

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING PROTEUS: FIVE FILMED VERSIONS OF
RICHARD III

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A Thesis Submitted to the
University of North Carolina at Wilmington in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

2004

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I can add colors to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down (3 Henry VI, 3.2. 191-5).

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ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare, through his unique literary voice, tried to make sense of the Renaissance world for his Elizabethan audiences. Since that time, many have been seeking, through adaptation, to make their own cultural sense of his plays. A handful of plays has attracted a great deal of attention in this regard. Richard III, with its plot about the rise and fall of a corrupt King, is the last of Shakespeare's cycle of history plays about the Wars of the Roses. Because it chronicles the closing of an era, the play might be assigned a place of stable significance. Its title The Tragedy of King Richard III links it with the medieval tradition and encourages attempts to regard it as conventionally and generically finished. Richard has his roots in the tradition of the morality plays' Vice figure, still followed by many in Shakespeare's time, and the play fits the pattern of tragedy as defined by Chaucer in The Monk's Tale.

It is a play that, despite the many reasons to settle its meaning, has inspired various actors and directors in the twentieth century. For one thing, Shakespeare endows his characters, especially Richard, with unruly qualities that call for modern adaptation. For another, the provocative "loose ends" that he incorporates into his handling of the historical account keep evoking treatments that, by emphasizing one or another of the ambiguities, escape the neat pattern that fits the play into the historical ending of an era.

Richard III was the first film made of a Shakespeare play in the United States. Produced for the screen as a silent movie in 1908, it was a Vitagraph one-reel film lasting ten minutes produced under the general supervision of J. Stuart Blackton, but probably directed by the Shakespearean actor William Ranous. The fact that an American

company chose this play as its first experiment in Shakespeare on film emphasizes that, though its subject matter seems to be about a distant period in British History, its themes are nevertheless relevant to quite different eras. Even at this early stage of film making, there seems a compulsion to grab the loose ends of the play and make them the American filmmaker's own. Richard III was also one of the first plays to be filmed in other countries at the beginning of the twentieth century; those countries include France, Russia, and the United Kingdom. The play has continued to intrigue the film and television world ever since. The power of Richard III to "spin off" various "special angle" adaptations has been especially evident in the film versions of the second half of the twentieth century.

This paper will be an extended, exploratory study focusing on five filmed versions of the play from the second half of the twentieth century. By applying certain theoretical ideas, especially those derived from new historicism, it will attempt to situate the film versions in their cultural contexts.

After the introduction, there will be five chapters about each of the films: Laurence Olivier's Richard III (1955); Herbert Ross's The Goodbye Girl (1977); Jane Howell's The Tragedy of Richard III (1983); Ian McKellan and Richard Loncraine's Richard III (1996); and Al Pacino's documentary Looking for Richard (1996). These films display a number of controversial themes that are raised by the play relating to class, fascism, gender, and war that are especially relevant to the second half of the twentieth century. The paper concludes by discussing what has been discovered about the cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This endeavor required me to study Shakespeare's play Richard III and five filmed versions of the play. Gathering the primary materials, finding a suitable methodology, and organizing my critical comments into a unified work would not have been possible without considerable help from my thesis chair, Dr. John Lewis Walker III. He invested considerable time reading and commenting on my text. He made innumerable cogent suggestions for strengthening the underlying arguments and improving the overall structure of the essay. His wisdom and guidance were instrumental at every turn. He has always shown me the way by exemplifying the finest qualities one could hope for in a gentleman and a scholar. His great patience with me and his profound insights into Shakespeare's art have made this paper possible.

I also want to give a special thanks to my thesis advisory committee members, Dr. Eli Byington and Dr. Kathy Rugoff, whose critical comments about my essay were perceptive and very helpful.

My thanks also to Sue Cody, Associate University Librarian at UNCW's Randall Library, who was most supportive and inspirational in my research matters.

I owe a special thanks to my family. My parents for all their support and Edward, Jacob and Teddy for giving me the inspiration to carry on.

My husband Jeremy, not only showed great patience and understanding, but also read the text carefully and helped with formatting. He has stood by me and loved me through it all.

INTRODUCTION

Richard III,¹ upon initial inspection, would seem to be a very conventional, traditional play that could easily be classified as a history play; it is looking back from the perspective of Shakespeare's time to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty, slightly more than a hundred years in the past. Putting a conclusion on the historical developments that suit the political climate of his time, Shakespeare shapes the play to end with the Earl of Richmond, a Tudor, triumphing over Richard. He thereby ends the Wars of the Roses with the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and reaffirms Elizabeth I, herself a Tudor, as the rightful queen of his time.

A sizable body of criticism holds that Shakespeare created this play as a tool of Tudor propaganda (Hammond 118). Elizabeth I, an example of an assertive female who never married, might have sparked Shakespeare's need in Richard III to introduce strong female characters who all suffered a dreadful fate after they wedded. Elizabeth I was in a precarious position during her reign, especially where marriage was concerned. She was under pressure by her male council to make such a union, which she did not want to do. If she had, it would have made her vulnerable to her spouse, who would have been in a position to eradicate her power. Shakespeare's inclusion of several women – Queen Margaret, Lady Anne, and the Duchess of York – who have been rendered powerless through marriage and widowhood suggests that he may be indirectly enhancing Queen Elizabeth's traditional image as a woman who has avoided the matrimonial trap.

The structure of the play is highly organized and traditional. It reveals its debt to the Roman tragic writer Seneca, on whom Shakespeare drew for such sensational elements as

bloodiness, revenge, prophecies, ghosts and the supernatural. Shakespeare made Richard and Richmond strong characters. The significant presence of women also established links with the Henry VI plays and with the Senecan chorus. The use of women characters in formalized scenes of lament, woeful rivalry, retrospection and prophetic combination is unique. But his introduction of three generations, each with its memories and griefs, recalls the more traditional Seneca's Troades (Bullough 236).

Other evidence for the play's status as a traditional in the sense of fulfilling the requirement for the genre of tragedy can be seen in Andrew Wise's entry in the Stationers' Register on 20 October 1597. There, it is entitled The Tragedy of King Richard III, it was originally thought of as a tragedy. It is also a play that manages to follow the standard movement of medieval tragedy as described by Chaucer in the Prologue to The Monk's Tale:

Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of heigh degree

Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly. (The Canterbury Tales VII.1973–1977)

Based on the workings of the ancient Roman goddess Fortuna, whose turning of a great wheel was thought to govern people's fates, one rose to a position of power and then fell. Chaucer used this theory in The Monk's Tale, in order to explain the Monk's stories. Richard III seems to fit this description because, at the beginning of the play the protagonist is seen on his way to the top. He reaches his peak when he becomes King after removing all his rivals, and then falls after being in power for only a short time. The

rise and fall pattern is clearly seen. The first three acts contain a charismatic Richard who successfully removes anyone who stands in his way to kingship. Playing a variety of roles with malicious enjoyment, he is finally offered the crown. Yet it is this moment of greatest triumph that heralds his downturn of fortune. Richard is always at the center of attention, even when not on stage. There is no subplot or conventional romantic interest, for all events are part of Richard's rise and fall.

Shakespeare's study of The Mirror for Magistrates (1559), with its emphasis on tragedy, in particular the fate of Richard's brother Clarence, may have deepened an impression that the dramatist already had that the downfall of great men was often due either to divine justice working against them or to other men's evil desires which would finally bring an evil reward. Shakespeare's ending in Richard III seems to show that Richard's rise and fall follow the medieval pattern of tragedy. This idea is elaborated on in the Arden edition of the play:

“We do not participate in the agony of a man's loss of his soul; Richard, true to his dramatic origins, is committed to evil at the beginning of the play. Whatever was potentially good in him is already subverted to the drive of will and power, the Machiavel's immense belief in his virtue, his superiority to the rest of mankind created his superb megalomaniacs whose dedication to the belief that might is right leads at last to the terrifying discovery of their own inadequacy” (Hammond 106).

Richard's actual gaining of the throne is at the very moment when his own nature and the efforts of others have begun the process that will unseat him. “[t]he violence and treachery are expiated in ritual acts of retribution and reconciliation” (Hammond 98). It appears to be a finished tragedy, both historically and generically conclusive.

Richard III's other affinity with tradition and seemingly complete lies in having a protagonist who can be classified as a medieval type figure. Shakespeare rejected the obvious choice of representing Richard merely as a ranting tyrant and wrote a part more developed, but based on the morality play's Vice figure and the theme of divine retribution. Clearly, the Vice formed in Shakespeare's mind the natural theatrical mode of expressing radical evil, which, Hammond suggests, "springs from a context of decayed public morality, evil which has no satisfactory rational explanation" (101). In the Morality play, Mankynd (c.1475), the Vices are all buffoons. They stand for smart good-for-nothings who deride and molest the unheroic hero, Mankynd, an artisan with a spade. He is bedevilled by Titivillus, falls to despair, and is tempted to hang himself. But Mercy saves him, with a homily to the world, putting the Vices in their place. The morality play, with good conquering the energetic evil vice, lasted in some form through the sixteenth century, and Elizabeth I was said to be fond of its notion of rewarding only the deserving (Hammond 100).

Some sixty-odd characteristics of the "formal Vice" have been identified. The ones exhibited by Richard are many: "the use of an alias, strange appearance, use of asides, discussion of plans with the audience, disguise, long avoidance but ultimate suffering of punishment, moral commentary, importance of name and reluctance concerning it, self explanation in soliloquy, satirical functions that include an attack on women, [. . .] boasting and conceit, enjoyment of power, immoral sexuality [. . .] and the self-betraying slip of the tongue" (Hammond 101). Richard himself talks about his role and uses the words "formal" and "Vice." In one of its common Elizabethan senses, the word "formal" means conventional or regular, but Richard uses it to indicate the opposite. He appears to

be something different from the conventional and obvious Vice of the popular stage, because he is imitating the method of that role in an extended way (Spivack 394). For example, he subjects the young Prince Edward to a sophisticated play on words, a common trick of the Vice:

RICHARD. So wise so young, they say do never live long.

