

to the film viewer from on high no less) that confirm the "holiness" of the "sacrifice" performed by the film's sexual martyr, Bess. To abbreviate her argument, Nelson seeks to rescue the ending of von Trier's film from detractors who find it "an unholy alliance of 1940s movie kitsch with organized religion" (Nelson 2001: 229). She does so by claiming that, absent "the metaphysical level on which the bells operate . . . *Breaking the Waves* would be just another example of the sort of art Westerners have happily consumed for a hundred and fifty years: social realism shading into modernism that steadfastly upholds a rational-empirical worldview" (Nelson 2001: 229). And she concludes:

To the adherents of this sensibility, the demand for "realism" is as narrow and two dimensional as the bells are to detractors of *Breaking the Waves*. In New Expressionist terms, the bells represent a Shakespearean ending in which the moral order has been restored by a message from those inner areas of reality coincident with a transcendental reality we do not experience with our five senses – and it is a defiant message in the face of all sensible judgment as rendered by the well-intentioned, both within the film and in the audience. (Nelson 2001: 230)

Taymor would no doubt discern some slippage between Nelson's effort to recuperate the space of the spiritual or uncanny for Western art and her own effort to generate – "as if redemption were a possibility" (2000: 185) – an ethical alternative to the very different kind of "Shakespearean ending" with which she was contending in *Titus*. For Taymor, the *idea of a possibility* – of release, escape, redemption – is about as far as it gets. However, the solution she arrives at through the medium of young Lucius uncannily echoes von Trier's conclusion, as the soundtrack dissolves from the cries of infants, to the shriek of birds of prey, to peals of bells. When Taymor briefly quotes Edward Munch's "The Scream" (1897) in the opening scene of *Titus*, the gesture connects her project with the earliest aims of Expressionism: to represent feelings, emotions, reactions to the world, rather than the world itself. Young Lucius's departure into a cinematic sunrise invites us to think along the vector of this aesthetic. Whereas the terrified figure in Munch's painting turns its back to a burning sky, this figure turns to face it: daring it, risking it. This reframing gesture suggests that while the world does not change – indeed, remains full of dehumanizing violence – one's stance in relation to it can change. The figure of exit is important, then, not because such exits exist as such or are being offered (that would be compensatory reassurance) but because they can be imagined. In Nelson's words, such reframing gestures mark "the moment when we become completely conscious of the boundaries of the worldview we have comfortably inhabited for several centuries that is also, inevitably, the moment we abandon it: we see the door in the sky, and we walk through it" (Nelson 2001: 23).

5 Vernacular Shakespeare

The adaptations explored in this chapter operate in a different vein of cultural reference and technical sophistication than the comparatively "high-style" remediations of *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus* on which we have focused thus far. Julie Taymor's subject is nothing less than "the last 2000 years of man's inhumanity to man," and the art-forms and iconography through which that inhumanity has been represented. Michael Almereyda's is a play to which Western culture has regularly returned over the course of 400 years to stage the conflict between the always unsatisfied desire for presence and certainty and the technologies that mediate that desire. By contrast, the "subject" of a film like Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* could be said to be adaptation itself, particularly the adaptation of Shakespeare to "the movies," as that term is commonly understood in the vernacular surround of American popular culture.

Several obstacles have long stood in the way of Shakespeare meeting America "on equal terms" at the movies. In her article "Welcoming Shakespeare into the Caliban Family" (1996) culture critic Margo Jefferson identifies the first of these as a problem of language:

Shakespeare must meet America at the movies, and on equal terms. Combative, experimental and mutually seductive, whether in a mass-culture smash or a quirky art house "docudrama" like Al Pacino's current "Looking for Richard." . . . Shakespeare must adjust to city street and suburban mall English, constantly reinvented by different regions, neighborhoods, races, ethnicities and classes. (1996: C11, 16)

No matter how vividly present the architecture of a cinematic Venice or Verona may seem, characters speaking Shakespearean verse (particularly in the classic British acting tradition) may sound stuffy and mannered, if not downright foreign to modern American audiences. Moreover, the passage implies, a film fully invested in that language reflects a world of unequals: on the one hand an educated elite who inherit the difficult language as their own; on the other, those urban and suburban speakers from "different regions, neighborhoods, races, ethnicities" who do not. In this chapter we explore several recent films that set out in different ways to redesign Shakespearean language to echo the pacing and rhythms, the sounds and stylings, of the American street. At the same time, we explore the different vocabulary

- parody, burlesque, and masquerade
- docudrama
- popular culture
- sound
- riffing
- sampling

required for talking about adaptations that may be deeply engaged with a playtext or some part of it, without being conventionally "faithful" to it.

Both the abrasive rhythms and duller textures of American urban and suburban life are put to work in such films as Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), William Reilly's *Men of Respect* (1990), James Gavin Bedford's *The Street King* (aka *King Rikki*) (2002), Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996), and especially Billy Morrissette's *Scotland, PA* (2001). What links these films is their effort not just to make Shakespeare viable in the popular marketplace but to find a way of translating Shakespeare into a specifically American cinematic vernacular. This involves a transformative approach to spoken language in its own right as well as a transformation or compression of stage-dialogue into cinematic image or gesture. But vernacular translation also means different things for each of the filmmakers in question. For Morrissette it involves a sustained reckoning with the competing vernaculars of music, radio, and television. For Van Sant, it occasions the "translation" or transposition of Shakespeare into American English paraphrase, most effectively in the sequence when his Prince Hal figure, Scott Faver (Keanu Reeves), rejects Bob Pigeon (William Richert), his vagabond "Falstaff" surrogate. The deployment of Shakespeare in *Idaho* is also signaled by a movement out of the speech patterns of the street, into the high style of blank verse directly culled from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. In these instances, Shakespeare is superimposed on the matter of the street in the estranging manner that Brecht highlighted movements from ordinary speech to songs. This privileging of Shakespeare-derived language differentiates *Idaho* from *Men of Respect* and *The Street King*, which translate Shakespeare into "mafiaspeak" and "spanglish," respectively, and rely upon clever citational strategies and visual substitutions to mark their respective debts to – and difference from – *Macbeth* and *Richard III*.¹ In Pacino's film, Shakespeare's language is, for the most part, "done straight." But Pacino also invites large incursions of urban American speech patterns, compresses long speeches into shorter ensembles of speech-actions, and unmoors entire passages in order to restructure our experience of the play.

Shakespeare and the Street: Looking for Richard

Looking for Richard begins portentously with the tolling of a church bell, punctuating a wintry view of bare trees and a Gothic-spired church as a British-accented actor's voice speaks lines from *The Tempest* that will be reprised at the end. The church view fades into that of a New York brown-brick apartment house rising above a schoolyard where a boy shoots baskets. Pacino wanders aimlessly into the frame, dressed in black and wearing a baseball cap turned backwards on his head. The montage fades back to the church, to fingers flipping through the pages of a Shakespearean playtext, then again to the playground where

Pacino turns to notice the camera as the speech concludes. At this point the film proper abruptly begins: an animated indoor scene which finds Pacino in company with his associates beginning their interrogation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Two aspects of this preface are noteworthy: (1) the artful dissolving of the English pastoral scene into American urban space, which is mediated by the speaking voice of Prospero and the black-and-white pages of the playtext (as well as the contrast they make with the colorful but artless graffiti on the wall of the apartment building); and (2) the craftily conceived "look" of Pacino as he shambles aimlessly into our gaze wearing the immediately recognizable signs of adolescent sloth and studied indifference. Old world beauty, seriousness, and decorum are juxtaposed against the relaxed and sloppy standards of a new world which, as this first scene develops, speaks in a lively, contentious patter as the struggle to assemble a common or consensus understanding of the Shakespearean playtext takes shape.

Although his approach to *Richard III* is avowedly "docudramatic," what Pacino documents in the most compelling moments of his film is how much more dramatic Shakespeare can be made by "penetrating into what at every moment the text is about," and how film itself may be better positioned than theater to bring the truth of the speaking voice to the surface. These insights belong to Peter Brook, one of the few British authorities in the film whose pronouncements are not violated by a knowing smirk or jump-cut. According to Brook, American actors can achieve this speaking voice as long as they stop being "obsessed with a British way of regarding text" – that is, as a kind of musical score – and embrace the sustained exploration of character and motivation that has been a hallmark of American acting since the high-tide period of "the Method" and New York's Actors Studio.² Brook elaborates this point at length in a clearly privileged moment in Pacino's film, claiming that:

Every actor knows that the quieter he speaks, the closer he can be to himself. And when you play Shakespeare in close up in a film and have a mike and can really speak the verse as quietly as this [Brook demonstrates as he speaks], you are not going against the grain of verse but are going in the right direction because you are really allowing the verse to be a man speaking his inner world.

