

# Shakespeare, the Movie

Popularizing the plays on film, TV,  
and video

*Edited by*

Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt



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## SHAKESPEARE, THE MOVIE

*Shakespeare, the Movie* brings together an impressive line-up of contributors to consider how Shakespeare has been adapted on film, TV, and video, and explores the impact of this popularization on the canonical status of Shakespeare. The essays explore the transformation of Shakespeare by a newly technologized culture, from cultural icon to pop-culture product.

Addressing the interplay between the discourses of Shakespeare criticism, film studies, performance studies, and cultural studies, the essays in this volume open up a range of questions about spectatorship, originals and adaptations, and the appropriations of popular culture.

Taking a fresh look at the Bard and his place in the movies, *Shakespeare, the Movie* includes a potlatch of what is presently available in film format to the Shakespeare student or scholar, ranging across BBC television productions, filmed theatre productions, and full screen adaptations by Kenneth Branagh and Franco Zeffirelli.

Contributors: Lynda E.Boose, Richard Burt, Peter S.Donaldson, Katherine Eggert, Robert Hapgood, Donald K.Hedrick, Diana E.Henderson, Barbara Hodgdon, Tony Howard, James N.Loehlin, Laurie E.Osborne, Kenneth S. Rothwell, Ann Thompson, Valerie Wayne, Susan Wiseman.

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*Richard Burt*



London and New York

First published 1997  
by Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).”

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

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contributors (individual essays)

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*  
Shakespeare, the Movie: popularizing the plays on film, TV, and video  
/ edited by Lynda E.Boose, Richard Burt.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616—Film and video adaptations.
2. English drama—Film and video adaptations. 3. Television adaptations. 4. Film adaptations. I. Boose, Lynda E., 1943– .
- II. Burt, Richard, 1954– .

PR3093.S545 1997

791.43'6—dc21 97–312

CIP

ISBN 0-203-99208-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-16584-9 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-16585-7 (pbk)

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# INTRODUCTION

## Shakespeare, the movie

*Lynda E.Boose and Richard Burt*

In the wake of the recent shift from literary studies to cultural studies, few critics now believe that representations can be vehicles for universal truths divorced from the time and culture that created them. Rather than divide an original Shakespeare off from subsequent adaptations, critics are now more likely to deconstruct that opposition, to see the first production simply as part of a continuum that encompasses all subsequent versions, including even heretical ones that unapologetically rewrite the Bard. Moreover, since recent textual work has compelled Shakespearean scholarship to divest itself of the belief that “the text” has any knowable original or is itself a stable entity, to judge a film based on a Shakespeare play according to how closely or how well it adheres to the (presumed) Shakespeare text is to invoke a criterion implicitly dependent on a referent no longer there.

*Shakespeare, the Movie* includes a generic potlatch of what is presently available in filmic (usually video) format to the Shakespeare student or scholar. On the less contestable end of the spectrum of meaning encompassed by our implicit definition of “Shakespeare on film,”<sup>1</sup> the collection includes BBC television productions, filmed theater productions, and full screen adaptations like Kenneth Branagh’s. It also includes films like Zeffirelli’s that, eschewing Branagh’s more lineal kind of textual adaptation, deliberately whittle down and then cut and paste the sixteenth-century narrative in order to tell and sell a story more amenable to contemporary viewers. In terms of films that reconstruct a Shakespeare narrative in some new realm of the imaginary, the collection has welcomed innovations such as the animated Shakespeares that reformulate radically truncated texts into images no longer tied to their origin in an actor’s body and its representation of the real. Yet, in the largest sense, a discourse about “Shakespeare on film” encompasses an even broader reference that extends even to films with a wholly different representational economy and market strategy— films like Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *The Last Action Hero*, in which Shakespeare is neither the underlying text nor even the source of the plot, but only the reference to a film within the film.

In addressing the interplay between the discourses of Shakespeare criticism, film studies, performance criticism, and cultural studies, the essays in

this volume implicitly open up questions about Shakespeare's status as legitimating author-function, about the relation between original and adaptation, about youth culture and pedagogy, and finally, about the relation between the popular as hip and the popular as politically radical. Given the significance of the American money that lies behind so much of contemporary, even British-made film, it also seems viable to ask what kind of aesthetic best defines not only productions referred to in this collection but the flood of new Shakespeare films coming out even as *Shakespeare, the Movie* goes to press. Is the cultural partnership behind these films merely the latest vehicle of American cultural imperialism? Is it destined to lead to a dumbed-down Shakespeare rewritten in the idiom of mass culture? Or might it, alternatively, work to produce some new kind of post-colonial critique of English high culture?

Classifying a film as belonging to "the popular" implicitly defines it inside a cultural dichotomy, within which the antithesis (never acknowledged as "the elite") is usually read as "the classical." In one widely held view, popularization functions as a vehicle for the transmission of subversive or transgressive recordings of Shakespeare, whereas a film that is widely recognized as classical carries with it a kind of stable universality.<sup>2</sup> But what is meant by either term, popular and classical, is not nearly so obvious as might be imagined. What techniques does a filmmaker invoke in a classical film (black and white rather than color, for instance)? What kind of relationship between actor and Shakespeare is assumed within the "classical" model—close and embodied? Cool and distant? If the "classical" is meant to refer to a work that supposedly transcends the cultural signs that date it, how well do any of the classically "classic" Shakespeare films actually reflect such a presumed stability?

What, one might ask, would now set off a popularizer from other Shakespeare filmmakers of the day? Did Olivier and Welles, to take two obvious examples, consciously strive to popularize? How is one to differentiate between popularizers like Branagh and Zeffirelli? Or is it possible that, in the politics of the present marketplace, making a "popular" Shakespeare film will increasingly necessitate an aesthetic that derives from neither the radical nor the hip (sites where the cultural elite are in fact quite comfortable), but from the bourgeois realm of mass culture, where popularization is likely to determine translation away from either language or narratives that radiate their origin in Shakespeare's century? Presumably, at one time it was the classics that were the big-budget extravaganzas, while those labelled popular were low-budget items conceived of as drive-in movie fodder. In the wake of the financial reorganization of film and the way the bottom line so thoroughly controls production, teen-targeted, popular film has rocketed into the huge-budget model, while—up until the very recent Jane Austen fueled and Merchant-Ivory underwritten revival of period film—anything considered "classical" had become equated with a kind of artsy-fartsy cultural elitism that was bound not to make money and was something thus left to the independent film producer aiming at the art houses or the Sundance film festival. Thus, as the twentieth century nears its close, just where the film

industry will take Shakespeare seems quite up for grabs, the multiple possibilities best illustrated by the enormously different aesthetics, languages, and indeed narratives of the three most recent films released before *Shakespeare, the Movie* went to press: Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*, Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, and Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.