PRINCE. What say you, Uncle?

RICHARD. I say, without characters fame lives long,

[Aside] Thus, like the formal vice, Iniquity,

I moralize two meanings in one word (3.1.79-83).

The seduction scene of 1.2 between Lady Anne and Richard is an amplification of the style and method of the typical seduction effected by the Vice in the pivotal scene of the moralities. With every device at his command, Richard dissolves his victim's allegiance to virtue and binds Anne to the evil, which he, the Vice, personifies (Spivack 170). He has a talent for masking evil under piety. In these words directed to Lady Anne, he is also making a special appeal to the audience:

RICHARD. But, gentle Lady Anne,

To leave this keen encounter of our wits,

And fall something into a slower method:

Is not the causer of the timeless deaths

Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,

As blameful as the executioner? (1.2. 118-123)

He is inviting "the appreciation of the audience for his dexterity in deceit, for his skill in that kind of exhibition, which evolved out of the moral metaphor of the Vice. The

historical figure who ruled England dissolves into the theatrical figure who ruled the English stage” (Spivack 395). Richmond, who is crowned the new, good monarch at the play’s end, finally in 5.5 overcomes Richard, allowing him to fulfill the defeated Vice pattern. This, then, is another reason to see the play as a completed, neatly worked out product.

However, even though it is neat in all these ways, the play, if looked at carefully, has an intriguing dynamic nature, a kind of instability that gives it an appeal to twentieth century directors and encourages directors, performers and audiences to complete it with their own interpretive insertions. Even the three things described — the history sequence, tragedy, and the conventional Vice figure — can lead one to see that it has overflowing boundaries, that it is an examination of the human psychological state which can be never ending and therefore makes it anything but a closed, finished piece.

The historical context of the play is that Elizabeth I had inherited a tattered realm. Many, mainly Catholics, doubted her claim to the throne: dissension between Catholics and Protestants tore at the very foundation of British society. Her constant preoccupation was to eliminate religious unrest and to try to get things onto an even keel. Elizabeth lacked the fanaticism of her siblings Edward VI, who favored Protestant radicalism, and Mary I, who attempted to return the nation to conservative Catholicism. Throughout Elizabeth’s reign she tried to devise compromise for her own survival. She was, however, eventually compelled to take a stronger Protestant stance for two reasons: the machinations of Mary, Queen of Scots, and persecution of continental Protestants by two strongholds of Orthodox Catholicism, Spain and France. Mary was in Elizabeth’s custody from 1568 forward (for her own protection from radical Protestants and disgruntled

Scots) but still managed to gain the loyalty of Catholic factions. On several occasions she plotted Elizabeth's overthrow and assassination. Eventually Elizabeth felt she had no choice but to have her cousin executed (Smith 182).

Elizabeth regarded marriage as incompatible with sovereignty, and she chose the risky path of spinsterhood. In doing so, however, she exposed England to the terrible possibility of civil and religious war. But her own wit told her it was politically safer and diplomatically wiser to remain single despite the fact that if she remained single and childless, Catholic Mary Stuart was her legal heir. Elizabeth was, however, a master of political science, which helped her during her precarious reign. As England's first female monarch she managed to eventually acquire devotion from her close advisers. Few English monarchs enjoyed such political power, which she enhanced by assiduously courting her people. Thus, she managed by her own powerful efforts to maintain the devotion of the whole of English society throughout her long reign (Smith 183).

It was one of the more experimental periods in English history. Fashion and education came to the fore because of Elizabeth's penchant for knowledge, courtly behavior, and extravagant dress. However Elizabeth also knew that literature was about society and could be a way of undermining her rule. John Stubbs, who wrote a less than reverent piece about her was as a consequence ordered by Elizabeth to have his hand chopped off, and writers realized it was safer to exercise restraint in their writing and appear loyal to their monarch. It is no surprise to learn that the art of propaganda and the deliberate manipulation of public opinion had their birth in the sixteenth century. Elizabeth's public relations man and keeper of the public conscience was her principal secretary and lord treasurer, William Cecil, whose spies sounded out popular sentiment.

Serious literature of all sorts in the works of such writers as Spencer, Marlowe and Shakespeare was influenced and shaped by the current politics. Shakespeare on one level was more concerned with showing everything as it was without managing to become too politically involved, rather like his predecessor Chaucer. But if read with a sensitivity to the power relations of the Elizabethan age his work, especially Richard III, can be seen as inviting adaptations and interpretations to fill the gap left by his frequent use of prominent but powerless women.

The play may be implicitly asking the spectator to compare Elizabeth I's unmarried state and source of her power to the widowhood of the likes of Anne and Margaret in the play. Their widowhood places them both in the role of dependence and eventually renders them ineffectual. Margaret is seemingly a strong single woman and Anne a weak, easily manipulated woman. Shakespeare could be registering an indirect endorsement of Elizabeth I, who could fill the gap between the two weak women in the play and emphasize, why it is better for a female Monarch not to marry.

The omission of a powerful, active woman in the play invites the spectator to reflect positively on the Queen, whose careful manipulation of her image combined with forceful penalization, like the punishment of Stubbs and the execution of Mary, secured her position of strength that is notably unoccupied by the women in the play. Richard manipulates his mother (the Duchess of York), Mistress Shore, and Queen Elizabeth. In an act of verbal rape he seduces the vulnerable Lady Anne. Queen Elizabeth's seduction by Richard in 4.4, in which she agrees to give him her daughter to him to marry has always seemed less than convincing to critics. Perhaps one explanation is that this play is a controlled work by Shakespeare where all the women have to appear ineffectual;

despite her strength and obvious disapproval Queen Elizabeth, therefore, has to give in to Richard. Even when the women speak together, they often seem unconnected. They do not unite to support each other in making one strong voice against their unjust treatment. For example at the beginning of 4.4 Queen Margaret, Queen Elizabeth, and The Duchess of York appear to lament separately their tragic experiences. Thus, the implicit comparison between Elizabeth I and the women of the play suggests that Elizabeth has what they lack. By not marrying, she has avoided being downtrodden for men's sexual gratification. She has also sidestepped the political pressure to commit through marriage either to one foreign nation or to one constituency at home.

The only death we witness on stage is the dramatic one of Richard in 5.5. The women just seem to fade away, and Lady Anne dies, offstage. This symbolizes to the audience that the women are victims and the only death that really needs to be seen in the play is the evil Richard's. He is to be replaced on the throne by the good Tudor, the Earl of Richmond, who kills him. In reality, Richmond was Henry VII, the grandfather of Elizabeth I. This possibly reiterates subliminally to the spectator, through Shakespeare's fiction, that Elizabeth I might not have succeeded to the throne if it had not been for the death of such an evil man. It would also placate Queen Elizabeth herself, who was notoriously touchy about the murder or deposition of Kings. Shakespeare makes Richmond, who became the first Tudor king, a noble character out of compliment to the Queen's family.

The legend of Richard's wickedness had begun during Richard's own lifetime, despite his early reputation as a fair man who was not physically disfigured in any way. This was an interesting context for Shakespeare to consider, in his treatment of Richard.

The legend spread during the sixteenth century not only because every supporter of the Tudor regime wished to attack Richard but also because the circumstantial details given by the chroniclers provided interesting stories about him, his friends and his enemies. Shakespeare possibly knew such works as Memoires de Philippe de Comines, written between 1488 and 1504 by the counselor of Charles the Bold and Louis XI. Comines declared that Richard killed King Henry VI with his own hands or had him killed in some secret place. According to the same source he also had his nephews killed and himself called King Richard. These works would have sparked Shakespeare's imagination, along with the chronicles of Edward Hall, Richard Grafton, and Raphael Holinshed (Bullough 223). But the source that supplied him with the bulk of his information and fixed in his mind a tone, a general approach, towards the subject was Sir Thomas More's The History of King Richard III. In this book we find the Richard of the play, a witty villain, described in ironical terms by the author. Shakespeare modifies More in two ways by adding to him (More ends his account with the Buckingham flight) and by omitting materials More included. But Shakespeare was true to the tone of the book. He did not contradict; rather, but he made general what in More is sometimes more specific (Hammond 75). Historical sources like these would not only have provided Shakespeare with the source material for his play of Richard III, but would also have tempted him with easy ways to dramatize the closure of a historical period.

Yet the history sequence concluded by the play draws attention to many things outside the sequence. Just as Shakespeare appears to give it a neat ending, it immediately poses the question of the new leader's ability to keep everyone under control. As Spivack comments, "Shakespeare [. . .] applies to him (Richard) the method of a performance

designed originally for a timeless personification in a staged homily, not for a literal person in the moral dimension of human history” (393). It might be argued, then, that Shakespeare was in fact writing to reflect rather than patriotically strengthen the Tudor reign of Elizabeth I. She and Philip of Spain were heading for armed conflict. Elizabeth sanctioned English piracy against Philip’s treasure fleets, and in his turn, Philip encouraged Catholic sedition in England, gave support to Mary of Scotland, and slowly became convinced that he was God’s instrument, chosen to rid the world of that arch-heretic, Elizabeth of England. He launched the famous Spanish Armada attack on England. England won the battle, because of Spain’s inexperience at sea and Elizabeth won another battle for the devotion of English society. The conclusion of the play, with Richmond in control then can be seen as provisional reflective of the dangers and uncertainties that Elizabeth I faced while trying to maintain leadership (Hammond 72).

In terms of tragedy, there is the rise and fall of a character in Richard. But the rise of Richmond at the end of the play could be starting another cycle of power playing. It is thus not necessarily a finished tragedy; it could go on. There could be another rise and fall if Richmond proves to be corrupt. “[i]ts medieval tragic structure is fleshed out with a unique blend of Senecan gothicism, melodrama, farce and irony and its hero Richard is a charming, Machiavellian grotesque, a renaissance wolf amongst medieval sheep” (Hammond 73). Concerning the conventional Vice figure, Richard does not just exhibit recognizable Vice qualities, but also others that go far beyond. Conspiracy and enjoyment of power consume him, which are very modern matters of interest. These things that at first glance are conventional for this play can indeed excite interest and go beyond conventional forms. They tempt people to make connections with modern ideas of power.

