

THE BANQUET OF SCOTLAND (PA)

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he is full so valiant,
And in his commendations I am fed;
It is a banquet to me . . . (*Macbeth* 1.4.56–8)

Commending the victorious Macbeth with these lines, King Duncan sets up a model of mutual nourishment between lord and vassal, between political father and son. Duncan's praise is com- modiously ambiguous, potentially pointing both to other thanes' reports of Macbeth's valour as nour- ishment for Duncan and to Duncan's advancement of Macbeth as itself a source of nourishment: by praising *him*, I am fed; *his* valour and *my* remark- ing that valour constitute the *mise en place* for con- cocting the comedic feast of successful community. 'Banquet' evokes both social and natural, both fes- tive celebration and quotidian requirement. Being 'fed' – here in provocatively passive construction – also signals the way that food functions as a liminal substance that is both part and not part of the indi- vidual who ingests it, the way eating enacts both agency (the eater masticating, consuming, metabo- lizing the foodstuff) and dependence (without sus- tenance, no agent survives). All these resonances accrue to the dramatic logic of food as a leitmotif in *Macbeth*.

Billy Morissette's film *Scotland, PA* (premiered at the 2001 Sundance festival and commercially released by Lot 47 films in 2002) playfully literal- izes Duncan's 'banquet', exploring these questions of agency and identity in the context of depressed – if officially only 'recessed' – 1970s rural America. This black comedy, Morissette's first feature film, offers a surprisingly detailed and nuanced set of ways to think about identity and agency in both

Macbeth and the 1970s. Setting *Macbeth* in a greasy spoon, *Scotland, PA* makes burgers the foundation of Joe McBeth's ('Mac's') grab for power; the advent of the drive-through service window is here the opportunity that catalyzes Mac's, and particularly his wife Pat's, ambition. Mac (James LeGros) and Pat (Maura Tierney) are former high-school sweet- hearts, in their thirties and still passionately in love at the time of the film, who work as a line cook and a waitress in the drab local eatery, 'Duncan's', whose dull, prosperous and well-meaning propri- etor (James Rebhorn) seems invested in keeping the diner as staid as possible. When the restaurant's manager is revealed as an embezzler, Norm Duncan elevates his elder son Malcolm (Tom Guiry) to the title, promoting Mac only to Assistant Manager, although neither the aspiring rock musician Malcolm nor his younger, tentatively gay brother Donald (Geoff Dunsworth) has any interest in the business.

Upon Mac's ascension, Duncan confides an astonishing innovation he plans for the restaurant: a drive-through service window. This vision is not so novel for Mac, however, because the three stoned hippies (Andy Dick, Timothy Speed Levitch and Amy Smart) who frequent a local carnival have predicted it to him privately. Pat and Mac murder Duncan in a deep-fat fryer, buy the restau- rant with funds stolen from Duncan's safe, open

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the drive-through themselves, and luxuriate in the fruits of their prosperity until police lieutenant Ernie McDuff (Christopher Walken) is called in to help local law enforcement investigate the murder. With quirky, indeterminably strategic oddity, McDuff puts increasing pressure on the McBeths, leading Mac to murder potential witnesses, including his friend Banco (Kevin Corrigan). As Mac becomes more brutal, Pat succumbs to hallucinations of a severe grease burn on her hand, and their good fortune collapses when the ghost of Banco appears to Mac during the local television station's filming of a story on their drive-through. Mac lures McDuff to a final confrontation on the restaurant roof, which culminates in Mac's being fatally impaled on the longhorns mounted on the front of his car. Pat kills herself by cutting off her offending hand. The film is equally saturated by thoroughgoing engagement with details of the Shakespearian text and with textures of the 1970s: Bad Company songs, white lipstick, polyester prints, large jewelry, domestic wall murals, marijuana haze, rural unemployment.

Since the 1970s were the time when fast food permeated fully into the more remote areas of the US – with an enormous range of consequences, as Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* has recently brought to popular attention – the crisis instigated by Scotland's new drive-through offers a window into larger American issues of the decade.¹ With fast food comes a new commodification of the 'eating experience', a homogenization of locales that both en-franchises and erases them, a transformation of individuals into consumers. In *Scotland, PA*, the witches' prophecy upon their first encounter with Mac wonderfully encapsulates these transactions, evoking the commodification of food when the fortune-teller momentarily mistakes her vision of the restaurant drive-through for a bank window ('a bank . . . for food?'), signalling the permeation and erasure of locale when the witches, intoning Dave Banconi's nickname 'Banco', puzzle 'A Spanish bank?' only to discern eventually that there's nothing Spanish at stake, and pointing up how individuals flatten into cashpoints when the witches misrecognize Banco's personal name

for the word 'bank'. The 1970s are also, of course, the era of Watergate, of Vietnam, of cultural confrontation between 'square' inheritors of the 1950s and 'hip' heirs of the 1960s. *Scotland, PA*, I shall show, illuminates how these phenomena come together to make agency – what Lady Macbeth would call 'acting like a man' – fraught to the point of impossibility.

