

Method Acting and Pacino's Looking for Richard

Peirui Su  
*Purdue University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

---

### Recommended Citation

Su, Peirui. "Method Acting and Pacino's Looking for Richard." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 6.1 (2004): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1212>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1212)

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <[clcweb@purdue.edu](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

**CLCWeb Volume 6 Issue 1 (March 2004) Article 9**

**Peirui Su,**

**"Method Acting and Pacino's *Looking for Richard*"**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol6/iss1/9>>

---

**Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 6.1 (2004)**

**Thematic Issue *Shakespeare on Film in Asia and Hollywood***

**Edited by Charles Ross**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol6/iss1/>>

---

**Abstract:** In her paper, "Method Acting and Pacino's *Looking for Richard*," Peirui Su explores the influence of method acting on Al Pacino's decision to film Shakespeare's *Richard III* as an unconventional docudrama. She compares Pacino's film to Laurence Olivier's 1955 film of *Richard III* and Ian McKellen's 1995 modernized version to show how Pacino's documentary structure solves the problems raised by films that try either to recreate the Elizabethan world or to update Shakespeare, thereby introducing anachronisms. Su argues that Pacino engages US-American audiences by filming interviews and open rehearsals. Su concludes her paper by analyzing the well-known scene of Richard's wooing Lady Anne to show how Pacino's characterization of Richard III relies on the insight that Richard, like Pacino himself, is an actor.

**Peirui SU**

### **Method Acting and Pacino's *Looking for Richard***

In 1996, US-American actor Al Pacino released his docudrama *Looking for Richard*, forty-one years after Laurence Olivier's 1955 film version of *Richard III* and a year after Richard Loncraine filmed a modernized version of the play, set in a world of twentieth-century fascism, starring Ian McKellen. Critics hailed Pacino's *Looking for Richard* as "a solid entry among other Shakespeare films being produced in 1995-6" (Coursen 109-10). Even in his bitter review of the movie, Mark Leeper has to admit that it is "the first film about the making of a Shakespeare film," and that it "could not have been more timely" (Leeper <<http://www.eclectica.org/v1n2/leeper.html>>). Not surprising, critics and audiences have wondered why Pacino chose this Shakespeare play and this method of production. He seems to have cared less about commercial profit than producing a labor of love. As director, co-producer, and co-writer, Pacino financed his film out of his own pocket, suggesting that, if nothing more, then at least in this instance, art is more important than money.

As a young actor, Pacino felt alien to Shakespeare but as he grew old he found himself growing more familiar with Shakespeare's plays. It is his belief that only by playing Shakespeare can an actor understand the charm of his words and characters. Pacino himself appeared on stage in *Richard III* in Boston from December 1972 to January 1973 and again in New York City from 10 June to 15 July 1973. Both productions were directed by David Wheeler. Some reviews of those of his performances were quite encouraging: "One of the most credible -- and creditable Richard IIIs ever to limp his way across the stage" (Yule 69). He also did *Hamlet* (1979, workshop only), *Othello* (1979, rehearsals only), and *Julius Caesar* (1986-87 in New York). However, according to Pacino, no one has asked him to play Hamlet or other roles of Shakespeare in film. Nearly twenty years later, Pacino was invited to play in a film version of *Richard III*. During four years of waiting, he made four other movies and did two plays, but at the same time, he was always haunted by the possibility of making his own version of *Richard III*. In September 1995, the American Film Institute announced a discovery of a nearly perfect copy of a 1912 film version of *The Life and Death of Richard III* which was believed to be the oldest surviving American feature film. This coincidence probably spurred Pacino's passion further for shooting his own *Richard III*.

