

Locations and Relocations

'JINDABYNE' AND 'MACBETH'

ON THE FACE OF IT, THE TWO NEW FILMS *JINDABYNE* (RAY LAWRENCE, 2006) AND *MACBETH* (GEOFFREY WRIGHT, 2006) MAY NOT SEEM TO HAVE MUCH IN COMMON. BUT WHEN ONE THINKS ABOUT IT, AND WITHOUT WANTING TO LASH THEM TOGETHER AS A PIGEON PAIR, IT IS CLEAR THAT IN A COUPLE OF IMPORTANT WAYS THEY ARE WORTH CONSIDERING IN TANDEM. **BY BRIAN MCFARLANE**

FIRST, and most obvious, they are based on works by famous and non-Australian authors. Second, they are the work of directors whose name carries a certain resonance in recent Australian cinema. And, third, they are more than usually ambitious films in what is already a good year for locally made films.

In a recent issue of this journal, I wrote about the persistence of the literary adaptation in new Australian cinema.¹ While acknowledging a shift in the kinds of works adapted, from the 'classics' of our literature which were so significant an element in the revival of the 1970s to the more abrasive, usually urban fictions of recent times (cf. this year's *Candy* [Neil Armfield]), I realized that all the novels referred to, and all the plays but one, were either by Australian authors or set in Australia. D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (filmed by Tim Burstall in 1987) is the product of a few months' sojourn here by a British writer, and Michael Blake-more's undervalued *Country Life* (1984) is derived from Chekhov's imperishable study of Russian provincial life, *Uncle Vanya*. But these are exceptions.

Now, released within the space of two months, are two major new Australian films whose roots are to be found in other places and other cultures. In *Jindabyne*, director Ray Lawrence has taken Raymond Carver's minimalist short story 'So Much Water So Close to Home' and relocated it to the Snowy Mountains, while retaining the moral dilemma at the story's core. Geoffrey Wright, boldly retaining Shake-

speare's title, has set his version of *Macbeth* in Melbourne's ganglands, which have been the milieu for some sensational (or at least sensationally reported) killings in the last few years. A film adaptation is – of itself – neither more nor less praiseworthy than a film original: all that matters is the skill with which the adaptation has been effected; whether the filmmakers have comprehensively re-imagined the work as opposed, say, to aiming at that dogged fidelity which seems such a doomed enterprise.

These two new films, I shall argue, are the work of filmmakers who, while no doubt respecting their source material (why otherwise would they want to film it?), have not hesitated to take a strongly individual line with regard to the anterior text. They are directors of whom audiences have expectations, stylistic and thematic, and where Wright has omitted some characters and events, in the interests of a coherent relocation, Lawrence has had to be inventive in providing, as cinema must, the actuality of place and person that a terse short story may do without. Neither director has been exactly prolific and the new films of each are awaited with more than usual – and justified – interest.

Jindabyne: 'Nothing to Hide'²

EVEN FOR CARVER, WHO HABITUALLY DISPENSES words with an austerity that a Trappist monk might admire, 'So Much Water So Close to Home' is extraordinarily close-lipped about who the people are and where they live. Not that this matters



for so masterly a writer: in ten pages, utterly free from the sort of authorial comment that would guide our judgments, the lives of Claire and Stuart are laid bare before us. Stuart can insist that he has nothing to hide; Claire will have her own views on this and make her own reparations; and at the end they will have sex quickly before their small son comes home. Their ways of being with each other emerge with astonishing clarity from the sparest of exchanges and, as if heeding Henry James's dictum that novels should 'dramatise, dramatise', they seem to reveal themselves without overt intervention. Certainly, it is told in Claire's first-person narrative, but Carver ensures we know not just hers but Stuart's attitude to the moral point at issue. He is a man who knows he has something to hide.

The story has been filmed before. It was one of the several Carver stories Robert Altman adapted for *Short Cuts* (1993), his epic study of suburban dysfunction and other maladies. His film was set in Los Angeles but Stuart and his friends go fishing at a remote stretch of water and conceal the fact that they have found the dead body of a naked woman floating where they've set up camp. They persuade themselves that it won't matter to get on with their weekend trip and that it will be enough to report the body when they get home. This is the story Carver tells, that Altman incorporates in his portmanteau masterpiece, and which Ray Lawrence now makes the subject of his full-length film, *Jindabyne*. Though place and some names have been changed and though there's a wealth of social and personal detail that is not to be found in Carver and is spread over a wider range of characters in *Short Cuts*, what still matters is the story's moral core.

