What Can a Film Make of a Book?

Seeing literature through Apocalypse Now and Barry Lyndon

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Abstract

The question of cinematic adaptation of literary texts has been extensively discussed in the last decades, from different perspectives. Through the analysis of two exemplary cases - Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, based on Thackeray's novel *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, inspired by Conrad'd novella *Heart of Darkness* - this paper focuses on the question of fidelity and how it puts into question the current notion of "story" which we have inherited from formalist and structuralist oriented literary studies. It is part of a vaster work in progress which aims at understanding some of the procedures and effects of transcodification from literature to film.

Résumé

La question de l'adaptation cinématographique a été très amplement débattue depuis plusieurs dizaines d'années, et ce de plusieurs points de vues. A travers deux études de cas exemplaires (*Barry Lyndon* de Kubrick, basé sur le roman de Thackeray, *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon,* et *Apocalypse Now* de Coppola, basé sur un roman de Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*), le présent article réexamine le problème de la "fidélité" et la manière dont cette notion met en question notre conception du récit héritée des études littéraires formalistes et structuralistes. Ce texte fait partie d'un volume futur qui se propose de relire critiquement les procédés et les effets de la transcodification qui accompagnent le passage du livre au film.

In his long conversation with François Truffaut, at a certain point, Hitchcock starts speaking about the film *Rebecca*, an adaptation of the novel by Daphne du Maurier. He tells a little story. There are two goats who are eating the reels of a film based on a novel. "How is it?", one asks. The other replies: "Not bad. But personally I prefer the book". With his usual understatement and much irony, Hitchcock here sums up the question of "fidelity", reducing it not only to a matter of purely subjective preference but to a difference in taste between celluloid and paper[1].

We could ask ourselves, in fact: does fidelity really matter? Even before Hitchcock, many critics and film makers said no, starting with André Bazin[2]: they suggested that this was a pointless and irrelevant problem; a falsely descriptive notion which in reality always contains an implicit value judgement, often brandished to "defend" literary values, to defend, that is, the classical text from the corruption threatened by cinema as mass art, or even to defend cinematic values, each time identified with the visual, editing, photography.

As we perfectly know, the question of fidelity only arises for texts with a recognised literary status; it does not exist for the hundreds of current, popular novels and tales which have always furnished the cinema with subjects but which, in reality, function as nothing more than very detailed screenplays. Since its origins, the cinema has made a curious and to a certain extent diabolical pact with literature (I'll allow you to survive if you sell me your soul). In particular with the narrative and dramatic genres and, above all, with the literary genre considered to be the expression *par excellence* of modernity, the novel. The cinema has partly absorbed literature by means of a double-natured process. It has inherited some functions of literature, taking on the role of catalyst of the imagination carried out, between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, by the novel. At the same time, with the practise of adaptation, it absorbed literature to give back and make current its heritage, taking its plots and re-telling them to a much vaster audience, becoming almost one of the "forms of expression" of literature. It has interpreted the books, novels, short stories, plays, in the light of its own aesthetics, its own formal conventions, its own tradition, and also the laws of a real industry. Perhaps this would suffice to make the question decisive as to what the cinema has done with these books. And when we ask a similar question, fidelity immediately crops up.

If we come to the specific nature of the means used, to what we may call semiotic substance, there is a first, very simple, answer to the question we have just asked. What cinema does and makes of books and stories? Well, it translate them into images, that is, it makes them visible, it makes them seen; and this is not a small matter. To understand its significance, it would suffice to remember the provocative statement made by Joseph Conradin the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you

hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you *see*!"[3]. In this perspective, we could consider cinematic adaptations as something which realises a secret desire of the reader: that of "seeing literature"; this perhaps explains the strange mix of pleasure and disappointment which readers often experience when they see the cinematic versions of literary text. The joy and anxiety are those which characterise the experience of the *voyeur*: almost a forbidden pleasure, the violation of a taboo, breaking a basic convention. Literature is not originally created to be seen and - strictly speaking - all we are authorised to *see* in a written text is the words.

The (written) story is presented as the "report of events" and, in the literary sphere, as the report of fictitious events. On the other hand, even if we are perfectly aware that a film is fiction, the photographic image in movement produces an impression of reality without precedent, an impact of the object represented which is opposed to both the mediated and evocative nature of writing and to the fundamental convention of theatre. The visualising inherent in cinematic adaptation, then, almost seems to offer or reconstruct a possible reference for that report. For two hours, the cinema deceives us that *there is* a reference for and a reality to the literary text and that the reference is precisely *that* which the images capture. Cinematic adaptation often disappoints us but it also excercises - regardless of its artistic quality - an insidious *authority* over perception. It is something which seems to work against "the power of the written word" and, at the same time, to make it actual, to realise it .