Once Pacino decided to direct the movie himself, the choice of form became dominant. He faced two trends in Shakespeare film adaptation: Olivier's theatrical and faithful version in the tradition Elizabethan drama or some kind of modernization. He rejected both approaches. Olivier's version is somewhat inaccessible for modern American audiences, whose knowledge of Shakespeare and Elizabethan theatre is scarce. An updated modernization, on the other hand, is always anachronistic and sacrifices language and social context in favor of cinematic popularity. For actors in Pacino's mold, authenticity is always a primary concern. If British actors are nourished by the rich legacy of Shakespeare and verse play, their US-American counterparts emphasize more on the inner truth of individual, the kind of thing international audiences who regard American literature associate with Holden Caulfield in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Many US-Americans share this concern. Moreover, Pacino's education as a method actor prevented him from following the two approaches of period piece or modernization: Method is a system of acting techniques in the United States influenced by Russian theater director, teacher, and actor Constantine Stanislavsky's who developed his technique for the original production of the plays of Anton Chekhov. Later it was extended by the leading figures of method acting, such as Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner. In method acting stress is on "truthful behavior in imaginary circumstances" (Krasner 5). One necessary step for a method actor is to explore a character from inside out. The actor is supposed to experience and live through the role in order to create a convincing character. Stanislavsky suggests the magic "if" as a clue for how an actor should melt himself into a role. The actor should ask the question, if I am the character, how should I behave? In method acting honesty in performance is essential.

Contrary to the principle of "from inside out" in playing a role, Olivier insisted on working from the "outside in" (Olivier 118). He would paint a portrait of his character in his mind's eye first.

Olivier believed that what mattered was the person. While British actors such as Olivier are famous for voice and movement, Pacino pays more attention to naturalism in his version. Therefore, in order to avoid "fake medievalism," which is how Peter Holland describes the stylized set of Olivier's *Richard III* (Coursen 99), Pacino set most of his production of *Looking for Richard* in the Cloisters, a museum in northern Manhattan that is well-known for its collections of ancient architecture and artifacts. It offered both a sense of history and also authenticity, since it is a real place in New York. By drawing on such a rich and real cultural context, Pacino was able to eat his cake and have it too. Pacino also rejected Olivier's highly theatrical style of acting, makeup, and voice, which in the case of *Richard III* Olivier termed "the thin reed of a sanctimonious scholar" (Olivier, 119). Comparing to Olivier's external entry to his character, a "venom coated with sugar" (119), Pacino approached Richard from the inside out, and his docudrama records his efforts to understand Shakespeare's story and characters at first. In the movie we see Pacino interrogating people on the street, conducting interviews with Shakespeare experts and actors, and discussing the history of the War of Roses and life of Richard III. He tries to understand the soul of iambic pentameter, and he visits the birthplace of Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre in London. All these actions are closely connected with the principles of method acting of "motivation" and "justification." Method actors ask Why does your role do this instead of that? How can you justify his behavior? The prerequisite for an actor is to understand, to find an epiphany, which means a special expression of someone's character. Having emotionally experienced a role, the method actor can then play the part. A method actor is always on the road, always searching. Once a method actor finds a cause, everything becomes believable and effective. In Pacino's case, this is the reason why the first part of *Looking for Richard* is entitled "Question," and consists of the questions Pacino poses during interviews with pedestrians as he asks people their opinions of Shakespeare and *Richard III*. "Question" then dissolves into "Quest." The point here is that Pacino is giving his production an inner frame. It is a spiritual odyssey in which Pacino looks for the meaning of the play *Richard III* as well as his own cinematic version. Pacino justified this meta-cinematic approach by playing someone who is a "quintessentially urban, American actor" (Dowd 357). It was his intention to correct the common belief that a method actor has difficulty in doing Shakespeare because of the utter dependence of Stanislavsky-Strasberg training system on realistic texts: one "can play Chekhov, Odets, and Miller, but not Shakespeare" (Strasberg 175).