Throughout its pre-twentieth century history, Richard III has been especially susceptible to adaptation. The first quarto text was published in 1597, a second in 1598, a third in 1602, a fourth in 1605, and two others before the First Folio in 1623. Each was printed in the main from its immediate predecessor, but some show traces of slight correction, and quarto five was made up from quartos three and four. The First Folio often deviates from the quartos (Bullough 221). Subsequently, literary and theatrical adaptations replaced the script preserved in the 1623 Folio. Richard III survived on stage in thoroughly revised neoclassical versions, which aimed to improve upon what a later age saw as the crude works of Shakespeare's untutored genius. Such adaptations repaired defects of language and action and freely refashioned the plays to suit contemporary tastes. The fact that Richard III has survived to the present day is testament to the faithful transmission of these adaptations (Wells and Orlin 312).

One of the most famous adaptations was in 1700 by Colley Cibber. Initially it was performed without the first act (in which Richard murders Henry VI, taken from 3 Henry VI), perhaps because of official fears that it might arise sympathy for the exiled King James, but later the act was included. Cibber's version swept the original from the boards and remained the usually performed version of the play until the end of the nineteenth century. It is much shorter than Shakespeare's, running to some 2050 lines, nearly half of which are Shakespeare's (some from other history plays), and the remainder Cibber's own. Many characters are omitted entirely: Clarence, Edward IV, Margaret and Hastings among the major roles. Lady Anne's role, however, is expanded. "Altogether the fifty - seven characters of Shakespeare's play are reduced to thirty-one, many of whom are now mute, or nearly so.[. . .] There is still a need for a sizeable number of supernumeraries,

but the worst problems of doubling are eliminated” (Hammond 68). Cibber also allotted some 40% of the total lines to the title role of Richard. This along with its ease of performance contributed to its sustained popularity, particularly with its leading actors, helping to establish their theatrical careers (Hammond 69).

Between 1741 and 1776 Garrick gave 585 performances in 18 Shakespeare roles. At Goodman’s Fields, 24 year-old David Garrick, announced simply as ‘a gentleman,’ played Cibber’s Richard III. He set out to compete with the revival of the play, which had been held at Covent Garden the week before, the first time the play had been performed in London for six years. His success was immediate; the theatre was packed for his subsequent performances and his reputation was quickly assured, especially once William Hogarth immortalized his Richard on canvas. This may have been the beginning of the idea of a “star” actor being “made” by the role of Richard III. From this Garrick embarked upon an extraordinary career as an actor and director, as well as an adapter and restorer of Shakespeare. He played Richard a remarkable 83 times. For the English theatre the mid-eighteenth century cannot be called anything other than the Age of the Garrick. No one had achieved such dominance over the stage. It is possible of course to see Garrick’s use of Shakespeare’s Richard III, his recurrent definition of Shakespeare’s centrality in English theatre, culture, society, and, in effect religion, as a cynical manipulation of a convenient prop. He did however see Shakespeare as semi-divine and was somewhat obsessed with him in his lifetime. Contemporaries recognized that the energy and theatrical imagination Garrick brought to his acting marked a decisive break with the past. Despite being happy with Cibber’s version of Richard III, he began a move to call the other Shakespeare texts ‘back to day,’ reversing the movement to adaptation,

restoring speeches and scenes, refusing the, by then, habitual performance of Restoration adaptations. His approach to the playing-text was one of continual reconsideration, re-evaluation and restoration. (Bate and Jackson 71-2).

In 1814, during the Romantic period, Edmund Kean, a somewhat wild child actor with an undisciplined 'natural' acting style, produced performances filled with energy and pathos that fired the Romantic imagination and accounted for his reputation as a transgressor. His small physique made him perfect for the role of Richard. As Cibber's Richard III he conveyed a wide range of traits. Contemporaries praised his wooing of Lady Anne; his innovative stage business, such as that in the tent scene, where he drew battle plans in the sand with his sword; and his death scene. In London literary circles there was much talk of Kean and his low company. He reversed the actor's path towards respectability. He formed his own rowdy club, the Wolves, who got drunk together and disrupted the performances of his rivals. Keats wished he could have been in that company instead of among respectable bores. In the short term, Kean was the savior of Drury Lane. In his first two seasons, takings on the nights when he played were more than double those of nights on which he did not. George Cruikshank's caricature *The Theatrical Atlas*, aptly shows him in a famous pose for his celebrated Richard III role, raising his stature by standing on the book of Shakespeare and propping Whitbread's theatre on his hunchback. Through his connection in the public's eye with rebellious behavior, Kean prompted audiences to see Richard, one of his chief roles, as closer to the untidy common man. His performance had touched a populist nerve connecting with lower taste, with his wild life outside the theater lending authority to his process (Hammond 70). The sensational elements in his role as Richard III encouraged the non-

patent Coburg Theatre, in 1820 to put on that that play in melodramatic style using Shakespeare's words. This led to a prosecution for breach of the patent, but over the next decade the tide of illegitimate Shakespeare became so overwhelming that suppression of further such productions became impossible

William Charles Macready, the leading actor of the next generation, took over some of Kean's Romantic and 'radical' techniques in his portrayal of Richard – the contrasting tones and tempos, the dramatic pauses – but combined them with a certain respectability in keeping with the Victorian era's emphasis on the domestic and paternal. Kean in his portrayal of Richard may have marked the advent of "radical Shakespeare" into the realm of "legitimate Shakespeare", but Macready contrived to domesticate Kean's wildness and contained the threat. In the London theatre, Shakespearean acting became more and more respectable, and popular theater was transformed into kinds of vaudeville, music hall, and circus which drew less and less on Shakespeare (Hammond 71).

By 1895 Henry Irving's significant contributions to the staging and acting of Shakespeare earned him the first theatrical knighthood. His sets were built in a three dimensional style with platforms (Bate and Jackson 109-11). His version of Richard III, however, was however somewhat insensitive and involved brutal cuts. Even Richard's part was significantly reduced. His soliloquy at the end of I.2 is cut, as is much of 1.3. All the conversation between Clarence and his murderers is omitted, as are large sections of 2.1. The play ends with Richard's last line. Irving's version adds up altogether to only about 2000 lines, often jumbled. (Hammond 71).

Between 1900 and 1951, when two world wars, the general strike, the worldwide economic depression, and post war austerity profoundly influenced culture and the world

of Shakespeare production, no single name dominates. One of the most influential directors was Harley Granville-Barker, who in 1912 sought to adapt modern playing conditions to Shakespeare. He placed well known and accomplished actors in central roles, but did not, like Cibber, rewrite the texts to favor them. The political and economical disruptions of the next decades postponed until later in the century further work along the lines Barker had initiated.

Richard III was brought to life again when, released from their war time responsibilities, Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson re-established the Old Vic in London, which became the National Theatre. Their production of Richard III featured Olivier as Richard and John Gielgud as Clarence (Wells and Orlin 534). These were also the roles they played in Olivier's adapted film version of the play (1955) which was produced soon after the stage play and helped to send a message of stability to England after Hitler's downfall (Bate and Jackson 74). Olivier emphasized the symbol of the crown and the monarchy. The reinstating of a good monarch at the beginning of the film and after the corrupt King Richard falls at the end confirms the belief that the English system of rule is strong and incorruptible. By making the play into a film, Olivier sent that message to the English public.

Richard III has become more common in repertory, and on film as the twentieth century has progressed, perhaps because of our increasing awareness of the significance of dictators for our times (Hammond 71). Also the complex shifting relationship that audiences and performers have with power politics. The play deals with a variety of characters that are marginalised. Richard himself could be portrayed as an underdog in some ways in terms of his deformity and being without love. He seems unable to love or

be loved and is therefore completely focused on proving his effectiveness in contests for power.

The play centers on the medieval conflict that is present in all the history plays between military prowess and power, which is seen as serious and strenuous, and the “idle hours” of love, which is seen as enervating. The women, especially Margaret, often speak in the play like the women of Troy from the Iliad, commenting, warning of what is to come.

It is a play, then, that almost from its conception has been involved with changes of its sense of identity. The text itself was altered by Colly Cibber to meet his interpretative needs and has been reshaped by various actor and director interpretations over the centuries. The characters within the play wrestle with their own identities as they struggle to keep their power or love alive. Richard tries hard to pollute as many of these relationships and people as he can by changing their perception of each other’s identity in a futile effort to find his own. As Alice Clark argues, “Renaissance man considered human sensory receivers as imperfect and therefore incapable of reflecting the outside world of ever changing appearances. This feeling of unreliability spilled over into the theatre where the representation of feelings, facial expressions and gesture are often grossly deformed, as in the case of Richard III” (221). Richard, because of his deformity, has experienced from early childhood what it was like to be considered as having no identity that mattered or could be trusted. Actors and directors have capitalized on this uncertainty to develop his character in various directions in response to the most deeply felt uncertainties of their own eras.

The play is, of course, a searching examination of power politics. By overdeveloping Richard's character while relegating most of the other characters to the status of symbols, Shakespeare highlights the amount of acting that Richard does to gain power. Richard III is also an intense exploration of the nature of crime and punishment, as individuals are forced to confront their deeds. Just as some critics see the play as the reiteration of the Tudor myth, others see it as Shakespeare's dramatic interrogation, the final working out of the consequences of the seizure of the throne by Henry IV over eighty years before the play opens. These events are dramatized in the plays that precede Richard III.