Exploring the ways *Scotland, PA* figures agency, which it often undertakes through relation to *Macbeth's* models, unfolds both what the 1970s can offer as a setting for *Macbeth*, and what the play can offer as a lens for thinking about the decade. Both film and play mine ways that spectacle and patrimony provide rich grounds for negotiating what counts as agency: for whether and how individuals can effectively act. Reading the film against the play reveals just how dark *Scotland, PA's* vision of the possibilities for individual action is; reading the play against the film reveals just how intelligent – if far from pious – a take on *Macbeth Scotland, PA* offers. *Macbeth* is a play that ponders the origins of action: do the witches foresee or instigate? Do they corrupt the valiant or are they drawn to a target predisposed to err? Once the prophecy is spoken, how much responsibility for his ensuing actions can Macbeth deflect onto it? How much culpability accrues to Lady Macbeth's urging Duncan's murder, how much to Macbeth's executing it? In *Scotland, PA* characters explicitly argue about the fraught ambiguities of what agents know, do not know, prefer not to know, of their own intentions. The McBeths plan Duncan's murder the evening after Mac accidentally knocks Duncan unconscious with a refrigerator door. Driving home from work, Pat exults to Mac, 'It was like I could read your mind in there . . . I knew exactly what you were thinking'; when Mac demurs 'I didn't know what I was thinking', Pat remonstrates 'Mac, look at me. Yes, you did. You *did*.' Later in the film, as Mac secretly begins planning Banco's murder and Pat begs, 'Mac! What are you doing? You have to tell

¹ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York, 2001).

me what you're doing!' Mac erupts, 'I don't know! It's a surprise.' In such scenes that draw together how characters in both 1970s movies and Jacobean tragedy avoid confronting their choices, *Scotland, PA* lets us consider how well Harry Berger's remark that *Macbeth* 'dramatiz[es] failures or evasions of responsibility correlated with problematic structural tendencies that seem benign because it is in the interest of self-deceiving characters to view them that way' might gloss Richard Nixon's brilliantly passive gloss on Watergate, 'mistakes were made'; how well it might gloss Lyndon Johnson's strategically mystifying Vietnam policy of 'peace with honor'.²

Scotland, PA moves food from the margins to the centre of the drama. Mac's ambition first shows itself when, leaving his grill, he vaults o'erleaping the service counter to rout unruly thanes engaged in a food fight in one of the best glosses on 'minion' ever dramatized: the fortuitous opportunity shows Mac as fortune's darling, perhaps, but also stages his subservience to facilitating the post-game restaurant rush that benefits the boss and the customers, never the line cook. The film transliterates the play's negotiations of Scottish and English power into negotiations between carnivorous and vegetarian culture. Just as *Macbeth* imagines remedy 'from gracious England' (4.3.44) for Scotland's 'nation miserable / With an untitled tyrant bloody-sceptered' (4.3.104–5), so too does *Scotland, PA* bring in an outsider police lieutenant McDuff to investigate Duncan's murder. What the play figures as English, the film makes 1970s down-market urbane: McDuff arrives in town as a vegetarian, in a beige suit, bearing a plate of baba ghanouj to Duncan's wake and driving an olive-green Audi filled with transcendental meditation tapes.³ By contrast, the forlornly, claustrophobically backwater Scotland socializes over burgers and its men hunt deer. Mac draws attention to diet as the figure for cultural difference in his penultimate confrontation with McDuff after Banco's murder, asking nastily whether McDuff is 'gracing our home with a vegetable dish' upon this occasion (as he had at Duncan's wake) as a sign of 'how the better half lives'.