So fidelity does matter, even if this is certainly not because literature or cinema need to be defended in terms of their presumed integrity. We (as readers, as spectators, or as both) attribute specific responsabilities to films based on literary texts and we projects certain expectations onto them. But what fidelity really mean, what could it mean?

As Christian Metz pointed out, historically if not intrinsically, cinema is narrative: it has, at its base, temporality, a closed sequence of events[4]. Cinema tells stories and the majority of these stories are made up stories: originals or taken from literature. Thinking about fidelity, then, also means thinking about what we can call the *identity of a story*. According to Gérard-Denis Farcy, indeed, "le minimum vital inhérent à l'adaptation se loge dans l'histoire", for the simple reason that the story, considered independently of the semiotic substance through which it is presented, is always adaptable[5]. Generally, a story is identified as a sequence of events (the actions and their syntactic relations). Furthermore, within current use, there is a broader and in some way less rigorous notion of story, which also includes: the space-time location of the events (*Anna Karenina* is a story of marriage and adultery in Nineteenth-Century Russia) and certain functions and features of the characters, if not their names (*Madame Bovary* is the story of an unsatisfied *petit bourgeois*

woman). Adapting means, in the first place, re-representing all of this by means of a different semiotic substance and/or a different set of formal conventions.

But are sequence, space-time location, some basic functions and features of the characters sufficient to ensure that two stories are *the same story*? The film adaptations I will tackle, Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, based on Thackeray's *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, based on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, are emblematic and antithetical examples for a discussion of this problem. They show that the current notion of story is not a sufficient condition for fidelity, nor is it a strictly necessary one. The practice of adaptation, in other words, forces us to put into question the idea of story as a factual order which is not only independent of semiotic substance and of modal determinations but also independent of any interpretative work and attribution of meaning. As I will show, the identity of a story is located in the interpretations and in the thematisations to which it offers itself; in other words, it cannot be defined without reference to *meaning*. The factual order is not *per se* the bearer of a thematic identity or semantic dimension: a sequence of events is a potential structure which contains many possible stories.

The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon is about a young rough ambitious Irishman without a penny who chooses a career as adventurer and gambler. Thanks to his lack of scruples and a series of deceits, he manages to marry a rich English noblewoman and to enter high society. But he goes to ruin by squandering his money by gambling, on lovers and on business deals which turn out to be misguided. Submerged in debt, he is forced by his wife's family to leave England. He ends his life ill and an alcoholic, and dies of *delirium tremens* in prison.

The story is told in the comic tone of the picaresque tradition as exemplified by Defoe and Fielding. The text, published in 1844, is a parody of the Eighteenth-Century novel, in its themes, characters and narrative procedures. Barry belongs to the list of well-known characters whose most famous exponents are Moll Flanders, Lady Roxana, Jonathan Wild and Tom Jones. The comic aspect is already apparent in the narrative device. The story is narrated in the first person by the protagonist himself who, right from the very start, reveals himself to be a totally unreliable narrator: he continually boasts about his courage, his imaginary noble lineage, his generosity and audacity, with an exaggeration which is immediately suspect to the reader. Furthermore, his story is presented by a fictitious "editor" who spatters it with a series of notes which correct, rectify and give the lie to the statements of the narrator. The readers, in this way, are constantly invited to laugh behind the back of the main character.

But Thackeray pushes himself even further to deprive the novel of any tragic or dramatic dimension. Barry tells his story with a total absence of pathos, even at the most dramatic moments,

such as the death of his son Bryan. The pace of the narrative, the accumulation of the adventures and episodes is without pause and the narrator never allows himself time to dwell on sentiments and feelings. The characters are little more than comic masks: they do not change throughout the novel, they are not educated by life. Barry is an impudent and unbending scoundrel at the start and remains so until the end; Lady Lyndon is a sentimental, foolish and ill-tempered woman. Barry's ups and downs are always presented in a tone of grotesque farce; losing his fortune does not appear to have on Barry any more effect than having earned it; the social hierarchies are subject to continuous overturning and derision.

