

Making Macbeth American:
A History of *Macbeth*, Race and Class in America

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You will murder MacJones. Don't roll yr eyes at me.
You will murder MacJones sure as me and my 2 weird sisters are standing here today.
You will murder MacJones and you will build a kingdom on his bones.
Hold on now, ladies.
Talk to the hand, man, history is in the making, and those who fall short fall silent.
-The Witches, "Project Macbeth," Suzan-Lori Parks

Lawrence Levine, in his groundbreaking account of the split between “high” and “low” American culture in *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, explains how the appropriation of Shakespeare played a vital role in creating American national identity and cultural hierarchies. First, Americans assimilated Shakespeare into their own cultural canon. Second, even more important to my concerns, Americans have attempted to create “their own” version of Shakespeare. Levine points out that even American writers identified Shakespeare as part of their own American identity; James Fenimore Cooper declared that Shakespeare is “the great author of America” and that Americans have “just as much right as Englishmen to claim Shakespeare as their countrymen” (Levine 20). How do we have this right to claim Shakespeare as our own? Is it just our innate American idea that we deserve a right to anything and everything? Or have we created a new ideology of Shakespeare that we can truly call our own American version? Levine has pointed out how the performances, readings, interpretations, adaptations, and perceptions of Shakespeare’s plays can be seen to distinguish class hierarchies in America, but I argue that in addition to distinguishing class, Shakespeare in America distinguishes our conceptions of race. It seems to me that ways in which Shakespeare’s plays function throughout time reveal the structures, assumptions, and even the miss-perceived conceptions of the US class *and* racial system throughout America history. Ironically, a Scottish play written to justify the structures of succession, class, and hierarchy in the monarchy of Jacobean England is the most historically pertinent play to the history of class, race, and democracy in America: The tragic tale of Ambition, *Macbeth*.

In the era of Lawrence Levine's book, many critics have argued the class constructing uses of Shakespeare, but not as many have concentrated on solely the text *Macbeth*, or the relationship between distinguishing class and race within the Scottish play. In an attempt to intersect these two cultural labels I came up with a main question for this exploration: How has a British White authored, all White text of *Macbeth* been used in American history to define racial and class construction? On the one hand, *Macbeth* in America has been used as a theatrical and textual metaphor to separate and define between races and classes, but on the other hand, *Macbeth* in America has been used as a pluralistic vehicle to encourage multicultural conceptions of race and class. In this paper, I hope to explore how *Macbeth* has been used to define racial and social class boundaries, hierarchies, and identities on the American theatrical, textual, and filmed stage. In order to explore this question I will investigate the use of *Macbeth* in assimilating Shakespeare in the Early American era, *Macbeth* as metaphor in pro- and anti-slavery literature of the Civil War, the question of ownership and the blackening/whitening of *Macbeth* on the nineteenth century stage, the problem of white director/black actor in Orson Welles' *Macbeth*, the return to whiteness in conflicting *Macbeth* adaptations, and the movement to a Multicultural *Macbeth* on the contemporary stage. This broad study across the history of race, class, and theater in American is important to our critical engagement with Shakespeare as Americans because we must recognize the critical paradox of our cultural Shakespeare and reveal the history of American *Macbeth* to represent the contrasting uses of the text to broadcast racial consciousness and class definitions.

I believe that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a tale of "Vaulting Ambition" gone awry (1.7.27). So my question is, how has a play warning of ambition, reinforcing British primogeniture, and arguably enforcing notions of destiny and divine right become a staple play of the American identity in which the "American Dream" requires ambition, democracy, and individual citizen's hard work? The answer is complicated throughout the play's cultural function in American history. In order to explore an answer, we must travel back to the early stages of America and embark on brief histories. In the early era of Shakespeare in America, performances of *Macbeth* and Shakespeare's other plays were performed within an eccentric night of entertainment. It was common for a performance of *Macbeth* to have between act entertainment, and a post-main production farce. Levine points out that afterpieces and divertissements surrounding Shakespeare's productions in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century was a way in "having *integrated* him into the American culture" (23). By the mid nineteenth century, the theatre of Shakespeare had become a place not only to be entertained by the comedies and tragedies of the popular playwright (for he was not yet labeled *Classical*), but also a place to express national identity and class hierarchy. But I wonder, how can you assert American Identity at a very English/Scottish play? In an observation of an American audience in the nineteenth century, English visitor Frances Trollope explained: "The applause is expressed by cries and thumping with feet, instead of clapping; and when a patriotic fit seized them, and 'Yankee Doodle' was called for, every man seemed to think his reputation as a citizen depended on the noise he made" (Levine 25). So, it seems in a time where the actual play of *Macbeth* was still very much English, American audiences— notably not the playwrights, directors, and actors as we see later in American *Macbeth*

adaptations—inserted their own ‘Americanisms’ into the theatre, I suggest in an attempt to define their separate American identity from the English play. During this time period, the productions of *Macbeth* remained very much true to the text of Shakespeare. Not much would need to be appropriated, linguistically, to satisfy the very English origin audiences (As much as they assert their American Identity, we must remember that America had only gained independence within the span of a few generations from this point in history) in the early years of an independent America because Shakespeare’s language was literally the language of the early American nation. Shakespeare created much of the English known during that period, and this could be another possible connection that allowed Americans to become so cozy with Shakespeare. Of course, we don’t really have many surviving scripts of the original staging’s of *Macbeth* in America, but as we travel through the history of American *Macbeth*, we encounter some of the most important *Macbeth* productions in American history: those of the Astor Place Riots.

It is in the Astor Place Riots that we see one of the most important representations of how *Macbeth* has separated and defined between classes (and as we will later see races) in America. The Astor Place riots are one major marker for the cultural significance of *Macbeth* in American history. Playing in two separate theatres, for two separate classed audiences, the idealized masculine working class “American” actor Edwin Forrest fueled rivalry against the genteel aristocratic “English” William Macready. Each played *Macbeth* in a different manner, each transforming their character to suit their audience. But on the night of May 10, 1849, the two *Macbeth*’s followers took their idealizations of the character and the actor to the streets in a fatal brawling clash of the classes. The night provoked the first time the state militia had been used against its own

citizens and left twenty three people dead and over one hundred injured—most of which were of the working and lower class. As Nigel Cliff accounts in his *The Shakespeare Riots*, the clash between actors became a clash between national class identities, “Fire, you damned sons of bitches; you durs’n’t fire!” one rioter cried, tearing open his red flannel shirt and pointing at his breast, “take the life out of a free-born American for a bloody British actor?” (228). This image defines the backwards ideology of the riots themselves, the violence of *Macbeth* was literally taken to the streets, and as we had seen in the early American productions of *Macbeth*, American audiences were adding a class defining commentary to the experience of the theatre.

