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Jason Mark Ward, *The Forgotten Film Adaptations of D. H. Lawrence's Short Stories*.

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Reviewed by Louis K. Greiff

Jason Ward's *The Forgotten Film Adaptations of D. H. Lawrence's Short Stories* is the latest of four books devoted to Lawrence on film. Its predecessors are Gerald R. Barrett and Thomas L. Erskine's *From Fiction to Film: D. H. Lawrence's 'The Rocking-Horse Winner'* (Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1974), a casebook on the first Lawrence film adaptation, Jane Jaffe Young's *D. H. Lawrence on Screen* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), an examination of 'The Rocking-Horse Winner', *Sons and Lovers*, and *Women in Love* on film, and Louis K. Greiff's *D. H. Lawrence: Fifty Years on Film* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2001), a study of the large-screen adaptations of Lawrence's life and works from 1949 to the end of the twentieth century. Because of its attention to Anthony Pelissier's film *The Rocking-Horse Winner* (1949), as well as later adaptations of the same story, Ward's work comes full circle to the beginning of Lawrentian adaptation studies. In other respects, however, it explores uncharted territory by examining seven films, six of which were released in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. If not entirely lost, five of these films are, at best, difficult to obtain.

Ward's dual argument is announced and discussed in his introduction. First, the text is described as fluid rather than fixed on several counts. Often multiple versions exist, especially so with Lawrence's texts. Even if an authoritative version is established, it remains open to endless readings. All critical studies and film adaptations attach themselves to the text and become part of an ever-evolving entity, adapting as it moves through time and cultural change. Secondly, every film adaptation is itself a critical reading

of the text and also one work of art creatively responding to and interacting with another.

Chapter One of Ward's study focuses, in part, on the extant criticism devoted to Lawrence on film. As a result of his commitment to fluidity, in text and adaptation alike, Ward proves needlessly strident in his condemnation of textual fidelity as a measure of cinematic quality, and likewise of any critic who values it, including those critics whose work he otherwise admires. No less than six such critics come under attack and, unfortunately, the zeal with which Ward pursues their indictment leads him into error. He states that Greiff's work on the Lawrence films "refers to films that deviate from the source as betrayals" (39). A footnote adds that this work "uses various forms of the word 'betray' eight times to describe adaptations of Lawrence" (39 n.26). It is always risky to isolate a single word out of context, especially a word as highly charged as "betray". A check of Ward's references reveals that three uses of "betray" are part of more complex and less accusatory observations, for example "betrayed and remade", "celebrate ... as it simultaneously betrays", and "even their betrayal of Lawrence has a Lawrentian spin to it". More seriously, two instances of "betray" occur in quotations from secondary sources and thus are not Greiff's own words. One final "betray" is used in its secondary sense of "reveal" and is unrelated to discussion of the films.

Such instances of overstatement and inaccuracy diminish the effectiveness of Ward's first chapter. Matters improve, however, beginning with Chapter Two where Ward turns from his central argument and the other critics to seven Lawrence film adaptations. In what he terms case studies, Chapter Two examines Mark Partridge's 2002 adaptation of 'Odour of Chrysanthemums'. Chapter Three considers Robert Burgos's 1984 film of 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter' and Chapter Four examines five adaptations of 'The Rocking-Horse Winner'. All of these adaptations are short films except for Pelissier's 1949 feature-length release.

Ward's treatment of Mark Partridge's *Odour of Chrysanthemums* approaches it as palimpsest. The film contains

visual allusions to religious painting, for example, that revive religious content in early versions of the story that Lawrence eventually excised. Ward's commentary on Partridge's film is both varied and comprehensive, taking in the use of lighting, music and positioning of the three main actors as they transform the story's emotional content into sight and sound. "Partridge's expertise in cinematography", Ward writes, "can be seen in the way that he employs shallow focus and the contrast between light and dark to express the emotions and themes of Lawrence's text" (62-3). It is clear from this quotation – and many others like it throughout the book – that in practice Ward has a more positive view of textual fidelity than he expresses in theory. This is not surprising because attending to the film's relationship with the text is both necessary and inevitable in adaptation studies. The text gives life to and inspires the film. Should their interconnectedness cease to exist, the film would cease to be an adaptation.



Figure 5: Geraldine O'Rawe as Elizabeth Bates in *Odour of Chrysanthemums* (2002), directed by Mark Partridge.

In Ward's subsequent chapters, dealing with films of 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter' and 'The Rocking-Horse Winner', he takes up a new strategy, approaching all six adaptations through genre. Robert Burgos, director of *The Horse-Dealer's Daughter*, relocated Lawrence's story to the American West in the early years of the twentieth century. Thus Ward employs the framework of the Western genre to discuss it. He then examines five 'Rocking-Horse' films by way of five separate genres, approaching Pelissier's 1949 production as film noir, Peter Medak's 1977 educational film as horror TV, Robert Bierman's 1981 version as heritage film (similar to *Downton Abbey*), Michael Almereyda's 1998 experimental effort as art film, and finally Sara Pratter's 2002 *Pharaoh's Heart* as melodrama. Ward's generic approach yields a lively discussion, both original and incisive. Framing all but one of the films within the confines of genre, however, seems far removed from the book's otherwise consistent celebration of fluidity. Ward's concluding chapter provides a summary of the book along with a brief discussion of two recent Lawrence films, Bob Calabritto's *Rocking-Horse Winner* (2010) and Jo Lewis's *Lady Luck* (2013), another adaptation of the same story.

Despite occasional shortcomings, *The Forgotten Adaptations of D. H. Lawrence's Short Stories* is a welcome addition to the growing body of Lawrence film scholarship. Its discussion of *Odour of Chrysanthemums* is excellent, clearly a labour of love and the strongest chapter of Ward's book. More generally, the examination of all seven films is always original and provocative. Perhaps Ward's most basic yet significant achievement is simply calling his readers' attention to film adaptations they may know nothing about despite their level of interest in Lawrence or even their knowledge of his life and works.