In *Barry Lyndon*, Kubrick sticks scrupulously to the setting of the novel, Europe in the second half of the Eighteenth Century, making a very careful use of the iconographic sources. The film, it has been said, is the catalogue of a museum costing 11 million dollars. Almost every shot, indeed, recalls Eighteenth Century painting, the landscapes of Gainsborough and Constable, the portraits of Gainsborough, Hogarth and Reynolds. "Historic" or "costume" cinema no longer has anything false or approximate but is created literally, sticking rigorously to the history of Art: in this way, maximum realism coincides with maximum fiction. This clearly goes a long way in conveying an impression of fidelity: Kubrick seems to follow the indications contained in the novel and to show the world that Thackeray pretends to describe.

In addition, Kubrick leaves the original plot - in its basic articulations and considered independently from the medium, from modal determinations and from attributions of meaning - almost intact. Clearly, he must necessarily compress the duration of the story to adapt it to the standard time of a film: he must suppress and/or condense certain episodes of the novel. But the narrative syntax remains unchanged, that is, the logical and chronological relationships between the basic functions. The "what" and the "when" do not change and Kubrick works instead on the "how": *how* Redmond Barry looses his money on the road to Dublin (in both the novel and the film, in any case, he loses it and must, therefore, enlist), *how* he manages to marry Lady Lyndon (in both the novel and the film, in any case, he marries her and, therefore, acquires money and status). Almost all the characters correspond to the main characters in the novel, with the same names and basic features. And in the screenplay, we find a mass-scale literal reuse of the words of the novel and of many minor incidents. But, while he uses the very same elements, Kubrick completely overturns the meaning of the story.

In the film, Barry is deprived of the narrative function, assigned to the off-screen voice of a third-person narrator. As Kubrick stated in an interview, this was a deliberate choice to eliminate the unreliable narration and the counterpoint provided by the comments of the editor: "La fonction de la

première personne dans le livre était de présenter des faits réels de facon déformée. Mais il m'a semblé qu'un film qui montrerait, d'une part, une réalité objective et, d'autre part, sa présentation déformée par le héros, un tel film devrait être une comédie. Et le film ne se prêtait pas au comic" [6]. It is not, then, for "technical" reasons that Kubrick maks this shift but due to the programmatic refusal of comedy, which was, on the other hand, the tone and perspective adopted by Thackeray; the unreliable narration - as Kubrick himself admits - would have been "translatable" ("filmable").

This change, and the way in which he explains it in the passage I have just quoted, is the key to Kubrick's operation, which consists in paradoxically working *against* the original text, to bring Barry's story towards tragedy. The elimination of all the digressions and secondary episodes, then, resulting from the need for temporal compression, also has a semantic function: the pace of the narrative is drastically slowed, and the matter is reduced to its skeleton, a story of rise and fall, divided in two perfectly symmetrical parts and concentrated within a single character, gradually becoming more isolated and, in the end, defeated[7]. That which is perhaps the stylistic key to the film - the camera movement known as "pulling back motion" or "reverse zoom" - is often used to emphasise the isolation of the character: the camera starts from a close-up of Barry and then, moving back, shows us Barry in a much-broader framework, giving us an image of desolate solitude and powerlessness.

The characters in the film are not in the least caricatures and, albeit essential within their psychological presentation (the film has very little dialogue, though it abounds in close-ups, one of the main vehicles of psychological characterization in classical cinema), become dramatic figures dominated by destiny. This is realised starting by the very choice and use of the actors. The immobile, tragic, agonising beauty of Marisa Berenson would suffice to completely overturn the original character of Lady Lyndon. The Barry Lyndon in the film, as opposed to his counterpart in the novel, is a character destined to gradually lose his innocence and the illusions which mark him out during the early sequences. The actor Ryan O'Neal, from a certain point on, appears to be made up. Quite significantly, the first time we see Ryan O'Neal with make-up is when, to escape from Prussia, he assumes the appearance of the Chevalier de Balibari, that is, the appearance of the man who will bring to a conclusion Barry's worldly education after "his years of apprenticeship" spent in the army. From this point on, for the entire central part of the film, he bears on his face the signs of corruption and degradation.

The process of giving depth and dignity to Barry's character is completed in the final sequence, which is also the only authentic deviation from the original story which Kubrick allowed himself: the scene of the final duel between Barry and his stepson, Lord Bullingdon, is an invention

by Kubrick, just as making Lord Bullingdon the agent of Barry's ruin and exile is an invention by Kubrick. The duels, also very frequent in the novel, become, in the film, appointments with destiny. The last duel becomes the crucial appointment, which opposes the infiltrator, the *parvenu*, with the legitimate representative of the aristocracy. In the end, Barry spares his enemy and thereby signs his own condemnation: a gesture of generosity, of surrender, of defeat which marks the character as a romantic hero.