Whereas Altman chose 'Los Angeles suburbs that are going to seed ... rather than Carver's grey anonymous Midwest as his location',³ Lawrence has elected the magnificent Snowy Mountains and Jindabyne area of southern New South Wales. One of the film's triumphs is not to succumb to the temptations of pictorialism, this being a film about people and community, and every now and then one is shocked by the contrast of the natural beauty and the horror perpetrated in it, as in the film's opening, and what it is allowed to close over later on. Lawrence is on record as saying of the location: 'I used to go there all the time to fish ... That was part of the fascination with the story, the outdoors. I really

wanted to do a film outside. So when Beatrix [Christian, screenwriter] and I decided we were going ahead I said, 'Let's do what Raymond Carver did. Let's go where we want to set it and see what happens.'⁴ Film's necessarily higher level of mimesis enjoins on the filmmaker the need for specificity about details of place. Lawrence contrasts the dry expanses in which the unsettling opening sequence takes place with the serene lake near the town and the house where Claire and Stuart and their son live, and with the lushly forested and secluded river (the Snowy, at Island Bend) where the men set up their camp – and where they find the body. Though the film makes valuable use of its diversity of natural setting, Lawrence and Christian have focused very firmly on the strands of the community, the affiliations and undercurrents, and, very importantly, the Indigenous community just outside Jindabyne.

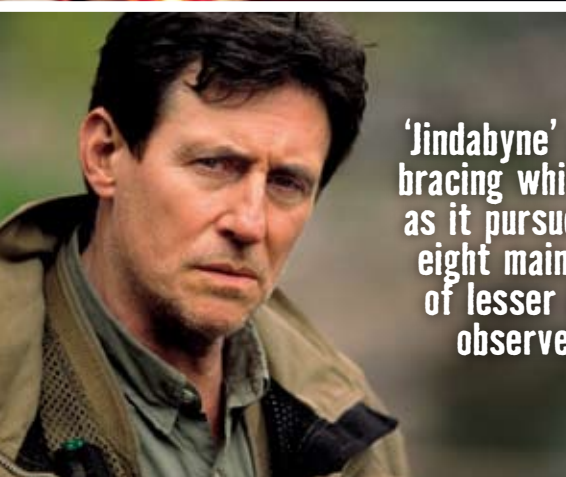
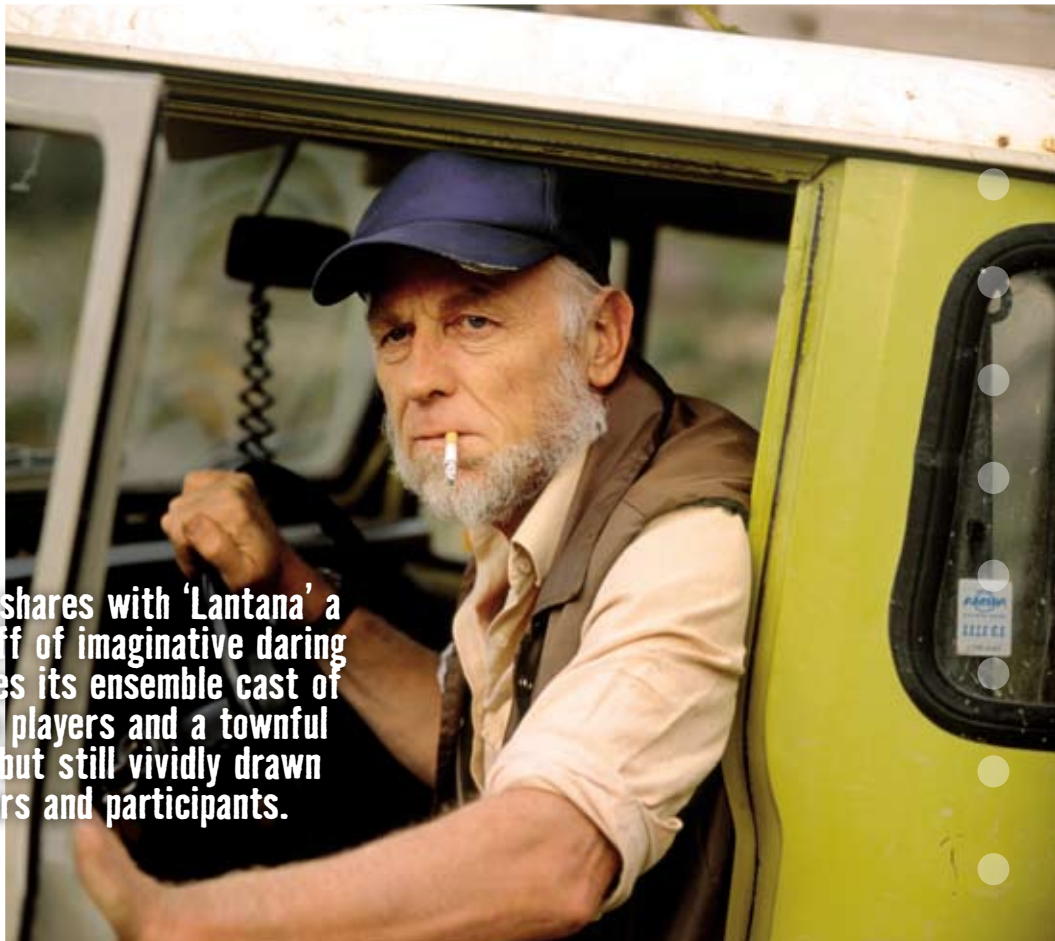
The film opens with a young Indigenous woman driving through a deserted brown landscape, singing as she goes a song about being 'off to the races at Jindabyne Fair'. Unknown to her, she is being pursued by an enigmatic and oddly alarming man (Chris Haywood) in a truck, creating the sort of danger one recalls from Steven Spielberg's debut feature, *Duel* (1971). This cryptic encounter – who is the girl? Why is this grizzled truck-driver pursuing her? – gives way to an early morning sequence in Claire (Laura Linney) and Stuart's (Gabriel Byrne) house, which appears to establish a close loving family, with hugs for young son Tom, and talk of the upcoming fishermen's weekend away. Then the film moves to another household in which an older couple, Jude and Carl (Deborra-lee Furness and John Howard) are concerned that their granddaughter is not in her bedroom. Quite quickly it is clear that neither of these households is quite what it seems, that there is lurking unhappiness and less-than-perfect trust at work among the occupants. There are two other couples involved in the network of intersecting lives that will be traumatically disrupted by the events of the fishing weekend.

