

On Bert Cardullo
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I have an interest in French films from the 1960s and '70s collectively called The French New Wave. This week I got into a highly touted recent biography of prominent New Wave director Eric Rohmer (*Eric Rohmer: A Biography*, by Antoine de Baecque and Noel Herpe—very disappointing by the way, and I coughed up \$31.19 for it, ouch). Since the book wasn't working for me, I decided to go online and see if I could find an interview with Rohmer and came across one from back in 2008—Rohmer died in 2010--that looked promising in the academic journal *French Forum*, which is published by the University of Nebraska Press: “An Auteur for All Seasons: An Interview with Eric Rohmer.” The interviewer was Bert Cardullo, nobody I'd ever heard of. But when I got to the site instead of the interview I was looking for, there was this:

Retraction

The journal's editorial office and publisher accepted and published the article under good faith and warranty from its author regarding the originality of the material. However, it has recently come to light that said warranty and trust were knowingly violated by Professor Cardullo, whose submission recreates in full an interview conducted by Graham Petrie that first appeared in *Film Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1971): 34-41. French Forum, Inc. and the University of Nebraska Press are committed to the highest standards of publication ethics and are thus compelled to retract the plagiarized material from this database. In so doing we wish to express our sincerest regret to *Film Quarterly*, Graham Petrie, and our readers with assurances that we will do all in our power to prevent such reprehensible circumstances from rising again.

How about that. Bert Cardullo, whoever he is, pulled a fast one and got caught. I immediately shifted gears: off of Eric Rohmer and on to Bert Cardullo. For whatever reason, plagiarism and plagiarists fascinate me. I've spent inordinate amounts of time looking into this topic, can't get enough of it. It is not just any kind of plagiarism that interests me. Until a couple of years ago, I taught in high schools and universities and ran into a fair amount of student plagiarism. I found it just kind of sad and embarrassing and I would say on the sly to offenders, "Don't do any more of this, OK? Let's just forget about it." The kind of plagiarism that intrigues me no end is, call it, major league plagiarism. Like the word is that T.S. Eliot stole a lot of "The Waste Land," and Bert Cardullo here getting his lifted interview into print in a major academic journal.

So I started Googling around on my laptop about Bert Cardullo. It turns out that Bert is far from a first time offender with his bogus Eric Rohmer interview. In 2010, *The New Yorker* magazine reprinted a an interview by "critic and scholar" Bert Cardullo with another French New Wave film director, Francois Truffaut, just before Truffaut's death from a brain tumor. Oops. It came to light that Bert's interview was stunningly similar, as in word-for-word, with captioned translations of interviews with Truffaut that were features in DVDs of Truffaut's films. Needless to say, this raised the question of whether Bert had ever been in the great director's presence; probably not.

So who is Bert Cardullo? It turns out that Bert's big.

Dr. Bert [from Robert] Cardullo . . . Doctor of Fine Arts degree from Yale University . . . editor and translator as well as a critic and dramaturge . . . published over twenty books [including one entitled *Interviews with Eric Rohmer*] . . . articles in such leading journals as *The Yale Review*, *Cambridge Quarterly*, and *American Theatre* . . . regular film critic for *The Hudson Review* . . . on the theatre and film advisory panel of the National Endowment for the Humanities . . . twice appointed a Fulbright Scholar . . . University of Michigan professor of

theater and drama . . . speaker at educational institutions and literary gatherings.

And what do his colleagues think of Bert? Check out these accolades:

Film scholar Dan Harper: “Among my contemporaries, the best film critic writing in English in America is Bert Cardullo, and *Screen Writings* [a book of his] proves why.”

Jerry White, University of Alberta: “A lot of what Bert Cardullo has to say about contemporary world cinema would be interesting to a very wide audience. He is someone with an impressive and stimulating command of the difficult dance of the film review.”

The poet Frederick Morgan: “Bert Cardullo's articles and reviews are invariably intelligent, original, and highly informed. I have been a sturdy admirer of his work for years; he's a solid writer and an equally solid judge.”