Kubrick switches the mode of representation, from comic to tragic (the serious bourgeois tragic of the novel tradition), and makes a complete thematic turnaround. The soundtrack is a key-element to this shift. The two tracks which return most frequently in the film are Hendel's *Sarabanda* and the third movement of Schubert's *Piano Trio Op. 100*, probably one of the most poignant pieces of all romantic music. They give the film its fundamental (narrative) *tone* and, at the same time, function as real narrative themes: the *Sarabanda* as the theme of the duel, of defeat and death, and Schubert's *Trio* as the theme of love and destiny.

We could summarise Kubrick's operation as follows: he changes *literary* genre, from the picaresque to the *Bildungsroman*, to that which Franco Moretti has called the novel of "great expectations" and "*illusions perdues*"[8]. From Defoe and Fielding to Balzac and Flaubert. The companions of *this* Barry Lyndon are no longer Tom, Moll or Jonathan Wild; they are Lucien de Rubempré, Rastignac and even - if we think of the hopeless immobility of the film and the insistence on the relationship between the individual and History - Frédéric Moreau. It is emblematic that the film closes on the date which symbolises modernity: 1789, written on the cheque which Lady Lyndon signs for her banished husband (and here the zoom movement is the classical movement, forward, leading our eyes safely towards the significant detail). Kubrick pretends to tell the story of the book, but he shows us something very different, seeing in the basic sequence of actions *another (potential) story* not seen by Thackeray. While keeping the setting in Eighteenth Century, he projects the story forward, towards the Nineteenth Century and, perhaps, even further.

If from *Barry Lyndon* we move to *Apocalypse Now*, we are confronted with the absence of any explicit inter-textual contract linking the film to its literary source: as has often been emphasised, *Heart of Darkness* is not named in the credits of *Apocalypse Now*. However, if we are to believe Peter Cowie in his recent book on *Apocalypse Now*, the omission is the result of the disputes between Coppola and Milius in relation to the authorship of the screenplay. Milius claimed, among other things, that the idea of adapting *Heart of Darkness* through the Vietnam War was his, which in all probability is true. Coppola, in the end, preferred to eliminate the reference to Conrad's

text altogether[9]. However, everything points to the likelihood that the reference would have remained had the controversy with Milius not arisen.

Nonetheless, the distance between the two texts is considerable: what we see differs radically from what Conrad describes in the novel. The original story is in some way disintegrated. Of Conrad's novel, Coppola seems to only maintain a structural framework, a basic syntagm, a phrase which is susceptible to numerous expansions, specifications and interpolations. The phrase should be stated as follows:

A man sails along a river looking for another man, who in the end he finds, and during the trip, passing through a series of "stations" (both real and symbolic), discovers something.

This is not much and, if we really try, perhaps we will have no difficulty in finding several stories which are amenable the same structural framework.

Coppola takes this basic syntagm, fills it in and develops it by means of a series of specific narrative elements which apparently have very little in common with *Heart of Darkness*. The setting changes radically: colonial expansion in Africa in the last few years of the Nineteenth Century in *Heart of Darkness*, the American intervention in Vietnam at the end of the 1960's in *Apocalypse Now*. The narrative syntax, the sequence of events and their logical relations are subject to radical transformations. Here identifying a sequence of fundamental narrative functions which are applicable to both the novel and the film, as we did for *Barry Lyndon*, is impossible: the sequences are unmistakably two. Even the characters are completely different: their names, their actions and their characteristic traits change. What we have called the inter-textual contract seems to be hanging on the thread of a single name, a simple monosyllable, Kurtz. However, while in the novel, he is the agent of a European company which imports ivory from Africa, buried in a remote internal station, in the film, he is a colonel of the Special Forces who has penetrated as far as Cambodia to fight his own personal war.

And yet, as I will try to show, *Apocalypse Now* is extraordinarily true to *Heart of Darkness*. It achieves this through a thematic fidelity which is all the more astonishing because it is not supported by any diegetic or plot-based fidelity. The key to this singular relationship is certainly to be found in the particular space-time shift from the novel to the film. Among the various themes offered by Conrad's novel, it is the political and ideological which the film focuses on and makes visible. And, as Coppola himself wrote in a resume of the film kept at the Zoetrope Research Library and now reproduced by Peter Cowie, there is a historical continuity between the European colonialism of the end of the Nineteenth Century and the American imperialism in the Cold War

era, of which the intervention in Vietnam is both symbol and epitome: the war in Vietnam is nothing but the extreme point of a Western policy which started a century beforehand[10]. The only thing which has changed is, simply, the actors involved. And, therefore, there is an analogy and a deep solidarity between what the novel and the film are respectively about.

