

R. Costa de Beauregard Proposal for a paper at the Paris September 2016 SERCIA conference

Title: The award winning TV series *Downton Abbey* -1912-1922 (season 1-4): a 'docu-fiction'?

This TV series is a faithful document on England's social history upon a period of ten years (1912-1922) and yet also relies on strategies borrowed from the art of fiction, such as the choice of a rather secluded world – setting, costumes, social standards – which is a far cry from today's TV audiences' experience, and thus entertains us by a picturesque – sometimes humorous and never nostalgic -- depiction of a past which nevertheless claims to be an authentic 'present'.

However the narrative also relies on time as well as changes in the understanding of this microcosm within a macrocosmic perspective; the approach of history is not teleological or explanatory but rather a statement about self-fashioning as far as characterisation goes. This typically Early English Renaissance concept of individualism as the sole rule of social life provides the series with an ideological dimension which develops into a redefining of consciousness as opposed to moral conscience in a rather Jamesian --and thus topical -- fashion.

Literary topoï are thus conflated with historical ones, as the structure of the family saga and its use of a classical 'heritage' cultural imagery blends a realistic rendering of everyday details with the underlying sense of a poignant -- because so very human -- tragedy.

The borderline between cinema and TV serials remains thin, if not deliberately understated.

Bio-bibliography of author

Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard : Emeritus Professor, Université de Toulouse II Jean-Jaurès. Profile : Art and Film Anglo-Saxon Studies. Publications: Author:**1992**: *Nicholas Hilliard et l'imaginaire élisabéthain* Paris : CNRS ; Author:**2000** : *Silent Elizabethans-The Language of Colour of two Miniaturists*, Montpellier : CERRA. Director: **1997** : *Le Cinéma et ses objets-Objects in Film*, Poitiers: La Licorne; Director:**2009** : *Cinéma et Couleur- Film and Colour*, Paris : Michel Houdiard. **Present research**: phenomenology and film. Corpus : Early Cinema.