That Pacino adopted a documentary form for *Looking for Richard* was also based on his theory of communication. For Pacino, an actor must communicate with his audience. The significance of audience lies not in the fact that it determines the commercial profits of a film, but that Pacino -- as a director and as an actor -- has firm faith in the intelligence of the spectator. Contrary to Olivier's assertion that it is necessary to lead an audience by the nose and guide its thinking, in method acting the emphasis is on an audience's independent agency. If Stanislavsky says that actor is the soul of theater, Vsevolod Meyerhold believed it is the actor plus the audience. In method acting it is thought that the audience produces fifty percent of the performance. The empty space -- the stage -- is not void; rather, it is full of energy. An audience charges a stage with power, and only with its assistance can an actor release his creativity and consummate a role. Pacino's interviews with his audience not only show his concern for spectators, but also his intention to justify his making a movie as a means of popularizing Shakespeare in the US. He tries to involve local people in his production. He wants to share with them his enthusiasm and obsession with the Bard. Furthermore, his communication with his audience can educate young actors. Pacino finds, from his personal experience, the importance of classics to the growth of young actors in the US, who can never grow if they are constantly doing the same thing.

Pacino learned the importance of growth from the work of Vittorio Gassman, who played in the original Italian version of *Scent of a Woman* (*Profumo di Donna*, directed by Dino Risi). In fact, he developed the education theme in *Looking for Richard* while studying Gassman's film for his own rendition. Pacino feels strongly that life and theater are always meeting in a kind of playful puzzle and that it is important to show what is behind the screen or the stage, too. He aims at communication with critics as well as the general audience by inserting clips of his rehearsals, one of the more charming aspects of his docudrama. In this he is actually similar to Olivier, who admitted

that "critics are a grim necessity" (Olivier 362) and suggested that more critics ought to sit in on rehearsals "so that they could see the amount of work, concentration, belief and love that goes into the construction of a piece, before they take their inky swords to it" (Olivier 363). Pacino uses his docudrama to present scenes of actors discussing their roles during rehearsals. He also recorded the multiple voices of Shakespearean experts. By making a movie about making a movie, Pacino is able to juxtapose Shakespeare's great story of violence, ambition, and lust for power with producers and actors. Some critics have objected to the frequent interruptions in the documentary but others believe that the double theme of making a movie about making a movie gives "life to the costumed segments" (Coursen 110). The fragments cohere as parts of a quest rather than a consequence. Pacino told a *Playboy* interviewer that when we watch "regular movies you want the story to take us away and get us involved, but the nature of this film is showing process, and eventually you get into *Richard* and you forget about process. You're into the story and you don't know how you got there. That's the trick" (Grobel 136). This trick also appeals to the magic function of an audience's mental montage, which enables viewers to endow a movie with consistency and meaning even though it is composed of fragmented cuts.

Pacino's reliance on his audience to superimpose unity also helps us to understand how he thinks about the character of Richard III. In fact, his Shakespearean villain is made up of pieces from his own former roles. For example, I believe the complex figure of Michael Corleone occupies Pacino in his Shakespearean role: Pacino first acted Richard III after his role in *The Godfather* had turned him from a stage actor to a movie star. Indeed, in my opinion we can detect the archetype of Michael Corleone in many of Pacino's films such as Tony in *Scarface*, Frank Slade in the *Scent of a Woman*, Carlito Brigante in *Carlito's Way*, John Milton in *The Devil's Advocate*, or Walter Burke in *The Recruit*, not to mention his portrayal of King Herod in the play *Salome*. All these characters live at the edge of society physically and psychologically: the drug dealer, the Mafia don, the blind soldier, the veteran CIA agent, and finally, the Devil himself. Each character exhibits various and complex aspects of human nature: they are evil and violent but at the same time, charismatic, earthy, and vulnerable. They are mysterious and antiheroic, but also emotionally intense and explosive. For Pacino, such characters serve as stepping stones to develop his skill because to create them, he must experience what the characters feel, and their emotions must be genuinely acted, not pretended. The issue of what is genuine raises the question, among critics, as to the role that catharsis plays in method acting. Actors let off their inner tension, anxiety or guilt through imitating their character. The result is similar to the effect of psychotherapy. For example, one of the most important techniques Stanislavsky developed was emotional recall, in which an actor turns to their own experiences or pasts to find feelings similar to those of their characters. In this context, Russian actor and theatre director Yevgeni Vakhtangov pushed Stanislavsky's theory to an extreme, saying that "it is the actor's life, and not necessarily the role, that inspires" (qtd. Krasner 29). Some teachers of method acting are accused of acting like psychoanalysts and invading an actor's psyche. Nevertheless Deb Margolin maintains that acting "is an emergency, and in an emergency you do whatever works" (Margolin 128). In other words, method acting is legitimate as long as it helps an actor grasp a role.