The thing is that they do have 'something to hide'. It's not that they have done anything as clearly horrific as the men in John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972) are forced to do when their canoeing weekend goes haywire. What the four fishing friends in *Jindabyne* are required to do is to consider their priorities and they signally fail to rec-

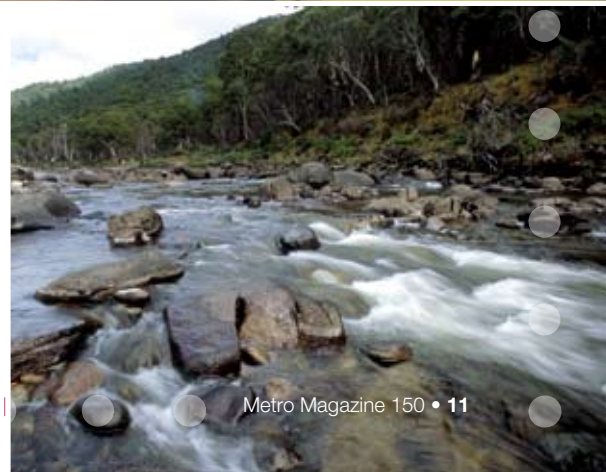
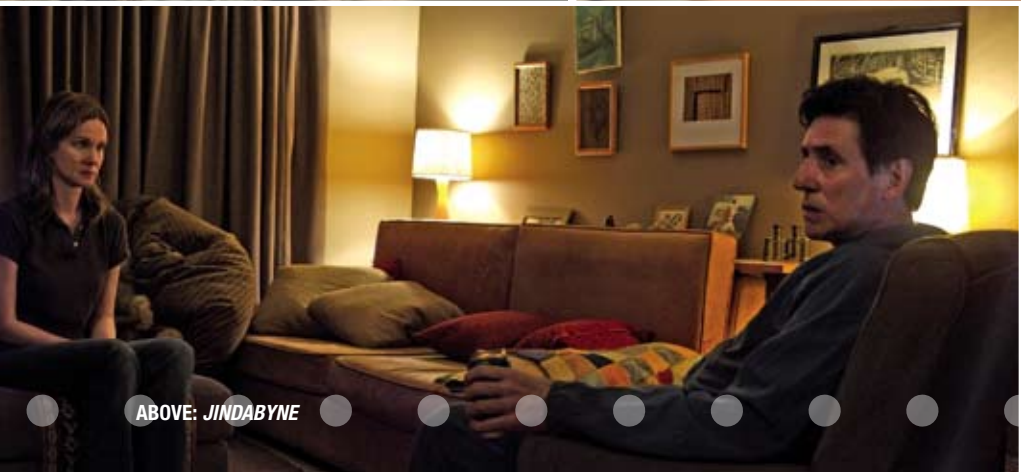
ognize these, or, if they do, to put them to one side. The youngest guy, Billy (Simon Stone), is 'not getting any reception' on his mobile, and this seems enough reason to go ahead and enjoy the weekend and report the body in the water (we've seen the truck-driver dump it there) when they get back. The primeval forest, with its potential for engendering conflict, recalls not only *Deliverance* but also the recent *Mean Creek* (2005) where a bunch of kids do very bad things in a setting of majestically tranquil beauty. We register the shock of the dying fish Stuart catches, poignant in its beauty, realizing that he who has been semi-deranged by the horror of discovering the body has still been able to get on with the business of the weekend.