Well, maybe Bert's not so solid. The January, 2011 issue of *Notes on Contemporary Literature* contains this notice:

This is to inform the readership of “Notes” that “Marguerite Ida-Helena Annabel in Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*” by Bert Cardullo is largely plagiarized from pages 82 through 85 of Professor Sarah Bey-Cheng's book “*Mama Dada: Gertrude Stein's Avant-Garde Theater*.” We condemn Bert Cardullo's dishonesty and apologize to Professor Bey-Cheng and our readers that it escaped our editorial scrutiny.

And there's more: In 2012 *The Cambridge Quarterly* retracted no fewer than four of Bert's articles. The problem in this case is that Bert had copied two of them from the writings of film critic Stanley Kauffmann and the other two he had published elsewhere in the past; with the last two, I guess it could be said that Bert was plagiarizing himself.

Bert gets a lot of mileage out of what he writes. For instance, he published the same exact article under different titles in three different publications:

“The Doctored Dilemma: Shaw’s Approach to Tragedy in *The Doctor’s Dilemma*” in *Modern Language Review* 106. 3 (July 2011): 647-661.

“Play Doctor, Doctor Death: Shaw, Ibsen and Modern Tragedy” in *Comparative Drama* 45.3 (Fall 2011): 271-288.

“Whose Life is It, Anyway? Shaw, The Doctor’s Dilemma and Modern Tragedy” in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 31 (2011): 102-117.

Bert doesn’t always go to the trouble of changing titles. The article, “Shaw, The Philanderer, and the (Un)Making of Shavian Drama” appeared in two journals: *Forum Modernes Theater*; and *Neophilologus*.

We aren’t done. *Studies in French Cinema* retracted Bert’s 2013 article “Cinema as Social Documentary” when it found out it had been previously published by Marco Grosoli in the journal *New Readings*. And Bert’s introduction in a book he coedited, *Theater of the Avant Garde*, contains good-sized chunks of Christopher Innes's *Avant Garde Theatre*.

Evidently Bert really likes Stanley Kaufmann. Pages 70-72 and pages 85-86 of his book *Vittorio De Sica* is plagiarized from Kauffmann's reviews; pages 56-58 and page 195 of his book *Waves from the East* are copied from Kauffmann’s reviews; his two-volume book *Screen Writings* is replete with plagiarisms from Kauffmann's reviews; his book *The Films of Robert Bresson* includes an essay, "Dostoyevskian Surge, Bressonian Spirit" that plagiarizes virtually all of Kauffmann's review of "L'Argent"; pages 47-49 of his book *Screening the Stage* are taken from

Kauffmann's review of "Betrayal"; and his essay "The Sounds (and Sights) of Silence: 'Way Down East' as Play and Film" is stolen from Kauffmann's essay "D.W. Griffith's 'Way Down East'."

Bert is versatile; he doesn't just limit himself to plagiarism. The writer Gonul Donmez-Colin asserts: "Bert Cardullo took a chapter from my book *Cinemas of the Other: A Personal Journey with Filmmakers from the Middle East and Central Asia* and put it in his book *Waves from the East: New World Cinema, Asian Style; Essays and Interviews* without my permission."

What's my reaction to what Bert Cardullo has been up to? I know I'm supposed to be outraged, how dare he do such terrible things. But I'm sitting here smiling; reading about Bert Cardullo has brightened my day, that's the truth of it. The sheer audacity of Bert's stunts, the blatant no-holds, barred fraudulence of them, the freeness of them—Bert's a free man--does it for me. Pulling the legs of the self-satisfied, the pompous—these academic journals, *The New Yorker*—good for you, Bert. Unintentionally we can assume, but still, Bert is providing valuable lessons to us all. His antics underscore that much of what we read and hear isn't true. His phony *New Yorker* interview isn't the only thing phony in that publication, you can bet the mortgage on that. By taking it to the extreme, Bert is holding up a mirror to the rest of us: we are all con artists and plagiarists. We are all sneaking around and lying on our jobs and with the people in our lives. We are all pontificating ideas about politics, art, how to live, and whatever else as if we came up with them when, really, we are just parroting what we've read or heard without saying where we got it. We are all copying other people's lives without attribution. Let's have lunch, Bert.