While it is unclear whether Pacino "quotes" Brook merely to articulate a position to which he has already committed himself, Brook's statements bring into focus two prevailing concerns of Pacino's project. First, they underline its Americanness, which is apparent not only in the acting choices and speech patterns of Pacino and his cast, but also in their alternating anxiety and hostility toward the authority of British acting, scholarship, and behavior. (All the scholarly talking heads in the film are uncoincidentally British.) Second, they emphasize Pacino's commitment to a conspicuously cinematic (and "Method"-oriented) dissolving of the distance between word and feeling as a way of getting at the truth of experience.³

Pacino's film combines an unusual blend of humility and deference to Shakespeare with confidence, nay arrogance, regarding the ability of actors, particularly *American* actors, to seize possession of a play to which they claim to contribute an energy and "truth" that escapes the capacity of scholars and other kinds of actors to deliver. The claim Pacino makes is conveyed with both conviction and a discernible measure of irony. He is well aware (we think) of his own lack of authority as either scholar or well-trained speaker of the verse. But he also wants to persuade us that the playing-space Shakespeare left behind has been vacated or, what amounts to the same thing, has been ineffectively filled by a theatrical and scholarly establishment that operates more as a heritage industry than as a creative force that can bring anything close to Shakespeare's original power to dramatic production. This consideration is dramatically realized in a scene played more for its farcical than serious potential: when Pacino and his sidekick Frederic Kimball pay a surprise visit to the Shakespeare birthplace. There they find, to their manifest surprise, that no one is home – and that, moreover, the beds are too small and the rooms too threadbare and narrow to have housed so august a presence as the Bard.

One way of reading this scene is to see the visit as a pilgrimage that involves a sincere effort both of understanding and veneration (Lawson 2000: 45). But the casually irreverent tone Pacino and Kimball adopt persuades us to see it as what in the streets of New York would be called a "goof": a form of acting out and acting up premised on a studied state of unseriousness, aimed at demystifying the very idea that one could hope to find Shakespeare in such a setting. In this setting of Bardic veneration, Pacino constructs himself as a seriously playful and playfully serious seeker-of-truth: inviting his own ejection from the Shakespeare birthplace by men he casts in the role of proprietary caretakers, exercising a curatorial control over a Shakespeare made to seem more at home in a museum than in the open air or street. When Kimball and Pacino find themselves back outside, Kimball (middle-aged, casually dressed) offers a closing comment, "What a bummer." The gesture brings what Pacino elsewhere labels "the quest" further into the circuit of an adolescent's "excellent adventure," bumpily but earnestly pursued by a seemingly ageless American Don and his Sancho-like sidekick.

Pacino's related preoccupation with dissolving the distance between word and feeling emerges in the New York based, man-in-the-street interviews he conducts and in the contrast they make with the British, scholar-in-the-study sequences. It also emerges in other contrasts Pacino stages between actors and scholar-experts. The privileging of feeling over word, directness over rhetorical display, is most powerfully evoked in a statement Pacino elicits from an anonymous panhandler, who claims to derive from Shakespeare the message, "If we *felt* what we said, we'd say less and mean more." This assertion is dramatically linked to a carefully edited comment by Vanessa Redgrave, who assesses the evolution of 400 years of British political culture in terms of an

ever-widening gap between word and feeling. Together, the two judgments suggest that the antidote to this dissociation is waiting in the humble confines of the American street, where passion may still be said to speak directly. Redgrave's intervention is largely presented in voice-over: as indirect commentary on the just-concluded, passionate implications of Estelle Parsons's Queen Margaret (in a staged "rehearsal" of *Richard III*, 1.3) and as a kind of vocal bridge or caption for yet another give-and-take discussion between Pacino and his actor-associates. As such, Redgrave's message – "The music, literally, I mean the music, and the thoughts and the concepts and the feelings have not been divorced from the words and in England you've had centuries in which word has literally been divorced from truth and that's a problem for us actors" – seems to gesture in two directions at once. It points back to the expressive immediacy of Queen Margaret's utterance and forward to the ongoing quest for truth pursued by Pacino and his band of American brothers (and sisters), a quest underwritten by its grounding in the expressive immediacy of the street as embodied by the panhandler's commentary.⁴

Although the panhandler's statement brings a street-savvy urgency to Redgrave's magisterial pronouncement, it is hard to see how Shakespeare – a playwright given to sustained rhetorical flourishes, verbal excess and studied ambiguity – can be said to advance the idea of saying less but meaning more. What does advance this idea is Pacino's performative spin on *Richard III* which, though it mainly proceeds through a series of intense discussions and filmed rehearsals in theatrically defined spaces, is decidedly cinematic and not at all consistent with the American theater's often slavish devotion to the full Shakespearean script.⁵ In the best moments of his film Pacino does not seek to "stage" Shakespeare as much as to restructure our experience of the play; he does this by maximizing the dramatic potential of individual moments in the playtext, and by eliding equally significant scenes and speeches that fail to translate into the medium of film. This is especially the case in the Lady Anne scene and in the scene in which Richard debates the arrest of Clarence and wrangles with his enemies, which Pacino intercuts with images of King Edward writhing on his bed. Pacino and his colleagues speak – and inhabit – their lines as well as one would like. But it is Pacino's preference for physicality and for fracturing the linear "screen" of text-based interpretation (by means of close-ups, jump-cuts, montage, and other cinematic devices) that most effectively delivers the "truth" of these scenes.

This is not something Pacino arrives at spontaneously, without discussion or careful preparation. The "truth" in the case of the Lady Anne scene is the sum of its evolving parts. We watch Pacino assemble these parts: from his casting choice (he asks for an actress young enough to make Lady Anne's vulnerability to Richard credible) to his sensitive probing of why, apart from her youth, Anne would be vulnerable to Richard (she has no sponsor or protector in the royal court). As the sequence unfolds, Pacino again intercuts commentary and conversation with superimpositions and fades of full-dress

rehearsals and more casual walk-throughs, privileging all the while his sampling of facial tics, sounds, lines, and gestures. Crouching in dark corners of the film-frame, he tries on scowls, limps, and line-readings that all but announce "An actor prepares," at once striving and refusing to make a seamless transformation from Hollywood celebrity to Shakespearean character.⁶ As the scene goes forward, we witness both the intensity with which Pacino abandons himself to the character of Richard and the unusually erotic charge Pacino brings to an encounter that may test an audience's capacity to abandon disbelief. The sequence is further enriched by film's capacity to allow a camera to focus and circle in close-up on their figures to the exclusion of all else in the frame. (This tight focus affirms Brook's point that film allows actors to speak their lines with an intimacy the stage does not usually afford.) Given how closely Pacino draws the viewer in, it is both shocking and exhilarating to witness how, upon Lady Anne's withdrawal, Pacino reduces an actor's dream of a 36-line speech to three lines. He turns the *caesura* in the third line – "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" – into an occasion for gleefully triumphant laughter that combines with the swinging of his riding-crop overhead to make action eloquence.

Saying less and meaning more thus translates – at least in Pacino's filming of the early scenes of the playtext – into an aesthetic that shows off the power of American acting styles. Those styles prefer gesture over word, the body over the head, and suit film's capacity to deliver (in howsoever stylized a way) the pressure and fullness of experience, the tenor and immediacy (if not the "truth") of the street. It is no coincidence that the film flattens out when Pacino reverts to playtext chronology and conventional filmic realism in the closing battle scenes with Richmond. In these scenes, *Looking for Richard* moves far from the American street that was, in many respects, its inspiration, and just as far from the roughness and immediacy of the play's earlier scenes. Those earlier scenes were distinctive in a number of ways: filmed in "found" playing spaces and rehearsal studios, they seemed the product of intense, often contentious, debate and made potent use of montage to show us things that do not literally "speak" in the playtext (King Edward's writhing on his bed, Queen Elizabeth's passionate embrace of his corpse). In the end, Pacino gets caught up in the seductions of conventional cinematic display and falls prey to the temptation to "open up" the play to the presumptive freedoms of out-of-doors color, light, and panoramic spaces. In so doing he loses touch with what Neil Sinyard describes as the liberties of "fragmentation, enhanced by a montage that leaps about in time and place with a mobility that only cinema can manage" (Sinyard 2000: 70). Pacino's reprising of Prospero's lines on the fading of "this insubstantial pageant" at film's end is dramatically effective, but at similar cost. The decision imposes a sense of polish, refinement, and closure on a film otherwise committed to the power of process, accident, and the passion and inspiration of actors themselves as they *unmake* established ways of understanding *Richard III*.

Accents Unknown: *The Street King*

James Gavin Bedford's *The Street King* substitutes a site-specific and ethnically hybridized American vernacular for Shakespearean language: channeling *Richard III* to fit the rhythms of *chicano* gang subculture in Southern California (specifically, east Los Angeles), and the cinematic and television conventions that characteristically represent them. Unlike *Men of Respect*, a mechanical, point-by-point paraphrase of *Macbeth* in terms of a New York mafia subculture, *The Street King* wears its Shakespearean pedigree lightly, gesturing rather than deferring to the plot-line of *Richard III*. The film certainly grounds itself on the play: employing Spanish equivalents for the names of Shakespeare's primary characters; dramatizing the drive to power of younger brother Rikki (played by Jon Seda as more hunk than hunchback), who engineers the demise of older brothers Jorge and Eduardo, the current "king" of the Ortega gang. Yet viewers unfamiliar with the playtext might be hard pressed to notice the Shakespeare connection, so seamlessly does the film conform to the established conventions of the ethnic gang/drug subculture genre of films such as Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) or the Brian De Palma remake of *Scarface* (1983). *The Street King* stands in relation to *Richard III* in the same way that the spray-painting of Shakespeare's image stands in relation to the reproduction of the Droeshout portrait that first appears on the *barrio* wall in the film's opening credits (figure 5.1). As we witness this progressive defacement (by a hand that refashions Shakespeare's image through the addition of a goatee, shades, red bandanna, beauty mark, and large cross earring), we are disarmed of any expectation that a film which announces itself as "based on *The Tragedy of King Richard III*" will deliver something other than an ironic masquerade of that transaction.