For Pacino as a method actor, the motif of Michael Corleone thus resonates in Richard III: it is part of his own personal past, and it gave him an understanding of the lust for power and thirst for violence that marks Shakespeare's character. Both Michael and Richard are ambitious and cruel and their inner turbulence contrasts with their outer coolness. This contrast is especially evident in Pacino's acting in *The Godfather II*. We always see him as a blank face, calm and emotionless, without flashes in his eyes or anger in his voice, but he still gives the impression that he is a dormant volcano and nobody can predict when he will erupt, as when he learns that his wife has had an abortion. Like Michael Corleone, Richard III is transformed from a brave fighter to a villain. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI* (this play precedes *Richard III*), Richard is able to face chaos and danger on the battlefield, but in *Richard III*, the same character alters, without losing his earlier intensity, into someone who does not hesitate to do anything in order to usurp the crown of England. He murders his brother and his two nephews, marries his niece, and exterminates ruthlessly his enemies and opponents, including Buckingham, his right-hand man, just as Michael pushes Tom

Hagen aside in *The Godfather*. He trusts no one and suspects everyone. No creature loves him and he does not love himself. It is this balance between intensity and composure, between fire and ice, that makes the magic in Pacino's acting. It is also a symbol of his fatalistic split as an actor: he is inevitably torn between his role and himself, between an observer and a player. However, this schizophrenic state does not damage but reinforces Pacino's performances. The duality of this split identity allow the actor to immerse himself in his role by giving him a sense of success. It also allows him to observe everything as an outsider. In this sense, Richard III is an actor. When everybody believes that his heart is figured in his tongue, he is an actor. Richard is an actor when he determines to rip the crown of Hastings off his shoulder. He is melodramatic as he tells his cabinet that Queen Elizabeth and Shore, Hastings' mistress, have used their witchcraft to make his arm deformed, for no one believes him. As Hastings tries to defend his lover ("If they have done this deed, my noble lord," *Richard III* 3.4.73), Richard explodes and keeps stressing on the word "if" to stoke his rage: "If? Thou protector of this damned strumpet? / Talk'st thou to me of 'ifs'?" (3.4.74-75). Then, in a cool and calm tone, so familiar from the older Michael Corleone, he issues his orders: "Off with his head!" (3.4.76). At this moment, one can hardly distinguish Pacino from the Duke of Gloucester, since both are great actors, and both are able to move instantly from temper to self-control.

Another personality trait of Pacino's anti-heroes is the innate loneliness they suffer, which always draws sympathy from the audience. In the last scene of *The Godfather II*, when Michael Corleone is left alone in his study, he recalls the sweet days of the past when his father was not dead. A camera shot of his study is superimposed on a flashback to a family party. Sonny, still alive, is talking and introducing Carlo to his sister. He quarrels with Michael for enlisting in the Marines. Michael sits alone, hearing the singing and cheers for his father's surprise birthday party in the next room, on the right side of the frame, with some narrow paths and fallen leaves visible in the background. Next the camera pulls toward him in a close-up to suggest that he is deep in memory and meditation. At the same time, however, his position is to the extreme right side of the frame, which creates, according to the visual habit of the audience, a sense of danger and instability, as if Michael is going to drop off from the edge of the screen to the unknown darkness. It follows a fade-out. This shot indicates that Michael Corleone, after committing so many crimes, has lost himself and his humanity. He must pay the price of loneliness for what he has done. Like Michael Corleone, Richard also lives in the abyss of solitude. His only friend, if there is one, is his horse, a symbol of loyalty, and at the same time, it stands for a lifestyle where Richard feels at home and in which his value of existence and bliss of passion can find proof and source. For Al Pacino's Richard, life is symbolized by and simplified into a riding crop that he always holds in his hands as he plays Richard. Like much of Pacino's method acting, the detail of using such a stage prop to represent the personality of a character comes from Lee Strasberg. Strasberg enumerated one principle among others: to use objects for their symbolic meaning (see Krasner 6). It was Strasberg's custom to explain how actors bring roles to life by making their performances physical, "incorporating actions and behavior as means of embodying the role" (Krasner 6). When Kim Stanley played in Checkov's *Three Sisters* on Broadway, Strasberg provided her with a small tree branch to vent her feelings. During the whole play Stanley clutched this branch behind her back and won raves. The riding crop for Richard functions similarly. It stands for a desire for action and danger, a wish to engage in battle, and all in all, the passion of Richard's youth. It acts as a stimulus for his best memories, his wish for an ideal existence, a recurrence of creativity. At the same time, it serves as a reminder of sanity, self-knowledge, and strong will. It also symbolizes that Richard always takes fate, not only of his own, but others', in his control.