This study will focus on a cultural analysis of five film versions of Richard III from the second half of the twentieth century. It will begin with Laurence Olivier's interpretation from 1953 and end with Al Pacino's documentary Looking for Richard in 1996. Other versions covered are Herbert Ross' The Goodbye Girl (1977), Jane Howell's The Tragedy of Richard III (1983) and Ian McKellan and Richard Loncraine's Richard III (1996).

It is a play that, because of its implication in important cultural issues, encourages a variety of interpretations to reach audiences of different eras. In each of the films we will discuss how this is done. We will consider several issues. Included will be the treatment of women, as well as the participation of various male characters in the construction of their own fate and those of others. We will examine the ways that each film manipulates elements of Shakespeare's text and cinematography to form its structure. Finally, we will look at how, in terms of each film's historical context, the ideas of power and evil are presented or implied. For as Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt argue, "[t]he new historicist project is not about demoting art or discrediting aesthetic pleasure; rather

it is concerned with finding the creative power that shapes literary works outside the narrow boundaries in which it has hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries.” They call upon us “[t]o imagine that the writers [and, we might add, filmmakers] we love did not spring up from nowhere and that their achievements must draw upon a whole life-world and that this life-world has undoubtedly left other traces of itself” (12-13). The conclusion will summarize the cultural implications of these films and their impact on how we think and learn about Shakespeare.

CHAPTER ONE: LAURENCE OLIVIER'S RICHARD III (1955).

Laurence Olivier's portrayal of Richard III as an evil man, though highly successful in performance is one-dimensional. The main themes that Olivier deals with in his interpretation are evil and betrayal. By reducing women's roles in the film, in particular that of Queen Margaret, Olivier emphasizes Richard's evilness and women as victims. He focuses his acting on a certain stereotype of the Richard character, an intelligent, unscrupulous tyrant. The removal of Margaret's part is especially noteworthy because it deprives the play of one of its few indications of female power – that is the powerful curse. Olivier emphasizes the corruption and symbolizes this through Richard's talking alone to the camera.

Richards's cruel sexual impact is also present in the film. The impression of this on Lady Anne is particularly effective in Olivier's interpretation. After Richard has wooed her, the film immediately contains a close up of Olivier addressing the camera stating, "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long," suggesting he is already assured of her capitulation. Olivier plays a vigorous, overpowering lover for Claire Bloom's immature and insecure Lady Anne, convincingly winning a woman whose relatives have lost their lives because of him. Richard's sexuality is obvious in the scene. Olivier disregards the play's text to include two prolonged kisses, during which he has the actress firmly in a grasp that signifies sexual dependency (Davies and Wells 125-6). Ian McKellan's version, by contrast, shows none of the sexual enjoyment of capturing Anne. Rather, his enjoyment is of having manipulated another pawn in his journey to power.

Olivier's interpretation of power shows the monarchy becoming subject to evil and then being purged of it through the coronation of Richmond in the final scene. The crown is seen as a visual image hanging in the air above the throne at the beginning of the film. A real crown is placed on Edward's head, who is himself corrupt; he is then replaced by the equally corrupt Richard. Finally the crown is placed symbolically on the head of the noble Richmond. (The idea of the goodness of the English monarchy was no doubt a popular theme for Olivier's audience of that time, who still had recent memory of what had been a real threat of invasion and take-over by the Hitler.) At the end of the play, Shakespeare has Richard fighting and being slain by the new king, Richmond. In the film, Olivier has all the soldiers slaying Richard, which helps to give the audience watching the film the feeling of democracy, the people overcoming a tyrant. In addition, Richmond is shown by Olivier as handsome, waiting to be crowned on the battlefield, not having stained his hands with blood.

This is very different from Ian McKellan's film version, which indicates a new order at the end that may not be any better than the previous one. This is a much more cynical, but perhaps more realistic view of life at the end of the twentieth century than Olivier's 1950s version. It is also nearer to Shakespeare's theme of the medieval Wheel of Fortune in his or Colly Cibber's version.

Olivier cuts a great deal from the play, as Colly Cibber did, to emphasize the character of Richard and all he represents. By removing Margaret, he de-emphasizes the power of women and all but obliterates the historical context to concentrate on Richard's evilness. He invites us to look at the play in its current terms, as a series of ideas below the surface. He expands Richard's opening soliloquy by adding lines from a soliloquy

Gloucester delivered in 3.2 of 3 Henry VI which endow him with an even greater desire for power:

Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile,
And cry, 'Content,' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions (182-185).

This helps to characterize Richard's malignity by showing him as an actor whose great talent is for deceit and manipulation, which by the tone of the speech he appears to reveal in.

In their discussion of the play, Wells and Orlin make interesting comments. They believe Shakespeare uses women to show psychological insight and should not therefore be cut. They discuss how Queen Margaret, whose contribution to the whole might seem the most ritualized, has lines of acute perception. "What?" she asks, in words which carry the temporary shifting of allegiance in a group faced with a common enemy, "Were you snarling all before I came, / Ready to catch each other by the throat, / And turn all your hatred now on me?" (1.3.185-7). They believe the women of the play perform, like the women of devastated Troy, as a chorus of mourners; but these same women are also the ones who are made to question the very use and function of language. When in 4.4 the Duchess of York asks the radical question "Why should calamity be full of words?" (124-6), it provokes Elizabeth into thinking about language and function. She attempts to define the gap between words and reality. The women's impotent position with words in the play is not, of course, Shakespeare's (408). Whereas in the play women talk a lot about their helplessness, in the film they are scarcely allowed to talk at all.

In removing Margaret and her curses, Olivier has shifted the emphasis away from the intelligence of history and the working of divine justice. As Griffin comments, “He cuts out the character of the virago Queen Margaret, who runs like a thread through Shakespeare’s text, reminding Richard and his fellow sinners and the audience, that retribution will come. And in so doing, Olivier narrows his scope from the execution of divine justice on doers of evil to a chronicle of Richard and his pawns, and his theme from the falls of princes to the punishment of one man” (Griffin 235).

Laurence Olivier himself said about the arrangement of the film that “[i]f you are going to cut a Shakespeare play, there is only one way to do it—lift out scenes. If you cut the lines piecemeal merely to keep all the characters in, you end up with a mass of short ends.” He excised from Richard III the cursing scenes and the character of Queen Margaret, which not many spectators knew the play well enough to miss. The removal of Margaret, as Constance Brown notes in her essay, and the reduction of other parts force particular attention on the psychology of Richard, and his link to current affairs. “The structure placed on the action of the play by Margaret’s curses is replaced in the film by another structure, visual rather than linguistic, which forcibly suggests how Richard is to be taken and insists on some connection between Richard and Hitler” (Brown 137). This revisioning has the effect of detaching Richard from his historical context and making him transportable to the modern age. The film also gained in taking these steps by exploiting Olivier’s onscreen charisma, which was much more in demand at the time. (Thorpe 362).

Another interesting treatment of a woman in Olivier’s film is Mistress Shore, she is referred to in the original text but has no lines and is not mentioned as being present in

any of the scenes. As Griffin notes, “[i]n the film *Mistress Shore* is mimed most effectively by Pamela Brown. In a scene set in the Tower, we see the mysterious and beautiful Jane Shore, actually leading Hastings forth from his cell. Her relationship to the King is suggested entirely without dialogue, and her open transfer of her affections to Hastings is made in a single shot at the king’s death bed when she and Hastings exchange an understanding look as the king breathes his last” (Griffin 236).

The final point of interest is the treatment of Anne. One reviewer points out that Olivier’s Richard woos Lady Anne, played by Claire Bloom, over the coffin of her dead husband, Edward, Prince of Wales, not over the coffin of her father-in-law, Henry VI. It is a change that implicates Anne more deeply in submitting to Richard’s sexual appeal than in Shakespeare’s original (Davies 177). What Olivier seems to be doing is to emphasize sexual exploitation and betrayal instead of giving weight to family betrayal. Again, this is more comprehensible in modern times.

But what of the portrayal of male characters and how much they are in charge of their own and others’ fate? In Olivier’s interpretation he omits Clarence’s subtle and skilful pleading with those who come, on Richard’s instructions, to kill him. As Davies explains,

“[o]ne can appreciate that Clarence’s plea to his murderers in 1.4 ‘that you depart and lay no hands on me’ and its ensuing development might sensibly be seen as slowing the necessary narrative pace of the film, but one cannot help regretting that Gielgud was denied the dramatic opportunities in the elaboration of this eloquent entreaty, especially when one sets it against such preparatory lines for his killers as ‘S wounds, he dies. I had forgot the reward’ and ‘O excellent device! – and make a sop of him’”(Davies 178).

It leaves the impression that Clarence did not really try to save his own life, as Shakespeare intended he should in the original. However, the omission of Clarence's plea, which refers to the historical context in which he switched sides in the War of the Roses, allows Olivier to move the play into contemporary ambiance.

Olivier's film also reflects the play's inherent absence of any satisfactory alternative to Richard in Edward's court and the idea that the court in Richard III is clearly in a state of political instability, which invites a Hitler to move in. Edward's inadequacy as a king, is elucidated through religious reference. Religious chants and symbols are used to stress Edward's corruption. During the scene in which Edward tries to reconcile the factious nobles, he lies in bed holding a rosary. At a moment when the queen's back is turned he kisses the hand of Mistress Shore, still clutching the rosary tightly in his hand.

Olivier also visualizes the inadequacy of the child, Prince Edward. When the prince arrives in London, Richard and Buckingham escort him into the throne room. The doors swing open and he runs in. He pauses abruptly, his back to the camera, looking up at the empty throne. The camera moves back and up until Edward, a small, solitary red smear against soft gray, is dwarfed by the room (Brown 140-1). Perhaps in this insignificance of the prince we can see a hint of the failure of political naivete in events leading up to World War II.

But how does Olivier manipulate elements of Shakespeare's text to structure the film? Olivier opens with the abstract image of the crown, symbol of divine by sanctioned authority, "[i]ntroducing into the text the coronation of Edward IV from 3 Henry VI. By doing this, the director focuses his work on the curve from legitimate king to tyrant to

legitimate king” (Brown 137). There is no question that the theme of who owns the crown is important to the film.