This “Macbethian” moment represents the hard working ambitious class trying to overtake their aristocratic superiors, only to be reinforced through physical force back into their class hierarchy. Nick Moschovakis points out in his introduction to *Macbeth: New Critical Essays*, that this incident “suggests how a tragedy’s evocations of bloody conflict might conduce an outbreak of actual bloodshed” and that in response to *Macbeth*, “a combatively anti-aristocratic crowd felt able to identify with a regicidal protagonist—albeit one who was also, paradoxically, a tyrannical king” (16). But, why did productions of *Macbeth* in Shakespeare’s England not evoke bloody riots in Jacobean theatres? I ask, what makes *Macbeth* in America such a volatile stimulant for Americans? During the era of an emerging modern America, Americans were struggling to fully identify themselves as individuals within an American social class system that was based off of English classes, and as a nation separate, yet rooted in English culture. We can view the Astor Place Riots as an actual historical event adaptation of *Macbeth*—the struggle of an individual on an ambitious quest for power and a “rightful” place in social hierarchy. As

Macbeth feels wrongfully shamed by Duncan's granting of Malcolm as heir, "We will establish our estate upon/ Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter /The Prince of Cumberland;" (1.4.37-39), Americans feel shamed by an elite American upper class that is dominated by British patriots and sympathizers. I believe that in an America meant to be ruled and governed by Americans, the wrongful position of British elites in the American upper class drives Forrest's followers into bloody riots that mirror Macbeth's ambitious bloodsheds. The Astor Place Riots showcases the historical strife of class mixed with ambition and power, and the ultimate demise of ambitious rebellions, because both Macbeth, and the American rioters reach fatal endings—the courageous plea of the rioter bearing his chest daring the militia to fire upon him is reminiscent of Macbeth's cry to Malcolm, "With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed./Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests" before he realizes that he too will face death (5.8.10-11).

From these historical anecdotes, I argue that Americans in the era of defining their place in the American class identity, turned to Macbeth as a manly hero who fought for what was a given right, and this perspective mirrored how Edwin Forrest played Macbeth on the nineteenth century stage. Working class Americans invested so deeply into this concept—even to the point of fatal rioting—because of the need to assert their place in the American identity, both back in England through Forrest's European tours, but most importantly on their own American stages. But, what the 1849 Astor Place Riots tried to achieve in a rebellion against class hierarchy, only demonstrated and reinforced the divide between a working class American "freedman" and the British-esque American aristocracy. Strife between hierarchy, succession, and the "right" to achieve the a solely American identity is represented through different American adaptations of

Macbeth and specifically through their intended audiences, their reception, American interpretations, cultural relevance, and historical geography from this point onward. In this strife of class divide, conceptions of race and their social position only fueled the important of *Macbeth* representations.

To think of the use of *Macbeth* to separate and define classes and races during the nineteenth century, and to place the Astor Place Riots in context, we have to examine the use of *Macbeth* in metaphor for the argument for, and against slavery during this time period. I would like to come back to the question of race in the Astor Place Riots, but I'd first like to give a context for the political importance of *Macbeth* in American conceptions of race. Notably, I must point out that again, we are still only in the point of *Macbeth* in American history where the actual text is being used and assimilated into American culture by Americans either adding their own commentary outside of the play (as in the a Yankee-Doodling of the early American theatres, or the cultural riots) instead of actually using and adapting the physical play to convey class and racial definitions on the stage which we see later in a movement of American adaptations.

Civil war quotations of *Macbeth* reveal the class structures and definitions of tyranny within the changing nation of an America at war with itself. *Macbeth* was the most popular Shakespeare play on the national stage in antebellum America (Nathans 23). Due to its popularity, and its capacity for universal recognition, *Macbeth* was often used as a metaphor in civil war era political speeches, literatures, and comics.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a text is ambiguous in its distinction of pure good and pure evil characters and therefore the open endedness of the virtue of Macbeth, the morality of his deeds, and the tyranny of the differing Kings allowed both abolitionists and pro-

slavers to use *Macbeth* as a political metaphor for the morality of slavery. The play *Macbeth* can be interpreted generally in many ways, but in this era we see the actual text being reduced to simplistic summations up as either a cautionary tale of the dangers of “vaulting ambition” or a tale of fighting bravely for honor and power. These simplistic interpretations were used as metaphors of *Macbeth* in conflicting ways throughout the civil war. Nathans has pointed out that this confliction in the text itself allowed “*Macbeth* [to] fit the mood of the troubled nation” (Nathans 25). As we will see, the mood of the troubled nation spurred a need to define class and race hierarchy.

Explained by Nathans, for the confederates, Macbeth the man could represent a southern democratic hero who stood up against a metaphorized tyrannical Duncan of Abraham Lincoln to defend the rights of the states like their own rightful heirdom (25). Ironically we see this metaphor of the oppressed Macbeth against the tyrannical Duncan again used by twentieth century African American writers to stand for the oppressed Blacks who must rise and take violent action to overthrow the oppressive Duncan-like white man (Moschovakis 65). When Macbeth was interpreted as evil, southerners could use the metaphor of “bad” Macbeth in political stabs against slave rebels and abolitionists whose “vaulting ambition” leaves violence and bloody consequences for the nation (Nathans 26). I’d like to point out the connection between the assertion of the supports of slave rebellions and anti-slavery as being labeled the same as the rioters of the Astor Place Riots. Each group was rebelling to assert their right to a place in American society—one fighting to break racial hierarchies, and the other fighting to break class hierarchies. In contrast, abolitionists could create a metaphor between the “innocents” of slaves to Duncan, and the pure violent evilness of slave masters and Macbeth

(Moschovakis 67). This incorporation of guilty consciousness to racial consciousness and seperative politics shows how metaphors of *Macbeth* were used to physically separate racial classes. To briefly sum up our examples of the use of *Macbeth* as metaphor in the most volatile political construction of racial separation in the civil war era we can look to W.E.B. Du Bois' trope of our "race problem" as "a spectral intruder at America's banquet" in one of America's most important early text on Race, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois 1903, 10; *Macbeth* 3.4.101-102).

