

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF FILMS AND NEW DIGITAL TECHNIQUES

*A critical edition is both the process and the product,
a close analysis of the text according to well-known methods,
and the final results of this analysis.*

B. Bentivogli, P. Vecchi Galli, *Filologia italiana*

*Every edition is a form of interpretation;
there is no model-edition, because every edition is bound to its times,
while it opens itself up to a certain practice
as it follows a variable kind of teleology [...]
mechanical reproduction has become so sophisticated
that it can be responsible for an equivalent of the original document,
thus releasing the mental value of a critical edition.*

G. Contini, *Breviario di ecdotica*

Besides a definition of critical edition based on closeness to the original source, it is possible to envision a critical edition as a work-in-progress meant to deliver an otherwise lost text. This work-in-progress type of critical edition can also be called an "open text" in the sense that every reader/viewer, through the tools (generally labeled as "critical apparatus") offered by the critic/editor, can repeat, re-evaluate and even revise a whole philological itinerary. This kind of edition is, therefore, a process and a product, a method and a goal, a work and a concrete object.

Our contemporary age is characterized by a strong destabilization of the filmic text's canonical status. Despite the notion of an allegedly single text, more and more versions and editions are available, not to mention all the changes that have taken place in the areas of production, distribution, exhibition, reception, and consumption. In the wake of the digital revolution, even film-making has changed along with the gradual disappearance of certain techniques of reproduction. Thus, the philological labor of the critical edition has taken on a different value, by opening itself up to a more flexible understanding of textual production. It is time to reassess: what is a critical edition? Its function? Its methods? Its goals? Its limits? Its intellectual history? By trying to deal with these questions, we would like to propose a general orientation and not a definitive method. For instance, no matter which kind of critical edition are we dealing with, the subjective interpretation is always involved.

Critical editions in DVD

Should we embrace or abandon the DVD format for critical editions of filmic texts? By using literature as a model, what are the points of contact and the points of divergence with the critical edition of a film on DVD? Is it useful, for instance, to present the filmic text with an introduction which might tell the viewer/reader how to handle the various materials gathered around the text? Is it necessary to develop a standardized sign-system through which the viewer/reader can navigate inside the critical *apparatus*? Is it useful to offer to the reader/viewer the possibility to explore the historical witnesses' opinions used for the critical edition? Are we looking for a standard or for a critical edition based on a closed model? Should a critical edition avoid generalized guidelines and follow the requirements of each case based on the editor's views and the kind of film at hand? Is the DVD the only and the best kind of technology to produce critical editions?

Critical and Documentary Editions

We need to distinguish between critical edition and documentation. We are dealing here with two different projects. The documents themselves must be evaluated in the light of certain visualization techniques, because even their reproduction is a critical gesture. The first question is whether a certain edition should be based on texts surviving in the original documents or should also include corrections, revisions, and interpretations based on a critical intervention. For instance, in the case of a film on DVD, no matter how much the so-called "extras" may be valuable, these additional materials do not necessarily constitute a critical edition. The documentary method is focused on the past revisited through the lens of surviving physical objects; by contrast, the critical edition method calls for a level of creative interpretation due to the fact that even the original documents attached to a text may end up misleading the viewer/reader.

Digital Critical Apparatus

It is crucial to make clear what are the sources of the critical edition, so that these very same sources may be consulted and verified. In the case of a literary critical edition, usually the editor spells out in the introduction which sources have been left out and why; when it is necessary the critical *apparatus* highlights the alternative interpretations added by the editor. These are the so-called authorial notes. This editorial action documents the choices that have been made. In the light of this dynamic of disclosure, it is possible to compare the critical *apparatus* to the site of a textual drama. The critical apparatus should tell us everything about the life of a text; from its original moment of conception to the very last moment of its reception. In the history of literary criticism, recent technological developments have enabled editors to overcome the limits of the so-called *codex* format. Turning now our attention to film history, only thanks to the development of DVDs it has been possible to digitalize entire film-prints. Among literary specialists, it is possible to talk about the "body" of the critical edition? Would this terminology apply just as well to film studies?

Philology, Products, Digital Processes

There are closed structures (CD-ROM, DVD), which are not too different from a critical edition on paper. There are also open structures (hyper-texts, data-bases) which are also capable of housing the critical edition in such a way to allow the reader/viewer to interact so much that these open structures profoundly differ from the traditional concept of critical edition. Should the *apparatus* remain on the side of the critical edition or should be a fundamental part of it? Is this dilemma a new way of staging the well-known tension between text and palimpsest? Can the palimpsest work as a model only for the construction of the *apparatus* and of the documentation, or should it be extended to the critical edition as a whole? Is it possible to say that, because of the way the DVD is built to begin with, the filmic text is bound to confuse itself with its critical *apparatus*? How is it possible to distinguish between these two levels inside the DVD format?

Critical Edition/Public

The new media landscape allows for the circulation of cinema and its remediation on a scale which we have never seen unfold so massively. Classic films have been recently the object of re-editions which we have seen go from restored version, to television programming; to archive re-printing; to re-release on a commercial level; from the first home-video editions to recent DVD editions, not too mention what is available on-line. There is also a historical relation between technological transformation and cinephilia. Looking back at the days of the advent of sound, cinephilia, the development of film archives, and the films themselves were all bound up together by a feeling of complicity among a few devotees; by contrast, from the fifties, cinephilia has began to slowly become an economic force.

Participants

Hans-Michael Bock, Giulio Bursi, Jean-Pierre Candeloro, Paolo Caneppele, Michele Canosa, Angela Dalle Vacche, Natascha Drubek-Meyer, Anna Fiaccarini, Joseph Garncarz, Vinzenz Hediger, Nikolai Izvolov, Uli Jung, Kenneth Knoespel, Vittoria Lera, Martin Loiperdinger, Maria Assunta Pimpinelli, Davide Pozzi, Leonardo Quaresima, François Thomas, Sergio Toffetti, Simone Venturini, Christoph Wahl.

Institutions

Ruhr Universität Bochum, Università di Bologna, La Camera Ottica (Gorizia), Cineteca Comunale di Bologna, CineGraph (Hamburg), FAMU (Prague), Filmmuseum (Wien), GeorgiaTech (Atlanta), L'Immagine Ritrovata (Bologna), Istituto LUCE (Roma), Cineteca Nazionale (Roma), Research Institute for the Art of Cinema/NIK, (Moscow), Università della Svizzera Italiana (Lugano), Université de Paris III, Universität Siegen, Universität Trier, Università degli Studi di Udine.