Collectively, the essays in this volume explore and may themselves even illustrate both the pleasures and the problems that popularization presents for any cultural criticism of Shakespeare on film, TV, and video. The first two essays focus on the increasing importance Hollywood plays in present film productions of Shakespeare's plays, even those that are made far away from Los Angeles. Concentrating on the directions in Shakespeare film that have emerged in especially the 1990s, the collection's two editors in "Totally Clueless?: Shakespeare Goes Hollywood in the 1990s" offer an overview of the many film sites where Shakespeare began appearing in the last decade of the twentieth century. Yet, as Boose and Burt point out, in spite of his new ubiquity, Shakespeare's lease in America is now, as it has always been, fraught with ambivalence: for, in a paradoxical trend that may have implications for the teaching of Shakespeare, at precisely the moment when desire to film his plays has never seemed stronger, his name has simultaneously become regarded as a marketing liability. In the second essay, Barbara Hodgdon focuses her energies on two recent made-for-television *Othellos*, the Janet Suzman (1987) and Trevor Nunn (1989) productions, and reads the two in terms of how they circulate and re-mediate metanarratives of race and gender as well as cultural tropes of assimilation and domestic violence. Framed by the O.J. Simpson trial—which also re-mediate *Othello* as a made-for-television-event—the essay explores how the discourses surrounding these representations work to secure spectatorly pleasures by keeping *Othello*, and Othello, in place.

The next set of essays focus on film whose heritage is, in one way or another, transnational. Donald Hedrick, in "War is Mud: Branagh's Dirty Harry V and the Types of Political Ambiguity," illustrates how directing has become politics and how war has become theatricalized. By using mud as the chief image marking the film's ideological structure, Branagh's *Henry V* ensures its American marketability by giving equal justification to a reading of the film associated with a pro-war, Clint Eastwood vigilantism and a reading that reinforces an anti-war critique of American foreign policy. Next up is James Loehlin's discussion of the witty use that directors Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellan make of film quotation in their transformation of *Richard III*. In "'Top of the World, Ma: *Richard III* and Cinematic Convention,'" Loehlin examines the way the film modernizes the history it tells by appropriating the cinematic codes of genres like the British heritage film and the American gangster movie. Robert Hapgood develops further the focus on a transnational Shakespeare, turning to the international reception of Zeffirelli in his essay, "Popularizing Shakespeare: The Artistry of Franco Zeffirelli." Hapgood discusses Zeffirelli's film versions of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1966), *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), and *Hamlet* (1990)

and suggests that Zeffirelli has achieved a compelling rapport with worldwide audiences by inviting identification with leading characters and their vulnerabilities, by holding true to his conception of the core of the originals, by accentuating youthfulness and timeliness, and by embracing the motion picture medium in its full range of sensory appeals.

The next two essays address more specifically the very different kinds of audiences a transnational Shakespeare may have, in one case, a post-colonial Indian audience and in another, children. Valerie Wayne argues in "*Shakespeare Wallah* and Colonial Specularity" that the film *Shakespeare Wallah* presents Shakespeare's plays as sites of cultural conflict associated with the end of the British Raj in post-colonial India. Her essay analyzes the specular positions of Indian audiences in the film as they watch Shakespearean productions staged by a British touring company. From their hybrid position as former British and newly independent subjects, the audiences offer not only approval, but mimicry, resistance, and total disruption of the performances of the Shakespearean text. Laurie E. Osborne addresses to *Shakespeare, the Animated Tales*, a joint British and Russian venture. These animated versions had to negotiate what to cut in terms of what were famous lines of Shakespeare in Russia as opposed to what were famous lines in England. (Lines like "Alas, poor Yorick" and "O, brave new world" had to be restored by English members of the production team.) In her essay on these cartoons, "Poetry in Motion: Animating Shakespeare," Osborne argues that distinctive tension between stillness and motion enables *Shakespeare, the Animated Tales* to foreground the interrelations between textual cuts in the play and film editing. With cel animation, stop-action puppetry, and painted animation, the first series of the *Tales* represents the elisions they make in Shakespeare's texts even as they introduce late twentieth-century youth to Shakespeare framed through film cuts and strategies.

What follows are two essays on very different *King Lear*s. In "When Peter Met Orson: The 1953 CBS *King Lear*," Tony Howard argues that although the Peter Brook-Orson Welles's film remains an important document in the development of these two directors' brilliant careers, when Peter met Orson Shakespeare met television, and the outcome was less than serendipitous. For Howard, the 1953 Brook-Welles collaboration on a live television broadcast of *King Lear* stands as a brave but flawed attempt to work radically within the context of a commercial medium and adapt the aesthetics of English Renaissance theater to those of the television screen. Concentrating on the map that dominates the dramaturgy of the play's second scene and the ways in which *King Lear* films have staged it, Kenneth S. Rothwell's "In Search of Nothing: Mapping *Lear*" takes the reader on a journey through social meaning that spans the various *Lear* films from the 1909 Vitagraph print to the postmodern absence of the object in Jean-Luc Godard's transgressive 1987 "twisted fairy tale" of a *King Lear*.

The final group of essays is concentrated on the ways in which gender and sexuality define and/or have been defined by, through, and in, the relationship between various films and their links to Shakespeare. In her essay, "A *Shrew*