As in the case of Michael Corleone, Richard's loneliness is further strengthened by the frailty and stupidity of his enemies. Like "a Renaissance wolf among medieval sheep" (Coursen 99), Richard wins the crown without much labor, but then the rest is emptiness. The process is too short. His superior intelligence breeds irony, as it does in Pacino's portrait of Michael Corleone, especially in *Godfather III*, admittedly the least successful film in the series, where he utters a line suitable to the Reagan years in America: "Never feel embarrassed with your wealth. It's only the trick of the rich to keep the poor without it." Successful or not in the earlier film, this irony helped Pacino

play the most famous scene in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the seduction of Anne. It helps him pretend to be religious when he seeks the coronation; it helps him surprise Buckingham. When Richard requests Buckingham to kill the princes as a means of reinforcing his position, Buckingham hesitates. But when he makes up his mind to follow Richard's edict, everything changes. As Pacino films the scene, Richard rearranges his dress, seems absent-minded, and smiles while Buckingham speaks off-screen. He touches his moustache to indicate thought and then shifts. He pushes Buckingham with his riding crop, mocks him, ignores him, suddenly stands up, and again using his riding crop, threatens Buckingham's doom, but he does so subtly and craftily, not violently. The climax of Richard's exhibiting the art of performance and inescapable split in his personality arrives in the scene of wooing Lady Anne, which determines success of the play to great extent. Accordingly, Pacino's experiment on cinematic techniques reaches a culmination in the scene. In his search for motivation of the characters, of Richard and Anne, Pacino defines Anne as a very young girl who is unfortunately on the losing side. She has lost her husband in the war and has basically no future. Richard wants to defeat his rivals from the House of Lancaster; he intends to justify the legitimacy of his position through this marriage. It appears to me that this analysis of Shakespeare by Pacino is more convincing than Olivier's interpretation of Anne as a woman of loose morals who has got rid of her ring when she meets Richard the second time and already surrendered to Richard III before the seduction scene. If Olivier's understanding is logical, then Richard must have been an attractive man so that Anne cannot resist his charm. McKellen's portrait of Richard in the scene is no better. Terrence Rafferty complained that the sequence lacks an "appalling magnetism ... potent enough to win the grieving widow over. As the charmless McKellen ... play[s] it, Anne's capitulation is wholly incomprehensible" (Coursen 109).