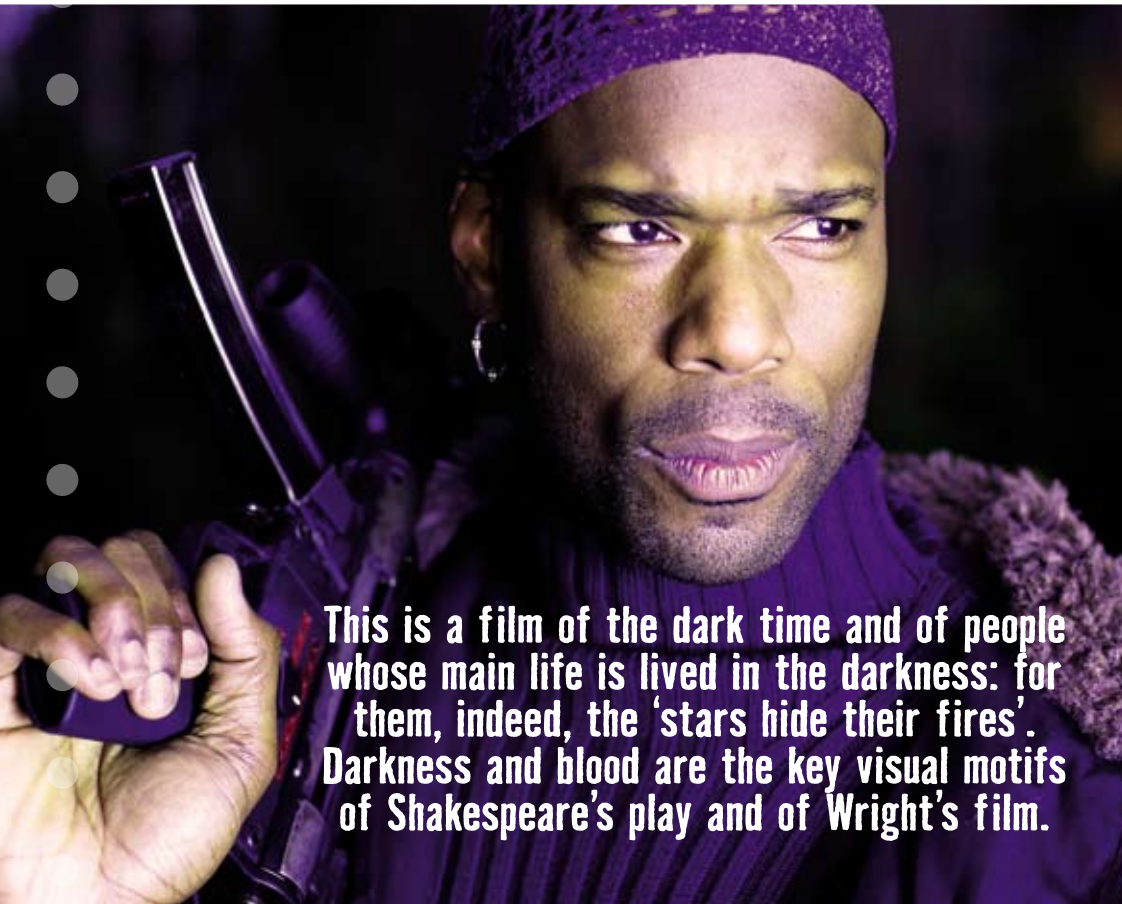
By this point, *Jindabyne* has become a film about responsibilities and priorities. 'I don't know what the fuss is about,' says Stuart, just before a newspaper runs the headline: MEN FISH OVER DEAD BODY, and the SBS news reports the body of Susan O'Connor found in Kosciusko National Park, while the girl's family berate the men on TV. The men have not been prepared for the rage that makes itself felt in the town. 'It's about all of us,' Claire tells Carmel (Leah Purcell), girlfriend of Rocco (Stelios Yiakmus), the fourth on the fishing trip. The murderer appears in town and talks about the need for 'rewiring' the church, but the film isn't about him: it's essentially about how the town, especially the four women partners of the fishing-trip blokes, come to terms with their self-justifying expedience and how at least one of the women, Claire, needs to come to a kind of reconciliation with the Indigenous community, even at the risk to her own marriage. Not that she is presented as a simple-minded figure of restorative justice. Her 'back-story', to use that cultish term it's usually better to avoid, includes a strange and unexplained dereliction of maternal duty when she walked away from her marriage for eighteen months after her son was born. Similarly, Jude has the spectre of her daughter's death always in the back of her mind as she and Carl bring up their granddaughter, and in a sequence of the women together they talk about babies and 'people dying in the wrong order'. Mortality in all its inappropriate manifestations keeps threading its way through this narrative.