It is in order to visualize the corruption of the court, Olivier adds Mistress Shore. Edward’s fondness for her is established almost at once. As he pauses to chuck her under the chin with the scepter, the film conveys Edward’s lasciviousness and a warning that things are not as under control as they should be (Brown 134).

Because of all Olivier’s changes in the text, the emphasis shifts to one man, Richard/Olivier, and his unblinking gaze into the camera. It is in Richard alone that the power of the film lies. As Brown remarks, “Buckingham is the craftsman, the technician, the super-subtle instrument, Richard the master designer and driving force. He is utterly unscrupulous, but there is a great deal more to him than that. He has the attributes tyrants often possess – a sharp intellect, an enviable way with words, and sufficient sex appeal, in spite of his deformity, to woo successfully a woman whose husband and father-in-law he has murdered” (142).

A review from Dec. 16, 1955 states, “Sir Laurence, incarnating that evil genius, the treacherous, witty, spleenful and ever-unrepentent villain, plays Richard in a spirit verging on the Victorian melodramatic. He savors his wickedness with relish, sharing, in close up, his cynical and mirthful contempt for his victims. Gleeefully, he takes perverted joy in the world’s dislike of him, reveals his plots, glories in his hellish ministry. Rage he knows and despair, but never gloom or self-pity ” (Graham 1).

Some objected to the shallowness of Olivier’s portrait and wanted a portrait of more psychological realism, but generally the reviews at the time hailed it as a triumph.

It is also instructive to situate the film in its sociological context. The decade following the Second World War was a difficult time for women. After being independent and vital during the war effort, they were expected to return to the home and remain there. Their chief role was to be seen as mother and silent support to their husband to bring back a form of stability to society. The omission of Margaret as an intelligent deliverer of curses and predictions and the inclusion of a decadent Jane Shore, it could be said, reflect this in the film. Shore is there only for men's sexual gratification, and Margaret is entirely omitted so that the audience misses, for example, her reminders that Richard's family murdered her husband and son. Lady Anne seems totally submissive to Richard's sexual prowess in the seduction scene, rather than undergoing a slow breakdown by Richard of her psychological resistance, as Shakespeare had originally intended.

Britain was still recovering from the experience of Hitler's tyranny, and it would seem predictable for Olivier to produce a film that emphasizes a stable monarch being replaced by a corrupt tyrant who is then replaced by another stable monarch. In this regard, it is interesting that Olivier's Richmond, who defeats Richard in the play, does not engage in any fighting and in fact has no lines. Our only impression of him as he waits to be crowned by Lord Stanley after the battle, is of a handsome symbol. Since Richard has corrupted both words and action during the film, his antitype is permitted neither. That is the only way Richmond can represent the stability of the monarchy without the corruption into which it fell under his predecessors. The frequent use of the word triumph in reviews at the time and the prominence of the crown in the film add to

the feeling that Olivier was trying to provide reassurance to his audience in his film interpretation of Richard III that the monarch was a good institution and would survive.

Olivier's own comments seem to confirm this impression: "I felt Shakespeare within me, I felt the cinema within him [and] I felt myself to be an agent of his imagination" (275-6). Olivier felt in some way that he was an inheritor of Shakespeare and a transmitter of his genius to the contemporary world. Barbara Hodgdon states of Olivier that he was "[c]ommitted to remembering a distant past – mobilizing it, as Shakespeare had done, to address a national crisis – and poised between a theatrical and art-historical heritage and fully cinematic imagining" ("Replicating Richard" 208).

CHAPTER TWO: HERBERT ROSS' THE GOODBYE GIRL (1977).

An interesting but indirect adaptation of Richard III is in the Herbert Ross film of Neil Simon's play The Goodbye Girl. The film covers the topic of gender roles, which was of emerging interest in the late 1970s. The plot is about an actor named Eliot Garfield, who is fascinated by being able to play Richard, according to him the second greatest role in Shakespeare. The assumption is that the greatest role to play as an actor is Hamlet, who one gathers, is Shakespeare's most sensitive male character. The actor Eliot seems therefore to be taking for granted that he is not going to have to worry about sensitivity, but is going to be able to play Richard as a traditional male. He is made extremely uncomfortable when he discovers that the director wants to use the play to challenge and explore gender roles by presenting Richard as a gay man. He expresses fear on the one hand at being seen as a gay man by straight people and on the other that his portrayal will rely on using stereotypical female behavior that might offend the emerging gay and women's movement of that time. As Eliot proclaims in the film, "[t]he critics are gonna crucify me and gay liberation is gonna hang me from Shakespeare's statue by my genitalia."

The figure of Eliot is a measuring rod for both traditional feelings of sexuality and new ideas. Simon allows the film to work in a variety of ways. He explores, in a safe way, gay and women's issues, but allows the actor Eliot, as Shakespeare did when creating the role, to have his hump and twisted fingers to help express what he felt he is. Eliot sees his hump as truly masculine, "subconsciously representing the phallus"(Burt 255). This helps him retain his original ideas of himself in the part. He fails in his role as

a gay Richard but succeeds in his actual life as a heterosexual lover who becomes a father figure to his partner's child. Simon thus affirms a version of the nuclear family. Olivier had wanted a story about a powerful and evil villain with a lot of energy who has his day and is displaced by someone morally better, a vital component of 1950s thinking. Simon produces a Richard figure who involves the audience in a consideration of contemporary gender issues but who is safely contained in a traditional relationship by the film's end. This is an indication that the mainstream film industry was unable in 1977 to portray Shakespeare and all men as anything but predominantly heterosexual. A comment by Burt helps to explain the film's choices: "In recent English and American legal controversies over gay rights, the issue is often less about actual gay sex than it is about the mainstreaming of representations of it. Homophobes tend to legislate against representations, which view gays in a positive light"(244).

The Goodbye Girl begins with the main character Eliot Garfield's (Richard Dreyfuss) discovery that a friend who sublet Eliot his New York apartment failed to tell his dumped girlfriend, Paula Mcfadden (Marsha Mason) and her daughter Lucy (Quinn Cummings) to vacate it. This difficulty is resolved by an agreement between Eliot and Paula to share the apartment, but it is quickly followed by another difficulty. Eliot has come from Chicago to make it big in New York, and he is appalled to learn that he must play Richard III as gay. His reaction shots to playing the director's gay interpretation of Richard rather than his actual interpretation is what really generates the film's comedy (Burt 254).

The key women in the film are Paula and her daughter Lucy. At the beginning of the film Paula is a skeptical, hard to get mother. Both she and her daughter resist having Eliot

in their flat, but eventually give in. Eliot wins the hearts of both women. Though he leaves them for a job elsewhere, it is not before he asks them to go with him. They say no, preferring to stay at home and, as Paula jokingly suggests, spending the money he promises to send until he returns. He suggests leaving his guitar at the flat they shared, implying he will be returning. This establishes at the end of the film that a nuclear family has tentatively evolved.

The historical context of the film is that in the 1970s gender roles were still not destabilized despite the 1960s social revolution, the ending of aversion therapy for gay people, and the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967. So in the film there is a heterosexual actor trying to play Richard as gay and finding it embarrassing because he is not gay himself. The film deals with stereotypes, which Neil Simon takes for granted will be rejected in a humorous way by the audience of the time. This is especially true of the gay director of the play, who is only truly happy with his production when he finds out that his mother likes it. By the gay director allowing Eliot to keep Richard's hump as long as he plays the character as gay signals the avoidance of any deep discussion of sexuality or gay rights in the film. Eliot discusses how he is embarrassed to play the role, and the audience and critics in the theatre in the movie reject the interpretation. We might say that Simon is looking for Richard III as Al Pacino does in his later documentary, but not too hard. He does not break through to new levels of understanding that investigate the role of Richard as a loner and what that might mean in terms of sexuality; instead he keeps the whole experience light hearted.

Simon is writing with a humorous consciousness of the significance of William Shakespeare for an actor as he makes the character Eliot talk about how much he wants to

play the role of Richard. Eliot is clearly impressed with the idea that Richard is the second greatest role to play. This illuminates which roles, over generations, have become important to Shakespearean actors and why actors such as Olivier and McKellan are drawn to play the part of Richard. By displaying the role in the way he does, Simon is also making light fun of an actor trying to interpret it. At the time of the film's release critics also believed that, by doing this, Simon and the film industry were disrespectful to gay people when they were most vulnerable in mainstream society. Twenty years later, however, Ian McKellan, an openly gay actor, will play the part of Richard as a power manipulator and will desexualize him and emphasize the corruption of heterosexuality throughout the play. The success of McKellan's film allows his version to speak not just as a lone minority voice but as an acceptable alternative in mainstream society in the 1990s. Simon, by contrast, creates an absurd, eccentric Richard through the humorous contention of Eliot and the gay director of the play. The film consequently does not break new ground or have any message of real significance.

The women's movement was becoming more active in the 1970s. Simon, however, plays only lip service to this and uses the ending to maintain the dominance of the male in the film. Burt believes that in The Goodbye Girl "The film stages a solution to the breakdown of the nuclear family, namely, the heterosexual 'sensitive guy'" (254). He goes on to say that "insofar as the sensitive guy is defined against the macho, macho man, he is vulnerable to being read or reading himself as symbolically castrated (in this film, read feminized, read gay)" (254). He then discusses how this film gets to its 'happy' ending with its reinstatement of patriarchal rule. Richard III is crucial since this character provides Eliot with what he needs: a prosthesis to defend against what might be called his

symbolic castration anxiety. The prosthesis emerges through an implicit pun on the noun hump, meaning hunchback, and the verb to have sex:

MARK. How do you see Richard? Mr. Macho? Is that it?

ELIOT. I don't see him as a linebacker for the Chicago Bears, but let's not throw away one of his prime motivations.