Indeed, the film's strategy throughout is more parodic and citational than assimilative. It dips into selected passages of *Richard III* without attempting to swallow the play whole, providing a series of filmic substitutions and displacements for what the playtext supplies. For filmgoers who know the play by heart, some new level of interpretive significance may be mined as we watch the "good cop" who fills the role of Richmond become the "bad cop" at the film's end. His conversion suggests an equivalence between presumed legitimacy and criminality when he reiterates the words "plata" and "plomo" (silver and lead, or bribes and bullets) which appear on either side of the restructured portrait of Shakespeare in the film's prologue. Yet new interpretations of the play may be only incidental to *The Street King's* citational strategies. The film's substitutions more often merely reward the knowing viewer with a double (largely parodic) perspective on the action that will remain unavailable to filmgoers unprepared to read the Shakespearean signs and signals.

Some of the more successful effects of this kind involve Rikki's daring visit to the wake of his old friend Alejandro (the film's stand-in for the



5.2. Alejandro forever?

o Bard

murdered Edward, Prince of Wales). He purportedly undertakes this visit to retrieve a piece of Alejandro's mother's famous lemon cake to share with his buddies, but uses it to make a date with Alejandro's surviving girlfriend, Anita (the film's stand-in for Lady Anne). Swearing oaths to his innocence in the more-sincere-than-thou manner of Richard Duke of Gloucester, after having conspicuously plucked a red rose from a funerary bouquet, Rikki emerges unscathed, cake in hand, anticipating his meeting with Anita, where his production of the same knife he used to kill Alejandro proves entirely convincing. Pressing the knife into his workout-hardened stomach until it draws blood, Rikki transforms Richard's act of theatrical daring into an entirely contemporary and ethnically specific display of *macho* vanity and endurance. *The Street King* deploys the dramatically cued strategy of direct address to the camera considerably more often than Shakespeare has Richard deliver asides or soliloquies. Yet in this instance the 36-line bravura speech that Pacino reduces to "I'll have her but I will not keep her long" is even more efficiently translated into a few winks of conversational bravado followed up a moment later by a wryly narrated clip of Anita's visit to a tattoo parlor, where she has the elaborately wrought name of Alejandro painfully erased and replaced with that of her new object of devotion, Rikki. Of a piece with the vigorous misogyny that animates the film, the scene nonetheless acutely realizes the vanity that makes Lady Anne believe in Richard's love while providing a culturally specific application to the mores and practices of the East Los Angeles gang subculture.

This is not the only time that Bedford renovates the plot of *Richard III* in a timely and inventive manner instead of attempting to reproduce it.

For example, rather than have Rikki's brother, Eduardo, die of an unnamed illness as does Edward IV in Shakespeare's play, Bedford's script has Rikki cut Eduardo's cocaine with a foreign substance and later disguise himself as a physician in order to channel air into Eduardo's IV tube. The byplay gives Rikki an added occasion to demonstrate his ruthlessness and resourcefulness and the film another opportunity to advertise its ironic take on the iconic original. Here as elsewhere in *The Street King* – when, for example, Rikki announces that "You gotta think global for the twenty-first century" upon his short-lived ascension to the position of *jefe* or king of the Ortega family – expansive irony distinguishes Bedford's effort to translate *Richard III* into the idiom of the American street. This irony is less self-reflexive than Pacino's wry undercutting of his quest for Method-based emotional truth. Yet Bedford's transposition of Shakespeare's English history play to fit the contours of the *barrio* clearly echoes Pacino's translation of the same play into an American vernacular of gesture, action, and speech, and Van Sant's site-specific rewriting of the *Henriad*. It also brings Shakespeare back to the future of nineteenth-century Shakespearean burlesques, when irreverence first began to displace deference in American treatments of the Bard (Cartelli 1999: 29).

Media Vernaculars: Listening to *Scotland, PA*

To me Shakespeare is like James Brown . . . Shakespeare is someone to be appropriated and sampled.

Oscar Kightley'

No recent Shakespeare film or spin-off treats Shakespeare as irreverently, or with as much deference to American popular culture, as does Billy Morrissette's *Scotland, PA*. Yet unlike other recent screen *Macbeths* (such as the dogged *Men of Respect*) *Scotland, PA* is engaged less in updating the play within a popular and marketable genre-niche than in backdating it. *Macbeth*, it turns out, provides a way to look back on the rise of popular, consumer culture. Mass media features prominently in both the story the film tells and in the way it backdates *Macbeth*: 1970s films, television, and radio provide the audio-visual vernaculars into which it translates Shakespeare's play. Like *The Street King*, *Scotland, PA*

maintains a remarkably close relationship to the playtext throughout this process of translation. In doing so, it helps expand our vocabulary for talking about the ways films that do not aim to revive Shakespeare handle their source material.

Van Sant's and Bedford's films variously sink into, pass through, paraphrase, and allude to the playtexts they recycle and renovate. Morrisette's film provides an example of three other modes of renovation. It "riffs" on and "samples" *Macbeth*.⁸ And it reproduces the structure of Shakespeare's language when not using the language itself. *Scotland, PA* also focuses our attention on soundtrack in a way that helps stretch our thinking about these different modes of translation. Although film is a multi-track medium that includes dynamic sound and also print (credits, subtitles, words printed on objects within the *mise en scène*), critics are often sidetracked by image versus text debates. Thus we may forget that Shakespearean language happens as much or more in the soundtracks of a film as it does in the image-track. And in a number of ways, the vocabulary of sound quotation may be better suited to the kinds of adaptation going on in Shakespeare films than print-based vocabulary.

Before exploring these concerns, we need to sketch the story *Scotland, PA* tells about the rise of mass culture. The film resituates the tragedy of *Macbeth* in the economically depressed confines of central Pennsylvania, in the post-Vietnam era. It maps the play's cultural divisions between barbaric northern Scots and civilizable, Anglicized Scots onto the conflict between a stalled-out culture of small-town losers – personified in Joe "Mac" McBeth (James LeGros) and his deer-hunting buddies – and a counter-culture of hippies, rockers, and New Age vegetarians. The counter-culture is personified most suggestively in the person of Lieutenant McDuff (Christopher Walken), an outsider to Scotland, who plays meditation tapes in his pea-green Audi. Working dead-end jobs at "Duncan's" burger joint, frustrated by their lack of opportunity, Mac and his wife Pat (Maura Tierney) seek to escape into management by killing the owner and taking over the business. The barely submerged plot of *Macbeth*'s rise to power unfolds as the two renovate the restaurant, emboldened by a prophecy heralding transformative new business practices, such as a drive-thru service window. This prophecy is delivered by a creepy trio of stoners (some what anachronistically called "hippies" in the cast list), played by Andy Dick, Timothy "Speed" Levitch, and Amy Smart.

As with other low-budget Shakespeare spin-offs, such as *Men of Respect* and *The Street King*, the cast is largely drawn either from unknowns and B-list TV actors (Maura Tierney and James Rebhorn here, Jon Seda in *The Street King*) or from established character actors doing star-turns in low-profile vehicles (Christopher Walken here, John Turturro in *Respect*). The film's setting, characterizations, pratfalls, and send-ups owe as much to the comedic conventions of gross-out films such as John Landis's *Animal House* (1978) as they do to TV shows like

McCloud and *Colombo*. Drinking, eating, lecherousness, rock music, fag-jokes, and sight gags dominate (especially the first half of) the film. Broad comedic liberties are taken with minor characters (the stoner witches, Malcolm and Donald) and with unprecedented add-ons (the sun-tanning guy and his burnt-to-a-crisp son). There is a sense that these conventions are totally in charge of what once was *Macbeth* – until, that is, the play's relentless plot and constrained field of action reassert themselves in the second half.

Part of the appeal of the film is certainly its campy gross-out sensibility: Duncan murdered in the Fryolator, Pat's lopped-off hand in its oven mitt. Yet as Lauren Shohet has shown, the gross-outs in *Scotland, PA* carry undercurrents of the demystifying disgust evoked by Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (2001). Where the play harks forward to the coming of James I to the English throne, the film foreshadows the dominion of the consumer economy, a king of burgers and entrepreneurial aristocracy supplanting medieval monarchs. Shakespeare's "supernatural solicitings" are re-imagined here as the inexorable rise of the fast-food industry. The questions of agency that dominate *Macbeth* and make its supernatural effects genuinely spooky – did *Macbeth*, the witches, or Lady *Macbeth* first spark the impulse to take over the throne? – are remapped onto anxieties about unskilled workers being permanently left behind by the rapid emergence of that economy. Like Van Sant, Pacino, and Bedford, Morrisette intensifies our attachment to his Shakespearean anti-heroes by emphasizing the complacency of characters such as Malcolm and Donalbain who, like *Idaho's* Scott Favor, inherit family wealth. Their wealth distinguishes them from those who must hustle for a living or rely on illegitimate means of advancement: Mac and Pat, *Idaho's* Mike Waters, *The Street King's* Rikki, and Pacino's Richard. Thus, when the moral framework of *Macbeth* resurfaces in *Scotland, PA* it does so in class terms. We watch Pat treat the help as badly as Duncan and Doug treated her, and we witness the McBeths' sudden prosperity turn to a private hell of anxiety. We can hear the pull of *Macbeth's* plot assert itself at the Grand Opening celebration, where the McBeths' dysfunctions are broadcast in language remarkably close to that of the banquet scene (3.4), the corresponding turning point in the play.