for the Times,” Diana Henderson maintains that *The Taming of the Shrew*’s frequent representation on film and video during periods of antifeminist backlash is more than coincidental. Although adapters have long strived to make the story more palatable by creating the illusions of subjectivity for Katherine and an erotic bond between the principals, the problematic nature of the changes themselves suggests the need for an aesthetic that will offer an alternative to textual fidelity in filming Shakespeare. In the next essay, “Shakespeare in the Age of Post-Mechanical Reproduction: Sexual and Electronic Magic in *Prospero’s Books*,” Peter S. Donaldson maintains that *Prosperous Books* gives recent feminist and psychoanalytical readings of *The Tempest* as a story about Prospero’s attempts to control female sexuality and appropriate the birth-giving powers of the maternal body a technological inflection, associating Prospero’s magic with the power of digital media to create enhanced illusions of life. Because the film relies so heavily on digital image technologies and foregrounds their workings, *Prospero’s Books* is not only a reading of *The Tempest*, but also a metadigital or metacomputational allegory. It links new media to the wonder-working technologies of the Renaissance. In Lynda E. Boose’s essay, “Grossly Gaping Viewers and Jonathan Miller’s *Othello*,” the focus is on the voyeuristic position the BBC/ PBS made-for-television film constructs for its audience. In the Miller film, both gender and sexual relationship are visually defined through costume rhyming, lighting technique, and the quotation of seventeenth-century paintings. And while the production’s *tour de force* moment of compelling the audience to peer into a mirror to see the bed ultimately fails through its reduction to television sized screens, the film quite consciously works to create us as grossly gaping voyeurs, led into complicity with Desdemona’s murder by an Iago who is visualized on screen as merely a younger member of the Venetian patriarchy. In “Age Cannot Wither Him: Warren Beatty’s Bugsy as Hollywood Cleopatra,” Katherine Eggert argues that Beatty’s film—exactly the kind of production that *Antony and Cleopatra* necessarily spawned in Hollywood—uncannily though unconsciously reproduces the characters and plot of Shakespeare’s play. Fascinated with its Cleopatra as *femme fatale* and sexual object, the Beatty film veers from representing her in Shakespeare’s terms as directorial presence. Meanwhile, Beatty’s own career, a template for reflecting cultural anxiety about American masculinity, actually constructs him as a new filmic Cleopatra. Ann Thompson’s “Asta Nielsen and the Mystery of *Hamlet*” explores one of the many instances wherein *Hamlet* has been performed by women, on stage and screen. Asta Nielsen, Danish star of the silent cinema, formed her own production company in 1920 and made *Hamlet* as her first film. Unlike other women who played *Hamlet* as a man, Nielsen played *Hamlet* as a woman disguised as a man, drawing on the thesis put forward in Edward P. Vining’s 1881 *The Mystery of Hamlet*. Using evidence from all three texts of the play, Vining argued that *Hamlet* became more “feminine” with each revision. Vining’s book can be seen as indicative of Victorian anxiety about *Hamlet*’s lack of virility, while Nielsen’s film can be seen to celebrate androgyny. Susan

Wiseman's "The Family Tree Motel: Subliming Shakespeare in *My Own Private Idaho*" acknowledges that Shakespeare may not save a critique of American masculinity, but he does authenticate the decidedly different cultural narrative of the paternal and filial street bonds of gay hustlers versus those of inherited privilege and social legitimacy, a narrative that the film self-consciously invokes within the scenes it so self-consciously quotes—via Orson Welles's *The Chimes at Midnight*—from the *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays. The collection's closing essay discusses gay versus queer representations in Shakespeare film. Focusing on three straight, mall movies in which Shakespeare is a signifier of gay sexuality, Richard Burt's essay, "The Love That Dare Not Speak Shakespeare's Name: New Shakesqueer Cinema," argues that straight films in which gayness is represented may paradoxically prove more disorienting than self-identified gay representations of Shakespeare.

The essays speak for themselves and need no further prologue.

## NOTES

- 1 For filmographies, see McKernan and Terris 1994 and Rothwell 1990.
- 2 On Shakespeare, see Patterson 1990; Weimann 1978, 1996; and on Shakespeare and film, see Collick 1989; Holderness 1985; and Pearson and Uricchio 1990. For work by an unsophisticated and, in our view, unaccountably influential critic, see Fiske 1990. For more thoughtful examples of a cultural studies approach to popular culture, see Grossberg 1992; Bourdieu 1984; and Bennet 1986.

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# TOTALLY CLUELESS?

Shakespeare goes Hollywood in the 1990s

*Lynda E.Boose and Richard Burt*

A short sequence in the 1995 summer film comedy *Clueless* (dir. Amy Heckerling) offers what might be considered a mini-allegory of Shakespeare's circulation within the popular culture of the 1990s. Based on Jane Austen's *Emma*, the film narrates the coming of age of "Cher," a Beverly Hills high school ingenue and media-savvy teen queen who reformulates the pleasures of discourse into side-by-side telephone conversations conducted on mobile telephones. In the manipulation of cultural capital as a means for asserting status, Cher (Alicia Silverstone) clinches her superiority inside of a contest that defines itself through Shakespeare. When her stepbrother's excessively Harvard girlfriend misattributes "to thine own self be true" to Hamlet and Cher corrects her, the girlfriend then rejects Cher's substitution of "that Polonius guy" and slams home her apparent victory with the smugly dismissive line, "I think I remember *Hamlet* accurately." But Cher beats her, point, set, and match, with the rejoinder that while she, by comparison, may not know her *Hamlet*, she most certainly does know her Mel Gibson!

We begin with *Clueless* because it complicates present moves in cultural studies about Shakespeare. With its Los Angeles location and youth market for Shakespeare, *Clueless* offers an opportunity for certain kinds of questions. For openers, just who is its Shakespeare joke on—the girlfriend, Cher, or just whom? Just what is the high-status cultural currency here, and how does "Shakespeare" function as a sign? Does the fact that Cher knows *Hamlet* not via the presupposed Shakespearean original but only via Mel Gibson's role in Zeffirelli's movie signify her cultural illiteracy—or her literacy? Or does this exchange perhaps point us away from any presumptive original, be it Jane Austen's or Shakespeare's, and direct us instead toward a focus on just its mediating package, what might be called the Hollywoodization of Shakespeare in the 1990s? In a postmodern way that effectively mocks all the presumed distinctions between high and low culture, *Clueless* does not merely relocate high culture to a low site (Los Angeles): after all, this is Beverly Hills, not the Valley, and no one is more vigilant than Cher and her friends about maintaining standards and eschewing tastelessness. Instead, *Clueless* elaborates on films like *L.A. Story* (dir. Steve Martin, 1991) in which Steve Martin begins by reciting a

speech in praise of L.A. that parodies John of Gaunt's deathbed speech to Richard II, substituting "this Los Angeles" for the concluding words, "this England"; and on Jean-Luc Godard's *Lear* (1987), in which William Shakespeare Junior the Fifth goes to Hollywood to produce his ancestor's plays, which end up being edited by Woody Allen. Like these two films, *Clueless's* repeated reference to technologies such as movies, televisions, mobile phones, head sets, car radios, CDs, computerized wardrobes, intercoms, and other devices that record, transmit, amplify, and likewise reshape meaning formulate the mediating power of Los Angeles as the contemporary site where high/low distinctions are engaged in endlessly resignifying themselves.

