

ly foregrounds the medium's materiality, it also «dematerializes the story as an object, makes much more elusive its existence as a thing.» (125-6) Internet fiction even dissolves the material supports of RAM-memory and CD-ROM, in contrast to interactive computer-aided theatre, which allows for the participants' bodily immersion.

What *From text to hypertext* requires, then, is a renewed phenomenology of the subject, as Gaggi realises only too well (112), a method to counter the predominantly symbolic economic and cultural exchange, binding critics and consumers alike in their engagement with the world. In his conclusion he quite appropriately mentions Elizabeth Wheeler's invocation of subjective experience (painful or pleasurable) in response to Baudrillard's apparent amorality, daring to apply that category not just to people, animals, or nature but «(possibly even) hypertextual networks» (143). How that should be conceived remains as difficult a question (which people like Donna

Haraway have barely begun to answer) as that of locating whatever ethical and political agency can be imagined. Karen-edi Barzman is quoted for looking in the «semiotic slippage», «the instability of signs» (144), Kristeva for reverting to the pre-symbolic, bodily energies of the female, which she also labels the «semiotic» (150), in recognition of the subject's inevitable but ever-fluid, provisional participation in the Symbolic. The economy and lucidity with which Gaggi synthesises the problem of the subject and suggests a potential, in no way absolute solution, follows from his expert coupling of theory with practical analyses. My only quarrel is that he did not admit right away (in the preface, say) the general need for a phenomenology, tracing and traversing his otherwise admirable trajectory.

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Gene D. PHILLIPS. *Conrad and cinema. The art of adaptation*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995, xvii + 219 pages.

The first undeniable merit of Phillips' work is that it is the first book ever published entirely devoted to the topic. Its publication coincides with the recent boom in Conrad adaptations in the last few years that has turned the Polish writer, as Daniel Rosenthal points out, into «the literary darling of Nineties film and television» (1995: 35). The long fruitful history of Conrad on screen would certainly deserve *per se* a book which exhaustively explores the peaks and valleys of such a relation, but there is also a second reason which justifies a close look at the subject: Conrad has always been considered a very «cinematic» writer whose technique has been compared to that of

the cinema. In fact, Conrad himself even acknowledged «I must have been unconsciously penetrated by a prophetic sense of the technique and the very spirit of film-plays» (quoted in Ingersoll, 1995: 24). Unfortunately the bad news is that in spite of this splendid raw material, Phillips' book does not come up to expectations.

In the first chapter Phillips deals with the relationship between film and novel as well as the difficulties a filmmaker may find when adapting a literary work to the screen. Special emphasis is made on the idea of «faithfulness» but his conclusions do not add anything new to the subject and seem to be simplistic: in order to

judge the merit of an adaptation we should see to what extent «the significance of each story» is reproduced (3). Phillips considers, thus, that the spirit of a novel is something unambiguously objective, which is homogeneously perceived by the audience. This assumption, that a novel has one –and just one– significance, which might be helpful for a superficial research to categorise «degrees of faithfulness», becomes something very difficult to subscribe to, especially in the case of Conrad, who explicitly considered that the more ambiguous a work was the better.

In the following eight chapters Phillips reviews most film adaptations of Conrad's works. Although the criteria of the grouping of the films in every chapter are not always coherent and the intended film allusions in the titles of the chapters are sometimes somewhat far-fetched, the author displays a remarkable concern about making the book easy and accessible for the reader. For that reason he structures all the chapters following the same pattern: Conrad's biographical information related to the novel which is being discussed is followed by a detailed narration of the plot of the novel, and after that we find the discussion of the film, which is typically just another detailed narration of its plot plus a few isolated quotations of some critics.