The divide between the 'better' and lesser 'halves' is rigidly confining, in no way altered by the amelioration in individuals' local circumstances offered by the successful drive-through. In Mac and Pat McBeths' moment of ascendancy, they make over Duncan's staid restaurant into the cheerfully gaudy formica McBeth's. This brings happy crowds to the restaurant, and the newly prosperous McBeths move from a trailer to a ranch house. They cast their lot with meat, seizing a chance to improve themselves within the rural/carnivorous gestalt, but the McBeths' grab for agency is circumscribed by their apparent inability to escape their town. Although there are no clear financial or family barriers to their leaving Scotland after stealing money from Duncan's safe, their agency seems limited to becoming the bosses of the pre-existing business, not leaving the system entirely. The film emphasizes this systemic continuity when lowly restaurant employee Robert/Richard (Pat cannot remember his name) gives Pat the finger in a scene that mirrors her earlier response to her erstwhile manager. Escape seems out of the question, despite Pat's complaints about Scotland's limitations ('this town is too fucking small') – limitations emphasized by soundtrack selections invoking a larger world, as when Pat resolves upon suicide to the Three Dog Night track 'Never been to Spain'.

Although the McBeths seem firmly trapped in the 'Scottish half', the sociocultural divisions figured by vegetarianism, particularly the fantasies McDuff projects onto Scotland, are complex. Just

² Berger, 'Macbeth: Preface to a New Interpretation', *ELH*, 47 (1980), 1–31; p. 3.

³ My term 'English' here somewhat oversimplifies Jacobean distinctions among already Anglicized, potentially civilizable, and intractably barbarian (northern) Scots; the play allies actual English and the first category of Scots. See Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2003); Arthur Kinney, 'Scottish History, the Union of the Crowns, and the Issue of Right Rule: The Case of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*', in *Renaissance Culture in Context: Theory and Practice*, eds. J. R. Brink and William Gentrup (Aldershot, 1993); and Kinney, 'Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Question of Nationalism', in *Literature and Nationalism*, eds. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool, 1991).

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as the politics of ethnicity are not straightforward in early Jacobean England, where a newly Scottish court intersects with English traditions casting Scots as barbarians, the politics of diet are not entirely straightforward in Scotland, PA. McDuff is firmly vegetarian ('oh yes, the whole family') and jokes about greasy food killing Duncan's/McBeth's customers. But McDuff's vegetarianism does not offer any clear-cut positive alternative to the problems of Scotland. McDuff misperceives Scotland as pastoral, or perhaps more properly georgic, romanticizing the capacity of Scotland's restaurant to nurture its citizens ('do not underestimate what you do, sir! Workin' the grill, fryin' the fries, feeding hungry people'). He demonstrates an hilarious fascination with the workings of the restaurant whenever his investigations take him there, cooking an order on the line and puzzling over Mac's innovations ('"French . . . fry . . . truck": is that right?'). McDuff is bemused by the apparent warmth of Scotland's community: for instance, witnesses hug him after he interviews them in his murder investigation. The viewer, however, knows that this apparent sincerity is an effect brought about by layers of confused imitation: the first witness hugs McDuff in gratitude for the lieutenant's willingness to conceal the witness's adultery, then other witnesses assume this to be 'standard procedure', as the jaded waitress Mrs. Lennox drawls. Not genuine connection, but something like its opposite – serial imitation based on collusion to conceal betrayal – underlies this emergent 'ritual'. The uncogency of McDuff's misrecognition of Scotland becomes clearer when he comes to inherit the restaurant and the film's final shot shows him standing in a stylized Birnham-Woods apron covered with tiny trees, holding a carrot, in an empty parking lot that we know never will be filled by Scotland customers hankering after a 'garden burger'. That final scene closes with a streaker flashing past McDuff, the 1970s leaving the McDuff who seemed so effective in his professional capacity ludicrous, isolated and befuddled when he seeks to fulfill his own dream.

The final scenes of both *Macbeth* and *Scotland, PA* depict what remains when the toil and trouble's

done; *Macbeth*'s counterpart to McDuff's vigil on the asphalt of his newly acquired restaurant is Malcolm inviting the assembly 'to see us crowned at Scone' (5.11.41). Indeed, *Macbeth* might be read in broader terms as a play about what survives: what remains of political order after catastrophic disruption; what remains of prophecy (or suggestion or curse) after the forecasting apparitions vanish; what remains of folk drama and ritual into the Renaissance; what remains of morality plays upon the Shakespearian stage. In *Macbeth*, Malcolm's survival and return to claim his rightful throne affirm dramatic catharsis and political hope.