Like *Macbeth*, *Scotland, PA* and its characters are haunted by its future, the audience's ambivalent present. That future is not incidentally a global future, in which the intrusion of the fast-food industry into rural and urban communities alike has become a dominant symbol of the evils of globalization. Where Shakespeare's play provides for Malcolm's return to the throne, Morrisette's film provides the equivocal triumph not of individuals but of an industry. McDuff, not Malcolm, takes over the restaurant, remodeling it a second time as the "Home of the Garden Burger." Three decades of fast-food menus later, we can see what a disaster this particular entrepreneurial dream is likely to be for him. Glossing the play's final scene in terms of competing business models,

rather than competing models of kingship and nation, the film uses repetition to pose questions about the costs and benefits of new modes of business. Which version of the local (if any) will triumph in a global economy?

The real irony of this final remodeling is that, given his counter-cultural/New Age tastes, McDuff is possessed by entrepreneurial dreams in the first place. (Walken establishes this with marvelously understated hints of covetousness and admiration for the burger joint.) McDuff's drives appear oppositional: his remarks about the killing potential of greasy food identify him as a prototypical Green Party environmentalist. Yet his desires turn out to be remarkably conventional. One way to understand McDuff's appetite for business is to see it as the remodeling of his oppositional drives in the image of Mac's by the invisible hand of capital, a process that can only end in tragedy for McDuff. But tragic and parodic impulses intersect here in more complex ways. The Garden Burger will surely be a disaster in McDuff's time. However, vegetarianism is now a billion-dollar industry. And the film's class-mediated gravitation into the moral vortex of *Macbeth* makes it clear where our sympathies should lie. In the final reckoning, the meat-free (i.e. "not born of woman"), educated, professional, and law-abiding McDuff earns his new reign of vegetarianism by biting the hand that feeds him. By contrast, the greedy, over-sexed, under-educated, under-achieving McBeths are cruelly and comically punished for their transgressions. The innocent (largely) endure and the audience can see in McDuff a virtuous forbear of alternative lifestyles that now thrive.

It is not entirely clear whether the anti-establishment counter-authority of alternative lifestyles represented by McDuff can change the establishment in a real way. But the hindsight allowed by the film helps us see clearly that this is how the establishment renews itself – by adopting anti-establishment counter-authority as its own. The film also helps us see that this assimilation is neither complete nor unilateral. Mac will never confess, McDuff will not eat meat except in self-defense, and burger chains now serve vegetarian food. Convention and the process of conventionalizing – being made over according to an established formula or script – are the central dramatic preoccupations of *Scotland, PA*. Yet the film, like the play, sees the exchanges between received forms and those who perform them as a feedback loop, not as a process of absolute possession.

At different moments in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* we hear summaries of Renaissance ideas about a good king, a tyrant, a repentant murderer, and so on; the characters embrace, reject, or adapt these normative ideas for themselves. In a similar vein, *Scotland, PA* rehearses mid-century American ideas about economic success ("don't you think she deserves better?"), satisfaction ("we rock!"), and good taste. Indeed, the aspect of the play that seems most to interest the film is the way in which it dramatizes individual encounters with dominant fictions about success. This point is brought home by the addition of a detective

to investigate Macbeth's crimes. Detectives as a fictional class are purely instrumental narrative devices: ideological tools, empty of all drives except those of the order it is their function to restore. But in American popular culture, detectives also register the romantic dream of agency: the ability to negotiate a system and yet remain integral, sincere, oneself, which we code as "character." *Scotland, PA*, smartly, returns that instrumentality to all its characters. All are tragically subject to cultural scripts (and the fantasies of power that attend them) to the same degree. All are engaged in negotiating some script as their central actions. Walken especially builds this struggle into the way he "scores" his lines as an actor, establishing McDuff's motives and backstory. Among the many moments worth pausing over is a (no-doubt Walken-initiated) reference by Lieutenant McDuff to his earlier career as a dancer during his interview with Donald. The reference both points back to a more creative past and anticipates his later career-change from officious detective to health-food entrepreneur, thereby indicating less a fixed character than an individual fluidly moving from one role to another as an actor does.

In *Macbeth*, we become aware of the cultural scripts characters play out and negotiate through shifts of genre or gestures towards familiar fictional devices. The source material reworked in Shakespeare's play is generically varied, borrowed from classical drama, contemporary prose history, the preoccupations of the court, and the latest fad in popular print. Thus the play restages stories from Tudor chronicles to the tune of popular murder pamphlets and mixes in a comic porter from late-medieval cycle plays with Jacobean witches who sing. A long tradition of stage burlesques has been alive to this pastiche, or mix of genres, in *Macbeth*. With the exception of *Scotland, PA*, modern film-adaptations have largely missed it.

The campy aesthetic of *Scotland, PA* foregrounds the ways that it retransmits culturally charged matter, marking every action or behavior as already conventional, even when it seems to be freshly invented. The stylings, sounds, and narrative conventions of 1970s television and radio do the most aesthetic work in these terms, by aggressively backdating the story. Morrisette's period details are lush, even extravagant: polyester pant-suits; shag haircuts; "Rock Blocks" playing Three Dog Night and Bad Company on the radio; black-and-white TV. Almost everyone drives Camaros. Almost everyone is underemployed. We are meant to see and hear the 1970s in a double sense, here. Visually and aurally alluring, it is also as archaic and formulaic as a tragedy of medieval kings. And when the film combines this period material with Shakespearean matter it does so to underscore their shared archaism and conventionality.

McDuff makes an especially good example of this kind of recombinational. Walken's primary source is Peter Falk's Columbo, the detective in an enormously popular show of that title. Walken borrows Falk's deadpan delivery and canny misdirection. And Morrisette's screenplay

borrowing an important narrative device from the show. The constant reference to an absent Mrs Columbo, who never appeared on the scene, is reprised in Walken's comments about "Mrs McDuff," which reconfigure Lady Macduff's doomed fate. The film combines the two intertexts, Shakespeare play and TV serial, quite wittily. When Mac makes a snide comment about "all the little McDuffs" anyone who has read the play in high school will recognize the implied threat. Yet for Columbo, such references would be nothing more than a verbal gambit, designed to put his quarry off balance.

More than anything, then, this mix of allusions points us to the thin apparatus of inherited forms, reminding us that character is a function of story and verbal gesture. One consequence of such intertextual playfulness is that we see how radically Mac's dramatic possibilities are curtailed by comparison to those available to Shakespeare's Macbeth. There will be no true pleasure for him to experience, no real horrors to perpetuate, no heroic national scene for his action.⁹ The narrative possibilities offered in this re-imagined 1970s are far more limited; we might even think of them as depressed. The three hippies underscore this point when they briefly bare the apparatus of adaptation, as if they are newly inventing, then rejecting, and then reconsidering the pertinence of the *Macbeth* script to modern life. "I know, Mac should kill McDuff's entire family!" Hippie # 2 (Levitich) offers brightly. "Oh that'd work great . . . about a thousand years ago!" scoffs Hippie # 3 (Dick), "You can't just go around killing everyone." "Or can you . . . ?" invites Hippie # 1 (Smart). The question of scripted outcomes points in several directions here, not only to Shakespeare's medieval Scotland but to the police serial. Killing everyone who knows anything is exactly the sort of tired solution that the bad guys in *Columbo* resort to, just before they are caught. The same strategy figures in contemporary events such as the mass killings orchestrated by Charles Manson and his "family," which famously inform the bloody Roman Polanski film-version of *Macbeth* released in 1971 and compared to which this parody seems very tame indeed.¹⁰

Drawing genealogical connections between Renaissance tragedy and detective serials, in this way, *Scotland, PA* might be read as a comic lament to the decay of culture: even bad guys had bigger stages in the past. This kind of reading – emphasizing the film's interest in the commodification of experience – would be in keeping with other recent "genre" adaptations of Shakespearean tragedy, such as Almereyda's noir *Hamlet* or the mafia *Macbeth*, *Men of Respect*. Those films, Douglas Lanier has argued, deploy screen Shakespeare as a form of social critique of the way in which cultural material (such as Shakespeare's plays) is appropriated by mass industries like Hollywood (2002b).