MARK. Oh? What's that? He wants to hump Lady Anne!

The hunchback returns not as the macho linebacker but as a hump. Although Eliot follows the director and plays Richard as gay, he fights to keep the hump and the twisted fingers and eventually he and the director reach a compromise:

MARK. Do you see where I'm headed?

ELIOT. I'm trying, Mark.

MARK. Richard was gay. There's no doubt about it. But let's use it as subtext. We'll keep it, but now we can put back the hunchback and the twisted fingers.

Burt understands this to mean that the hump functions as the phallus. With Richard stripped bare to his metaphorical hump, Eliot can still hump women, even if he acts the part of a gay transvestite too. Eliot learns how to perform on stage and to perform in bed. Burt argues that though the film is not overtly homophobic, it does suggest that Eliot frees himself up by unconsciously equating the stigma of being gay with the stigma of being a cripple (255). It can be argued that Eliot's possession of the phallus, allows the film to conclude with a reconstructed, nuclear family, and a wife willing to stay at home and wait for her husband's return. Yet the process of normalization itself is anything but normal. What might seem like two separate plots – one about the actor's career, the other

about a romance – instead prove to be linked through Shakespeare, kept as a subtext, as it were, to the heterosexual romance. Simon again avoids any real discussion of women’s rights (256).

Burt’s criticism makes an interesting contribution when trying to understand the film from differing perspectives. Simon, though clearly experimenting with ideas about sexuality, does so in a lighthearted way that conforms in the end to the Hollywood stereotype of a heterosexual, male - dominated family. Interestingly, another version of the film has just been produced for American television (2004) at a time when the domain of the traditional family is again being challenged.

The effect of Simon’s appropriation of Shakespeare in The Goodbye Girl is astutely summed up by Douglas M. Lanier, who comments about filming Shakespeare in the late seventies,

“It is telling that outside of ‘proper’ Shakespeare films, Hollywood typically placed Shakespeare’s language in the mouths of characters who were somewhat problematic. The cinema’s penchant for portraying attempts to update Shakespeare as comic or hopelessly misguided, as in The Goodbye Girl, points to a contradictory impulse to harmonize Shakespeare with the protocols of pop culture and at the same time, to situate Shakespeare as a figure who cannot be brought in line with the protocols” (64).

As we shall see McKellan’s film of Richard III at the end of the twentieth century highlights how astute filmmakers have become in making Shakespeare fit with the protocols of popular culture while retaining the feel of a “proper” Shakespeare film, even with McKellan’s eclectic delivery of the lines.

CHAPTER 3: JANE HOWELL'S THE TRAGEDY OF RICHARD III (1983)

Jane Howell's production is yet another way of bringing Richard III to bear on current issues. Throughout the 1980s, when it seemed that no more major Shakespeare films might appear, televised performances, in particular the BBC-TV Shakespeare series, were produced that continued the idea that "the Shakespeare film might be considered a genre all of its own" (Barbara Hodgdon VI). Howell's adaptation still had text-based concerns, but more than Olivier and Simon, and less than McKellan, it was moving into the political arena.

It appears to be a traditional version (she uses the 1951 Peter Alexander edition), but, as with Olivier, it exhibits some radical departures from tradition. The main difference is that it is a made — for — television drama rather than the other versions in this study, which are cinematic experiences. Howell concentrates on trying to transfer the experience of watching in a theatre, through television, to viewers in the sitting room.

The Tragedy of Richard III is the last of the Henry VI - Richard III sequence produced by Howell. Consequently, there is no need and no desire by Howell to cut or add lines. Nor is there any need, as with the other film versions, to make an overt statement in the one play about what she, as a director, is doing to make her version understood. Olivier focuses on the power and evilness of Richard, taking lines from elsewhere to make it more effective, as first exemplified by Colly Cibber. The Goodbye Girl contains Richard in another story. McKellan sets his version in the 1930s to explore the power theme in another political context and, in Looking for Richard, Al Pacino produces a highly selective documentary, focusing on such things as insight into

character and language. But for Howell, we must watch the whole tetralogy to understand her thematic messages. Through her subtle direction she makes an audience work at listening to Shakespeare's words and the pattern of the language, as well as the emotional and visual effects, in order to understand her retrospective cultural themes. She does not rely as heavily on cinematic techniques to make the audience's job easier, as the other films do.

The rules Howell follows, in her version resemble those of the original production in that one scene follows another immediately and that the focus must be on the actors. They are the essential reality; for Howell believes a production must give the audience a chance to contribute with their minds, their imaginations.

Howell uses a stockade or adventure playground as her set throughout the Henry VI to Richard III tetralogy. In previous parts of the sequence she has men fighting on hobbyhorses, emphasizing her message that they behave no better than bullying schoolboys. Along with the theme of the playground, she seems to be pointing out all the areas where violence and abuse of power occur in the home and amongst family, in the playground, at school, and in society at large. The adventure playground is not static. As it experiences the Wars of the Roses, the bright colors fade, more doors appear, and the set looks charred and chipped by the end of the sequence. For these history plays she created a full-scale repertory company and cast a small number of actors in multiple roles, establishing the feeling of a real family onstage and off. Looking for Richard comes close to this onstage-offstage feeling of family, but as a documentary it is able to display the actors in their roles on stage, in rehearsal, as themselves.

Unlike McKellan's version, which focuses overtly on the power and the winning of a civil war in 1930s Britain, Howell seems, as the critic Michael Manheim writes, "to be rooted in an outlook, identifiable most recently with the immediate post-Vietnam War period, a time that has not given up on the human spirit" (132). She gets her message across about the worthlessness of all wars in a compassionate but visually expressive way. She seems aware this would be viewed by a television public who might switch off if entertained in too political or lecturing a tone.

Her nobles, like Olivier's, are egotists certainly, but not so overbearing. Each, Manheim believes, possesses sparks of decency, and each appears to know the meaning of honor. Henry's vision in 3 Henry VI becomes in Howell the point of the story. The King's instinctive pacifism becomes the sole opposing force to the senseless blood and carnage that Howell expounds in the stacks of corpses concluding each battle sequence. The destructive blood culminates with the image of the crazed old Queen Margaret cackling atop a veritable mountain of bodies at Richard III's conclusion. This adds to our understanding of why this version, has to be called a tragedy.

In contrast to the other versions, Howell's has a strong conceptual basis and visual imagery. She uses her set with its playground's many doors as entrances and exits and also the camera as the actor's confidante rather than manipulation of the text to produce her television version. She gets her message and themes across in a more subtle way as a consequence. As Susan Willis comments, "The visual element of a production complements the text and often works to interpret it, as it can and should in the medium of television. Howell does not appear in her version and believes that the play is a director's piece, individual aspects of which the actors realize" (167-171).

Howell's costumes for Richard III are the military fatigues of the Falklands and the Gulf War, and military costumes in previous plays in the tetralogy could indicate that she is representing the changing fashions of bourgeois domination, suggesting a progression paralleling the stages of Marxist historical determinism. This makes her political message strong but spreads it over the entire history plays rather than forcing it all into Richard III. In doing it this way, she sacrifices the dramatic overthrowing of a tyrant's evil that both Olivier and McKellan achieve. Richard seems to get so lost in the theme of pacifism, that his death, which follows the same path as Olivier's Richard with all the men stabbing him, loses any cathartic feeling of relief for the audience. We see his evil come to an end as he kneels while Richmond is being crowned. This somehow gives the impression that he was never that evil or a big enough danger to pacifism in the first place, but always about to give in and be forced to conform.

Hastings and Buckingham are more effective in their confrontations with death than Richard, but the most unavoidable character of all in Howell's interpretation is the cackling Margaret, whose obvious presence is in stark contrast to her erasure from Olivier's version. Howell's rendition is an indication of the real importance of the role of Margaret. We see her through the cycle of plays disclosing what has happened and predicting what is to come. This culminates in her climactic "I told you so" laughter about man's waste of man at the end of Richard III. Though this detracts somewhat from the evilness of Richard, it keeps the focus very much on pacifism and the idea that everyone has the potential for evil.

It should be emphasized that this production is part of the historical tetralogy. To truly appreciate Howell's work, as Willis points out, "[w]e must realize that the power of

a single production is multiplied, the production is four times larger, the patterns varied, some within a play, some across the sequence, demanding greater control and offering greater possibilities. She has developed her own solution to some of Shakespeare's challenges and used what she learned" (175). This is a production that uses the leisure provided by television and the ability to have weekly breaks to tell the whole story. We are allowed to see Richard emerging through the previous play, and we are gradually introduced to his inherited evilness. Richard III does not need to be a self-contained story in two hours or so.

By contrast, Simon's The Goodbye Girl accommodates the story of Richard III within another story. Olivier, in his film, reaches out from the play and draws in other works by Shakespeare in order to expand the play, while McKellan also expands by using Olivier's ideas of including extracts from other plays, especially 3 Henry VI. He sets it in a different time period either from Shakespeare's time or his own. His audience is required to think in three contexts: the Shakespeare setting, the time of its production (the late 1990s), and 1930s Britain.

Howell's production was part of the BBC's transmission from 1970 onwards of all of the works of Shakespeare to be shown to a mass audience in their homes and schools via the television. This was called the BBC/Time-Life Shakespeare Series. It shifted the focus away from the text alone to emphasize the potential of the plays in performance. Howell was therefore working within a large project that had a kind of institutional approval as official Shakespeare, expanding standards of uniformity and exemplifying the cultural attitudes of 1980 England with a middle of the road production. However, Graham Holderness describes the series and argues that "[a] different kind of populism

emerges from within the BBC itself: where academics envisage television as a means of reconstructing the Elizabethan theatre, producers think more of translating theatre into the familiar discourse of television itself. The tendency of the resultant approach to Shakespeare must necessarily move towards a devolution of cultural authority” (69-70). So Howell’s examination of cultural assumptions in Richard is not as obtrusive as the efforts of some of the others. She does show how Richard III fits in with all the other plays and as a consequence looks at the cultural construct of Shakespeare. She hints at connections with recent wars but does not examine power structures overtly. The theme of childhood emphasized by Howell is a critique of the war in general, but it is not as pointed as McKellan’s much more specific attack on fascism. Nor does it explore, as does Pacino, the question of who has the right to interpret Shakespeare.