Scotland, PA is likewise intrigued by questions of remains; less solemn than *Macbeth*, *Scotland PA*'s primary kind of 'remain' is the leftover. With an a-posteriori gesture befitting a remake, the film's first two scenes open with leftovers. In the first, seated on an after-hours Ferris wheel (as wheel of fortune), the pothead witches accidentally drop their bag of leftover chicken. A dead bird dropping from the sky, their fried chicken echoes evil omens (the ritual remains of Rome, the dramatic remains of *Macbeth*). Furthermore, this moment serves as a pretext to cite the pre-text: 'the fowl was fair', bemoan the witches upon its loss, in a giggly, stoned riff on 'fair' and 'foul' that opens *Scotland, PA* with what remains of another play. Equally understated, and just as provocative, is the opening shot of the film's second scene, inside Duncan's diner. This begins with tight focus on a half-eaten burger; into the frame then comes the waitress's hand, which we watch clearing the tray. (Thus the first two scenes bring into the frame the two major fast-food products of the early franchise era: fried chicken and burgers.) As she takes it to the kitchen, the waitress (who later shows herself to be both self-righteously judgemental in condemning Malcolm and hypocritically light-fingered in stealing the restaurant's paper products) furtively takes a bite of the leftover meat. Satisfyingly disgusting, this image offers a ripe figure for intertextual borrowing, for what it means for a text to avail itself of sources. The snatched gulp of pre-possessed meat is unhygienic, cheap, aesthetically displeasing – but this is how *Macbeth* can be chewed over.

Like the waitress nibbling the leftover burger, *Scotland, PA* invokes its sources, which extend well beyond *Macbeth*, as a not-fully-integrated series of borrowings that enable both formal and psychological response. Concurring with Lady Macbeth's 'when you durst do it, then you were a man' (1.7.49), *Scotland, PA* links problems of agency with problems of masculinity. By inundating the viewer with diverse spectacles of masculinity that wonder what it is to be a man (an undrafted man, at that) in a depressed coal valley in the era of Vietnam, the film emphasizes questions of modelling, of theatricality, and of imitation within the rubric of 'acting as a man' – what Macbeth with rich ambiguity calls 'do[ing] all that may become a man' (1.7.46, emphasis added). Serial, fragmentary images create a pastiche of manhood: Duncan's assertion 'every young man likes [American] football' cuts to the posters of Joe Namath and Liza Minelli, followed by Superman shirts and Mark Spitz fitness videos, that mark a campily gay sensibility. The adulterous local tanning-salon operator offers one, 'swinging', model of fulfilment (open Hawaiian shirt, sideburns, necklace); Donald and his boyfriend Tommy's quiet suaveness, in matching crimson silk bathrobes, another.

Spectacles of masculinity in *Scotland, PA* intercut citation with action that tries (and fails) to imitate it. Perhaps most prominently, clips from the television detective show *McCloud* bracket the film's action with their image of an impossibly effectual good detective. Immediately after the opening shots of the Ferris wheel, *Scotland, PA* cuts to a *McCloud* clip that shows the detective dangling from a helicopter, sustaining the dizzying height that Mac will not, before riding the vehicle back to earth and forcing the bad guy to surrender with a gesture that Mac precisely recapitulates when he feigns surrender to McDuff at the end of the film. During the investigation, the hapless local police officer watches *McCloud* in the station, unable to drag his eyes away from the episode in order to talk with an informant, too absorbed by the didactic *image* of effective policing to *act* as a police officer. Other sources are offered more allusively or fragmentarily. McDuff's character evokes the television detective

Columbo as much as it does McCloud: McDuff's apparent (or genuine?) digressiveness, his allusions to a never-seen wife and family, his eventual success in solving his case all echo Columbo. In another example unavailable to characters, but very present for viewers, several hunting and drinking scenes allude to Michael Cimino's 1978 film *Deer Hunter* – a film similarly set in depressed 1970s western Pennsylvania, a film for which the same actor who here plays McDuff, Christopher Walken, won an Oscar. Such borrowing from other texts not only produces the formal texture of the film but also defines affective and psychological response: affect here originates in outside sources. When Banco offers Mac the information required to begin Mac's advancement at the restaurant, for instance, Mac's decision to take his fate into his own hands is accompanied by his pointedly crossing the room (of the local bar 'The Witches' Brew') and kicking the jukebox, which changes the soundtrack to Bad Company's 'Bad Company'.