Cher's receding of *Hamlet* could be located in a wider range of 1990s *Hamlet* (s). The *Hamlet* created by the 1990s wasn't big just among the literati—he was so big that he was making guest appearances in all sorts of unexpected places, with different implications of its gendered reception. In 1991, Oliver Stone cast the Kennedy assassination through the lens of *Hamlet* in *JFK*. In 1994, Danny DeVito and the US Army found *Hamlet* to be the perfect force for transforming wimps and misfit soldiers into the STRAK army company that concludes *Renaissance Man* (dir. Penny Marshall) reaffirming the male bond in "Sound Off" lyrics that inventively substitute "Hamlet's mother, she's the Queen" for the usual female object of cadenced derision. Similarly, Disney's 1994 *The Lion King* (dir. Roger Allers and Ron Minkoff), reworked *Hamlet* for a younger generation. In 1995, Kenneth Branagh released his *A Midwinter's Tale*, a film about a provincial English production of *Hamlet*, and then in 1996 and 1997 his own full-length and abridged versions of *Hamlet*.

Ultimately, however, it was Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1992 film, *The Last Action Hero* (dir. John McTiernan), that most clearly allegorized the transformation of Hamlet from melancholy man into an image that could be valued by the young male consumers to whom the newly technologized violence of the 1990s was being played. In a displacement explicitly fictionalized as the direct product of a young male viewer's contemporary fantasies of masculinity, on screen the image of Olivier hesitating to kill the praying Claudius literally dissolves into a Schwarzenegger Hamlet who is actively engaged in "taking out the trash" of the something-rotten Denmark into which he is thrust. And in a clever bit of metatheatricity, the substitution of Schwarzenegger, America's highest paid actor of the early 1990s, is situated as the ultimate insurance that movie houses will stay open and movies will keep on playing. Kids like the film's ardent young filmviewer will keep right on getting sucked into the action-packed worlds of heroically imagined male violence that is both promulgated by American film and simultaneously guarantees the industry its seemingly unassailable hegemony. Though ironic, it is nonetheless true that the *Hamlet*(s) of the 1990s construct a world even more obsessively masculine than did the *Hamlet*(s) that preexisted any articulated feminist critique of popular culture. Mel Gibson as Hamlet means *Hamlet* as *Lethal Weapon Four*. But Mel also means Hamlet as Hollywood Hunk, an object of desire who, like Glenn Close's

Gertrude, projects an image implicitly accessible to female and male viewers alike.<sup>1</sup> Zeffirelli's film may well be *Lethal Weapon Four*, but Hamlet-as-Mel suggests Shakespeare's prince as a 1990s model of unrestrictedly appropriatable desire, and it was through an appropriation of Mel-as-Hamlet that Cher triumphs over her truly clueless adversary, eventually winning a college guy (read: Harvard Law) boyfriend at the film's close.

Rather than assessing the various new *Hamlet-sites* in terms of possibilities for contradictory readings or as evidence anew of an American cultural imperialism, we are more interested in the critical developments that such a proliferation may signal. In the wake of the present displacements of book and literary culture by film and video culture and the age of mechanical reproduction by the age of electronic reproduction, the traditional literary field itself has already, to some extent, been displaced as an object of inquiry by cultural studies. And the Shakespeare moment in *Clueless* perhaps interests us for the very way it enacts this displacement, invoking the high status literary text only to dismiss it in favor of the actor's performance. For Shakespeare studies, what the transition from a literary to an electronic culture logically presages is exactly what, in fact, seems to be happening: an increased interest in the strategies of performance accompanied by a decreased focus on the poetic and rhetorical, the arena where New Criticism once so powerfully staked its claim.<sup>2</sup> If Michael Berube (1995) is right in assessing that the move to cultural studies primarily involves taking a less serious relation to criticism and its subjects, then Shakespeare (and Renaissance) Studies appears to be following suit, its dialogue lightening up a bit. New ways of reading the transvestism of the Renaissance stage, for example, are being discovered by contextualizing the cross-dressed Shakespeare heroine alongside pop culture figures like Michael Jackson and Madonna (see Garber 1992, 1995) and films like *The Crying Game* (dir. Jordan, 1992; see Crewe 1995).

It could be said that this shift to a cultural studies approach opens new possibilities for a kind of Shakespeare criticism with wider appeal to a non-academic public (which presumes, of course, that the Shakespearean academic necessarily wants such a popular audience.) It must also be said, however, that the shift raises a number of new questions, many of which relate to the new influence that Hollywood, Los Angeles, and American capitalism are already exerting on the popularization of Shakespeare. The media in 1990s America—film, video, television, and advertising—seemed suddenly prepared to embrace the Bard with all the enthusiasm (and potentially crushing effect) that such whole-hearted American embraces have come to harbinger for much of the world. Thus the question of potential diminishment that has always been raised about putting Shakespeare on film reappears, reinvigorated by the very technologies that make Shakespeare more accessible. We have yet to imagine how Shakespeare will be staged on the Internet, but for many of those who, unlike Cher, do know their Shakespeare, the transfer from “live” theater to the absent presence of the technologically produced filmic (or digitized) image

invites a distinct ambivalence much like that which betrays the voice of *New York Times* writer Frank Rich, here writing in 1996 about Fredericke Warde, the star of the recently rediscovered silent 1912 *Richard III*. Noting that Warde blamed what he perceived as a “fall off” of Shakespeare theatrical productions on schools and literary societies for turning acting texts into objects of intellectual veneration, Rich, for whom the discovery of this venerable old Shakespeare film seems to have acted as catalyst for his own lament for a lost golden age, characterizes Warde as a thoroughly clueless innocent, someone who “didn’t have a clue that movies were harbingers of a complete cultural transformation that would gradually lead to the desensitized pop media environment of today.”<sup>3</sup>

In the larger sense, however, Shakespeare’s disappearance, his status as ghost-writer, precedes the 1990s. In some ways, the present historical moment only clarifies the way Shakespeare has always already disappeared when transferred onto film. Taken on their own terms, films like Greenaway’s *Prosperous Books*, Derek Jarman’s *Tempest*, and Godard’s *Lear* involve not merely the deconstruction of Shakespeare as author but his radical displacement by the film director; and the interest in any of these films could legitimately be said to lie less in its relation to Shakespeare’s play than in its relation to the director’s own previous *oeuvre*. Even films which adapt the Shakespeare script as faithfully as does Branagh’s *Much Ado About Nothing* speak within a metacinematic discourse of self-reference in which, through film quotation, they situate themselves in reference as much to other films as to a Shakespeare tradition.<sup>4</sup>