Morrisette's adaptation has a related, but finally different, set of interests. The film is less concerned to convey the pathos of interpellation – the melancholy recognition that we are shaped by discursive and social structures that conform to a dominant ideology. It is more

concerned with assessing the costs and benefits of a recycling process that it sees as an essential feature of culture. To be sure, the film ironically acknowledges the increasing homogenization of consumer experience: whether it be the new practice of "eating out" or the standardized emotions purveyed by radio station playlists, under the cover of stirring, hard-rock backbeats. Yet it never allows the costs of that homogenization to register as truly tragic, even when it turns out that the practice of "eating out" originates in murder. Indeed, the film makes fun of the tragic view of interpellation, asking us to see the scripting of experience as a kind of consumption, digestion, the only way in which any inheritance – including Shakespeare – continues to live. Accordingly, Morrisette's innovation here is not – as in Luhrmann's film – to put Shakespearean material into *mise en scène*, in the form of brand names and advertising (fragments of Shakespeare absorbed and repurposed by corporate America). Instead, he uses the story and language of *Macbeth* to model the *circulation* of conventional material within a consumer economy. Mass media serves as much as Shakespeare as this film's touchstone – even the hippie witches amuse themselves by parroting lines from popular commercials. So we turn now to look closely at three scenes that foreground the different ways *Scotland, PA* translates the playtext into the vernaculars of film, television, and radio.

Scene 1: Duncan's in slow motion We begin, appropriately, with the food fight, a mock-heroic version of the battle described in the early scenes of *Macbeth*. For those familiar with the play, the scene alerts us that Morrisette is engaged not in revival but in parodic translation and even close reading. Set in Duncan's greasy spoon, the food fight establishes Mac's status in the film in the same way the soldier's description of the battle establishes Macbeth's status in the play. The sequence dramatically homes in on the equivocal phrase, "Valor's minion," describing Macbeth's ruthless triumph over the rebel Macdonwald (1.2.19) in Shakespeare's play. "Minion" is an equivocal word, meaning both "daring" and something less positive like "boytoy," or male favorite. As Harry Berger has observed, this phrase foreshadows a host of later concerns: the question of what constitutes true manliness; the notion that even in triumph Macbeth will nevertheless remain subordinate; the fear that favoritism, not desert, might govern the workings of the court – a worry repeated at Malcolm's restoration, when like his father, the new King creates a host of new titles for his lords ([1980] 1997).

Morrisette emphasizes the equivocal messages in this phrase by providing visual and aural equivalents for them. As the food-fight escalates, Mac vaults the counter and throws the instigators bodily out the door. Quotes from Beethoven's 7th symphony rise magisterially in the score as Mac leaps into action. At the same time, the camera and diegetic audio slip into a slow-motion sequence that signifies "Heroic Action" is taking place. But the goofy slow-motion sound of Mac's voice grates against the score and, together with the fundamentally trivial



Mac jumping
fe to come?

situation, deflates those tired action conventions. After we return to normal speed and Mac acknowledges the general applause, all that awaits him is the short-order grill. The distorted sequence and sound remind us that even when he seems to be acting most effectively Mac cannot "jump the life to come" (1.7.7). Later, when Duncan promotes him to Assistant Manager (confering the coveted title of Manager on his unwilling rocker son Malcolm) this disappointment simply recapitulates what the slow motion established. Mac's problem is a failure to progress.

The slow-motion sequence plays on the Shakespearean phrase, taking it in new directions, improvising freely and sometimes with heavy distortion, but always returning to that central theme. What is happening here is a kind of audio-visual *riffing* on the phrase "valor's minion" in the context of familiar action conventions. We borrow the term riffing from the common practice of quotation in jazz and rock music, which involves alluding to and innovating on *riffs* (melodic ideas, usually in the form of short, repeated phrases) from earlier songs. Played on a single instrument, often bass or rhythm guitar, riffs provide the underlying structure for improvisation in a new composition. Unlike print quotations, most musical quotations are unlabelled. For this reason, riffing seems especially suited to describing the dynamic and variable ways in which Shakespearean matter registers with screen audiences. When we hear something familiar in a musical riff, that familiarity may locate itself anywhere along a continuum, from explicit citation, to intertextual conversation, to echo. Or, given the wide circulation of many standard riffs, such borrowings may register simply as stock material, as the mixed-genre effects of the "valor's minion" sequence do.

The inventiveness of a riff lies not so much in the selection of a particular passage or source – the body of material to draw on is well established as with the way in which it is played on or elaborated. While riffing may sound like extempore art, the practice is as highly codified as Renaissance verse. As Albert Murray observes:

When they are effective, riffs always seem as spontaneous as if they were improvised in the heat of the performance. So much so that riffing is sometimes regarded as being synonymous with improvisation. But such is not always the case by any means. Not only are riffs as much a part of some arrangements and orchestrations as

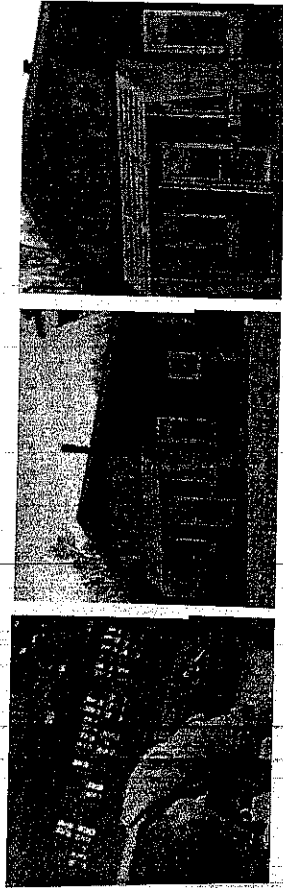
the lead melody, but many consist of nothing more than stock phrases, quotations from some familiar melody, or even clichés that just happen to be popular at the moment. (Murray 1976: 96)

Shakespearean language stands in precisely this relation to the screenplay and action in *Scotland, PA*. It offers musical and dramatic ideas that the film riffs on in ways that are more and less recognizable, depending on the listener's familiarity with the source, yet are meant to sound spontaneous – even when those riffs hold closely to the play-text (as they often surprisingly do in this film). Like musical riffs, Shakespearean riffs do their artistic work in films whether they are recognized or not. For the most part the verbal riffs this film performs are unlabelled. So, for example, when Pat tells Mac "It's done. Can't be undone" – a line that particularly worried Morrissette, as he notes in the DVD commentary – the familiarity of the phrase has more to do with the way it has been absorbed into contemporary idiom (as "what's done is done") than with its Shakespearean coinage.

The screenplay of *Scotland, PA* dips in and out of explicit intertextual reference both to Shakespeare's playtext and to other popular and high-culture matter in this way, weaving it together in a mode that is sometimes ironic, sometimes comic. But in several key scenes Morrissette wants us to hear this kind of riffing as genuinely occult. The very absorbency of popular culture, as it recycles earlier material and reproduces it as convention, is the source of Scotland's uncanny.

Scene 2: Spell at the midway As a verbal mode, riffing belongs particularly, it turns out, to the witches. Their power to absorb and recast earlier material is established before the credits roll, in the opening sequence at the midway. Sound cues – composed of foley effects, dialogue, and musical score – organize this sequence, bridging several shifts in location. These sounds carry us from a long-distance shot to medium shot, then from this "real" scene to a recorded scene from a TV show, and then back to the "real" of Scotland. What starts us on this journey – the first sound we hear – is the reverberating thump of an industrial switch echoing in a large open space, as the lights go out on a midway at night. The camera had been trained at a distance on the lit circle of the Ferris wheel. We learn we have leapt forward (blindly, in the dark) because of the sounds that follow: stoned giggles of hippies with the munchies, miked in medium close-up. As they riff on the opening lines of the play, the hippies tune our ears from echo to double entendre and irony: "The fowl was foul. . . ." "The Fair was fair. . . ." "Shhhhh! She's having a spell!" "Oh God, so dramatic." The wordplay comes across more clearly than the visuals, though we have glimpses of the caretaker leaving and the trio sharing their fried chicken.

Under the lingering associations of the phrases "having a spell" and "so dramatic" the scene shifts to an extended montage from the popular 1970s detective show *McCloud* and the credits roll. Emerging from the murky colors of the fair into black and white this montage



Disestablishing
audience in
Scotland, PA

partly returns us from the dark. But we are still somehow spell-stopped, conjured into this new medium – as we can tell again from the score, which has a particular, carnival sound that connects back to the midway. Anton Sanko's jazzy accordion composition plays over the *McCloud* montage, punctuating Denis Weaver's impossible stunts on a helicopter as he captures a quasi-corporate bad guy (note the suit and briefcase). The montage closes with a cut to Duncan's burger joint, still in black-and-white. This long shot (what will become the establishing shot of the next scene) resolves from black and white into color on the final chord and the printed credit to Shakespeare.