Lawrence and Christian (whose first feature screenplay this is) very skilfully integrate the film's narrative strands, from the



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riveting opening, the significance of which we will not grasp for some time and which will haunt the film till its end, to the lives of the four men friends which are shaken up by the suppressions of their weekend, and to the gradual emergence from the ensemble cast of Claire as the film's moral voice. Unstable as she has been regarded, it is she who cannot let the men's feebly self-interested prevarications rest. And in her attempts to reach the Indigenous girl's people, in her unwanted collection of money for the funeral, asking the priest (Bud Tingwell) to pass it on for her, she runs herself into danger from the murderous Gregory (in a sequence that parallels the opening) as she goes to attend the outdoor burial ceremony. What, by unobtrusive metaphoric extension, she is doing here, by comparison with her community at large, is to critique the national negligence of the Indigenous population and the official unwillingness to effect real reconciliation. The film is not in the least preachy about this or anything else, but it is so richly textured that such wider meanings ripple out from the specificities of the plot. The film doesn't end on a note of unrelieved bleakness, any more than Carver's story does. 'I want you to come home, Claire,' says Stuart, who has come to the ceremony, as one of the mourners sings one of Susan's last songs.

Among Australian filmmakers, Ray Lawrence is a curious case. In one way he is the Terence Malick of Australian cinema, with a mere three films to his CV in twenty years. In 1985 he directed and co-wrote (with the novel's author Peter Carey) the maddeningly pretentious *Bliss*; maybe it was ahead of its time, but certainly *in* its time it was hard to bear with, though it did win AFI awards for film, screenplay and director. One can only surmise that this was a dud year for Australian films; unruly Cannes audiences left noisily, and the failure of this stylistically incoherent black comedy-cum-fantasy probably accounts for Lawrence's not filming again for sixteen years. In 2001, he made *Lantana*, arguably one of the finest films ever made here, if not *the* finest, an accolade some of us would certainly go along with. After the stumbling start with *Bliss*, Lawrence seemed to find his feet with the absorbing account of interlocking suburban lives, and the omnibus approach is apparent again in *Jindabyne*: in these two disquieting, sharply intelligent films, he has shown a real capacity to understand and represent what is going on in a relationship, and to suggest how communities, be-

cause they are never anything but relationships, are always fragile. *Jindabyne* shares with *Lantana* a bracing whiff of imaginative daring as it pursues its ensemble cast of eight main players and a townful of lesser but still vividly drawn observers and participants. If one singles out Laura Linney's taut, wracked Claire, she is really only slightly more than a first among equals. Gabriel Byrne's kind, weak Stuart and Furness and Howard as the older couple, Jude and Carl, all offer the spectacle of actors who are able to convey the feeling of whole lives caught in representative moments.

The relocation and recreation of Carver's moral drama to such a removed setting and the filling in of the lives of those eight protagonists (if, that is, there can be more than one) so as to make them absorbing individually and as epitomising a community is a major achievement. The very act of drawing on an American source suggests an anti-parochial reaching out; the triumph is to have made it seem just as socially and emotionally true in its Australian setting. It may well be the Australian film of the year; like the best national art, it is not constrained by the specificities of place but in its detailed addressing of these seems to have a very good chance of striking chords internationally.

Macbeth: 'Stars Hide Your Fires'

WHY HAVE AUSTRALIAN FILMMAKERS been so reluctant to try their arm with Shakespeare? Surely it can't be because they think he's irrelevant to antipodean life? It surely can't be anything as narrow-visioned as that, when you consider all those other non-British countries that have filmed the very greatest plays: think of Russian Grigori Kosintzev's stunning black-and-white *Hamlet* (1964), or Russian again, Sergei Yutkevich's visually imaginative *Othello* (1955), or the Japanese *Throne of Blood* (1957), Akira Kurosawa's savage samurai version of *Macbeth*, or any number of American adaptations, whether 'straight', such as Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle's lush *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935) or the two disguised versions of *King Lear* – Joseph Mackiewicz's melodrama *House of Strangers* (1949), remade by Edward Dmytryk as a Western, *Broken Lance* (1954), or the MGM sci-fi reworking of *The Tempest* as *Forbidden Planet* (1956). I adduce this heavily truncated list merely to suggest that there is no

reason why an Australian filmmaker should feel daunted by the prospect of Shakespeare, any more than Russian, Japanese, American, Polish and many other filmmakers have. And also to insist that there is no reason why a film adapted from Shakespeare can't be relocated not just to another country but also to another genre.