Yet judging from the commentary and the advertising matrix surrounding the release of the most recent Shakespeare adaptations, the fact that Shakespeare is the author seems to be becoming not only increasingly beside the point but even a marketing liability—an inference that *Los Angeles Times* movie critic David Gritten quite clearly picks up from the voices of both the director and producer of Ian McKellen’s 1995 *Richard III*:

Here on the set of *Richard III*, a film adaptation of one of the world’s best known plays starring a bunch of distinguished classical actors, it comes as a surprise that everyone is trying to play down the S-word. The S-word? That stands for “Shakespeare.” He’s the guy who wrote *Richard III* some four hundred years ago, in case you weren’t quite sure. In truth, the people behind this *Richard III*...are hoping to attract those very people who aren’t quite sure of the film’s provenance. “I’m encouraging everyone working on this film not to think of it as Shakespeare,” says director Richard Loncraine. “It’s a terrific story, and who wrote it is irrelevant. “We’re trying to make the most accessible Shakespeare film ever made,” says producer Lisa Katselas Pare.

(Gritten 1995:39, 41)

The similar trend that Don Hedrick points out in an essay in this collection—that any mention of Shakespeare is exactly what was under avoidance in the

marketing of Branagh's *Henry V*—is a truism equally applicable to Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*. Likewise, Gus Van Sant (1993:xxxviii) notes about the making of *My Own Private Idaho* that while the foreign producers wanted to put in as much Shakespeare as possible the American producers wanted to cut out as much as possible.<sup>5</sup> Yet just when we might assume that the Bard's name was truly a marketing liability or that veneration of Shakespeare had come to be regarded in popular contexts as uncool,<sup>6</sup> the notably cool film director Baz Luhrmann put out a new *Romeo and Juliet* that is unquestionably situated in the pop culture, made-for-teens film market and is called *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>7</sup>

The popularization of Shakespeare on film, video, and television—which began inside the stalwartly liberal tradition of noblesse oblige attempting to bring culture to the masses—now finds itself, in America at least, in a strictly market-responsive milieu in which literary knowledge is in general a decidedly low capital, frequently mockable commodity, caught within the peculiarly American ambivalence about intellectualism, and therefore to be eschewed at all costs. When Gus Van Sant imports the various Hal and Falstaff scenes from the *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays and sticks them into *My Own Private Idaho*'s world of contemporary Portland gay hustlers and street dwellers, neither the film nor the characters speaking the lines register any acknowledgment that they are drawing upon Shakespeare. If this film is a Shakespeare spin-off, no one has to admit knowing it. But as a market screening device, the omission must have worked, since only those people who had read the Henriad or read commentary on the film in specifically “intellectual” magazine and review venues seemed conscious of any Shakespeare connection. The same might be said of *L.A. Story*. While many members of the audience may have picked up the allusions to *Hamlet* and other Shakespeare plays, only a Shakespearean would have read the movie as a rewriting of the play. Likewise, the connection between *Clueless* and Jane Austen's *Emma* got intentionally excluded from the film's promotional packet and was left to become known via strategically leaked news items designed to be circulated by word of mouth to intrigue the elite without turning off the intended teen market.

But while pride in anti-intellectualism has long roots as an American tradition and is a force which the 1980s and 1990s have seen assume a renewed political ascendancy, quite the opposite has historically been true of British cultural life, where Shakespeare and the English literary tradition have long been a rallying point of national superiority. The quotation of Shakespeare lines seems, in fact, to be used in Britain as a special, high-status kind of sub-language, a signalling code of sorts that regularly shows up in the language of even British detective novels. It is thus frankly impossible to imagine the making of a British film like *Clueless* in which success would be correlated with a pride in *not* knowing one's Shakespeare. Nonetheless, the apparent dominance of Hollywood capitalism so thoroughly determines the market that Britain's famous Shakespearean actors

now find even themselves playing roles within plays which require that they “not think of [the play] as Shakespeare.”

But Hollywood’s relationship to Shakespeare is marked by more than just the avoidance of the S-word. When Gus Van Sant turned to the Shakespeare narrative that he then consciously veiled in *My Own Private Idaho*, he even approached it through a layered mediation, essentially rewriting not Shakespeare’s second tetralogy but Orson Welles’s version of the second tetralogy, *Chimes at Midnight*. Van Sant’s film thus participates in a peculiarly American norm by which Hollywood, up until Branagh’s box office successes of the early 1990s, chose to maintain a significant distance from the direct—or “straight Shakespeare”—adaptational model that made both Olivier and Welles famously associated with all that was once included in the meaning of “a Shakespeare film.” And while American television has shown some “straight” American versions of Shakespeare that do not modernize the verbal idiom or rewrite the story (most notably, televised versions of filmed theatrical productions, such as the American Conservatory Theater’s famous 1971 *The Taming of the Shrew*), apparently the last instance in which a definably Hollywood film seriously tried to produce Shakespeare straight was Stuart Burge’s 1970 *Julius Caesar*—itself an attempt to remake Joseph Mankiewicz’s far more successful 1953 *Julius Caesar*. And although Japanese, German, Russian, Swedish (and etc.) straight Shakespeare films apparently feel perfectly comfortable doing Shakespeare with casts made up from their own national back lots, when Hollywood has made that same commitment, the casting list betrays a special American insecurity in its inevitable compulsion to import a large number of Royal Shakespeare Company actors to surround the American star.

Perhaps because Shakespeare is such a signifier for British cultural superiority, America’s relationship to the Bard has frequently been marked by all the signs of a colonized consciousness. All in all, the preferred American approach to Shakespeare has been decidedly oblique; up until the sudden, Branagh-inspired boom in straight Shakespeare of the mid-nineties, Hollywood has distinctly felt more comfortable reworking Shakespeare into new, specifically American narratives such as Woody Allen’s *A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy* (1982) or Paul Mazursky’s *Tempest* (1982), for example. America’s best made for film Shakespeare productions may, in fact, be the musicals *Kiss Me, Kate* (dir. George Sidney, 1953) and *West Side Story* (dirs. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961), where the Bard is recreated within a particular theatrical idiom that is thoroughly home-grown.