"Having a spell," the witch's phrase that ushers in this montage and names the shift in medium, means feeling queasy and disoriented (because you ate bad chicken). But it also means conjuring and exposing the fictional apparatus that renders lived experience. This Brechtian break in the form is designed to make us notice mediation taking place. Like the credit sequences in Lührmann's *Romeo + Juliet* and Almeréyda's *Hamlet*, this disestablishing sequence emphasizes not only the mediated nature of what is to follow (editing, camera-work, color) but the mixed nature of the media in question, which will recombine elements of drama, TV, and film. The resolve to color suggests not that we have exited the televisual world conjured by the witches – with its impossible heights of masculinity and mobility – but simply that the lights have turned back on in a contiguous space. The world of the film is scripted by the televisual, mediated in an occult way that will itself become the subject of the unfolding story. Moreover, the sequence suggests, the occult may be inseparable from the workings of reference as such. If we have at least read *Macbeth* in high school (the audience that Morrisette describes in his DVD commentary), we are likely to hear the echo of the famous opening lines of the play, with their doublings and inversions. Even without having watched many detective shows in the 1970s we may still recognize the signature graininess as a marker of a shift to video and the staginess of the chase scene, with its predictable closure, as a feature of the action genre.

Television clearly has uncanny effects on the characters in *Scotland, PA*. As Shohet observes, real policing lurches to a halt when the enthralling Denis Weaver hits the TV screen at Scotland's police station

(2004: 190). But the opening sequence prepares us to notice such hypnotic effects and view them ironically. Indeed, if the conventions of Hollywood cinema depend on an aesthetic of seamlessness, in which sound reinforces our sense that the event is "for me," lacking any barriers to immersion and understanding (Altman 1992), then what the audiobook offers "for us" in this opening sequence seems to be a qualified distance. Sanko's theme tunes our ears not only to the film's campy aesthetic, but to the ironic listening position that the soundtrack will provide throughout the film. When the slow-motion sound effects grate against Beethoven's 7th Symphony, disrupting our sense of aural realism, we are already prepared for that distance. Later, when the music track turns to the machismo of Bad Company and Three Dog Night, it performs what is by now a very old audio convention for matching feature song to visual narrative. We share (hear) Mac's fantasy in the music track ("Oh, I was born with a 6-gun in my hand") even as we see him objectively in the *mise en scène*, wandering the midway at night. We may notice how poor the match is between the tough-guy persona of the song and Mac's aimless wandering. If so, that dramatic irony assures us that we know his inner self better than he does.

Yet the cumulative effects of this disestablishing sequence are less comfortable – and less about privileged audience knowledge – than the notion of dramatic irony usually implies. While the *McCloud* montage plays, we are invited to recognize ourselves being acted on (conjured or hailed) by televisual representation in a way that does not fully release us from its spell.¹¹ In what is clearly a moment of media allegory, the greater cultural potency and reach of television is invoked here: what scholars since the 1950s have described as its "extension of the perceived environment," a form of "going places" without expending energy or resources.¹² Moreover, television arguably interpellates its audience more thoroughly than does film because it traffics to a much greater extent in repetition. "Repeats" of episodes from shows such as *McCloud* now circulate endlessly, perhaps infinitely, on cable TV. Through their repeated catchphrases and jingles, TV commercials in particular are made to adhere to both the conscious and unconscious life of the viewer and thus enter into everyday conversation. Even the hippie witches can't get the repeated call of "Anthony, Anthony" from an old Prince Spaghetti commercial out of their heads.

Yet because the processed nature of the representation is exposed in this sequence (cinema briefly trumping the televisual), self-reflection and even some measure of control seem possible in the act of reception. It is not so much that we are being hailed as being invited to adopt and adapt what the convention offers us, and to recognize ourselves doing so. The truly eerie quality of this process is that we choose that possession as much as we are chosen by it. The absolutely normative quality of this process is that we can find campy (self-aware) pleasure in choice and refusal: the kind of pleasure we might get in imitating voice-overs of *Animal Planet*, for example, or in the punchline commentaries

by the repetitions, equivocation, and drift that characterize language in *Macbeth*. The verbal patterns borrowed from the play can be heard especially clearly when the hippies hail Macbeth, interrupting his nighttime wanderings to tell his fortune. The hippies begin by deconstructing the title of the play in alternating voices. "Mac!" "Beth!" "Beth!" "Mac!" "Fleetwood Mac!" "Macramé!" "I love macramé. . . ." Their exchange runs along the chiasmic patterns of the Witches' opening lines; words and ideas come in pairs, then repeat in reverse order. Like the Witches, the hippies speak in clichés, a fact they call explicit attention to. When Mac asks how they know his name, they equivocate: "You mean your name really is Mac? I thought we were just saying it like you say it . . . like 'Watch your step, Mac,' 'Up yours, Mac,' 'Fuck you, Mac!'" Reducing the name to its component phonemes, their free association simultaneously empties those sounds of signification and loads them with excessive affect, promiscuously attracting new meanings and new mouths: "Love the one you're with" "(love the one you're with)." This reduction also brings the remote and formal titles of Scottish feudal culture down to local, colloquial scale. Indeed, the hippies' colloquialisms seem a kind of verbal inventory of a culture that has leveled social distinctions and lost any memory of its patronyms. "Mac," the prefix that signifies "son of," is reduced to an epithet (Shohet 2004: 191–2).

As in Shakespeare's play, verbal repetition is the mark of the uncanny movement of language, as it speaks the subjects who appear to be speaking it. The source and vehicle of that movement is commercial media, as the quotations that make up this dialogue suggest. We hear the names of bands, fads, the refrain from a CSNY anthem, and fragments of what sound like insurance ads.¹⁴ When Hippie # 1 tells Mac's fortune, this ventriloquism becomes explicit. Dubbed androgynously in different voices (including Mac's), her prophecy is a verbal collage of fragments from contemporary songs and television and radio commercials (and parodically recalls the famous moment when a demon's voice emerges from the swiveling head of a possessed girl in William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973)). All the fragments involve the signature pattern of doubling and at least one employs echo ("Anthonyyy! Anthonyyyyy"). Material that we might expect to find in a hit soundtrack cross-contaminates with dialogue here, as if sending up the convention that non-diegetic music glosses the inner life of the characters on screen: "Even though you ain't got money, she's so in love with you honey. Don't you think you deserve better? Don't you think [Mac's voice] she deserves better?"¹⁵

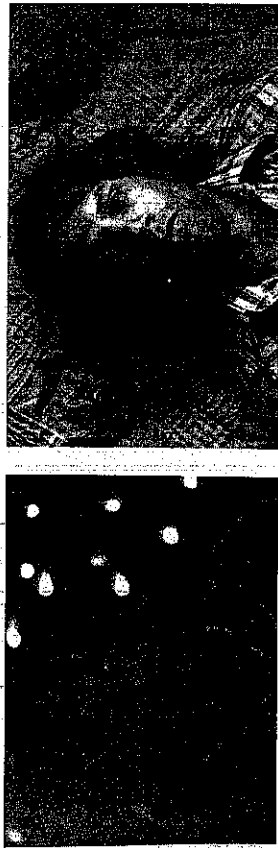
The overall effect of this speech mode is to suggest that every utterance (and feeling and idea) emerges as a repetition of prior utterances and the experience can run the gamut from verbal play to possession to stupor. Where the Witches' earlier spell conjured television, this one conjures radio as the medium that broadcasts conventional matter. As the scene closes, it turns our attention to the way in which radio delivers sound and sentiment "for us" and under that spell, produces listeners as

in *Calvin and Hobbes*, or even in watching Macbeth refuse to play the part that Macdonwald earlier starred in (made popular in Elizabethan murder pamphlets) of the repentant sinner.

The aesthetics of this credit sequence, then, belong to the world of recombination and sampling evoked by Oscar Kightley, in the epigraph above, in which listeners and consumers of recorded material may become makers and recording; machines become instruments. Morrissette samples *McCloud* the way late-twentieth-century musicians sample earlier compositions. Sampling is a technical art that involves extracting elements of a sound recording (often rhythm track, sometimes just a single unit of sound) and recombining them with other material in ways that let us hear the original sound differently. The excerpted montage from *McCloud* works in this way: it provides familiar visual rhythms (as if it were a James Brown bass-line) over which Sanko remixes new melody. Where rifting concentrates artistic energy on the way a familiar idea is borrowed and elaborated, sampling concentrates artistic energy on the process of selection, extraction, and reuse of recorded material. In this case, Sanko's music has the effect of estranging the familiar rhythms of compressed time in the action montage. Its witty, squeaky, commentary estranges in the mode of Kurt Weill, making the montage and its later imitations in the film itself seem like a puppet show.¹³

This discussion may seem to have traveled fairly far from the problem of Shakespearean language on screen, as it passed from sound effects through rifting and sampling. However, both techniques provide a formal vocabulary that helps us understand better how carefully Morrissette and his artistic directors have listened to *Macbeth*. For all its supernatural apparatus, the truly eerie qualities of the play have to do with its verbal echoes – echoes the audience hears but the characters do not. From the moment that the witches' words come out of Macbeth's mouth ("so foul and fair a day I have not seen" 1.3.38), ideas, intentions, and feelings slip contagiously across subjects and possess them in a way that cannot be described by clear lines of agency, cause, and guilt, but that nevertheless has profound consequences. The truly eerie qualities of the film – and also its pleasures – have less to do with visual effects than with the way in which phrases, ideas, and feelings echo and cross-contaminate in its soundscape. Consider how phrases from Macbeth's famous "sound and fury" speech are parodically recycled for New Age consumption on the self-help tape McDuff listens to in his car: "Tomorrow is tomorrow, tomorrow is not today, etc." Rifting and sampling are the arts of the echo, in *Scotlizard, PA*, that alert us to the slippage of ideas and feelings across the subjects of commercial mass media.