Macbeth is the briefest, fastest-moving of the great Shakespearean tragedies. It has no time for *Hamlet's* reflections on the state of the theatre or elaborate staging of a play to 'catch the conscience of the king', or for *King Lear's* sub-plot of Gloucester and his sons. This is not to deny *Macbeth* its own complexity but rather to draw attention to the fiercely headlong movement of the drama – and to the shock of innerness that *Macbeth's* soliloquies offer by contrast. What is so daunting about filming Shakespeare may come down to two main matters. First, this is due to the prestige attaching to Shakespeare's name. A filmmaker knows he is putting his reputation on the line (as presumably a stage producer does) when he addresses himself to work of such high cultural standing. Second, a huge problem confronting the filmmaker who aspires to 'capture' Shakespeare on screen is that the plays belong to a non-realist category of drama. They are highly stylised in language, artificial in construction, and not intended for naturalistic settings, whereas film has so accustomed us to a level of realistic depiction of the actual world that it demands quite a lot of its audience to accept characters speaking in iambic pentameters. Of these three 'non-filmic' characteristics, the blank verse in which most of Shakespeare is unfolded is the most intransigently tied to the more obviously artificial mode of the theatre.

Daringly then, from Wright's point of view, if you set your film of *Macbeth* among warring twenty-first century Melbourne gangs, he has posed himself a major challenge in deciding to adhere to the original language, while relocating the action in time and place. The only other Australian adaptation of Shakespeare that I am aware of is Neil Armfield's film version of his own modern-dress stage production of *Twelfth Night* (1986). Of this latter, never widely seen, *Cinema Papers* had this to say: 'Putting any play on the screen is hard enough, but Shakespeare, in Australia, in 1987, 400 years and 10,000 miles from home base, poses even more problems.'¹⁵ Apart from the opening phrase about

putting plays on the screen, the rest of this dictum needs interrogating. If Shakespeare can be successfully brought to the screen in the range of countries listed above, all quite distant from 'home base' and at times nearly as remote from the play's composition, there doesn't seem to be any special reason why it should be more difficult to achieve in Australia at the same remove in time. Yet, apart from Armfield's attempt, more in the nature of a record of a past success than a re-thought whole, no one until Wright has made the daring leap.

As Ben Goldsmith has written of an early episode from Wright's *Romper Stomper*: 'As the skateboard/camera moves underground, the image decelerates to emphasise the threat and other-worldliness of the environment into which the [Vietnamese] teenagers have descended, and in slow motion the camera passes the leering faces of the skinhead gang.'⁶ This account of a moment from the film that made Wright's name is quoted here because it suggests a filmmaker with an eye for creating in strictly visual terms an ambience and atmosphere of danger and potential violence. Such a capacity is not likely to go amiss in a director bringing *Macbeth* to contemporary Melbourne. Wright, like Ray Lawrence, has had a sparse career in cinema. *Macbeth* is only his fourth feature film since 1992⁷ when *Romper Stomper* brought him to immediate and controversial attention, with its violent depiction of skinhead racism. The *Rolling Stone* reviewer claimed of that film that 'Ron Hagen's camera work captures the delirium of carnage that drives out rational thought', but went on to say, 'Ignore the prudes who think you shouldn't make films about things that scare you ... This Aussie *Reservoir Dogs* opens up a brutal world that needs to be understood.'⁸ His subsequent films, *Metal Skin* (1994), about a dysfunctional young man from Melbourne's western suburbs who becomes king of the roads by night when he's securely inside the metal skin of his car, and the US-made slash-horror-comic *Cherry Falls* (2000, released in Australia, on video only, in 2001), in which a psychopath is murdering virgins, would seem to confirm Wright as a director who wouldn't flinch from the bloodier aspects of *Macbeth*. At very least, knowing what one does of Wright as a director, it was never likely that he would succumb to decorous obeisance to the great play.

If the phenomenon of adaptation, and of Shakespeare in particular, are two of the key contexts in which this film needs to be

considered, an equally crucial element in its intertextuality is Wright's own filmography. Like Lawrence, he has been prepared to look beyond Australian shores for his inspiration. So, what has he done with *Macbeth*? In terms of setting, he has, as noted above, relocated it to Melbourne's gangland wars, which have received so much publicity in the last several years. And just as in Shakespeare's play we get very little sense of 'ordinary life' outside the world and whirl of king and thanes and murderous impulse, so Wright doesn't dally with the daytime suburbia of Melbourne with trams and bowling clubs and pavement cafes. This is a film of the dark time and of people whose main life is lived in the darkness: for them, indeed, the 'stars hide [their] fires'. Darkness and blood are the key visual motifs of Shakespeare's play and of Wright's film.