The relationship between *Scotland, PA* and the various images, sounds and genres it cites underscores the affective and psychological vacuum its characters experience. Most pointedly unavailable, and most longingly sought, are workable ways to define 1970s masculinity. Columbo is inimitably enigmatic; McCloud is impossibly effective. Whereas the deer hunters in *Deer Hunter* are variously emasculated by having gone or not gone to Vietnam, the deer hunters in *Scotland, PA* seem to have merely failed at life (despite bagging a doe). The photo of Nixon, on the wall behind McDuff in the big-city-police-station interview scene that turns the murder investigation in the right direction, provides a backdrop of corrupt political order. The film's pointedly ethical character, Officer Ed (so reluctant to open a letter addressed to another, even when instructed to do so by the addressee, that he pulls the shades before complying), is professionally incompetent. Malcolm pursues his dream of touring with a rock band but is booked only at forlorn strip clubs; Donald seems admirably ungrasping (and generously nurturing with his fondue), but withdrawn to the point of apathy from the world beyond his house ('we're rich, right? Then I

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don't care'). McDuff is professionally effective but otherwise hapless. Unlike Macbeth, Mac seems to have no legitimate options at all for advancing himself: where King Duncan 'plants' Macbeth, Norm Duncan insultingly makes Mac *assistant* manager, subordinated to Duncan's disinterested teenaged son. There are no models to be found here.

Both *Scotland, PA* and *Macbeth* figure effective action as paternal, and both show how cultures can use father figures to imagine ways of acting in the world. Like *Macbeth*, *Scotland, PA* depicts a culture yearning for fathers while killing off the ones it has. *Macbeth* draws upon James I's iconography of himself as the 'nursing father' of *Ecclesiastes* in its portrayal of Duncan as the head of the political order desired by nature, as the paternal source of bounty for his subjects ('I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing' (1.4.28–9), Duncan tells Macbeth), and as the image of Lady Macbeth's own father (2.2.12–13).⁴ Once Macbeth slays his political benefactor, of course, all of nature runs backwards, and Macbeth himself works as the opposite of a nurturing father, the 'butcher' of Scotland (5.11.35) who recounts a ghostly masque vision of himself with 'a fruitless crown, / And . . . barren sceptre in my grip, / Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand, / No son of mine succeeding' (3.1.62–5). *Macbeth* is not prodigal of good and effective fathers: the benevolent Duncan and Banquo both are killed, while conflicting duties tear Macduff from his family and earn him the teasing but evocative name of 'traitor' from his wife (4.2.46). Seward's Stoic reception of news that his son is dead ('Had I as many sons as I have hairs, / I would not wish them to a fairer death' (5.11.14–15)) might raise some questions about his paternal commitments as well. Effective fathers await the fulfilment of Banquo's masque of lineage, presumably, not to appear until 1603. Until then, the play has no wellspring of paternal authority once Duncan is dispatched, and seekers must flutter unsatisfied from England back to Scotland, from the future (the masque of Banquo's heirs) to the present, from the military to the domestic (Macduff).

Scotland, PA seeks effective fathers at least as intensely as *Macbeth*, and the ambivalence of its

conclusions echoes a larger ambivalence in the patrimony of the 1970s. Characters seek fathers both explicitly and in the film's broader explorations of paternal models of agency. McDuff comes into town as a good father – the competent and effectual detective who throws into relief the patricidal turpitude (the McBeths) and unintentionally complicit incompetence (Officer Ed) of Scotland. As the investigation draws to a close, both Mac and Ed explicitly remark upon McDuff's paternal qualities. Mac chooses Tab as a mixer for his bourbon with the snide remark that he wants to 'eat healthy' 'like big Daddy McDuff and all the little McDuffs'; Officer Ed, queried whether he finds McDuff 'pushy', forlornly remarks that McDuff (who protectively does not allow Ed to keep real bullets in his gun) is 'really nice; I kind of wish he would always be around'. Images of fathers and children play out in the margins of many of the films most important scenes. In the peripeteian scene where the First Class track 'Beach Baby' undergirds both the McBeths' exulting in their successful reinvention of the restaurant and McDuff's ominous appearance to reopen investigation of Duncan's murder, the camera pans past the first witness's carbon-copy son (a tanned, Hawaiian-shirted, mini-Burt Lancaster) on its way to the interview. McLeary's children play with and around Banco's shrouded corpse as it is removed from the garage where Mac murdered his friend; furthermore, evoking Macduff's vulnerable progeny of 'pretty chickens' (4.3.219), Ed changes his order from a burger to 'little chicken McBeths' when he arrives at the restaurant the night of Mac's death.