It is important to recognize in this analysis though that "familiarity does not necessarily equal relevance, and the choice of the play as a vehicle for political satire on slavery raises intriguing questions about antebellum Americans understanding of the cultural resonance of *Macbeth*" (Nathans 24). Although Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and his Lady fail at maintaining their power and die in the end, the *Macbeth* that is metaphorized seemingly overlooks some of the ironically 'minor details' of the play in order to fit it into a political caricature. From this idea, we can see stark differences in the uses of *Macbeth* in the civil war era and in more modern times. Up through the nineteenth century, Americans were using the original British *Macbeth* in American contexts, but still not entirely adapting *Macbeth* into their own.

I've been talking about how *Macbeth* as a text and character has been used (and not entirely contextually accurately) to politicize arguments for the position of race—specifically African Americans and slavery in America, and class—through a bipartisan like class struggle idolized through *Macbeth* actors Edwin Forrest and William Macready. Up to this point, the text of *Macbeth* has been used fragmentarily and literally off the stage to construct racial boundaries, but the question still remains: When does

American stop using Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and start creating their own American *Macbeth*? We see an attempt at this through the unique acting style of Edwin Forrest, but I don't believe *Macbeth* is able to be entirely Americanized until Americans stop using the text to separate classes and races and create subgroups and hierarchies, and instead start using *Macbeth* to define a new multi dimensional, multicultural American identity that encompasses, embraces, and encourages the diversity of America.

To answer this question of when *Macbeth* becomes Americanized, we first must explore the question of ownership. *Macbeth* starts to be parodied, satirized, and the text actually adapted during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in America in an attempt to define "ownership" of the text, and therefore the authority and power to define class and race hierarchies. I'd like to now turn to exploring how "coloring" *Macbeth* on the stage constructed class hierarchies and solidified an elitist position in the social structure for the white working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To explore this, I'd like to move toward a central question: Who owns *Macbeth*? In search of answers to this question, we must look at instances of "blackening" and "whitening" *Macbeth* on the stage, and eventually how this separatist movement transforms into a new cultural multiplicity in the simultaneous "blackening" and "whitening" in Orson Welles's "Voodoo *Macbeth*".

The "blackening" of *Macbeth* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are very different. While in the twentieth century, one form of "blackening" *Macbeth* can be seen through all black casts such as Orson Wells voodoo adaptation, or all black playhouses and directors, but, in the nineteenth century the "blackened" *Macbeths* still seemingly functioned for a white audience and white culture—in short *Macbeth* was being

“blackened” and reinforcing “whitened” in the nineteenth century. This idea is best seen through the function of minstrel show Macbeths and the position of race in the Astor Place riots. Nathans questions that in the defining moment for the intersection of play of national identity in the Astor Place Riots, we must wonder how is it that “race is curiously missing from the conversation, prompting the questions: Is 1849 the moment when Macbeth became ‘white’ ” (29). I don’t think this moment is when Macbeth became ‘white’ but when Macbeth became “owned” by Whites in order to assert their racial and class segregations. Maybe we can reanalyze The Astor Place Riots not only as the quintessential violent construction of class identity via theatre in America but also a question of ownership: Who owns Macbeth: the Americans or the British, the Lower Classes or the Upper Classes, and later the Blacks or the Whites? While the white working class vehemently supported the “aggressive white masculinity” in the Edwin Forrest Macbeth, historically, we can assume that the white lower class of New York would have been a “neighborhood completely racially integrated” where blacks and whites would have participated in a very close culture (Nathans 31). If we think of the “lower class” as incorporating both whites and blacks, it is interesting for us to think of this lower class as an early multicultural melting pot—a diverse community much like the multicultural community of 1930’s Harlem, which spurred Orson Welles’s “Voodoo Macbeth”

So, how did the Astor Place Riots “whiten” Macbeth? As a riot about the ownership of Macbeth the man, and more concretely the identity of America as a nation, the rioting American community—whether the British sympathizing elitist or the aggressive nationalistic working class—has one thing in common: whiteness. Nathans

suggests that “The riot may also be viewed as part of the ongoing struggle to preserve the Union in the face of increasing sectionalism, and thus, perhaps, as an “acting out” of the dilemma that faces Macbeth’s kingdom after Duncan’s murder. Should the nation accept the tainted but powerful presence of a leader who offers stability, or should it risk civil war to pursue the cause of justice?” (30). The social environment that inspired the Astor Place Riots was fueled off of the working class anxiety about their place in the social hierarchy of America and anxiety of the national identity of America, especially separating “blackness” from the working and lower classes. We could see the riot as a sort of American white working class’s nationalist self-assertion, just as how bigotry in fans of the Forrest vs. Macready Macbeth’s displaced their class self-assertion onto the lead of the play Macbeth.

While this discussion on the Astor Place Riots has shown how the dual staging of Macbeth have influenced class identities, these rationales intersect with race in the self-assertion of the white working class in America’s social hierarchy through the racialization of Macbeth in minstrel shows. Explained by Joyce Green Macdonald in her essay “Minstrel Show Macbeth”, Pre 1860s blackface minstrelsy used racial caricatures to the “service” of a burgeoning working-class consciousness which asserted itself against elites’ claims of social dominance. I interpret this statement as a way in which the “controlled blackening” of Macbeth—literally making a mockery of the “black” race in the ownership of a white author, white audience, and white actor—was a way for white working class Americans to secure a position on the American scale of social hierarchy. As they riot against the elitist class, and mock racial lower classes, working class white America secures a firm grip on the “middle class” while simultaneously asserting their

class as ‘the class’ of the American identity, through national and transnational perspectives. To unpack this statement, blackface minstrel shows were a very American construction but were transnationally brought out of America through British actors (Macdonald 60). The cultural movements of anti-British elitist interference, and also the ethics and morality of slavery converge in the Astor Place Riots and minstrel shows of the nineteenth century in a movement “toward racialization and away from Britain,” both of which converge in *Macbeth* productions (MacDonald 56).

