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Shakespeare on Screen: "Richard III."
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Shakespeare on Screen: "Richard III" brings together the papers presented at an international conference on the topic held at the University of Rouen on 4 and 5 March 2005. With their variety of approaches to filmic Richards, the editors have sought to study not just one of the most popular of the histories, but also to interrogate the notion of Shakespearean film, in more general terms.

Any reader is likely to discover how easy it is to underestimate the complexity of the issues involved. A case in point is the essay by Adriane Hudelet devoted to language and sound in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*. In a paper rich in detail, the author effectively tunes our ears to the film's street sounds and music, and convincingly illustrates how Pacino brings the sounds of our contemporary world and the world of the play into a fine accord, making Shakespeare's language less strange, while appreciating its relevance in a contemporary world.

On a different note, Sarah Hatchuel looks at the representation of death in a number of film versions of *Richard III*, and observes how histrionic, over-played, and theatrical these moments tend to be. In order to account for this, she then develops an intriguing Freud-based theory about the inability to imagine our own death, and the general difference between stage representations and screen representations. Apparently, film makers are convinced that a histrionic character like Richard must die histrionically.

Sébastien Lafait sheds light on the genre of *Looking for Richard*, as he probes the way in which Pacino welds documentary with fiction to produce what also in other quarters has come to be recognized as the *documentary* movie. Intriguing and attractive is the suggestion that only this mode could serve to present Shakespeare's most manipulative character to modern audiences (and certainly the school audiences for whom the film was originally made). The *docudrama* seems tailor-made for Shakespeare's machiavel.

Along comparable lines, Michèle Willems approaches the *Richard III* version in the BBC Series (with Ron Cook as crookback Richard), and illustrates how Jane Howell's directorial strategies for the television medium succeeded in recreating, more or less, the original conditions of the play's production in Shakespearean London. Eventually, though, it is also Howell's stark stage/screen images in their own right (with Margaret holding the dead Richard in a pietà pose on top of a mountain of corpses that to some recall the horrors of Auschwitz) that makes sense of the claim that this BBC screen production has unjustly suffered recent critics' neglect.

Mariangela Tempera shares a wealth of examples of the way in which Shakespeare's *Richard III* has become part of both high and popular culture, quoted in serious movies, in comedy, and in television series around the world. Tempera organises her disparate material into four categories: (1) staging deformity, (2) acting and overacting, (3) the seduction scene and (4) quoting and misquoting. Tempera well conveys how one may develop a fascination with a field that is rapidly expanding, with quotations coming at us from all directions. As the record of the discussion following the presentation by Mariangela Tempera suggests, this side to Shakespeare's popularity may well have great classroom interest and serve to give students a fascinating sense of the continuity between the popular culture that they are likely to be familiar with in the form of, say, *Twin Peaks*, and the high culture to which academic Shakespeare still adheres.

Mark Thornton Burnett's essay would seem to confirm this assumption, as it studies in detail a number of *Richard III* parodies. Thornton Burnett is right to stress that parody should not be defined too narrowly, since more is at stake here than the generation of pure ridicule. Respect may also find an outlet in parody, which is, after all, the sincerest form of flattery. In a sense, parody preserves and revives the very text it seeks to undermine or destroy. In the process, though, emerge the poignant concerns of the parodic adaptor in relation to belonging, loyalty, identification, and citizenship.

In an intelligent piece, Michael Hattaway identifies varieties of Englishness in screen adaptations of *Richard III*. This can be done profitably by placing the available film versions within the context of English cultural history. The main point Hattaway is making is that with Richard, who is "always *sui generis*, the other," interpreters need to define a local habitation, and that since Richard III belongs to English history, Richard invites definitions and redefinitions of

Englishness. One wonders, though, if there are examples of non-British films (like Raoul Ruiz' rare adaptation), where Englishness may be addressed differently, if at all. One also wonders if the phenomenon is limited to film (for especially in the case of *Richard III* the screen versions tend to follow the ghosts of earlier stage productions more closely than other plays).

The number of screen adaptations of *Richard III* (even if we include feature films with quotations from the play, or parodic versions of larger sections) is limited, and one wonders if the study of Shakespeare on film might not start to yield diminishing returns some day. This certainly would not happen soon if we took example from Dominique Goy-Blanquet's subtle as well as bold confrontation of *Richard III* with Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang* (2004). The criticism that the press levelled at Hirschbiegel for "humanizing" Hitler, and thus in a sense for making the criminal look like ourselves, leads to fascinating observations about the apparent desire of Shakespearean audiences with the available *Richard III* movies to have "evil ... shown as monstrous, never human, concentrated on one unnatural fiend."

But there is much more to enjoy in this collection. Kevin De Ornellas intelligently studies the boar imagery in screen adaptations of *Richard III*, which serves to convey the debasement of the central character, and Lucy Munro's study of the on-screen representation of children in three film versions of *Richard III* (Frank Benson, Olivier, and Loncraine) neatly historicizes these events, setting off our post-eighteenth-century view of children against Shakespeare's own markedly less sentimental attitude. Even more convincing is the contribution by Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin which studies the filmic treatment of "evil tongues" and "evil speech" as it occurs in *Richard III*. It is interesting to see how this play, in which an abundance of words is associated with inefficiency, translates into screen versions that reveal a greater economy of words and yet achieve greater screen impact.

Two essays by distinguished film scholars devote special attention to Laurence Olivier's screen version of *Richard III*. Anthony Davies argues that modern audiences used to Branagh and Loncraine may have become unjustly condescending towards Shakespearean films like Olivier's. Davies believes that in the case of McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*, it is obvious to see that we are dealing with cinematic experiments that have been boldly and impressively imposed onto a Shakespearean text, but it is rather

more difficult to gauge and accurately to describe the various forms of interaction between the cinematic language and the existing dramatic text. What seems clear, though, is that the "supernatural" elements that Shakespearean critics have discerned in *Richard III* are absent from the fast-paced and slickly periodized 1990s screen version. In this respect, Olivier's *Richard III* (presenting a soulful and disturbed hero to the end) enforces respect as an effective welding of cinematic and dramatic modes. Russell Jackson takes another line, as he illustrates how the Olivier movie may still yield valuable insights, if we are prepared to contextualize it. Drawing on multiple English and American reviews, he attractively situates the film in the early 1950s shortly after the coronation of Elizabeth II, discusses it in the context of the relationship between Olivier and Vivien Leigh, in terms of its aesthetic experimentation, and of the internationalisation of Shakespearean cinema that is marked by Olivier's *Richard III*.

Most of the papers in this collection are followed by a transcript of the discussions that they provoked at the original Rouen conference. Severe editing of these transcripts could have improved the collection, but on certain occasions, as in the case of the discussion following Michèle Willems' paper on Jane Howell's *Richard III* for television, valuable new lines of approach are developed. This collection would not be complete without the updated filmo-bibliography by José Ramón Díaz Fernández, put together, as ever, with great care. *Shakespeare on Screen: "Richard III"* is, therefore, a valuable contribution to Shakespeare and Film Studies. Its contributions are varied in theme and approach, and they suggest many new avenues for research and debate.

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