As mentioned earlier, Karen and Denys do not always share the same ideas but they do have one thing in common: the love for African culture and literature in general. With Bror, it is fair to say that Karen only shared the farm with him but even that can be considered saying too much as Bror was hardly ever home and he never took care of the farm. Both novel and film as well as biographical sources of Karen, inform us about
gender issues at the time. Karen Blixen most definitely stood out of all other women of her time.
6. Conclusion

I started the work on this research paper by choosing the novel I wanted to base my work on. This decision was very easy to make as I had already seen the adapted film of the novel and had felt very inspired by it. I was interested in reading the original story and understanding Karen Blixen’s character more. Working on this research paper has definitely helped me to figure out Karen Blixen’s personality and the ideas she defends. Her journey in Africa teaches any reader or viewer a lot about life and how to appreciate it to the fullest.

I began this paper by writing a critical summary on Karen Blixen’s novel Out of Africa. This was the first step to discerning what the novel precisely is about. I then found sources outside the novel and the book that would help me. Several different types of sources were useful such as documentaries, filmed interviews of Karen Blixen, biographies of Karen Blixen, essays and other novels written by Karen Blixen. Since this paper involved two cinematographic analyses, I also had to find information about the subject. Karen Blixen left to Africa just before the First World War and as a result, I looked through history books about European colonies in Africa and learnt a great deal out of them. I realised that making a bibliography is not just obligatory but it helps one keep track of the sources found. I also came to the conclusion that this particular research paper required information coming from all sorts of different topics such as African History, Feminism in the early twentieth century, cinematographic analysis skills, Philosophy as well as Karen Blixen’s story.

I then chose a couple of sequences from the film adaptation and paired them with information from the novel. Depending on the length of the scene and the amount of compelling information I could pull out from each sequence, I selected two sequences. After this, I started analysing the first sequence. I discussed many different aspects used in the film sequences. I learned to notice small details which change a whole meaning whether it is expressed with light, sound, props or camera movements. By dividing each shot of the sequence, one pays a lot more attention to each and every movement the characters do and the meanings behind them. Important objects are also considered that way. After the technical part, I compared the sequence from the film to information readers are given in the novel. This was also an important part of the analysis. It was beneficial for a full comprehension of the story. I subsequently followed the same steps for the analysis.
of the second sequence. As I was writing the part about a feminist perspective in both novel and film, which mainly focuses on gender, I started to see the evolution of this research paper and where it was all heading. It all began to make sense and Karen Blixen’s personality and her ideas became fully understandable.

To conclude, it is for sure fair to say that this paper enabled a thorough analysis of a story which raises many interrogations on life and how one decides to live it. Besides, this work on a novel and a film was a great mind-opener. The comparison between novel and film required a major step back in order to see the story as a whole. Throughout this research paper, I improved both my written and spoken English. This work also allowed me to work on my organisational skills and it also taught me some discipline as far as deadlines are concerned. Undertaking tasks one by one was also crucial to the good development of this research paper and brought me a step forward to being more independent.
7. Bibliography

Primary Sources

This is the well-known book which has been adapted cinematographically. My main subject.

The movie is also based on this novel. Karen Blixen describes her life in Africa in more detail. The book was first published in 1961. It is very short and many important characters reappear.

In this book, Blixen retraces her life in Africa in the form of letters which she wrote to her loved ones. An original way of writing an autobiography.

Out of Africa, dir. Sydney Pollack, screenplay Kurt Luedtke, performance Meryl Streep, Robert Redford, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Universal Studios, 1985
The adapted movie of the book.

Secondary Sources

A history book that explains the role of colonial troops in Eastern Africa during the First World War. The movie “Out of Africa” talks about this event.

Information about all her novels and stories that have been adapted on screen.
Baker, Katie, *Women in the World 2013: The Summit Is Finally Here!*  
*By reading this article, I learned that there was a very important annual meeting which gathers inspiring women of today, just like Karen Blixen. This big gathering is all about sharing and discussing the position of women in today’s society and fighting for women’s rights. Many celebrities take part in this event.*

*This is the retelling of a few events that occurred during Karen Blixen’s (aka Isak Dinesen) stay in Eastern Africa. The events are told by Kamante, Blixen’s cook at the time (introduced in the book and movie “Out of Africa”). An interesting read because it is a different point of view. Lots of photographs that help putting faces to names.*

*This essay discusses the different images that Karen Blixen gives in her book and how they are adapted cinematographically. The essay focuses mainly on Karen Blixen’s “Babette’s Feast” which was adapted in 1987.*

*Talks about the different approaches and techniques to adapt a piece of literature into a film.*

*This book contains a series of essays by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen). She discusses the role of women in marriage and the community and the relationship between the two sexes. She writes that the woman has a fixed and meaningful role in marriage.*
*Another short biography of Isak Dinesen that retraces her life in Africa.*

*Another history book that retraces WW1 in Africa.*

*Gives many examples of how famous films have been inspired by well-written novels.*

*Once again, a book that talks about life in an African colony at the time.*

*A camp for tourists who wish to visit Kenya in a luxurious way. Interesting to see how Karen Blixen’s reputation is still used commercially nowadays. Accessed on April 9th 2013 at 17h40.*

*The Karen Blixen Museum where she used to live in the town of Rungsted. Accessed on April 9th 2013 at 17h51.*

Karen Blixen Museum, April 9th 2013,  
[http://www.museums.or.ke/content/blogcategory/13/19/](http://www.museums.or.ke/content/blogcategory/13/19/)  
*The Karen Blixen Museum in Kenya, where Karen’s farm is situated. Accessed on April 9th 2013 at 17h56.*
Karen Blixen : The Last Interview, October 23rd 2013
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO0WhkQZhkU

This is said to be Karen Blixen’s last interview. It was aired by Belgian Television three months before her death in 1962. She talks about her vision of feminism as well as her thoughts on literature. This interview helps to discern her ideas on feminism as well as her true personality.