The blackface minstrel shows represent a separation and distinction of classes and races ironically through a mix of high and low, white and black, “Shakespeare and American slang” in order to “illustrate the appropriation of whites’ perception of black style to the causes of a wider class and national self-assertion” (MacDonald 56). This hodgepodge of mixing classes and races is what I believe becomes a quintessential aspect of American multicultural *Macbeth* on stage after the breakthrough of Orson Welles. Although, through minstrel *Macbeths*, the mixing of race was still used to separate and define racial hierarchies, and therefore still subgrouping identities of Americans. The minstrel shows of *Macbeth* allowed for white working class America to separate and distinct two different social classes at the same time, essentially making a distinct white middle class. I believe this was able to be caused because of the nature of minstrels and travesties: although the audience could contain different classes and races, in effect the use of blackface or travesty genre essentially mocks the culture the text inhabits and the culture that actual blackface parodies. While it could be argued that the use of blackface and minstrel shows should be read as a more good hearted humor where the Black culture being made fun of is laughing *with* the white audience members, not necessarily only be

laughed at. I think that we can't rely on this 'good natured' parody because of the volatile environment of racial and class distinction in the pre-, during, and post-civil war era.

Macbeth minstrelsy within their cultural moment were a separative force, not a uniting force. By taking high culture British Shakespeare and turning it into a low culture comedic minstrel show or burlesque, the white middle class American audience could essentially be representing a resentment towards a 'snobbish' British elitist influence by taking their prized Shakespeare and turning it into comedic plays acted out by the lowest of culture: even lower than the black race because even the actors' blackness was not a full coherent culture because only their spectacle appearance contained this "blackness."

The theatrical display of minorities on the stage has been used throughout American history to secure the white identity—for what the minority "others" are, white America is not, and it is easier to construct a national identity based off what you are not, and in comparison to other cultures. This would hold most true in the nineteenth century, because what white America "was" would have a lot hereditarily in common with white Britishness, so asserting a national identity through mockery and opposition would more clearly define the social position and identity of white middle America.

It is at this point that the shift in the uses of *Macbeth*, and the critical paradox of *Macbeth* in America emerges in opposition to our previous discussions. As I had introduced in the beginning of our exploration, *Macbeth* in America has been used as a theatrical and textual metaphor to separate and define social and racial positions, but also contrastingly as a pluralistic vehicle to create new distinct multicultural conceptions of an American Identity. It is within the controversial and pivotal production of Orson Welles's 1936 "Voodoo Macbeth" that we find both aspects of this paradox. The 1936 all black

cast, but white directed play has been controversial in the critical world because it can be defined as both reinforcing racial stereotypes, or also embracing multicultural identities and creating a new form of *Macbeth* that transcends limitations of racial and class hierarchy. In Orson Welles's "Voodoo Macbeth" the problem of black actor/white director takes on a new form of the "blackening" and "whitening" of Macbeth. As critics Alden Vaughan and Virginia Vaughan point out, although "Voodoo Macbeth" played to sold out crowds, "reviewers complained that it wasn't sufficiently Shakespearian; the actors they argues, couldn't speak Shakespeare's lines properly, while spectacle and special effects overtook Macbeth's heroic role" (116). The issues of blackening and whitening Macbeth in Orson's "voodoo" version goes beyond being labeled by race, but also as whether it was legitimately "Shakespeare" or not.

In thinking about Welles in my overall exploration of constructing race and class hierarchies, I see two very distinct and very opposite ways to interpret Welles within his cultural and historical context. First, Welles as white director implies "ownership" over Macbeth and "uses" race for commercial purposes. In this interpretation, Orson Welles's 1936 Harlem "Voodoo Macbeth" is very much like the dynamic of nineteenth century *Macbeth* minstrel shows. Within this interpretation of Welles, it could be argued that he uses notions of black culture and specifically "primitivism" to force a cultural heritage on his black actors and black audience members while simultaneously reinforcing an elitist heritage (again through the White history IS NOT this black history) of white culture for the white audience members. This interpretation of the play could align with a harsh early modernist ideology where the director Welles uses the play as a form of reconstructing *Macbeth* into an "authentic" text that he can "give back" to black culture. This statement

is problematically racist though because the notion of the play as authentic and something to be given assumingly positions Welles in the elitist position of power, and the black culture as not only 'lacking' but also ignorant of their own heritage. But can this have been Welles' original conception when producing the play? Or is this critic a projection of racial anxieties implemented during an era of segregation and civil rights? I argue that Welles' does not use his play to separate racial classes, but instead to create a new multicultural identity of the American Harlem. Welles's production is a very *transitional* piece for *Macbeth* in America, because as he stays closely true to the Shakespearean text, like previous historical Macbeths, his use of a multi-sensual theatre functions to create a unique aesthetic and audible Macbeth. Therefore, the second way in which we can interpret Welles within his cultural and historical moment is that his play is an early form of a Multicultural Macbeth.

Perhaps, just like how the voodoo is a combined hybrid faith of White Roman Catholic practices and African ritual situated in a Caribbean context incorporates multiple cultures to create a new spiritual practice; Maybe Welles's play incorporating White administration, African drummers, Black actors, French costumes, Caribbean settings, British text, and many more classes and races actually creates a new hybrid "one world" Macbeth that does not separate racial and class hierarchies, but instead brings many different ones together to create a collage of the cultures in which we live in—specifically like a collaged portrait of 1930s Harlem. This idea could be supported by Orson Welles's internationalist vision, communistic ideas, and linking of fascism with racism which Michael Denning explains in "Black Jacobins, Native Sons, and the Mexican Border: Race, Nation, and Fascism." Denning, coining this concept as a notion

of Welles' "one-worldisms," specifically his "promulgating an internationalist vision" and "linking of fascism to racism" denies any interpretation of "Voodoo Macbeth" as a separating vehicle contextual validity. This idea is also supported by critics Alden Vaughan and Virginia Vaughan. They agree that "Welles's version was a decidedly New World Macbeth" in which "the natives' animistic customs of witchcraft and voodoo opposing the hero's attempt to mimic European monarch. Welles substituted a jungle setting for Shakespeare's heath and made the witches into voodoo priestesses" (116). In the context of "Voodoo Macbeth" I argue we can redefine the term "one-worldism" to capture the distinct movement of Welles' adaptation of *Macbeth* to transcend racial and class separation in an effort to create a groundbreaking unique conception of American Multicultural Macbeth. Like how Welles's Banquo describes the voodoo priestess witches, "So withered and so wild in their attire,/ That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth/And yet are on't," "Voodoo Macbeth" is both a production of it's earth—it's cultural moment, but also is unique in it's inhabitants (1.1.4-5).