Most chilling, perhaps, is the paternal dimension of Mac's transformation from erotically passionate if economically under-achieving companionate husband to a 'father' who is powerful but brutal.

⁴ On Duncan's nurturing qualities, see Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest'* (New York, 1992); on James I and images of paternal nurture, see Elizabeth Spiller, 'The Counsel of Fulke Greville: Transforming the Jacobean "Nourish Father" through Sidney's "Nursing Father"', *Studies in Philology*, 97 (2000), 433–53.

The film's seeds of action are planted when, in Mac's first encounter with the witches, the female witch urges, 'Screw management! You can do better. Don't you think you deserve better? Don't you think . . . [Mac's own voice suddenly coming out of the witch's mouth] *she* deserves better?' Mac does come to provide better for Pat, but the frighteningly paternalist dimensions of this emerge three murders later, when Mac, believing he receives further instructions from the witches via a ringing phone that Pat cannot hear, abruptly departs without answering Pat's questions about his plans. He promises, 'Everything's going to be all right. I'm going to take care of *everything*, Pat. I'm going to take care of *you!*' Pat recoils, and the ambiguity about whether her horror indicates that Mac's 'taking care' of Pat refers to his seizing the directive role she always has played in their marriage (the interpretation offered in the director's DVD commentary) or whether 'taking care' of business here has an ominously gangland ring signals how dangerous paternalistic agency can be.

Other invocations of father figures in *Scotland, PA* are mediated by formal and generic shifts, reminding us that 'fathers' are image as much as flesh. Dropping the inaudible 'a' from 'Mac' to make 'Mc' telegraphs how consumer culture replaces the patronymic prefix with a branding prefix: 'Macbeths' and 'Macduffs' become McMeals and McProducts – without even a ripple in the surface of pronunciation. The ineffectualness of paternal inheritance in *Scotland, PA* evokes the cultural crisis of the 1970s: what, if anything, will America take forward from previous generations? Duncan's own sons do not want the restaurant; the McBeths are patricides; McDuff's garden burgers will find no custom. In *Macbeth*, the failure of paternal inheritance internal to the play can serve to affirm James I, Banquo's descendant, as a resolution to the problem. It's worth remarking, though, that even in *Macbeth* this is shown as distant and mediated. The vision of lineal descent comes in a masque, drawing attention to the importance of formal representation in 'naturalizing' political inheritance, and only Macbeth even witnesses the spectacle. The film's quite nuanced version of the masque

of Banquo's heirs suggests the even greater tenuousness of inheritance – is there anything worth inheriting in, or from, the 1970s? – in *Scotland, PA*. The movie's inheritance masque is fragmented and subtle. In an aside, early in the film, the stoned witches call out 'Anthony! Anthony!' and then, upon establishing that Mac's friend Dave Banconi is called 'Banco', one witch remarks 'sounds Italian'. Halfway through the film, the source of the witches' citation comes on the television Mac is watching in the McBeths' new ranch house: a commercial that opens with a mother calling 'Anthony! Anthony!' out her apartment window to bring her son in for lunch. The commercial voiceover sets the scene 'in Boston's Italian North End, home of the Prince [n.b.] Spaghetti Company'. This has the same effect as the masque in *Macbeth*: soon after watching the commercial, Mac remarks to Pat, 'Banco's a problem'. Lineage is here attenuated to the word 'prince'; dynasty attenuated to corporation; ethnic inheritance attenuated to a marketing device (for food, no less).

As the brief television image of Anthony's mother offering spaghetti perhaps highlights through contrast, maternal nourishment is even less effective in *Scotland, PA* than paternal succour. In the film's first scene in the diner, the sound fades in to the corrupt manager Douglas McKenna drilling Pat in making soft-serve ice cream cones: 'The tip of that mountain's going to go right into our customer's mouth, and make him happy.' Called to 'get out here, and have a look at your wife's beautiful cones' after Pat's thirteenth try, Mac deadpans, 'I love your cones, baby.' McKenna's leering at Pat's breasts in the next diner scene consolidates the cones' figuration as breasts, offering the soft-serve cone as Pat's counter-gesture to Lady Macbeth's 'I have given suck' (1.7.54). But where Lady Macbeth once offered maternal milk from her own body, Pat provides only the frozen, vastly artificial concoction of soft-serve from a metal nozzle. The next scene, at the Scotland football game, shows another woman ineffectively staffing a dairy dispenser: the heavily made-up Joan, who sighs that Malcolm 'is just crying out for a new Momma'. Delighted to serve Duncan, Joan tears up when her cocoa