Scene 3: Prophecy and Rock Block It is not just that Morrissette's screenplay samples and riffs on passages of playtext. The interactions between dialogue, diegetic music, and non-diegetic music are governed



ning like a

consuming subjects. As Mac succumbs to the multiple disorienting effects of the evening – the carnival ride, the prophecy, alcohol, marijuana, and the late hour – the camera closes in on his face. His eyes roll up and the audiobook drops everything but non-diegetic music, Bad Company's "Feel Like Making Love." The miking sounds close, the volume loud: like a good stereo turned up high in your room – but not the dingy room where the camera cuts to, as Mac wakes, and flashes back to the spinning carnival ride. Is he still possessed by the prophecy? Dissolving from music track to diegetic sound the song continues, playing over a series of cross-cut scenes organized around the theme of listening. As the sequence unfolds, the volume drops and loses resonance, re-establishing its source in various radios in the background. Downstairs Malcolm fights with his father. Upstairs, Donald mourns in youthful gay melancholy, listening to Janis Ian with his headphones on. Mac and Pat plot their rise in the burger joint and begin to mess around on their bed, playing "New Manager/Bad Counter Girl" (figure 5.6).

It comes as no surprise to find the McBeths' erotic life so scripted by economic immobility. The real twist in these cross-cut scenes is the gradual convergence of diverse emotions under the spell of the radio: a spell marked by audio dissolves that collapse the distance between music track and diegetic track, referential sounds and symbolic ones, real and ideal. The same song, turned up in each space, promises transformed circumstances to each individual. It releases Malcolm from impotent rebellion (he cranks up the radios in every room); it frees Donald from isolated melancholy; and it promises the McBeths a way out of the dead-end of recession. But the actual transformations are eerily the same. Malcolm's rage and Mac's orgasm both expire. They do so, ironically, in the recognition that the station has shifted to non-commercial mode, playing several songs from the same album in succession (in this case, a third Bad Company song, "Shooting Star"). "Rock Block" is now a promotional phrase but it originally described the ubiquitous practice of original programming by local disc jockeys (playing several songs in a row from the same record allows for coffee breaks). The coinage marks the practice as residual, in the process of being overtaken by bulk advertising, playlists, and other homogenizing effects of conglomeration.¹⁶



5.6 Rock Block



This scene gives us one of the film's darkest views of interpellation by modern media but also its happiest nostalgic buzz. If we step back for a moment to think about the nostalgia being offered, we can see – in the passionate blasting of Bad Company on an old stereo – a remembered moment when three aspects of our media-scape that are now totalized, à la McDonalds, were the once-separate vernaculars of film, TV, and radio. Looking back to this moment, when each is fully emerged and yet on the cusp of consolidation, *Scotland, PA* offers a genealogy of our present – of the invention of MTV, with its feature-song narratives, no less than the invention of the drive-thru. In this media archeology of our own present we visit an imagined youth, in which separate media powers – that have since come together, like Scotland and England – had an independent life and clearly differentiated claim on our attention. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* sponsors that look back and also reminds us that this genealogy is a fiction addressed less to the past than to the anxieties and desires of the present, as all genealogies are.¹⁷ This particular genealogy answers to two pressing concerns of the present: it is crafted at a moment when the old structures of authority (media and food industries) are again in productive ferment and when, in part because of this ferment, the prospect of mass, absolutist consolidation appears especially fearful. In this context, the film's insistent parody (even as the old moral framework of *Macbeth* resurfaces) can be obliquely reassuring. For it suggests that our own moment of absolutist fears may be only a mistaken fantasy of authority dreamed at an earlier stage. We may be called to restage it, but the possession will be far from perfect or complete.

In a subtle but important substitution of governing symbols, the film figures this shift from a tragic to a parodic view of historical change (and cultural transmission) by replacing the Ferris wheel with a different ride. The "Rock Block" sequence began (as the film did) with that figure of vertical, cyclical change, evoking the pattern of rise and fall that governs *Macbeth*. The ride Mac gets on, however – the nauseating ride where the Witches tell his future – rotates horizontally, like a record on a turntable (the device that sponsored disc jockeys, Rock Blocks, and, of course, sampling as a technical art). The substitution of flat spin for vertical rotation evokes the leveled social scene in *Scotland, PA*. It also suggests a different model of historical change, understood not in terms of tragic fall and restoration but in terms of cyclical substitution and return.

less a fixed "center" or "base," is apt to prove disappointing. Postmodern adaptations test the very notion of a clear boundary between what is "external" (in Anderegg's words) to a work and what "belongs" to it.

8 By "infrastructure" Grigely means the whole range of practices associated with the production, distribution, and formal reception of a given medium. As Donaldson has observed, *Titus* is poised at a moment of significant shift in all these aspects of cinema; advertising, celebrity lives of actors, director's cut editions on DVD, merchandise, toys, novels made from films, websites and the spectrum of fan reworkings are now part of the aesthetically and commercially dispersed experience of movies (2006: 257-8).

9 Taymor and Eileen Blumenthal survey Taymor's work in puppetry, mask making, theater, opera, and film in *Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire* (Blumenthal and Taymor 1995). See, in particular, the chapter on Taymor's 1994 stage production of *Titus Andronicus*.

10 Both the claim of cultural authority by comparison with Rome and the instability of such claims are central concerns of *Titus Andronicus*. Wayward allusions feature prominently in the stories of imperial expansion that Shakespeare adapts from classical epic.

11 If, as Grigely notes, "works are ontologized - that is to say, contextualized semantically - by the temporal history that surrounds their composition" (1995: 103), then Taymor's intervention gains added resonance from events like the widespread practice of arbitrary mutilation in the recently concluded civil war in Sierra Leone and from the efforts reportedly undertaken there by American protesters suppliers to fit and sell legs and arms to its victims. This sequence also evokes the grave injuries caused by buried mines in Afghanistan. The topic is tragic-comically treated in a recent Iranian film, *Kandahar* (dir. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 2001), set in a desert oasis in Afghanistan where people who have lost limbs due to the explosion of buried mines gather to be fitted for prosthetic arms and legs dropped from the sky by UN relief planes.

12 Starks (2002: 134) notes that Taymor may have borrowed the idea of channeling her film through young Lucius's point of view from Iane Howells's 1985 BBC *Titus Andronicus*. As Starks observes, "Taymor first incorporated it in the off-Broadway stage-production she directed in 1994" (2002: 140 n. 56).

13 In the Columbia interview, Taymor approvingly quotes Tamora's description of Titus's commitment to blood sacrifice, as "cruel, irreligious piety" (*Titus*, DVD 2).

14 Marvin Carlson describes "ghosting" as a theatrical effect of audience memory. "The recycled body of an actor, already a complex bearer of semiotic messages, will almost inevitably in a new role evoke the ghost or ghosts of previous roles if they have made any impression whatever on the audience, a phenomenon that often colors and indeed may dominate the reception process" (2001: 8). In cinema, ghosting is related to the familiar phenomenon of typecasting and also to the cult of the celebrity actor, whose personae in different films intersect with public behaviors off-screen.

15 Stone (2000) eloquently unfolds the audio and visual allusions to Fellini's *La Strada* (1954) in this scene.

16 All quotations from the text of *Titus Andronicus* are drawn from Jonathan Bate's Arden edition, 3rd series (London: Thomson Learning, 2000).

17 Shakespeare would likely have been familiar with Arthur Golding's 1567 translation, but for Taymor the text seems to be the translation by Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al. (1717) in which the key passage reads as follows:

Scarce had she finish'd, when her feet she found
Benumb'd with cold, and fasten'd to the ground:
A filmy rind about her body grows;
Her hair to leaves, her arms extend to boughs:
The nymph is all into a lawrel gone;

The smoothness of her skin remains alone.
Yet Phoebus loves her still, and casting round
Her bole, his arms, some little warmth he found.
The tree still panted in th' unfinished part:
Not wholly vegetive, and heav'd her heart.

18 Thanks to Peter Donaldson for this observation (personal correspondence 2005).
19 It was also the "extraordinarily lifelike appearance" of the little dancer, "enhanced by the use of painted wax and actual clothing" that made her "so disturbing" to Degas's contemporaries. Degas's sculpture, however, was but "a figurine about two-thirds" of his model's actual size and, hence, more akin to "a puppet or doll" (Czeszchowski and Pingoot 2002: 52).

20 Allusions regularly seem off-target in this way, an effect that is intrinsic to the act of comparison and that often stumps commentators. When Titus cites the example of Virginius, late in the play, the Riverside commentary puzzles that he has mis-remembered the story: "This Roman centurion killed his daughter to prevent her rape. Either the dramatist has got the story wrong or he is failing to convey the idea that Titus has a better case for killing Lavinia than Virginius had for killing his daughter" (Evans 1997: 1049 fn. 36). We would say rather that Titus has an interest not in getting his source "right" but in adapting it to his situation. In this context, it makes no more sense to hold Taymor to some standard of allusive decorum than it does Shakespeare.