Orson Welles' creates a *Macbeth* that mirrors in diversity the mixture of race and culture in the 5-points districts during the time of the Astor Place Riots. Like the mixing of free blacks, working whites, and diverse immigrants, the aspects of "Voodoo Macbeth" incorporate multicultural elements, but in this sense work together through *Macbeth* to build cultural relationships rather than use the play to distinguish differences. Welles invites his audience into the play using multi-sensual elements to convey an immediate feeling of transcending the theatre. His opening stage directions tell us a lot about the environmental situation of Shakespeare's text in a diverse arena. Opening to "Yamekraw" a drumming audible experience of spiritual, syncopated, and blues melodies

thought to be the first Negro rhapsody, by James P. Johnson and Joe Jordan, plays as “*First trumpet boom. Second trumpet. Low roll of thunder. Rain up and down. Thunder fades. Silence. The curtain rises on a jungle. Pause. Enter Macbeth and Banquo*” (1.1).

Just in the opening act, the text of Macbeth has been transformed into this New World, that is not wholly Haitian, Scottish, or American, and nor wholly black nor white, but instead a new Shakespearean experience that pulls from multiple cultures just like the syncopated collage of beats and sounds in the drumming music.

We also see notions of cultural collage in the use of dialogue in “Voodoo Macbeth”. The stage directions for the play create a “dialect unique” as Newstock in his article “After Welles” points out from a found handwritten note of Welles:

Dialect: Everyone try for British accent but it’s not upsetting if Southern or American accent comes through. As a matter of fact try to combine the Southern with the British to come up with a dialect unique. Must be used by everyone.

(97).

It is in this handwritten note that we see the aim of Welles to create a new American experience for Macbeth, one that focused on combining the identities of Black and South with British/North and White. Welles succeeded in creating a new identity of American Macbeth: one that embraces the racial and class differences in an attempt to create a new diverse identity.

Though I recognize that it is possible to interpret “Voodoo Macbeth” on both sides of our cultural paradox of Macbeth in America, I question if perhaps it is racist to call Welles racist and elitist simply because he is white. It would be interesting to see how our conversation of Welles would change if he was a black director directing this

black production with black actors, or even an all-white cast. Does the race of the actors and director matter when the play itself establishes a transcendent atmosphere that incorporates multiple cultures and multiple senses to convey a unique experience to the audience? No matter which way you interpret Welles's intentions with "Voodoo Macbeth", each represent an influence of the theatre on racial and class constructions: either good or bad.

So, from Welles' adaptation of Macbeth into a unique multicultural form, where does that leave us on the exploration of racial and class constructions through *Macbeth* in America? From here two paths emerge: Firstly, the continuing trend of Multicultural Macbeth and the encouragement of racial diversity through adaptations and productions in America; Secondly, a trend in the rise of "low culture" Macbeths and their self-assertion, yet reinforcing commentary on social class in America.

What can we consider a Multicultural Macbeth? As a student teacher, my perspective on Shakespeare has changed throughout my education. Shakespeare is a key author for high school curriculum, but recent research has questioned his true validity within all types of American classrooms—specifically his inaccessibility to new diverse classes. How can we make a play about Scottish thanes, for a London audience, written in the 1600s, but set in the 1000s interesting, and more important relatable to teenagers who come from different classes, different races, and different cultural experiences? As Susan Gushee O'Malley in her essay, "Cultural Appropriations of Shakespeare in the Classroom," points out, "for these students, to read Shakespeare as the repository of universal truths of the dominant culture is a schizophrenic act" (139). From this sense of irrationality of *Universal Shakespeare* in the classroom, the educational and critical

movement has been towards creating a multicultural classroom. From my experience, the best kind of English classroom you can create as a teacher is one whose texts can be relatable to all types of students, and hence we have moved to multiculturalism.

So, back to our initial question, what can we consider a Multicultural Macbeth? I believe a multicultural Macbeth is a new hodge-podge Macbeth: fragmentary, tolerant, globalized, and diverse. The perfect Macbeth could be taught in any classroom without offending or confining any races or classes, a play that has such diverse characteristics that it can be related to all students and relevant to all cultures in an organic hybrid form. Perhaps our ideal Multicultural Macbeth constructs racial and social class hierarchies by actually deconstructing separate boundaries and creating an every class, every race Macbeth. By now of course, I have the Shakespeare conservatists rolling in their graves—for this cannot be called Shakespeare surely with so much divergent adaptation? This is a key element of contemporary Macbeths. At what point can we stop saying “by William Shakespeare” and start creating our own American Macbeths? Orson Welles started the trend with “Voodoo Macbeth,” and on our voyage through Multicultural Macbeths, we can start to see Americans starting to take full ownership of the text—a movement to our own *Macbeth*.

In contemporary times, Multiculturalism as a trend has evolved out of the postmodern and globalization movements. Alden and Virginia Vaughan in their book *Shakespeare in America* dedicate a short chapter on the Multicultural Shakespeare. Although they only briefly touch on Macbeth productions, they point out a key factor in multicultural adaptations, “In the twenty-first century, Shakespeare, the most celebrated bastion of Anglophone culture, continues to provoke debate about the complications

ethnic minorities face in crafting their own American identity” (109). I believe we can think of this as the ways in which classic canonical texts act as vehicles for minorities to project their own cultures onto because it displays both their cultural practices, and also connects their identity through adaptation to the American/Anglo identity of the original text. Because Americans thought of Shakespeare as their own in the early era of America, specifically *Macbeth*, Shakespeare’s canonical texts represent a part of the foundational American literary identity. Multicultural adaptations function to truly represent the diverse culture that makes up the national identity of America in our contemporary times.

So what types of Multicultural Macbeths have impacted the canon of Shakespeare as we know it in recent times? Specifically since the Culture Wars, versions that I would label multicultural Macbeths have sprung up in great numbers. In 1985, John R. Briggs created a hybrid *Macbeth* in hopes to reach a more multicultural and young audience. Setting his play in 12th century Japan, he mixed Shakespearean elements with Japanese culture in *Shogun Macbeth* with Asian American actors. It was first staged at the Shakespeare Festival in Texas, and later was picked up by the New York Pan Asian Theatre (Vaughan and Vaughan 125). Reviews for the play though were not as rewarding of Briggs’ ambition. Dan Bacalzo’s review for TheatreMania explains, “while some aspects of this cultural transposition are inspired, the uneven production doesn’t always show off the concept to best advantage.” Of multicultural adaptations, Asian American Macbeth’s have not been as successfully present as African American Macbeths. Vaughan and Vaughan offer the explanation that “the barriers seem even higher for America’s newest immigrants—Latinos and Asian Americans—because Shakespeare is the premier poet of the English language and his vocabulary is more difficult to master

than colloquial American speech” (122). While this certainly cannot be true of all American Asian immigrants, it is important to note the sheer difference in cultural adaptations of *Macbeth* by different minority groups. To some minorities and immigrants, especially for many Latino and Asian Americans artists, “Shakespeare has come to stand for Anglo-America’s cultural hegemony,” (Vaughan and Vaughan 122). It is because of this claim that a movement towards accessible Shakespeare and multicultural *Macbeths* is important to encourage breaking down race and class borders.