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dispenser proves empty and she cannot fulfil his request ('Damn this cocoa! *Damn* this cocoa! We're out of cocoa, Norm'). As in the play, Pat is the only female character to get any substantial screen time; as for bit parts, *Scotland, PA* offers no counterpart to Lady Macduff. The other women, briefly glimpsed, pointedly fail to nourish: Peg the nurse abandons her shift at the hospital to play Yahtzee; the stripper at the Atlantic City club where Malcolm's band plays offers the most sterile model of sexuality; the Statue of Liberty statuette incongruously trotted out for the drive-through celebration reveals just how cynically the US invokes its symbols ('just put the bitch in the corner, guys'). Mrs McDuff sends baba ghanouj but is never seen; the sad, passive, alcoholic Pat Nixon is perhaps evoked in Pat MacBeth's first name and her martini-soaked silent vigils late in the film. Mothers provide no more hope here than fathers do.

Scotland, PA's characters experience the difficulty of either articulating identity or acting effectively in a depressed rural economy, in a strongly patriarchal nation corrupt at the top, during the selective service draft, as the McDonalds spread across the land. No wonder the witches have the munchies. They are hungry for action, but caught – like the film's human characters – between eras. ('I know! Mac should kill McDuff's entire family!' proposes one witch; 'Oh that'd work great! . . . about a thousand years ago', sneers another.) *Scotland, PA*'s witches share with *Macbeth*'s a somewhat ambiguous ontological status that arguments the blurriness of agency and instigation in the texts. *Macbeth* lets us ask to what extent the witches direct intention and to what extent they reflect it. Similarly, *Scotland, PA*'s witches have access to knowledge beyond Mac's horizons, indicating that they are not mere displacements of his psyche, but the film queries the extent to which the witches project Mac's desires when the female witch sometimes speaks in Mac's voice. The first encounter between Mac and the witches dramatizes the slipperiness with which characters flip-flop recognition and precognition. Two of the witches hail Mac from behind a carnival screen with fragments of his name – fragments that also draw attention to the

linguistic play of prefix that acquires such import in a film about failed patrimony and all-too-successful commercialization – 'Mac!' 'Beth!' 'Beth!' 'Mac!' 'Mac!' 'Fleetwood Mac!' 'Macramé!' When Mac asks how they know his name, the witches exclaim 'you mean your name really is Mac? I thought we were just saying it like you say it . . . like "Watch your step, Mac!", "Up yours, Mac!", "Fuck you, Mac!".' Like Macbeth, Mac seems to have been all too easily interpellated by a hail he need not have embraced; at the same time, the witches' disclaimer of foreknowledge is disingenuous insofar as 'Beth' was indeed part of their initial appeal for Mac's attention.

In both film and play, the witches' relationship to characters' actions is only a small part of the complexity surrounding characters' relationship to their *own* actions: the problem of where action comes from. Indeed, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth consistently mystify questions of agency. Upon conceiving his first nefarious act, murdering the Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth intones 'Let not light see my black and deep desires; / The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see' (1.4.53–5). The 'winking' eye both sees and does not see, perceives what is seen and unseen, seen in fragments, uncannily perceived through Banco's thick dirty glasses, chattered over through the witches' haze of marijuana smoke. Furthermore, divorcing the eye and hand to worry about whether the *tool* knows what it is doing (here, the metonymic hand; later, Lady Macbeth's invoking hell smoke 'that my keen knife see not the wound it makes' (1.5.51)), these characters strategically beg the question of agency – whether *they* know what they are doing.

The liminality of the hand – as Marx notes, part of the body, but the part that grasps external tools, a prosthetic link, inscribed by culture as much as nature – makes it a rich figure for thinking through complexities of agency. What the eye winks at in *Macbeth* is the hand, and *Scotland, PA* makes full use of the ambiguities about agency internal to this corporeal figure in addition to the ambiguities in the relation between hand and eye. In *Macbeth*, of course, the hand serves as central site for the