Even on the English side of the Atlantic, where Shakespeare has been apotheosized into the primary signifier for patriotism, nationhood, and national culture, the end of a tradition of turning Shakespeare plays into big fuss, high culture, capital-letter films has already been allegorized in the film *The Playboys* (dir. Gillies MacKinnon, 1992). An Irish acting troupe touring Ireland in the 1940s witnesses its Americanized production, part *Othello*, part adaptation of *Gone With the Wind*, be displaced and their troupe broken up by the arrival of the

real thing, the Hollywood movie and a newly opened movie house in the town they have just played. To be sure, the late 1980s saw the English tradition of Shakespeare film refurbished by Kenneth Branagh into an enterprise comparable in energy to that of the 1940s when Sir Laurence Olivier was making *Richard III*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, and, in 1955, starring in Stuart Burges's *Othello*. But what Branagh has done is infuse the filming of Shakespeare with a marketeer's sense of popular culture. In his productions, high and low culture meet in moments where Shakespeare's scripts get subtly reframed inside of references to Hollywood pop culture: Branagh's adaptation actually rewrites *Henry V* as Clint Eastwood's "dirty Harry,"<sup>8</sup> and his *Much Ado about Nothing* opens with a witty visual evocation of *The Magnificent Seven*.

The sudden contemporary renaissance in filmed Shakespeare is British-led, but by 1995 even British casting practices had changed to reflect the exigencies of market capitalism. Following in the direction that Zeffirelli had been the first to seize upon, the new British productions were now promoting their global commerciality through a mixture of what has been derisively referred to as a cast made up of "British actors" and "American stars."<sup>9</sup> Branagh's 1989 *Henry V* had been filmed with a British cast. But by the time of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the British principals were surrounded by American pop film stars that made brothers out of America's most popular black actor (Denzel Washington) and America's most popular teen heart-throb (Keanu Reeves). There were, admittedly, some problems with casting Americans: in Branagh's *Much Ado*, Don John's line about Hero, "She's a very forward March chick," was cut for fear that Keanu Reeves would appear to be reverting to American slang rather than reciting Shakespeare.<sup>10</sup> And as Alan Bennett, who, when making a film of his play *The Madness of George III*, had to retitle it as *The Madness of King George* because American backers feared their audiences would think they had missed the first two parts, ruefully comments: "apparently...there were many moviegoers who came away from Branagh's film of *Henry V* wishing they had seen its four predecessors" (1995: xix). Yet the trend of using American stars continues, sometimes with particularly fortuitous implications that suggested new levels of narrative. In a production released in 1995, the presence of American actors Annette Bening and Robert Downey, Jr in Richard Loncraine's World War II-era rewrite of *Richard III* provided a fitting way for the film to mark Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth, and her brother, Lord Rivers, as distinctive outsiders to the royal family, and, through dress and hair-style, encourage visual allusions that suggested Bening-cum-Elizabeth, outsider wife to Edward IV, as that famous American divorcee and outsider wife to another King Edward, Wallis Simpson. By 1995 Branagh, too, had gone American: Hollywood's Lawrence Fishburne played the Noble Moor to Branagh's Iago; and in 1996 Branagh's *Hamlet* included such box office draws as Billy Crystal (first gravedigger), Robin Williams (Osric), Charlton Heston (the Player King), and Jack Lemmon (Marcellus). Yielding to the implicit logic of such casting, Baz Luhrmann simply



invited the stars of his *Romeo and Juliet* “to speak the famous lines in their own American accent.”<sup>11</sup>

In what seems relatively new to British filmed Shakespeare (albeit certainly not to staged productions), the plays were also being cut loose from the tradition of the pseudo-“Elizabethan” setting and relocated in the viewer’s own milieu: a 1991 British film of *As You Like It* featured Rosalind in levis, and 1995 saw Britain rehistoricizing its own history by taking *Richard III* into the modernized territory that 1980s stage productions of the histories (especially the English Shakespeare Company’s “Wars of the Roses” extravaganza) had shown to be highly viable. Thus, shortly after Great Britain solemnly celebrated the fifty-year anniversary of the end of World War II, *Richard III* replayed that history by reinscribing it into the cycle of dark days that had eventually led to the Tudor triumph, British mythology now promising an Elizabeth (II) for an Elizabeth (I). By the end of 1995, it was increasingly clear that the trademarks of pop culture were determining the productions of not only such well-known popularizers as Zeffirelli, but had caught up with the Shakespeare industry at large and were putting it into the fast lane. According to the *L.A. Weekly*’s review of the 1995 *Othello*:

Writer-director Oliver Parker has opted for a spin on *Othello* that would make Shakespeare himself dizzy. With more pop than poetry, more snap than savvy, this variation of the tragedy finds the ever-appealing Lawrence Fishburne center court.... The production may be trashy and too fast by half—it makes Mel Gibson’s galloping *Hamlet* seem sleepy—but the tenderness in Fishburne’s eyes is startling.... While there’s nothing wrong in mucking around with the classics when it comes to adaptations, the selectiveness of Parker’s approach puzzles. Why, for instance, is there something so creepy and so very O.J. in the initial love scene between Othello and Desdemona...?

(Dargie 1995:67)

Similarly, Margo Jefferson noted that Shakespeare’s “metaphors and cadence ... passions, convictions, and conflicts must meet up with ours in a world of rock, rap, gospel, and schlock pop, all just a radio station away from Prokofiev and Mozart. Shakespeare must adjust to city street and suburban mall English” (1996: C11). All in all, the message from the mid-nineties would seem to be that Shakespeare was busting out all over: Branagh having shown Hollywood that there was a market, production money seemed suddenly to be flowing; Branagh released his complete, uncut *Hamlet* (1996); Trevor Nunn—having demonstrated his entitlement on stage by directing big bucks productions of *Les Misérables* and *Cats*—directed a new *Twelfth Night* that debuted at Telluride (1996); another *Romeo and Juliet* in addition to Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 production was on its way out; the Loncraine/McKellen *Richard III* (1994) had broken new ground in terms of reframing Shakespeare inside of pop-culture strategies; and,

using an inventive new format for producing a Shakespeare film, Al Pacino had allegorized his own experience of playing *Richard III* in a documentary called *Looking for Richard* (1996).