21 Burt contends that "Resistance to fascism becomes in the film a kind of massive death-drive, and honor-killing in the play is transformed into psycho-killing in the film" (2002a: 309). He adds "Antifascism in *Titus* is not collective rational resistance to a tyrannical state, but is located in the subjectivity of a hero who is both sadistic and masochistic and whose acts of violence do not respect distinctions between people who are in or out of his family" (2002a: 310).

22 The notion that Taymor's ending is involved in trauma management is more favorably addressed by Lisa Starks (2002: 121-42).

Chapter 5 Vernacular Shakespeare

1 On Van Sant's appropriations of Shakespeare see Curtis Bright (1997: 295-325), Susan Wiseman (1997: 225-39), and Cartelli (1999: 27-9). For a broad discussion of *Idaho* and *Men of Respect*, see Robert F. Wilson (1992: 34-7).

2 Foster Hirsch notes that a "central problem of the [Actors] Studio" approach has been "translating emotion into words, learning how to be as turned on by a playwright's words (especially if the playwright isn't a contemporary) as by recalling a powerful image from your life." He adds that "the chasm between feeling and words . . . seems like a continuing hurdle at the Studio" (1984: 198).

3 In an unpublished paper entitled "What country, friends, is this?" Gary Jay Williams remarks an "American ambivalence about Shakespeare" in Pacino's film: "In his film [Pacino] crosses his company's performance of the play dialectically with a performance of anxiety about the authenticity of Shakespeare for everyday Americans, the America from which Mr. Pacino, as a Hollywood film actor, wants and needs to derive his authenticity. Mr. Pacino is not prepared to give up either Shakespeare or America; his film gives us both unreconciled." (1997)

4 The full text of the panhandler's commentary reads: "If we think words are things and we have no feelings in our words, then we say things to each other that don't mean anything. But if we *felt* what we said, we'd say less and mean more." The speech is carefully edited to conclude with a spoken (self-authenticating) request, "Spare change?" directed at a pedestrian outside the frame of the shot and bridging to the next sequence.

5 As Hirsch notes of New York's Actors Studio, "many American actors, told for so long that they don't speak well enough to do justice to the language, have come to believe it" (1984: 200).

- 6 Barbara Hodgdon observes, "Pacino's strategy merges with that of Richard to generate a partial, incomplete kind of re-authored manuscript that, by showing his own body-in-process, affords an opportunity to examine how the actor's body functions as a lever to de-center, though not discard, the text-based core of Shakespeare studies" (1998: 209-10). About the Lady Anne scene, she adds, "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" becomes a mantra that not only propels the actor 'into' the character but which, when the scene continues, he uses to punctuate his own (double) performance" (1998: 211).
- 7 Oscar Kightley, a New Zealand playwright, director, hip-hop poet, screenwriter, sportscaster, and arts activist, is co-author (with Erolia Hopo) of *Romeo and Juliet* (1996). Kightley claims never to have read a complete Shakespeare play. He made this comment during a plenary panel discussion entitled "Shakespeare in the Pacific" at the Sixth Biennial Conference of the Australia and New Zealand Shakespeare Association in Auckland, New Zealand on July 9, 2000.
- 8 Smith (2004) uses the term "sampling" to cover a broad range of postmodern Shakespearean citation, paraphrase, and allusion. We aim to mine the terms specifically musical reference.
- 9 Morrisette notes that he originally planned scenes with kidnapped children but was dissuaded by his production team (DVD commentary). Yet directorial intention seems less important here than consequence. Allusions (whether to a play or a TV show) always exceed intention by their very nature as a feedback loop between audience and text. Intertexts such as *Columbo* or *Macbeth* assert a gravitational pull on the experience of reception and on direction and composition as well. Could there be a Mrs McDuff on the scene in Scotland after *Columbo*? Probably not in this context.
- 10 For discussions of the Manson murders and Polanski's *Macbeth*, see Bryan Reynolds (2002) and Deanne Williams (2004).
- 11 Tellingly, what Morrisette elects to riff on – an action sequence – is one of the few formal conventions of 1970s television that John Caldwell describes as heralding a new, self-consciously "televsual" style in the 1980s (1995). The hallmark of that emerging style, for Caldwell, is an attempt to make the viewer see television as a special form, aesthetically distinct from other media.
- 12 These are Charles Steppmann's (1950) influential claims, extended in major studies by Lynn Spigel (1991) and Anna McCarthy (2001).
- 13 Morrisette notes that Sanko's theme sounds like Tom Waits (DVD commentary). What he responds to is the way Waits channels Weill, a master ironist Waits regularly pays homage to.
- 14 "Love the One You're With," by Stephen Stills, performed by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, whose anthems were fading by the mid-1970s.
- 15 The first line is from "Danny's Song," Kenny Loggins's early 1970s tribute to the simple life.
- 16 Clear Channel, one of the largest US radio conglomerates, was founded in 1972 and made its first acquisition of a nation-wide frequency in 1975.
- 17 In fact radio and television were never wholly separate, sharing a complex history as the dominant broadcast media of the twentieth century, one that involved cross-pollination as well as competition. William Boddy notes important differences between the inception of radio – a widely debated, crowded, competitive, and open arena before the 1927 Radio Act – and television, with its planned and deliberately shepherded growth, which from the start saw regulatory barriers to competition and muting of public debates about its function (1990: 16-17).

- Charlton Heston as a Mexican Othello-surrogate in *A Touch of Evil* (1958). See Nicholas Taylor on the former as "a complex meditation on the insidious temptations of racial essentialism" (2005: 11) and Scott Newstock (2005) for a convincing assessment of the latter as an *Othello* film. For a provocatively post-modern appraisal of the "Olivier *Othello*," see Timothy Murray (1993: 101-23).
- 2 Shakespeare's tragedy itself offers competing accounts of race, reflecting the emergence of modern notions of blackness and whiteness out of very different earlier models of ethnicity. See Floyd-Wilson 2003 and Callaghan 1996.
- 3 Most of Daileader's examples are drawn from RSC stage-productions and demonstrate how stereotypes about black male sexuality migrate beyond the role of Othello to determine how black actors are deployed in other, non-traditional examples of "colour-blind" casting. Hodgdon (2003a) has elaborated many of these points regarding recent film-versions of *Othello*.
- 4 Stephen M. Buhler observes that under Parker's direction, Fishburne's Othello "speaks mostly with his body" while Branagh's Iago "has the most commanding voice in the film" (2002: 26-7).
- 5 In this respect and others, the work Eccleston does as Ben Jago bears an uncanny resemblance to the way Michael Kitchen channels class-based resentment and xenophobia in the role of Martin in the 1976 BBC production of Dennis Potter's controversial *Brightstone and Treacle* (dir. Barry Davis). The 1982 film version – featuring Sting in the role of Martin (dir. Richard Loncraine) – was considerably less successful in eliciting the politically incorrect pleasures of Potter's play.
- 6 Silverman adds: "On these occasions the discursive mode is direct rather than indirect. No distance separates teller from tale; instead, the voice-over is stripped of temporal protection and thrust into diegetic immediacy. Thus deprived of enunciatory pretense, it is no longer in a position to masquerade as the point of textual origin" (1988: 53). Whereas "the disembodied voice can be seen as 'exemplary' for male subjectivity" (1988: 164), embodied voice-over is "autobiographical and self-revealing," and therefore a precarious medium for establishing authority (1988: 52-3).
- 7 Sarah Neely offers an important corrective to Silverman's generalizations, analyzing vernacular voice-overs in contemporary Irish and Scottish film-adaptations. These films use the device ironically to expose the hierarchies of address in classical Hollywood cinema (2005). Jago's narration not only borrows the ironic intimacy of these counter-mainstream voice-overs but sidles up to the class-based grievances they address.
- 8 The histrionics of this scene bear obvious resemblances to the kind of "involuntary or constrained speech" that Silverman considers "a general characteristic of the embodied voice-over, as is vividly dramatized by that variant which seems most fully to turn the body 'inside out' – the internal monologue" (Silverman 1988: 53). But Ben's ability to recover his poise and to regain control of the film's momentum suggests that we are working here with a very special variant of the form: one rooted in the dramatic authority of the theatrical *aside* and rendered more intimate by its televisual mode of address, as we observe above.
- 9 See Linda Williams (1989: 122-6). The classic studies of visual pleasure are Laura Mulvey (1975 and 1981|1989).

Chapter 7 Surviving Shakespeare: Kristian Levring's *The King is Alive*

- 1 Some of the aims and effects of this subtle exposure of the filmic apparatus are explored by Lev Manovich (2001: 145-7), who differentiates them from the conventions of mainstream fiction cinema which are based upon "lying to the viewer" (146).
- 2 This manifesto may be found at the Dogme95 website, www.dogme95.dk/.
- 3 As Scott-Douglas writes, "the title 'Dogme95' suggests that the movement should be regarded, at least in part, as a reaction to GATT93, the final year of the

Chapter 6 Channeling *Othello*

- 1 Other prominent modern instances are Orson Welles's performance in the role in his own film *The Tragedy of Othello* (1952) and later casting of a skin-darkened