The film opens in a graveyard (actually Melbourne General Cemetery) where three schoolgirls are energetically defacing gravestones and their attendant statues. Modern as they are, they then present a mild shock to our systems by intoning the opening words of the play, ushering in the equivocal values enshrined in the Shakespearean ambiguities of 'Fair is foul and foul is fair' and 'When the battle's lost and won'. These teenagers are the 'witches' in modern dress. They are being inscrutably observed, we learn as they leave, by a man, Macbeth (Sam Worthington), who stands waiting while his grieving wife (Victoria Hill) is placing white roses in a vase on the grave of BE-LOVED SON of ... The camera doesn't divulge who are the parents of this dead child, but it does initiate the idea of Macbeth as a sonless man, a perception which the film will underline in various ways. The film then cuts to a river scene, with a riverboat, followed by a shoot-out in dark streets, all this recorded (on 29 July, a caption tells us) to the accompaniment of a very insistent score and with a hand-held camera to capture the effect of the equivalent of battle. Subsequently, inside a club, Duncan (played with some dignity by Gary Sweet) asks for a report on the foregoing and Macbeth is praised for his part in the fracas.

While the action that gives rise to Duncan's tribute to Macbeth is not as clearly established as it might be (a criticism that might be levelled at the end, when the supporters of Macduff and Malcolm seek their revenge on Macbeth), with too much undifferentiated gunplay between opposing forces, the film as a whole treats with ad-

mirable clarity the rise and decline of Macbeth. If a film of *Macbeth* is to make sense to modern audiences who may not be familiar with the play, or even with those who are, then this will be a major consideration. In essence the ascendancy of Macbeth to the position the witches and Lady Macbeth have encouraged him to covet and his unease in the role for which he has killed 'the gracious Duncan', must crucially be clear.

Wright and his co-screenwriter Victoria Hill (also co-starring as Lady Macbeth) have preserved the main line of narrative action from the play. After a gangland war from which Duncan has emerged victorious, he publicly anoints his son Malcolm as his successor. Macbeth, who has been a valued henchman to Duncan, has been tempted by the idea, put to him by the three schoolgirl 'witches', that he might himself one day occupy Duncan's position. Lady Macbeth, ambitious for her husband, spurs him into killing Duncan when the latter comes to stay. Suspicion falls on Malcolm, who flees; Macbeth assumes leadership; he murders Banquo who, he fears, suspects him and whose son Fleance has been foretold as future leader; he has Macduff's family killed as an act of irrational cruelty because Macduff has not accepted his leadership; he and Lady Macbeth become estranged and she suicides; and Macduff and Malcolm plot to bring Macbeth down, and, in the final, shoot-out, do so. I quote this sequence of events merely to indicate that the film does not, in its basic plot, play fast and loose with Shakespeare, though in less centrally important matters in the narrative chain it is prepared to take its own line.⁹ In Roland Barthes' terms the 'hinge-points' of narrative, the 'cardinal functions', those 'risky' moments when alternative outcomes are possible and which therefore generate the forward movement of a narrative, have been sedulously retained.¹⁰

If you're going to make a film of *Macbeth*, and use the title, you will presumably feel an obligation to ensure that your film has some connection with the original, but that is very far from implying that such an adaptation requires a reverential approach, or that the film should aim to be, in that absurd term, 'faithful', even if it is Shakespeare. For my money, the duller Shakespeare films are in fact those that tread just this path, some examples of this include Zeffirelli's handsome *Hamlet* (1990) or Oliver Parker's respectable *Othello* (1995, UK/US): neither of these is stupid or meretricious; they are just not very exciting.

Wright's film at its best does make one re-think the play, as well as offering a generally compelling film experience. He has not only retained most of the crucial plot moves from the play, as I've indicated, but the main characters and their functions in this plot are also preserved. There are some minor changes, such as showing us (instead of, as Shakespeare does, merely referring to him) the treacherous MacDonwald, bound and gagged with grey masking tape in the club that bears the name 'The Cawdor'. His title, Thane of Cawdor, in the play bestowed by the grateful Duncan on Macbeth, is sensibly, in a Melbourne gangland setting, eliminated here, though used by the witches subsequently. They are so clearly not part of the 'real' world of the gangs that they can get away with the stranger idiom. Angus, a mere presence in the play, is given more screen space here and is noticeable because he is played by an actor with long blond locks. None of these – and other – additions or changes affects the onward rush of the narrative of blood and darkness.

That reference to the omission of the title of Thane of Cawdor leads one to note that Wright has not sought to do away with the play's blank verse. Nor has he opted for an all-purpose 'stage English' that vaguely suggests affiliations with respectable theatre. There are some minor adjustments and curtailments: Macduff's 'castle' is now referred to in Macbeth's statement of murderous intent as 'The house [my italics] of Macduff I will surprise', because, given the modern open-space kitchen area in which the assassins do their work, it would be incongruous. Once or twice, someone is addressed as 'My lord' which, in the circumstances, grates somewhat. The actors speak the verse with a range of Australian accents which are convincing in the context of the relocated drama. Purists may well object that the poetry is to some extent the loser in this way of approaching the verse; by compensation, its essentially low-key delivery works well enough in realist vein. The actors give the verse a conversational quality (which in some Shakespearean productions I've seen I'd have welcomed) that helps to effect the transition from the conventions of the drama to those of the screen's greater and easier naturalism.