This book contains many different true stories and point of views of many women, from different backgrounds, about Africa at various times in history (end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 21st century).


Talks about the history of film adaptations and the various techniques used in the past. Based on several well-known adaptions.


This source helps to understand the Kikuyu’s philosophy and community through traditional kikuyu tales. There is an introduction which explains the Kikuyu’s social background.


A pictorial history book.


There is section in the novel Out of Africa by Karen Blixen called “From an immigrant’s notebook”. Karen Blixen tells the folktale “The roads of Life”. Her retelling of the tale is accompanied by drawings of a stork. I had quite some difficulties understanding this section and this book explains it very thoroughly.

*By reading this article, I learned that Ernest Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954 and that in his acceptance speech he informed that ‘that beautiful writer Isak Dinesen’ deserved the award more than him. I also realized how much interest people had in Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen) at the time.*


*Gives an idea of what making a film is like. Gives a bit of information about cinematographic adaptations.*


*This is the official and main biography of Karen Blixen. By reading this, we learn a lot more about Karen Blixen’s background and her Eastern African life.*


*This would help to understand the economic, social and scientific situation at the time in colonial Africa from 1870-1950.*


*A trustworthy website where books are suggested and where there is a forum on which readers discuss their opinions on the novel.*


*This is an interview of Isak Dinesen where we learn more about her life after Africa.*
Image sources

Here are the websites where I found images to illustrate this research paper. The images of the shots all come from the film Out of Africa, directed by Sydney Pollack (see part 7 for proper reference).


Karen Blixen during her interview with Belgian television: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO0WhkQZhkU

Karen Blixen and Denys Finch Hatton in Kenya: http://dansunecabane.blogspot.ch/search?updated-max=2011-09-21T06:23:00%2B02:00&max-results=7
8. Appendix

Here are the passages from Karen Blixen’s novel Out of Africa (see part 7 for proper reference), which were used for the comparisons with the novel at the end of each sequence analysis. The extracts are in order of appearance.

Passages cited in part 3.7 Comparison with the Novel

“They took the greatest pleasure in my Danish table glass and china, and used to build up on the dinner table a tall shining pyramid of all my glass, the one piece on top of the other; they enjoyed the sight of it.” (Blixen 184)

“As far as Berkeley Cole and Denys Finch-Hatton were concerned, my house was a communist establishment. Everything in it was theirs, and they took a great pride in it, and brought home the things they felt to be lacking. They kept the house up to a high standard in wine and tobacco, and got books and gramophone records from Europe for me.” (Blixen 183)

“Small, very slight, red-haired, with narrow hands and feet, Berkeley carried himself extremely erect, with a little Artagnanesque turn of the head to right and left, the gentle motion of the unbeaten duellist.” (Blixen 185-186)

“When Denys Finch-Hatton came back after one of his long expeditions, he was starved for talk, and found me on the farm starved for talk, so that we sat over the dinner-table into the small hours of the morning, talking of all the things we could think of, and mastering them all, and laughing at them.” (Blixen 141)

“He would have cut a figure in any age, for he was an athlete, a musician, a lover of art, and a fine sportsman. He did cut a figure in his own age, but it did not quite fit in anywhere. His friends in England always wanted him to come back, they wrote out plans and schemes for a career for him there, but Africa was keeping him.” (Blixen 186)

“Denys had a trait of character which to me was very precious; he liked to hear a story told.” (Blixen 194)

“Denys Finch-Hatton had no other home in Africa than the farm. He lived in my house between his safaris, and kept his books and gramophone there.” (Blixen 193)
Passages cited in part 4.6 Comparison with the Novel

“When the war broke out, my husband and the two Swedish assistants on the farm volunteered and went down to the German border, where a provisional intelligence service was being organized by Lord Delamere. I was then alone on the farm. But shortly afterwards there began to be talk of a concentration camp for the white women of the country; they were believed to be exposed to danger from the natives.” (Blixen 228)

“The people down by the border kept on demanding provisions and ammunitions to be sent to them; my husband wrote and instructed me to load up four ox-wagons and to send them down as soon as possible. But I must not, let them go without a white man in charge of them, for nobody knew where the Germans were, and the Masai were in state of high excitement at the idea of war, and on the move all over the Reserve.” (Blixen 228-229)

“I engaged a young South African by the name of Klapprott, to go with the wagons, but when they were all loaded up, on the evening before the expedition was to start off, he was arrested as a German. He was not a German, and could prove it, so that only a short time afterwards he got out of the arrest and changed his name. But at that hour I saw in his arrestation the finger of God, for now there was nobody but me to take the wagons through the country.” (Blixen 229)

“And in the early morning, while the old constellations of the stars were still out, we set off down the long endless Kijabe Hill, with the great plains of the Masai Reserve – iron-grey in the faint light of the dawn – spread at our feet, with lamps tied under the wagons, swinging, and with much shouting and cracking of whips.” (Blixen 229)

“I was out then for three months.” (Blixen 229)

“This safari lived for a long time in the memory of the farm.” (Blixen 233)