The credibility of Pacino's version of the wooing episode depends on cinematic techniques. He uses a hand-held camera in keeping with the documentary style of the film. The scene also resembles a costumed rehearsal, again in keeping with the fragmented style Pacino conceived for his docudrama. This style also creates instability and uncertainty concerning the psychology of Richard's wooing and of Anne's hesitation. An interesting coincidence is that none of the three versions of the scene is faithful to the original script in which the parade of bearing Henry VI's corpse is going from Paul's toward Chertsey to be interred (1.2.29-30). According to the text, the event should take place on the street of London, but two of the film versions are set in the church and one in the mortuary. Pacino's scene takes place in the dark and vast interior of the Cloisters. This interior resembles a stage. It has minimal decor; only the crude stone columns and floor are visible. Contrary to the artificial lighting of daytime in Olivier's play and barren whiteness of McKellen's setting, Pacino's scene depends on low-key lighting, so that the whole stage, a spot in the Cloister, is covered in the heavy shadows. Low-key lighting usually contributes to hard-boiled suspense genres such as film noir, mystery, and sinister romance. According to classical narrative cinema, the standard illumination scheme is three-point lighting. In order to model an actor's face (or another object) with a sense of depth, light from three directions is used. The key light highlights an image or an area of greatest dramatic interest. Fill lights, which are less intense than the key light, soften the harshness of the main light source and reveal the subsidiary details hidden by shadows. The back light picks out the subject from its background, heightening the three-dimensional depth of an image (see Giannetti 19). The low-key lighting in *Looking for Richard* employs very little fill light, creating strong contrasts between the brightest and darkest parts of the images and often producing strong shadows that obscure parts of the principal subjects. It suggests that Richard be one of the greatest villains in all Shakespeare's plays and implies a plot being processed. The low-key lighting, in this scene, is highly impractical in a truly theatre performance, because we are phototropic and our eyes tend to focus on the brightest object in a field of vision. Low-key lighting in the theater can cause visual fatigue in an audience, distracting their concentration. It is only feasible in a film.

It seems safe to say that Pacino borrows this low-key lighting and contrast from *The Godfather*. Gordon Willis, the cinematography of *The Godfather*, is famous for his low-key lighting magic: within the dark rooms, the Mafia dons plan their crimes. The contrasts between outside and inside, between brightness and darkness, are achieved through lighting. The same occurs in *Look-*

*ing for Richard*. Even at the beginning of the film, as Richard speaks his opening soliloquy ("Now is the winter of our discontent") in the Cloisters Museum in New York, the shot brings us a glimpse of greenery outside through a window, a contrast between the coldness and barrenness of medieval architecture and the luxuriant and boisterous warmth of a summer day in the 1990s, between the winter of discontent of an ancient suffering soul and the noise of the postmodern metropolis. In the scene of wooing Lady Anne, the low-key lighting with its shadows and darkness produces a dour and obscure atmosphere, full of desire and unnamable malice.

Pacino also experiments with the speed and rhythm of his film. Compared to Olivier's six shots and McKellen's forty-five cuts within seven odd minutes, Pacino does ninety-eight in a similar duration, which means 4.8 seconds per take. That Pacino implements such an MTV-esque film technique of quick cuts creates a marvelous mosaic of spontaneity that adds to the quality of his docudrama and gives it the thrill of theatrical performance. The lack of the classic Hollywood establishing shot during these fast-moving sequences is characteristic of edgy and avant-garde filmmaking. These cuts, which follow the rhythm of the original play, adjust to the phases of a quarrel and fluctuate with Lady Anne's mental swirl. The marvelous melodrama of Richard's wooing begins with a shout: "Stay, you that bear the corpse, and set it down." Richard then emerges from darkness. A series of shots and reverse shots follows, then several long takes (mainly for the encounter of Richard with the guards), but mostly medium shots. This not only indicates the changing points of view of the Richard and Anne as they converse, but also signifies the physical and psychological distance between the two characters.

Adding to Pacino's documentation of *Richard III* as an actor's vehicle, his version also includes a number of dissolves in close-up, which give the effect of hallucination and suggest that Lady Anne is gradually mesmerized by the honey-coated words from Richard. Then comes the turning point of this dialogue: "Thy beauty was the cause of that effect, / Thy beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep / To undertake the death of all the world" (1.2.121-123), and for the first time the two appear in the same frame. The camera mimics the shrinking of their emotional and physical distance and hints that an intimacy is gradually building between them. What seem to defeat Anne are Al Pacino's eyes, which express the longing, care, weariness, and despair of his character. He looks at Anne with intensity and tenderness. This gaze hardly insinuates a lechery that flashes in eyes of Olivier and McKellen when they play this scene. If this is lust, it is well-disguised. Anne is moved, and a shift in the lighting registers her change of mood. Gradually Richard's face begins to shine, as if Anne is now seeing an angel rather than a devil. She herself is drawn more and more into the shadows, symbolizing that she has fallen into the grasp of the dark Richard. At the end of the scene, Anne retreats and is totally swallowed by the darkness.