What I want to emphasise is that Coppola's space-time shift amounts to much more than a simple dislocation: the film can be seen as a long visualised metonymy of the book (though sometimes the boundaries between metonymy and metaphor are not so clear). However, within a political reading, too, it would be reductive and insufficient to say that *Heart of Darkness* is a novel about colonial expansion in Africa. Its thematic core - and this not only in terms of a political reading - is the lie: the lie of ideology, ideology (and language) as lie. And it is this thematic core which, in *Apocalypse Now,* Coppola takes up on and develops, starting from an extraordinary intuition, which allows him to make us *see* the horror: thinking not so much that it was possible to adapt the novel, shifting a certain syntagmatic chain onto the scene of the Vietnam War (Milius's original plan), but that it was possible to read the Vietnam War through *Heart of Darkness*.

The adaptation of the novel is played out through a series of corresponding elements which are not always rigid, which are often overlapping and intertwined but which remain, at the same time, rigorous. The colonial Agent Kurtz relates to Colonel Kurtz, as (Sea) Captain Marlow relates to (Special Forces) Captain Willard, as Africa relates to Vietnam, as the nameless river relates to the Nung River, as the Thames relates to the Ohio river, as Marlow's steamer relates to the Navy patrol boat, as Marlow's hiring by the company relates to the mission assigned to Willard, as the colonial enterprise relates to the war, as the company relates to the army (it is no coincidence that Willard at a certain point defines it as "the corporation"), as the Africans relate to the Vietnamese, as the members of the company relate to the Generals and other top members of the army, as the Russian harlequin relates to the American photo reporter, as Agent Kurtz's internal station relates to Colonel Kurtz's compound, as the tribes ruled by Agent Kurtz relate to the men and women at Colonel Kurtz's compound, as the "gorgeous" (African) woman[11] relates to the Vietnamese woman on her knees, as the Intended of Agent Kurtz relates to the wife of Colonel Kurtz, as the fragmentary stories about Agent Kurtz relate to the stories by General Corman about Colonel Kurtz, and, above all, to the dossier read by Willard during the trip, as the voice of Agent Kurtz relates to the tape on which the voice of Colonel Kurtz is recorded, as Fresleven relates to Colby, as Agent Kurtz's pamphlet relates to the typewritten pages of Colonel Kurtz, as the French ship which shoots at an invisible village relates to the soldier Roach who shoots at an invisible Vietcong, as the severed heads on the stakes that Marlow sees from his boat relate to the severed heads and hanging corpses

in Kurtz's compound, as the African jungle relates to the jungle of South East Asia, as the "pieces of decaying machinery"[12] abandoned in the coastal station relate to the tail of the airplane sunk in the river and eaten up by the vegetation which the Navy patrol boat comes across at a certain point, as the fever which hits Marlow and the agents relates to the drugs used by the soldiers, as enslaving and plundering relate to murder… and so on, and so on.

The generating core lies in the pairs Marlow/Willard and Agent Kurtz/Colonel Kurtz. Willard and Marlow play the same role. It is true that of the narrative procedure used by Conrad, which is loaded with crucial semantic responsibilities, in the film we only find a slight trace. *Heart of Darkness* is a story within a story: Marlow, the intradiegetic narrator, tells a group of listeners about one of his previous adventures (going back up the river); and one of the listeners narrates in turn to us, the readers, how Marlow once related one of his prevous adventures. Of all this, all we have in the film is the off-screen voice of Willard, which gives the story a retrospective nature, allowing us to imagine a possible audience, and the long opening sequence which works as a sort of narrative "frame", though not in rigorous narratological terms[13]. Nonetheless, Marlow and Willard are both "reflector characters", not only in the technical sense of how narrative point of view is handled in their regard, but in a broader epistemological sense. Technically, Coppola avoided the subjective camera (used in the film very sparingly), choosing instead to display Willard's point of view as a "thing": through a series of close-ups inserted in the editing of the scenes throughout the film, commenting in silence, we always have the stunned and shocked look of Willard, who projects his own bewilderment onto the atrocious and absurd spectacle of the war. We see that spectacle through his eyes in the sense that we continuously see the reflection of it on his face. Agent Kurtz and Colonel Kurtz play the same role. They both unmask the lies - the lies and ideology of colonialism, the lies and ideology of imperialism and war - by means not only of what they say, but of what they do and are. And if Marlow, during his trip, experiences a gradual identification with Agent Kurtz and witnesses his death, Willard, during his trip, almost *becomes* Colonel Kurtz and kills him: the film's thematic fidelity to the novel leads here to a process of intensification and hyperbole.