One interesting way that Multicultural *Macbeths* have worked around the “barrier” of the almost cryptive Shakespearean English is through the production of bilingual *Macbeths*. Two great example of this come from our only 2 non-continental U.S. states: Alaska and Hawaii. First, is Anita Mynard-Losh’s 2003 Alaskan production of Tlingit *Macbeth*. In this Tlingit version of *Macbeth*, Maynard-Losh explains that her production tapped into the kinship she observed between Tlingit and medieval Scottish clan systems, Tlingit and Scottish beliefs in supernatural influence over human events, and both societies’ history of tribal warfare” (Vaughan and Vaughan 127). Here we see that the cultural aspects of the Scottish text were relatable to the minority tribal culture of the Tlingit clan, but the Shakespearean language was very unfamiliar to the tribe’s sacred, but dying language. Throughout the play, both English and Tlingit was used—each patterned depending on the context of the lines be spoken. The actors were Alaskan natives, but spanned multiple tribes, not just Tlingit. Originally played in Juneau, Alaska, the play was so successful it was invited to play at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. Although it was a bi-lingual play, Vaughan and Vaughan point out that, “Because *Macbeth* is one of the best-known Shakespearian plays, audience

members who did not know Tlingit could follow the action in Maynard-Losh's bilingual production" (128). This play was able to incorporate different types of minority cultures, while simultaneously making Shakespeare their own, and creating a unique Macbeth that instead of driving apart different tribes, races, or classes. Maynard-Losh explains that "It became more than a play to us, more than art—it became a mission, an invocation of ancestors, an event that bridged art, culture, history, and community" (130). Because she recognized the power that an adaptation of Macbeth could have in defining a cultures identity, she was very conscious of her interaction and authority as a director, "I was always conscious that I did not own the culture; as I said to the actors in rehearsal, "Shakespeare belongs to everyone, all of us; but your culture does not belong to me, it belongs to you. You own both." (130). Here, we have almost come full circle in our earlier questions of ownership. Perhaps from the example of this play, we can agree that when it comes to the question of who owns Macbeth, we must actively give ownership to the cultures at hand. Macbeth can be owned by anyone, but we should not use Macbeth to impose culture or boundaries on anyone else.

Another great multicultural and bilingual Macbeth showed in 2008 at the University of Hawaii Manoa. The student production showcased the diverse and multicultural landscape of America's island. Staged by Paul T. Mitri, this Macbeth was, as audience member William C. Carroll puts it, "not only multiethnic, but also elaborately multilingual, as a way of further creating a multicultural word." (138). Multiple languages were used throughout the play including English, Japanese, Russian, Gaelic, Spanish and Arabic—these languages alone are a great representation of the diverse make up of contemporary America. Viewer William C. Carroll poignantly

explains, “Mitri’s production of *Macbeth* erects language barriers as a way of revealing cultural and racial divides, yet is able, for most members of his audience, to bridge those barriers even while emphasizing them” (140). It is in this quote that we see the true function of Multicultural *Macbeth* adaptations. As I have been saying, *Macbeth* had been used in two ways throughout American history, and it is within Multicultural *Macbeths* that we see how differences in cultures and races can be expressed in a way that “bridges” and creates a new and beautiful identity for the play, and for the American nation. Even the use of costumes in Mitri’s *Macbeth* further diversified cultural representations, including Scots, Samurais, and Russians. Most notably the diverse realm of the play married the diverse cultures of the actors; the actors involved in the play represented many different races and cultures: “casting included students of Anglo-Saxon Japanese, and Chinese descent, among others, and a single African American” (Carroll 138). It is through the use of bilingual and multiculturalism that Mitri was able to create a “cohesive world populated by remnants of our present world” as Carroll explains from his Director’s Notes (138). The cultural adaptations of *Macbeth* from both Hawaii and Alaska represent what I believe are some of the best Multicultural *Macbeths* of the millennial era. If we apply Mitri’s *Macbeth* to our scenario of the contemporary classroom from before, we could see a lot of opportunities for student relation.

Another rise in contemporary adaptations of *Macbeth* takes the trend of multiculturalism a step farther into class. Deemed by Shakespearean conservatists, and which would surely be classified as “low-brow” by Lawrence Levine, “low culture” *Macbeths* have entered into the Shakespeare conversation, much to the ado of traditional Shakespearean scholars. So what do I mean by “low culture”? In using this term, I don’t

prescribe the original negative context to it, but instead use the term comically to express how diverse mediums have been used to adapt Macbeths. Notably, within this second trend of contemporary Macbeth adaptations, the trend in the rise of “low culture” Macbeths and their self-assertion, yet reinforcing commentary on social class in America, there seem to be two distinct forms, Macbeth “projects” and Macbeth cultural parodies.

Created in 2006 by the African-American Shakespeare Company, *MacB: The Macbeth Project*, is self-described in *Shakespeare Bulletin* as “an ensemble of sites and institutions, players and pupils, actions and ideas” (Barnes 463). The project spans beyond just the theatre, and involves a series of interactions of Macbethian workshops, community activities, and localized productions. Associate Todd Landon Barnes explains the project as “a series of nodes in a larger network of projects, the *Macbeth Project* operates, in part, as the lack and mobile expression of a national arts pedagogy as it projects itself through local voices and bodies” (463). At the sole of the project was a hip-hop adaptation of Macbeth that related the Scottish heirdom to the corporation of hip-hop music. In *MacB*, the Macbeth “struggled not for land or kingship, but for intellectual property and “CEO rights”” (463). This “low-culture” version of *Macbeth* utilized struggles in contemporary hip-hop battles in order to bring to the front many issues in racial identity of African Americans today. It’s multi-faceted experience takes *Macbeth* to a new level of access—it became more of just a play, but part of local students and community members interactions with Shakespeare outside the typical theatre. An interesting analysis of the *MacB Project* is reminiscent of our own exploration. Barnes brings to attention in the *Shakespeare Bulletin* some very important ideas when thinking about Macbeth:

The AASC's *Macbeth Project* puts a number of weighty yet productive hyphenations into play. These hyphenations (African-American, old-new, classic-color, teacher-artists, national-local) make finding a unifying trait difficult; these diverse and other antithetical *traits d'union* resist the stability of a non-hyphenated identity. The AASC forces us to ask not "What is the *Macbeth Project*?" but rather "What does the *Macbeth Project* do?"