Another dramatic aspect of Pacino's representation of Richard's wooing is the way he whispers. With the help of clever sound recording and close-up camera work, he can speak Shakespeare's verse as quietly as he wishes. The color in this scene also matches his wooing vein. The basic hues of costumes are black, red, silver and grey, signifying two rival houses of York and Lancaster and their symbols, the red and white roses. Richard's costume shows a silver flower embroidered on a black background -- to me an echo of Baudelairean motives from his *Fleurs du mal* -- and Satan in disguise of a sinister silver snake. Dark red (purple) of Anne's cloak symbolizes her desirability and fragility. Meanwhile, the score of Howard Shore provides a religious solemnity of medieval choir music that accompanies the bearing of Henry VI's body, while at the same time the music is ironic, since Richard's lewd play of wooing takes place as the coffin is carried. The scene ends as Pacino picks up Richard's riding crop, as if giving a sign that he has recovered his sobriety. To prove that his passion has not overcome his reason, Richard speaks his well-known lines: "Was ever woman in this humor wooed? / Was ever woman in this humor won? / I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" (1.2.227-229). Thus, Richard/Pacino completes his metacommentary on the actor's craft.

As one of the most prominent actors in the history of US-American film, Al Pacino is renowned for deep involvement and even obsession with his roles in consequence with his commitment to method acting. In *Looking for Richard* he identifies with the way Shakespeare's character combines fiction and reality. The result is a portrait of ambition and obstinate self-confidence. Life is, for both Pacino and Richard, "always on the wire, and the rest is just waiting" (Yule preface). The



irony for Richard is that when he wins the crown, he needs to pretend no more and his wit and irony fade. Here, the great actor stops acting and ennui conquers him. Not until the battle of Bosworth does he recover his spirit. At that point Pacino/Richard again overlap in the final cry of "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (5.4.13). When Richard meets the fatal sword of Richmond, Richard/Pacino falls into the arms of Kimball, his co-writer, in a final superimposition of character and actor.

#### Works Cited

- Coursen, H.R. "Filming Shakespeare's History: Three Films of *Richard III*." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*. Ed. Russell Jackson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 99-116.
- Dowd, Maureen. "Al Alone." *Gentleman's Quarterly* 62.9 (1992): 278-359.
- Giannetti, Louis D. *Understanding Movies*. 9th edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 2001.
- Grobel, Lawrence. "Looking for Al." *Playboy* 43.12 (1996): 124-96.
- Krasner, David, ed. *Method Acting Reconsidered*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Leeper, Mark. "A Movie Review of *Looking for Richard*." *Eclectica Magazine* (2004): <<http://www.eclectica.org/v1n2/leeper.html>>.
- Margolin, Deb. "Mining My Own Business: Paths between Text and Self." *Method Acting Reconsidered*. Ed. David Krasner. New York: St. Martin's P, 2000. 127-34.
- Olivier, Laurence. *On Acting*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.
- The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. 2nd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
- Strasberg, Lee. *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method*. Ed. Evangeline Morphos. New York: Plume/Penguin, 1987.
- Yule, Andrew. *Life on the Wire: The Life and Art of Al Pacino*. New York: SPI Books, 1992.

Author's profile: Peirui Su is working towards her Ph.D. in comparative literature at Purdue University. Her areas of interest include Shakespeare, contemporary British and American literature, film studies, and Chinese literature of all periods. She received her M.A. in English Language and Literature in 1996 from Northeast Normal University, P.R. of China. Su is author of "Ming ji guhong: guanyu shala de zhongshi jiedu" ("A Comparative Study of Sarah Woodruff and the Image of Wild Goose in Su Shi's Poem") in *Guowai wenxue (Literatures Abroad)* 2 (2000). E-mail: <[sup@purdue.edu](mailto:sup@purdue.edu)>.