CHAPTER FOUR: IAN McKELLAN AND RICHARD LONCRRAINE'S

RICHARD III (1996).

In the introduction, it was mentioned that Richard III is a play that is concerned with identity. In Olivier's version, identity has very much to do with Olivier the actor portraying Richard and Olivier the director portraying his knowledge of cinematic techniques and his post-war vision of his country and his view of democracy. In The Goodbye Girl Simon is concerned with no individual's identity; rather, he projects Hollywood's stereotypes and as a consequence society's insecurity with its changing roles. Howell, for her part, is concerned with society's identity and consciousness as a whole about war and with keeping the historical cultural identity of Shakespeare's language alive through television. Ian McKellan is the most concerned with identity itself, displaying socially underlying meanings of identity and what constitutes Richard's and indeed McKellan's own identity.

In a book about his production of Richard III, McKellan explains his personal history with the play: "In 1958 I saw Laurence Olivier's Richard III at the Odeon Cinema in Bolton. A spell was cast as I watched the shadows of great actors and I had confirmed my juvenile sense that Shakespeare was for everybody. I hope that today's young audience might feel something similar when they see our film" (37). McKellan's 1996 version, for which he co-wrote the screenplay that was then directed by his fellow writer Richard Loncraine, is often compared and contrasted with Olivier's. Both are great actors who feel compelled to play the role of Richard and make a film about the play that they believe will be for everyone. Both produce films that were successful in the mainstream

film world. Both are adaptations of recent stage performances. McKellan's film is derived from Richard Eyre's 1990 production for the National Theatre. It took as its premise what might have happened if Oswald Mosley, leader of the blackshirted British Union of Fascists, had come to power in 1930s Britain. The story of the rise and fall of Richard also provides a critical perspective on the current crisis in the monarchy, as Loehlin notes, and on the specter of fascism that has haunted British politics from the Blackshirts of the 1930s to the National Front of the 1970s. The film's link between fascism and the ruling class also builds on the figure of King Edward VIII, whose pro-German sympathies during the 1930s, together with his passion for the American divorcee Wallis Simpson, brought him into conflict with his own government and eventually cost him his throne. These historical resonances give some political impact to the film's central story of a modern England ruled by an aristocratic dictator (Loehlin 70).

Unlike Olivier, who sent out a reassuring message to an audience eager to believe that there is good power and bad and that the monarchy is good, McKellan is skeptical about such possibilities. Working at the end of the twentieth century, he seems to suggest that all power is corruptible and, as with Howell, that all people have the potential to be evil. He says of his version, "[w]e were creating our own world, our own history of the 1930's and our invention of what might have happened if Britain had been involved in a civil war sixty years ago [. . .]. The style of the picture is heightened reality. We haven't been slavish to period reality" (44). McKellan as Richard in the film looks like Hitler with his haircut and moustache, but his uniform and accent identify him as an upper class British

officer like Sir Oswald Mosley. He is sending a strong message that no country, no matter how democratic, is that far away from having tyrannical rule.

McKellan's film, though emphasizing Richard as a tyrant, also follows a trend that was in theatre productions of the 1990s that reassesses Richard III as more than a one-man show. The supporting characters, McKellan believes, have to be given more attention, revealing a family drama of power politics, more tragic than melodramatic (24). McKellan does not portray Richard with the heterosexual sex appeal of Olivier or Al Pacino, but he portrays Richard with a demeanor that complements the text. He shows the perverse sexual appeal of Richard, who in his opening soliloquy believes his unfulfilled sexual needs should be channeled into his need for corrupt power:

And therefore since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days (I.I. 28-31).

As with Olivier during the 1950s, McKellan uses the various current cinematic techniques available to aid his interpretation of the play. An examination of these advances over the fifty years between the two films shows how they can be used to facilitate acceptance of the play for a mainstream audience. Richard Loncraine, the producer, uses reframes, and alludes to many other media, including black and white and silent cinema, 35mm still photography, photograph-based silk screen graphic art, wireless telegraphy and tickertape, recorded and amplified "live" sound, and, in the final moments, digital collage. This generous use of technology also characterizes McKellan's Richard, as Peter Donaldson points out, calling Richard a "Modern, media reliant

dictator, underscoring the film's obvious and insistent parallels between Richard and Hitler, English fascism in the 1930's and Nazi terror" (244). He also goes on to suggest that "this Richard III uses allusions to and techniques characteristic of silent cinema as emblems of death, framing the story of Richard as an allegory of the role of cinema and other modern media in the institution and maintenance of death dealing social regimes" (244). It is certainly removed from Shakespeare, with its quick changing action shots of war and violence, scenes of easily identifiable present day London locations and use of drugs, appealing to a mainstream audience who are fed a diet of most or all of the above in their regular film viewing. McKellan changes the thee's and thou's to you, again more pleasing to the contemporary ear and enabling the Shakespearean language to be more easily understood, but as a consequence losing part of the language's connection with high culture.

As with Olivier, McKellan makes media history a central part of the reworking of the text. But as Donaldson points out, "McKellan's Richard III offers an account of both history and media in transition that is markedly less optimistic than Olivier's [. . .] But like Olivier, he takes Shakespeare as predecessor, recasting the metatheatricity of the Shakespeare text as cross-media critique" (245). He is unlike Simon, who uses Shakespeare as a side show in a mediocre storyline.

McKellan, like Olivier, does remove women from his film version. The text itself is severely cut; Queen Margaret is entirely eliminated, as are many of the large number of the supporting characters. Those women who remain, however, in many cases have their roles expanded and developed through numerous non-Shakespearean appearances. Queen Elizabeth (Annette Bening) and Lady Anne (Kristen Scott Thomas) are given prominence

and in some cases additional lines. The young Princess Elizabeth (Kate Steavenson-Payne), who doesn't even appear in the Shakespeare text makes a strong impact. Lady Anne is seen more as a self-harming victim who uses drugs. She panders to her husband to get sexual attention because he ignores her. Her efforts are pathetically futile.

McKellan distorts Shakespeare's text to emphasize brutal military conflict. He does not add so obviously to Richard's lines as Olivier does from 3 Henry VI. In his opening soliloquy, McKellan shows the brutality of Richard as he kills Edward the Prince and Henry VI in the first scene prior to his speech. He imports both of these episodes from 3 Henry VI.

Other men within the play are seen as more scheming than in Olivier's version, in order to emphasize the corruptness of the whole society. The film's emphasis on visuals over text, together with its 1930s setting, actually allows a greater degree of development for various minor characters: Richard's henchmen, for instance, are carefully differentiated: Tim McInnerny's Catesby is a cold blooded opportunistic civil servant, Adrian Dunbar's Tyrell a sadistic young NCO, and Bill Paterson's Ratcliffe, Richard's doggedly loyal batman, who never realizes the full extent of his superior officer's villainy. In spite of their retaining virtually no lines, these three characters are more memorably depicted than in most stage productions (Loehlin 68). The audience is caught between the grins of Richard and Richmond, each inviting assent and complicity. Richmond's superior grin seems as though he may be morphing into a McKellan/Richard double. Both Richmond's smile at the end of the film which leaves the audience not knowing whether he will be a good leader or not, and Richard's laughter as he falls into

the flames join in a Hollywood action movie cliff-hanger ending. One can almost hear Arnold Schwarzenegger's famous Terminator phrase "I'll be back."

By repeating the spectacle of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, McKellan's staging not only invited reflection on the rise of tyranny in the 1930s Europe but also coincided with more wide-ranging events at the end of the 1980s- the fall of Berlin and the collapse of Eastern Bloc dictatorships. Also in the late 1980s, Britain's Tory government had stigmatized homosexuality through passing clause 28 of the Local Government code, legislation that precipitated McKellan, who had come out in 1988 in a BBC radio program, into a more openly political stance (Hodgdon 210).

The British Government moved towards decriminalizing homosexuality by lowering the age of consent in 1994 for homosexuals to eighteen (lowered again in 2000 to 16) from the original age of twenty-one enforced in 1967. This prompted a revival by McKellan of his part as Max in Martin Sherman's Bent. The play's program quoted clause 28, pointing out how given the survival of homophobia in the 1990's, the Third Reich did not fully end with its defeat. In a Britain in which many freedoms had been eroded and in which the level of sexual intolerance was on the rise, the events Bent dramatizes had immediate resonances and McKellan's performance as the character who initially disavows and then accepts his gay identity created an audience that, however temporarily, became engaged in queer activism (Hodgdon 211). But when McKellan's stage version of Richard III, on which the film is based, was produced at around the same time, July 1990, no connections were made by reviewers between the two performances, partly because Shakespeare is usually reviewed apart from everything else. Nevertheless, the question was never asked of why McKellan should step from Max in Bent to play

Richard III. The body of both Max and Richard III is not to be read as “McKellan’s” but as that of “an actor”. Naming it that way acts as a tacit code for the gay body. The urinal soliloquy in the film by McKellan as Richard is vastly different from the expectational body of past stage or film Richards, notably Olivier’s sexualized body. Because the space itself, the gents’ urinal, is a place for other men and carries stereotypical connotations as a site for cruising gays, the audience’s desire to perform along with Richard turns slyly “perverse” And that raises the question, Who exactly is the audience being hailed in this film? (Hodgdon 212).