(Barnes 467)

What does the *Macbeth Project* do? What have all of these historical American *Macbeth* adaptations done? I suggest that projects like the *Macbeth Project* allow community members and actual individuals of our diverse America to take Shakespeare into their own hand, and make *Macbeth* their own. In connecting community workshops to the actual hip-hop *Macbeth* adaptation, opportunities for unifying races and culture and encouraging diversity arise. It allows for a democratic representation of *Macbeth*. Audience members are able to interact, engage, and reflect upon the adaptations of *Macbeth* they encounter. Projects like this allow an organic notion of *Macbeth* to spring out of American culture. As Barnes explains, "It maintains a productive tension between performance and pedagogy, between the old and the new, between classic black and white texts and new hues of performance between a Shakespearean heritage and "Shakespeare for a New Generation" (467). This 'Shakespeare for a New Generation' represents our new conceptions of *Macbeth* in our contemporary America.

Another type of *Macbeth* project comes out of small town high school, Glen Ridge, NJ. Its YouTube medium, and integration with popular culture deems Lawrence Levine's label "low culture," but its effect on racial and class definition offers us an

interesting case study. *Star Wars: Macbeth*, created in the actor's senior high school English class in 1997, but release in 2001, incorporated Shakespeare and Star Wars, in short online installations. Courtney Lehman in "Out Damned Scot, Macbeth the Comedy: from Luke Skywalker to Walker Shortbread" explains how this seemingly irrelevant YouTube Macbeth adaptation was in reality an important way to reestablish the town's identity after the town became known for turning a blind eye to the tragic gang rape of a 14 year old mentally retarded girl by a group of school jocks (243). The *Star Wars: Macbeth* was successful is showing the progress the school has made, especially in terms of defining diversity. The adaptation itself offers "a variation on the dark comedy that constitutes the American high-school experience, this film features an attractive, athletic-looking Macbeth being defeated by glasses-wearing, semi-preppy nerds" (Lehman 244). The *Star Wars: Macbeth* clips, which can still be found on YouTube, utilize the same multicultural production like the more formal *Macbeth* productions. What Lehman explains is markedly different about the adaptation *Star Wars: Macbeth*, "is the multiracial cast; these are not the disturbed, underachieving, neofascist white boys of Columbine High but, rather, the gifted products of transnational mergers of people, places, and profit shares in the cosmopolitan north-east" (244). Although the production may seem low-brow, this YouTube Macbeth production represents the way in which localized productions of multicultural Macbeths can influence the identity of a community. As a microcosm, the media of *Star Wars: Macbeth* helped reshape and define the identity of Glen Ridge, NJ a decade after the town's horrible reputation made national coverage.

These versions of project oriented Multicultural Macbeths help represent uses of Macbeth in community based instruction and in localized constructions of racial and class identity. In his article “Hip-Hop Macbeths, ‘Digitized Blackness,’ and the Millennial Minstrel: Illegal Culture Sharing in the Virtual Classroom,” Tod Landon Barnes suggests that within the classroom, “instead of teaching students that all things are equal (adding an historical blindness to rival attempts at race blindness), educators might help students explore the changing difference between the early modern and the postmodern, between elite and popular culture” (164). This notion Shakespeare not as universal truths but as embracing differences and exploring his use in our contemporary world is an important aspect that should be thought of not just in the classroom, but also throughout Macbeth productions. We see these intermingling in the cultural parodies of *Macbeth*.

A more comical representation of the second trend “low culture” Macbeth adaptations—the “cultural parodies”—*MacHomer* uses satirical humor to present contemporary class and race in America through perhaps the most “low-cultural” medium yet, *The Simpsons*. Ironically, Canadian Rick Miller’s one man show, takes the popular American favorite, The Simpsons, and mixes it with the elitist classic Macbeth in order to create a unique—distinctly American adaptation. Although this show is not technically American, it’s use of American subject matter and popular culture, and it’s widely American audience shows up how satire Macbeths are able to play with racial and class stereotypes through exaggeration in an effort to make us all laugh at how silly we are when we take these hierarchies seriously. From the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project, Marissa McHugh interviewed Rick Miller in 2003 to gage his intentions when coming up with this farcical adaptation. Asking a question specifically

keen to our investigation: Do audiences think that it is reflective of a certain cultural identity? Rick Miller replies, “The US loves it because they are getting better at laughing at themselves. Mainly, through vehicles like *The Simpsons* where it clearly holds a mirror up to society and says, “Ha this is what some of us are like.” And then it goes into gross exaggeration and stereotypes—even racial stereotypes. But still people can laugh at it.” This is the concept that makes even “low-culture” adaptations of *Macbeth* important. Satirizing *Macbeth* has been around since Early American history. Political cartoons of satire *Macbeth* during the Civil War used the same comical agency to define class and racial boundaries. In our conversation of “low-culture” *Macbeth*, Miller answers an interesting question that we can’t ignore in our movement towards diverse *Macbeths*:

MM: Do you think the concept of “mainstream Shakespeare is deteriorating?”

RM: Overall the Shakespeare doesn’t necessarily satisfy. I prefer seeing something “fringier” because although sometimes it’s completely misguided—there is a sense of...something’s alive there

“Mainstream” *Macbeth* will always be around, no matter how much adaptation and reconfiguration the New Shakespeare Generationals embark on, the *Macbeth* of Shakespeare will always survive. But, Miller is right in that there is a sense in our exploration of multicultural and contemporary *Macbeths* that something is *alive*, something new has been consistently added to the Shakespeare conversation. We have to wonder though, does taking a “high class” text such as *Macbeth* and transferring it into a “low class” environment really change its class identity?