A serious problem with this book is that Phillips simply misses the point of writing a book about film and literature because he spends more time telling the plot of each novel than discussing the film or comparing both (e.g., he spends almost five pages telling the plot of a short story, «The Secret Sharer», while devoting hardly two pages to talking about John Brahm's version and one and a half page to Larry Yust's). Furthermore, in the discussion of the films we hardly find any analysis, reasoning or arguments. We have to believe his conclusions almost as an act of faith. For exam-

ple, dealing with Maurice Tourneur's version of *Victory*, Phillips tells us how the director transforms the ending totally, erases some important characters and modifies relevant episodes such as Jones' death; after that he concludes that it is a «credible» and «faithful» adaptation (32) without offering any reason to support his statement. An even more poignant example of the shallowness of his analysis is that what he has to say about *The Silver Treasure*, a lost version of *Nostromo* of which no known copies survive, is just the same as what he says about the available films (time of release, cast, etc.).

Apart from this lack of analysis, we also find in Phillips some bias when assessing the films. It seems that just being a Conrad adaptation is enough to get a good film. He always finds something to consider the adaptations positively. Sometimes a film is worthy just because it keeps the original ending of Conrad's novel. If the dark ending is transformed into a happy romantic ending for the sake of the audience (i.e. most of Conrad adaptations before the fifties) the film is worthy because of the splendid landscapes, the terrific performances or just the atmosphere.

Another objection to Phillips' work is how he neglects the contextualization of the adaptations in the historical moment of each one. As it is usually said «a text without a context is a pre-text» and in this way it would have been undoubtedly interesting, for example, trying to explain the gap from 1940 to 1952 in which no adaptation of Conrad was shot, or commenting on the significant evolution of the way natives are depicted in Conradian films as a consequence of the new postcolonial awareness that appears in the late twentieth century.

On the other hand, Phillips shows a remarkable visual sharpness when analysing some images, for instance the interpretation of some scenes from *The Secret Sharer* (87) or *Razumov* (49), which

are undoubtedly some of the most praiseworthy parts of the book and make the reader wonder why Phillips did not apply this sharpness to a more exhaustive analysis of the films. The very well documented filmography is equally commendable in spite of some omissions (mainly the five versions of *Victory* shot at Joinville in 1930 of which Phillips surprisingly says nothing, the unfinished 1993 *Heart of Darkness* starring Sean Connery, or some minor films such as the Mexican version of *Tomorrow*). The credits of the Spanish *Heart of the Forest* is full of misprints and we also find some repeated misspellings in the name of Terence Young (115, 189, 218) or Jeffrey Meyers (162, 163).

All in all, this book is a more than acceptable introduction to the topic espe-

cially suitable for non-specialists. However, the over-simplification of some issues and the lack of critical analysis could make someone from another field of study think that Literature and Film Studies is a minor almost anecdotal discipline which does not lead anywhere. Although Phillips can feel certainly proud to be the pioneer in collecting such a quantity of information in a book, we cannot help feeling a sense of disappointment about a lost opportunity to approach the relationship between Film and Literature using the rich material which Conrad as a writer and some gifted and not-so-gifted filmmakers have offered us.

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Lynda E. BOOSE; Richard BURT, (eds.). *Shakespeare, the movie: Popularizing the plays on film, TV, and video*. London: Routledge, 1997, x + 277 pages.

Referring to Warren Beatty's Cleopatra-like role in *Bugsy*, Katherine Eggert wittily entitles her contribution to this excellent volume «Age Cannot Wither Him». The phrase can be no less aptly applied to Shakespeare, who, through the global reach of the Hollywood film factories, has in recent years achieved a presence in popular culture more influential and pervasive than ever before. The accelerating production of Shakespearean films in the age of Branagh is being matched by the production of critical studies examining it. *Shakespeare, the film* is the latest, and in many ways the best, collection of essays on the subject. Especially admirable is its variety, both

in the types of popularisations it covers and the critical methodologies it embraces. Included are studies bristling with theory, others intent on locating the bard's shifting place in modern culture, and a welcome number providing detailed explications that will send readers back to the VCR for another viewing.

Two essays on *Othello* define the collection's range of critical interests. Writing from a moment when issues of race and sexuality were focused by the O. J. Simpson trial, and returning repeatedly to the trial and its press coverage, Barbara Hogdon fruitfully compares the effect of «looking relations» (26) in two films featuring black actors as Othello.