I began by speaking of the pact that the cinema has made with literature, suggesting that it is important to understand what the cinema does with the literary stories and plots. Clearly, a very broad field of possibilities is open: cinema can take the soul of a work of literature to preserve or to change it in the most diverse ways. The two adaptations I have analysed exemplify two different modalities of the pact and two antithetical relationships with the literary tradition. *Barry Lyndon* is an extraordinary example of the way in which a film can work with literary models: Kubrick, while working within cinematic aesthetics, plays between two literary worlds, bringing the cinema

towards literature. *Apocalypse Now* travels the opposite road: although the Vietnam War has inspired many narrative and theatrical works, it is a quintessentially cinematic theme, and rarely has a film taken from a novel so clearly exhibited the technological dimension which is film-specific. Coppola brings literature towards the cinema, almost tearing the novel away from its literary roots.

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References

[1] F. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon Hitchcock*, Paris, Éditions Ramsay, 1983, p. 105.

[2] See A. Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinema?*, II, *Le cinéma et les autres arts*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1959. See also, of the same author, "Adaptations, or the Cinema as Digest", trans. by A. Biette and B. Cardullo, in *Film Adaptation*, ed. J. Naremore, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. 19-27.

[3] J. Conrad, preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, in *The "Nigger" of the Narcissus*, Norton Critical Edition, New York, Norton & Company, 1979, p. 147.

[4] C. Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinema*, Paris, Klincksieck, 2002, pp. 53-55.

[5] G.- D. Farcy, "L'adaptation dans tout ses états", *Poétique*, 96 (November 1993), p. 390.

[6] M. Ciment, *Kubrick. Édition définitive*, Paris, Calmann-Levy, 2001, p. 167. The interview by Ciment appeared originally in "L'Express", August 30 and September 5, 1976.

[7] The novel, in the first edition, published in "Fraser's Magazine" in 1844, was divided into two parts. The First part ended with the marriage of Redmond Barry and Lady Lyndon. The second part was much shorter. Bryan's death, the separation of Barry and Lady Lyndon and Barry's ruin were all concentrated in the last chapter. Kubrick reuses the original division but switches the marriage to Lady Lyndon to the start of the second part and shortens the duration of the latter narrative segments. The film, then, is divided into two absolutely symmetrical parts: the first, "By waht means Redmond Barry acquired the style and the title of Barry Lyndon"; the second, "Containing an accountof the misfortunes and disasters which befell Barry Lyndon". In this way, the marriage to Lady Lyndon, the peak of Barrys' fortune, becomes, at the same time, the start of his downfall.

[8] F. Moretti, *Il romanzo di formazione*, Torino, Einaudi, 1999, p. 6.

[9] P. Cowie, *Le petit livre de Apocalypse Now*, trans. by B. Achour, Paris, Cinéditions, 2001, pp. 212-214.

[10] "Apocalypse Now est une relecture de la nouvelle - devenue aujourd'hui un classique - de Joseph Conrad, *Au coeur des ténèbres*. L'action se situe en 1968 pendant la Guerre du Viêt-nam. […] Alors que notre héros traverse l'absurdité et la folie de l'engagement américain dans cette guerre, la jungle, sa mystique primitive et son incroyable puissance l'attirent de plus en plus. Il devient évident que la guerre menée par l'Amérique 'pour apporter la civilisation à des millions d'ignorants' n'est rien d'autre que le prolongement d'un colonialisme mercantile, et que l'horreur et la sauvagerie ne se trouvent pas dans la jungle, mais dans la culture américaine elle-même […]". *Ibidem*, pp. 73-74.

[11] J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Norton Critical Edition, New York, London, Norton & Company, 1988, p. 60.

[12]*Ibidem*, p. 19.

[13] Here I have no space for a detailed analysis of the opening sequence, which rises many questions as to the narrative frame, the "position" (in time and space) of Willard's restrospective voice (is *all film* a flashback, from the very first shot?), the visual flashforwards which it contains, the use of the suibjective camera at certain given moments, to mention only a few.

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