Lawrence O’Toole in his review quotes McKellan as stating, “[a]cting like being gay is about being secretive. Acting is about disguises. To put on a costume and makeup, and to adopt somebody else’s voice and words and at the same time express oneself in a very heartfelt way, then that is a release from the constraints of ‘normal life.’” These are sentiments that Richard III might himself have endorsed, but for more evil ends and to rid himself of his feelings of impotency. McKellan, in a 1992 interview with Ben Brantley, alludes to his sense of doubleness. Asked about his personal identification with Richard III, he replied, “Do you mean, do I think of myself as a misfit...I could make a case for saying a gay man who has a mainstream career and is recognized by the Establishment as being one of them is akin to a man with an abject deformity, an abnormality, who is determined to rise to the top of the heap. But a misfit...I’ve not felt a misfit in quite a long time” (O’Toole 36).

Whereas the film may avoid any explicit link between homoeroticism and fascism, leaving the audience to decide about what connections to make, there can be no surprise in this late twentieth century film that either or both can be concealed beneath the most

perfectly formed, most clean cut body (Hodgdon 213-14). McKellan emphasizes that Richard's homosexuality is a natural part of him and that he is not a villain because he is homosexual.

CHAPTER FIVE: AL PACINO'S LOOKING FOR RICHARD (1996).

The final film to be discussed in this study is the 1996 Looking for Richard, written by and starring Al Pacino. It is often described as a documentary that searches for the true identity of the play and the character Richard III. Pacino attempts to deconstruct the play and communicate its essence to a mass audience. It is also a film about a film, which documents the issues and resistances involved in making a film of Richard III. Many guest speakers, academics, and actors are asked to contribute, but unless we know them already their identities remain a mystery. The only person we really know and can identify for sure in the film is Pacino. In Looking for Richard the viewer accesses Richard on a more human level than in the other films. The other films are all finding the key to the play in their own way. Pacino seems more concerned with the cultural issues of Shakespeare and how he and an audience might overcome these. He uses this gap in knowledge to allow the spectator to be part of the process.

The film of the play itself, as H. R. Coursen notes, would have made a solid entry among the other Shakespeare films produced in that year. It is comparable, in its setting and costuming, with Olivier's version. Pacino is the impresario of a project that may or may not work out. His experimental approach attempts to make the old script work in the context of a gritty New York City. It is a film that touches self-consciously on the theme of the intelligence and ignorance of the audience. The actors engage in debates as they try to translate the script into modern idiom, before the reasons for Shakespeare's words become apparent. The finished product, the goal, is a function of the process (Coursen 99).

Pacino's technique is to keep building areas of activity in the film that can become points of reference. We watch him establish rehearsals for his production of Richard III. Richard's opening soliloquy is interrupted by cuts to a discussion of what it means. Pacino and his director walk the streets around Times Square questioning the sidewalkers and panhandlers of New York. These interviews highlight the relevance of Shakespeare in the 90s. The effort to make the film also incorporates a seeking after the identity of an elusive "Shakespeare": who is he? (Coursen 111-12). Pacino and his director go to Stratford to visit Shakespeare's place of birth, and their camera end up setting off the smoke alarm, unintentionally deconstructing any insight into Shakespeare that they or the viewer might have had.

If the extracts shown from the play being produced are any guide, Pacino's version, unlike many of its predecessors, does not excise most of the women's parts. Pacino's wooing of Anne (Winona Ryder) over the corpse of her deceased father-in-law at The Cloisters in New York City, matches Olivier's for sexual electricity. As the actors sit around a table rehearsing in a Manhattan office, the casual situation develops its own dynamic, with a fantastic reading of Queen Elizabeth's lines by one actress, but not before she has to win the attention and understanding of Pacino and the other actors.

Scholars who appear in the film are seen as not knowing the answers to Pacino's questions about Richard, which is a way of trying to demystify Shakespeare for the non-scholar. The title Pacino initially assigns to the play, 'King Richard' becomes Looking for Richard, so we are aware that the film incorporates at least two worlds, each one searching for the other. The goal, we are told, is to establish a relationship between the play and "how we feel and how we think today." Pacino then shows how he thinks and

feels in the role of Richard by making the decision to substitute “C” for “G” in Richard’s prophecy that gets George Clarence locked up. Pacino either ignored or failed to pick up on the idea that Shakespeare’s Richard is using the letter “G” because it could (ambiguously) stand for “Gloucester.” That is, it identifies Richard himself as well as the less obvious George Duke of Clarence and shows his clever exploitation of ambiguities to manipulate the King and ensnare Clarence. Pacino’s decision to lose all this by changing it to “C” for Clarence invites the following question, Should a director/actor make changes when they perhaps do not know or fully understand the changes they are making? Is changing the rhetoric to make it easier a good enough reason for change if it blunts some of the subtlety of the language and loses a strand of the intelligent depth of its author’s meaning or do these things not matter? There is perhaps enough variety in the themes and ideas of the play for directors to emphasize these favorites without the language needing to be changed, one might argue, by either an ill-informed or totally self-absorbed actor/director. Some might say Pacino would have been well advised to ask a scholar’s advice here to enhance his understanding. Others might say let him go ahead and do whatever he wants with the language it is his production and therefore open to his interpretation.

Kenneth Turan comments, perhaps a little harshly, that “[w]hile there’s no harm in attempting to make Shakespeare more accessible, it is hard to imagine this film exciting anyone except Pacino’s fans and those who are fatally charmed by celebrity actors. More a high-culture version of Planet Hollywood than a helpful gloss on its celebrated play, Looking for Richard is a worthy idea derailed by unyielding egotism. When Pacino asks,

‘What is this thing that gets between us and Shakespeare?’ He’s too self-involved to notice that in this case the thing is he and he alone”(Turan F1).

A guide created to accompany Pacino’s film suggests that “[y]ou and your students may want to read Richard III by William Shakespeare in conjunction with viewing the film Looking for Richard.” In the past, a film such as this would definitely have been used as a teaching aid to supplement the reading of the play rather than the other way round. This is indication of how approaches to teaching Shakespeare are changing.

In a post-modernist world, it is clear from this film that cultural artifacts have been cut adrift from their sources, and films such as Pacino’s are achieving an identity of their own (Coursen 116). Pacino’s theme of demystifying Shakespeare on one level works well, but on another emphasizes that perhaps any deflating of the language has to be done thoughtfully in order not to extinguish the subtlety of Shakespeare’s writing.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how five filmmakers have interpreted the play of Richard III. It considers how the film world can take a piece of work and give it a whole new identity; which in turn tells us something about the society we live in. As the films progress through the second half of the twentieth century, all the versions pick up the theme of abuse of power from the play and make it relevant in their own ways.

In Pacino's version, we experience a documentary of postmodern orientation about understanding Richard III. Pacino's film is of value as an investigation into Shakespeare that tries to rid us of any myth that he is impossible for the layperson to understand. Even changes he makes to the language are a place for discussion. Neil Sinyard believes that "[i]t is Pacino who has constructed in cinematic form the equivalent of what has been described as the central task of late twentieth-century criticism, where we consider the play as a dynamic interaction between artist and audience and learn to talk about the process of our involvement rather than our considered view after the aesthetic event" (Sinyard 71). The film's unfinished nature reflects that all learning is ongoing and unfinished.

Olivier made his version in part as a post war piece for England and the monarchy as Shakespeare might appear to do in his original play. McKellan highlights the hypocrisy of aristocracy and its closeness to English fascism and the dangers of propaganda. It is interesting to entertain the possibility that in his original text, Shakespeare, unable to openly discuss propaganda, seems to convey a subliminal supportive link to Elizabeth 1. It seems appropriate, however, to note that despite his seeming support for his Queen he

nevertheless manages to convey a feeling of ambiguity about the historical situation as a whole. That is, he displays through this play and the other plays in the history tetralogy, particularly 3 Henry VI the horror of war and what, through the character of Richard, humans are capable of doing to become powerful. Howell emphasizes this human psychological need for power more strongly in her production than the theme of divine retribution present in the Shakespeare original.

Simon's film falls under a Hollywood spell, with its predictable happy ending and consequently achieves very little that is thought provoking but is certainly entertaining. Howell's difficulty for a modern audience is that, despite the innovative playground theme, her version is quite traditional in its approach, and current audiences are often more used to watching fast moving television and film scenes. One has to work at trying to understand the language or fathom her less than obvious links with the global current war events of then and how they are relevant to now. Pacino and McKellan, with their more immediate and obvious cultural themes and use of current cinematic techniques, make the links easier for the viewer and are consequently far more appealing to a modern audience.

Shakespeare's historical play Richard III is somewhere in all these films but has been deconstructed and redefined to suit the particular interpretation of each filmmaker. Shakespeare keyed into the hopes and fears of society in Richard III and filmmakers and actors have sensed that this play is a touchstone and have exploited it for their own reasons. The films of the play have each tuned into the gap left by Shakespeare's link to Queen Elizabeth I and filled it with their own historical context. This is positive, in the sense that it shows how Shakespeare keeps inspiring new creations, which keeps his work

alive and makes the study of his plays, a more democratic experience. The films also open up our understanding of how Shakespeare has been made relevant today and can help with trying to understand the historical themes of the original play.

But although the films link abuse of power to some aspect of their own times, it is important to note that most, if not all of them abuse power in their own way by de-emphasizing or eliminating the women's parts. Ironically, in detaching Shakespeare's play from its historical context in order to relate it to the power struggle of their own day, these films, particularly Olivier's, ignore indications of women's power and the battle of the sexes that Shakespeare has inscribed in his text and the history tetralogy as a whole.

Though more symbolic in Richard III, the women's voices at least respond, analyze and prophesy about the power dynamic in the play. Their absence in the films illuminates how Shakespeare has given modern directors some pointers that could surely be used to redress the masculinist bias of recent productions.

NOTE

¹Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt in the introduction to their book Shakespeare, the Movie, state “Recent textual work has compelled Shakespearean scholarship to divest itself of the belief that ‘the text’ has any knowable original” (1). It is still necessary, however, to use a scholarly text of Richard III in order to be able to comment on changes in emphasis. The version used for quotes is the Arden text, but there are references to what Colly Cibber did to emphasize how he updated and changed Shakespeare’s work.

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