Just how Hollywood's new interventions in a territory hitherto tacitly conceded to the Brits must look to the newly colonized former colonizer forms the potential subtext for Ian McKellen's remark about the difficulty he had in finding producers in Hollywood to fund the kind of *Richard III* film he wanted to make: "Of course, if Ken or Mel, or best of all Arnie or Sly were cast as Richard, it would have been easier" (McKellen 1996:25–6). Baz Luhrmann (an Australian) put "William Shakespeare" in the title of his *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, almost as if to insist on its authenticity. And as if to emphasize some kind of essential difference between the English kind of Shakespeare and the kind implicitly associated with American models, the Telluride announcement for Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night* (1995) asserts, with a barely concealed sneer: "the film succeeds in part due to Nunn's decision to ignore the box office lure of Hollywood stars, and to cast all the parts with outstanding British actors who can actually speak Shakespeare's lines with proper cadence and clarity."<sup>12</sup> Perhaps because he rightly sensed that strategies such as the above would fail, Kenneth Branagh made a more canny compromise, casting American stars not as leads but in multiple cameo parts for his 1996 *Hamlet*.<sup>13</sup> In these terms, the film promo that was most risky of all is that for Adrian Noble's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996), the cast was made up not of Hollywood stars but a core of the same actors who played in the (1995) Royal Shakespeare Production. Perhaps for this reason the film's US release was delayed.

However much a British director might wish to preserve a British Shakespeare, American production money is the hidden engine that drives Britain's Shakespeare films. The disappointing overall outcome of the 1980s televised BBC Shakespeare series was due, at least in part, to Time-Life Corporation's determination to produce televised "classics" that would exhibit a uniform fidelity to imagined assumptions about Shakespeare's text and times.<sup>14</sup> Doing "culture" for an educational enterprise apparently provoked one extreme of the American colonial response. But Hollywood hegemony over the global market combined with the new, bottom-line-only mentality of the 1990s may now threaten Shakespeare from quite another direction. In light of Hollywood's 1995 decision to revise the heavy puritanism and somber morality of *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Roland Joffe, 1995) into a film that would be more fun for an audience and would get rid of that "downer" of a Hawthorne ending, can a film of Nathum Tate's *King Lear*, in which Demi/Cordelia lives and marries Bruce/Edgar be far behind?

Of all the films of the 1990s, some of the most innovative come from an avant-garde tradition whose energies are infused both by popular culture and an international mode of film production. Through avant-garde filmmaker Peter Greenaway's very attempt to unpack the place that intellectual and aesthetic elitism has played in Western culture, *Prospero's Books* (1990), forms in many

ways an important investigation of the idea of “the popular.” A meditation on *The Tempest*, the film reproduces Shakespeare’s play as caviar to the general and grants few if any concessions to the popular; Greenaway’s revision of *The Tempest* relocates Prospero in the image of the elite filmmaker bidding farewell to a tradition that he himself, as technological magus, participates in destroying. In a science fiction bound together by a technologically produced iconography of western culture stretching from the pages of Renaissance humanism to computer-generated models of virtual reality, the revels seen as ending in this latest rendition of Shakespeare’s final play are played out as a kind of intellectualized, nostalgic farewell to even the existence of a culture that might be called learned or elite. The book disintegrates, and before us we see a virtual meltdown of all that symbolizes the learned tradition, even the word itself. Yet in a kind of acknowledgment—indeed, almost an allegory—of the end of the twentieth century’s new culture and its new possessors, it is Caliban, its implied inheritor, who reaches into the flood and saves the First Folio from the literary armageddon on screen before us. Meanwhile, at the margin, orchestrating the deluge, stands the figure of the maker—the Gielgud who is Prospero who is Shakespeare who is Peter Greenaway—mournfully bidding culture—at least as he and we have hitherto imagined it—into oblivion. Elite reproductions, whether avant-garde or devoted to the “classics,” as well as popular productions, then, meet in the disappearing of Shakespeare.

Dealing with specifically filmic reproductions or appropriations of Shakespeare means that “the popular” must be thought through not only the media and institutions in which Shakespeare is now reproduced—mass culture, Hollywood, celebrity, tabloid—but above all, youth culture. For as Shakespeare becomes part of pop culture and Shakespearean criticism (especially film criticism) follows suit, both move into an arena increasingly driven by a specifically youth culture, and Hollywood has clearly picked up on that fact. The animated versions already released for more than a dozen of the plays and scheduled for additional releases are only the most literal version of this development. Clearly playing to the potent consumerism of what is recognized as a notoriously visual subculture, all four of the so-called “big” tragedies have recently been reproduced in sophisticated comic-book form, appropriate for college students; major Shakespeare critics are turning their talents to readings of MTV videos; and teen idols like Keanu Reeves are being lifted out of movies like *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure* (dir. Stephen Herek, 1989) to play Van Sant’s modern-day Prince Hal in America’s contemporary Shakespearorama.<sup>15</sup> But the production that went the furthest in enunciating itself as a teen film was the 1996 production of *William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet*, orchestrated by a director whose claim to fame rested in his previous direction of *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo (star of the sit-com “Growing Pains,” co-star of *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape* [dir. Lasse Hallström, 1994] and star of *Basketball Diaries* [dir. Scott Kalvert, 1995]) plus Clare Danes (star of MTV’s “My So-Called Life”) as Juliet. Two journalists (Maslin 1996:

C12; Corliss 1996:89–90) compared the film to an MTV rock video; MTV News did a segment on it; MTV itself aired a half-hour special on the film three times the week before its United States release; and, also the week before release, the film sponsored the TV show “My So-Called Life,” ads blaring forth clips from the soundtrack CD with music by bands such as Garbage, Radiohead, Everclear, and Butthole Surfers. As has become standard for all films, even a website was announced.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the ultimate statement of just how thoroughly *William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet* had constructed itself as a youth culture film lay in the way it was market-tested. At the screened tests done at U.C. Berkeley the summer before its opening, studio moguls handed out market surveys that specifically asked that those who filled them out be only those viewers who were thirty-nine or younger.<sup>17</sup> The marketing campaign proved successful: *Romeo and Juliet* came in first at the box office the week of its release in the United States.<sup>18</sup>

Yet the strategies of casting teen idols and the co-construction of youth culture as popular culture were themselves part of the box office stroke mastered some time ago by Zeffirelli in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Indeed, as Robert Hapgood aptly suggests in an essay that is part of this collection, if Zeffirelli’s *Hamlet* was less of a success than were his earlier Shakespeare films, it was because his *Hamlet* was far less oriented to a young audience. In all American-made film versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, the culture has inscribed itself into forms of racial tension replayed within an ethnically marked youth culture, as in *West Side Story*, *Valley Girl* (dir. Martha Coolidge 1988), *Love Is All There Is* (dir. Joseph Bologna and Renée Taylor 1996) and the Luhrmann production, which was set in a Cuban-American community, Verona Beach. The trend toward making films directed almost exclusively at youth culture is a global one, and the 1987 Finnish-made film, *Hamlet Goes Business* (dir. Aki Kaurismäki), confirms its relevance through the film’s staging of Ophelia’s suicide: after gazing at a photo of Hamlet, Ophelia drowns herself in a bathtub while listening to a teen pop lyric in which the boyfriend wishes only to make up with his girlfriend so that all his dreams will be fulfilled. Yet while the inventiveness of some of these popularizations should rightly be applauded, at some point the devolution of Shakespeare to pop culture/youth culture (for which we may also read masculine culture) must give some critics, particularly feminists, pause: if we may read the increasing portrayal of regressively stupid white males (*Forest Gump* [dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1994] and *Dumb and Dumber* [dir. Peter Farrelly, 1994]) as a kind of Hollywood pandering to the anti-intellectual machismo of its adolescent buyer, just what kind of an American *Hamlet* is destined to succeed Mel Gibson’s action hero is indeed a topic to puzzle the will.