To further explore the above question, I’d like to turn to a self-labeled “low class” adaptation of *Macbeth* that introduces us to the controversy of adapting “high brow” texts

into “low culture” settings. *Scotland, PA*, whose target audience according to the director is “the kids in the back row who are getting stoned reading the Cliff Notes” (Directors Commentary) exemplifies the trend of “low culture” Macbeths who both commentate and reinforce social class positions in America. As a film that uses whiteness as a minority and basis for adaptation in order to construct class hierarchy, an interesting new division of race and class emerges: “white trash.” In *Scotland, PA*, a “white trash” characterization is used to demonstrate the “fate-like” claustrophobia of class hierarchy and immobility in America. Elizabeth Deitchman in her essay “White Trash Shakespeare: Taste, Morality, and the Dark Side of the American Dream in Billy Morrisette’s *Scotland, PA*” explains that in the film, Morrisette “examines America’s growing class divide by translating the play’s central question concerning the role we play in determining our own fate into a question about the role we play in establishing our place in America’s social order” (140). In the minstrel shows of *Macbeth*, white anxieties about social class position were deferred into constructing plays that forced a lower class consciousness onto American black culture, but in *Scotland, PA*, white anxiety about social class causes literally the fate of Macbeth himself: failure, death, and a concretely defined place in social hierarchy.

Perhaps in contemporary times this new subclass “white trash” is a constructed response from middle class white Americans whose anxiety about their social position has ‘labeled’ a lesser, “trashier” subtype of their own class. Morrisette’s adaptation “links social class directly to morality, vilifying the white-trash McBeths actually trapped in their class category and veiling the dark side of the American Dream” (Deitchman 140). By transforming Scottish thanes and kings into “American business owners and

their employees,” Morrissette “raises the specter of America’s buried social class inequalities,” (Deitchman 141). King Duncan because Norm, a Donut and Burger King, and Macbeth becomes his burger flipping employee who gets robbed of his deserved title of manager to become *just* “assistant manager” to Norm’s sixteen year old hippie rocker son. As Marguerite Rippy explains in her essay “Fast Food Shakespeare,” “British primogeniture survives intact in American capitalism” (Rippy 1). Here, I believe we see that in the absence entirely of minority races, the construction of race and class is projected onto a capitalistic model of social defining, labeling the McBeths as inferior economically, and therefore racially within their own ethnic identity. They exist on the lowest rung of the capitalistic world because they exist on the lowest rung of their race. Given the directors supposed target audience, we can infer that the film itself only reinforces the immobility of class, the failure of the American Dream, and the unattainable power in a capitalist monarchy—an America in which these pot smoking Cliff Note reading kids can’t hope to move up the ladder of society as much as they can hope to engage with a “high culture” *pure* text of *Macbeth*—they are stuck with an indie “white trash” and “fast food” version of Shakespeare. This statement in itself is complicated though and leads back to the original discussion of Levine’s *HighBrow/LowBrow*—Can Shakespeare adaptations be specifically “Low class” or “High class” and does interacting with a “lowbrow” version make the audience “lowbrow”?

An in-depth analysis of these truly “American” adaptations of *Macbeth* helped us span the historical analysis of the text of *Macbeth* and its influences in the American identity. The main questions we are left with on *Macbeth* in America: How have we Americanized *Macbeth*? And, how has Shakespeare *Macbeth*-ized us as Americans?

There is no single answer to these questions, for it all depends on how you personally interpret the play, its adaptations, and the cultural and textual validity of adaptations and appropriations. My answers are surely not aligned with traditionalists.

As we reach the end our journey through the history of *Macbeth* in America, I'd like to point out that not all critics agree with my insistence on the importance of all types of *Macbeth* adaptations, and you, reader, may certainly have already crucified my arguments for disgracing sacred Shakespearean text. Two critics, Kim Fedderson and J. Michael Richardson in their essay "Macbeth: migrations of the cinematic brand" harshly criticize *Scotland, PA*, which for my purposes represents the contemporary class struggle of who owns Shakespeare: the High class or the Low class? They start of their tirade against Morrisette by situating his *Macbeth* adaptation within a predicament, "One the one hand, he clearly wants recognition within SHAKESPEARE" explaining his desire to be apart of the "SHAKESPEARE" canon, and on the other hand they declare, "he derisively claims that the seriousness of members of SHAKESPEARE...amounts to little more than efforts to 'morally or culturally shape and uplift the public, that is to act as a kind of social bra'" quoting the director from the movies press kit (312-313). While Fedderson and Richardson are not amused by Morrisette's supposed lack of seriousness handling Shakespeare (by their perspective), I argue that Morrisette's humorous analogy represents the true function of Shakespeare in America. In fact, I argue I could just as easily change the title of this paper to "*Macbeth: America's Wonderbra*," and still be able to express my views on the important function of *Macbeth* in America—although of course my critical interpretations would then be most likely labeled by Shakespeare conservatists like Fedderson and Richardson as "low culture" and irrelevant to *his*

scholarly study. But, I argue that throughout the history of *Macbeth* adaptations, in one way or another, the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has functioned to *support* American perspectives, *shape* American Identity, and *uplift* racial and social classes—yes, just like a well-designed Wonderbra that has been a key part of American culture since its introduction.

Fedderson and Richardson end their “highbrow” rant against *Scotland, PA* by denouncing its usefulness to ‘SHAKESPEARE’ (which in itself is pretentiously all capitalized as if he personally would take offense), “as a contribution to SHAKESPEARE, *Scotland, PA* is an incoherent adolescent rant, not the ludic and subversive, intentionally fractured postmodern refrigeration of a canonical text that it claims to be” (313). Now I admit that this one declaration goes against the entire claim I have made about the importance of *Scotland, PA*—“low culture” and multicultural adaptations—in the American history of *Macbeth*, but I as a critic I admire it nonetheless. Within this critique about the adaptations “incoherent” contribution to the Shakespeare canon, we can see that the struggles between classes, races, and cultures are still alive and well in contemporary America. The argument for the place of Shakespeare in America continues to spark debate. Like the fight for who owns *Macbeth* between the working class and elite class in the Astor Place Riots, like the fight for who owns *Macbeth* between Unioners and Confederates in the Civil War Era, like the fight for who owns *Macbeth* between the Blacking and Whitening during the time of Wellesian influence, the fight for ownership of *Macbeth* continues between the high culture conservatist Shakespeare scholars and those who they deem “low culture” liberal Shakespeare experimentalists who cry “Shakespeare for All!” The cycle of “Who Owns *Macbeth*?”

will continue through our future as American readers, scholars, actors, directors, and audiences, continually redefining what we think of as class and race. We can only hope that the “weird” Shakespeare Gods will play nice, and that “Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow” the trend of encouraging a community based “one-world” Multicultural Macbeth will continue, instead of ‘that Scottish Play’ being used to drive apart different races and classes and leaving this history of Macbeth in America simply as:

A tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

-William Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 6, Lines 26-28

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