expression of the repressed: after the deeds have been executed that the eye was to wink upon, Lady Macbeth's 'damned spot' appears upon her hand (although, winkingly, only to her). *Scotland, PA* makes Lady Macbeth's spot more prominent, and draws out the ambivalent agency of the hand, when Pat redresses her spectral burn by fatally chopping off her own hand. When one of her hands seizes a cleaver to chop off her other hand, clad in a Scottish plaid potholder, upon a cutting board, the potholder emphasizes the hand's potential to grasp at the same time that the cutting board emphasizes its disintegration from the body. Inter-cut with the scene of Pat (clad in Birnham-woods-print polyester) chopping off her own hand is the scene of Mac (clad in damned polka dots) attempting to choke McDuff with a burger – an effort foreclosed by McDuff biting Mac's hand. Both Pat's hand on the cutting board and Mac's hand in McDuff's teeth emphasize flesh as mere foodstuff, the opposite of corporeal agency. Moreover, these hands recall the prominent shots of Duncan's tied hands hanging out of the fryer upon his murder. Stretching one's grasp in this film – exercising agency to open a drive-through window, to become more than assistant manager – turns the member that grasped into mere mortal meat.

Indeed, the film's final shots of both Mac and Pat show only their hands. Pat's severed hand on the cutting board is grotesquely large because of its potholder, evoking her overreaching grasp. The final view of Mac shows only his hand sticking out of the blanket that covers his corpse, propped upon the longhorn welded to the front of his car. Thereby Mac's grasp at the burger empire concludes supported by an animal part that is not even food but rather stylized decoration, ludicrously dated. This offers far less hope than what even bloodily butchered Scotland, UK offers Malcolm in *Macbeth*. In the play, Malcolm attests that when he comes to assert his inherited privilege of rule, 'I think withal / There would be hands uplifted in my right' (4.3.42–3). Mac's 'uplifted' hand, by contrast, can exercise nothing. Transliterated to the capitalist politics of carnivorousness, the huge horns on Mac's car signal something more complex than the

symbols of cuckoldry they evoke. The hypermasculine car ornament emasculates the erstwhile driver; the beast bites back with its impaling horn, but after its own death has rendered its aggression moot. The steer's flesh already has been consumed by an anonymous customer; the hungry burger industry has bagged both the longhorn and the franchise operator.⁵

In *Scotland, PA* the groggy sleep of McDonaldsification doth murder all. Paternal somnolence pervades the film: Malcolm chides Duncan for habitually falling asleep in his office; Officer Ed dozes at the police desk. Perhaps the sole genuinely poignant moment in the film comes just after Duncan's murder, when the McBeths silently listen to Malcolm pounding on his father's office door, shouting 'wake up, Dad!' But even when awakening is possible in this film, it only illuminates confinement. Here, Duncan is not murdered in his sleep, but rather when he tries to seize initiative: the provocatively named 'Norm' Duncan catalyses his murder when he unveils his homemade blueprints to the McBeths ('tonight, you two are going to witness history'). In another of the film's explorations of how spectacle and imitation produce action, Duncan glosses the blueprints for the mystified McBeths by abruptly putting Pat and Mac into a mock rehearsal, seizing the role of a Method director who has the McBeths develop a scene of discovering their need for drive-through takeout. Indeed, Duncan coaches the McBeths to feign yawning to signal that they're too exhausted for any other alternative. And Mac recapitulates this very yawn in his final fight with McDuff, turning feigned surrender into feigned sleepiness to get McDuff off balance. As it turns out, of course, the imitated gesture of sleep quickly becomes the permanent sleep

⁵ For related interpretations of ways that Almereyda's *Hamlet* critiques capitalist modes of both production and representation, see Mark Thornton Burnett, "To Hear and See the Matter": Communicating Technology in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, *Cinema Journal*, 42 (2003), 48–69; and Katherine Rowe, "Remember Me": Technologies of Memory in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, in *Shakespeare, the Movie, II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, Television, and DVD*, ed. Richard Burt and Lynda Boose (New York, 2003).

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of death. Duncan and all the rest of Scotland also 'sleep' in their belief that fast food will mitigate rather than exacerbate their passivity. The audience knows that global McDonalds, not the local McBeth's, is the Big Mac here. The McBeths' retitling of their menu encapsulates this when it names their offerings the 'Big McBeth', 'Little McBeth',

'Fishy McBeth', 'McBeth McBeth'. The leftover burger Mrs Lennox chewed as the film opens now carries the McBeths name. This seems a victorious assertion of agency when they re-make the restaurant. But in the end, 'the McBeth' is what's consumed. The 'bitch' statue of liberty stays stashed in the corner of a fast food nation.