Given that popularization is linked to youth culture, the crucial question for cultural critics rests, finally, with the pedagogical implications of Shakespeare’s popularization on film, TV, and video. Popularization has meant the proliferation of representations, on the one hand, and thus an enlargement of what can be legitimately studied as part of the Shakespeare canon. But it has also meant the

disappearance of (what was always the illusion of) a single, unified Shakespeare whose works could be covered. Students in today's average, college-level Shakespeare course are now more often shown select scenes from two or more versions of a given play than they are a single production in its entirety (productions like the 1980s BBC Shakespeare renditions, initially aired on a PBS series, that were ultimately designed and marketed specifically for classroom purpose). CD-Rom editions of the plays necessarily further this fragmentation.<sup>19</sup> With film and/or digital image as the version through which Shakespeare is primarily known, Shakespeare's accessibility is guaranteed, but along with this move to film comes a perhaps inevitable new sense of Shakespeare's reproduction, one which offers certain challenges to cultural criticism of Shakespeare as it is now practiced.

Consider, once again, the scene of Shakespeare pedagogy as narrated in *The Last Action Hero*. In this film, the kid who plays hookey in order to see action films starring Schwarzenegger grudgingly returns to class in time to hear his teacher regaling the students with the pleasures of *Hamlet*. The scene offers a bit of caviar to the theater-going elite in the private knowledge that the teacher is being played by Joan Plowright, Olivier's wife of many years and herself a renowned Shakespearean actress. The in-joke is included, but it is at the same time made purely extraneous to the pleasures of *The Last Action Hero*, where pleasure is distinctly located in the smash-bang thrills of pop culture. As the truant takes his seat and the teacher informs the students that they may recognize the actor, Sir Laurence Olivier, from his work in a television commercial or from playing Zeus in *Clash of the Titans* (dir. Desmond Davis, 1981), the relevance of Shakespeare seems most vividly represented by the comically outmoded 16mm projector through which the old Olivier film is being shown. The old-fashioned, dated feel of Olivier's film may be accounted for, at least in part, by the way the scene in *The Last Action Hero* marks a new relation between the plays and their audience, one in which the aura that pervaded the filmed Shakespeare "classics" is gone, and, with it, the sense of embodied intimacy between the audience and Shakespeare himself. The displacement of Olivier by Arnold Schwarzenegger marks the disappearance of an older sense of the actor as someone who actually knew Shakespeare, who communed with him, understood his mind, and perhaps at times even thought that he himself was Shakespeare.

Nonetheless, this film marks neither the unequivocal triumph of a new American cultural imperialism nor the displacement of a Shakespeare understood to be English by one who has become brashly American. As much as the film would seem to dismiss Shakespeare, it may also be understood as playing out one more version of the way that America, through the aesthetic medium that is as peculiarly American as the stage is English, tries to come to terms with its own, unregenerate fascination with the Bard of Avon. As apparently irrelevant as *The Last Action Hero* would seem to make Shakespeare, in this and all such recent filmic moments in which the Bard is suddenly invoked, William Shakespeare is still somehow a necessary signifier. He is that which must be

posited and the debt that must be acknowledged before—and in order for—popular culture to declare itself so unindebted to the S-guy that it may get on with the production of itself and its own narratives.

## NOTES

- 1 The issue of just whose sexual fantasies Gibson's image plays to is itself an example of the contradictory impulses that the culture's new sophistication about media now allows. On the one hand, in vehement defense of the hunky hero's body as an object for female fantasies only, Mel's spokesMEN have gone so far as literally to deny the right of any fanzines (the new, technologized fan magazine produced by fans and circulated on Internet) to produce gay narratives about Gibson—the narratives that are, of course, encouraged by the distinctly homoerotic overtones of the male partnered relationship in the *Lethal Weapon* film series—overtones that have indeed become progressively more blatant as the rejection of them has become simultaneously more vocal. For more on Mel, see Hodgdon (1994). If there is any gender equality to be offered at all, it is probably to be found only in the newly explicit bisexuality of pop culture's film star images that sexualize us all into universal consumers. In particular, see Marjorie Garber's chapter on "Bi-sexuality and Celebrities" (1995).
- 2 It appears that Shakespeare's legitimacy, at least in the United States, depends on his status as screen writer rather than playwright. In a program on Shakespeare in the weekly television series *Biography This Week*, with interviews of British scholars like Andrew Gurr and Stanley Wells, the narrator concluded by remarking that "Shakespeare is now Hollywood's hottest screenplay writer" (broadcast November 9, 1996, on A&E). And Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*, which includes footage of Pacino at the reconstructed Globe and interviews of Branagh and Gielgud, nevertheless focuses on the American film stars acting in the play.
- 3 See Rich (1996): Rich goes on to say, "But if audiences inevitably giggle a bit at the 1912 *Richard III*, they should also look at it as a window on an even more distant past when Americans didn't have to be spoon fed a great dramatist but were united in their passion for one who gave them characters who mirrored their own complex humanity, not to mention sublime poetry, along with the requisite dose of sex and violence. Exciting as this extraordinary find is [i.e., the movies], we will see in its frames the ghosts of something far larger that we have lost."

We would add as well that the use of American film stars in Shakespeare film productions is nothing new. Witness the Max Reinhardt *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with James Cagney and Mickey Rooney or the Joseph Mankiewicz *Julius Caesar* with Marlon Brando; and of course, there is a long tradition of Shakespeare burlesques in America and elsewhere. See Levine (1988). What has changed, in our view, is the reception of American stars in Shakespeare, both among the viewing public and academia. Moreover, the present moment of Shakespeare reproduction includes new spin-off products from films in addition to videos, many of which are regularly cross-referenced: CD-Roms; laserdiscs; soundtrack CDs; MTV specials; Internet websites.