There is realism of another kind in the gang war at the start of the film when a matter of drug trafficking and a street shoot-out are involved, and in the sequence near the end when the forces of Macduff and Malcolm invade Macbeth's stronghold,

where, 'bear-like', he must fight to the end, though he has lost heart all but completely. My reservations about these two sequences, mentioned above, are that, for all the dextrous camera work and the persuasive modern realization of conflicting forces, the details of the action are simply not clear. There is almost too much visual energy at work here: it has its own kind of excitement but clarity of exposition is not one of the virtues on show. Elsewhere, though, realism is vindicated in the horror of the murder of Duncan and the grooms, in the assassination of Macduff's wife and child, and in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and bloody suicide. These latter scenes are attended very convincingly in human terms by her housekeeper/maid (Katherine Tonkin) and doctor (Kim Gyngell), who give us necessary glimpses of lives *not* caught up in the pervasive bloodshed and darker impulses. Their professional solicitude strikes an aptly realist note in a film which also aims to make the supernatural figures of the witches believable as figments of Macbeth's increasingly disturbed mind.

But there is more to Wright's treatment than a mere transposition of poetic drama into film realism. Not only has he audaciously retained the artificiality of the iambic pentameters, thus linking himself to the play's poetry in which is created the dominant images of darkness and bloodshed, but he has given it his own emphasis. His Macbeth is – like Shakespeare's – a nature divided against itself. From the graveyard opening where Macbeth's sonless state is announced, there is a thread of allusion to fathers and sons which goes some distance to explaining the rift in Macbeth's nature. Duncan talks of passing over his business, the 'Cumberland' empire specifically, to his son Malcolm; Macduff (in a brief scene created for the film) kisses his sleeping son and takes a sheet of the boy's paintings before going to answer a summons from Duncan; Banquo and his son Fleance, whom he has earlier restrained from alcohol, go hurtling off on motorcycles (Banquo to meet his doom, as it happens, from Macbeth's thugs); and, when the avengers come to unseat Macbeth at the end, the remaining sons, Fleance and Malcolm, are in their forefront. The film then closes, not on Malcolm's supposedly rallying speech to usher in a new order (never as convincing in Shakespeare as the *disorder* that has preceded it), but on Macduff's walking away into the dawn with Fleance, whom he has taken under his wing – the wing that failed to shelter his own son. Some part of Macbeth, as well as his being fuelled by his and

his wife's ambition, is fulfilled by the idea of 'kingship' (of a gang in this case), but the absence of a son, in his patriarchal view of things, makes the honour a 'hollow crown'. The witches have prophesied in Macbeth's dream that Banquo's children will inherit, and this notion is borne out in the film's last shot as Macduff takes benevolent charge of Fleance. I don't know how important this train of thought was to Wright and Hill, but for me it confers on their film the kind of intellectual purchase that makes adaptation a potentially exciting enterprise. The modern and local trappings have their place in the interests of realism, but this perception of what the play means to its adaptors goes to the heart of the matter.

Jindabyne and *Macbeth* have little in common except their willingness to look further afield than usual for their source material. This wouldn't, however, have been enough cause for cheering if the resulting films hadn't so hearteningly shown their makers willing to take what they wanted and to make it their own.

Brian McFarlane, an Honorary Associate Professor at Monash University, is currently writing a book on *Great Expectations: Novel and Adaptation*, and is preparing the third edition of his *Encyclopedia of British Film*, both for publication in 2007.

Endnotes

- 1 'The Film of the Book: Adaptation and the Australian Cinema', *Metro*, No. 149, Winter 2006.
- 2 'So Much Water So Close to Home' (1977), in Raymond Carver, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1981, p.82.
- 3 Geoffrey Macnab, 'Short Cuts', *Sight and Sound*, March 1994, p.80.
- 4 'Interview with Ray Lawrence', Press Book, *Jindabyne*, April Films, 2006, p.15.
- 5 James Waites, 'Twelfth Night', *Cinema Papers*, July 1978, p.48
- 6 Ben Goldsmith, 'Metal Skin and the Cinema of Noise', <http://www.sensesofcinema.com> 2000.
- 7 His 1988 film, *Lover Boy*, starring Noah Taylor, appears never to have been released in Australia.
- 8 *Rolling Stone*, 10 June 1993.
- 9 This summary of the main narrative events was first written for a Study Guide on *Macbeth* which I prepared for ATOM. There seemed to be no purpose in merely rendering it in other words to say more or less the same thing.
- 10 Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' (1966), in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow 1977, p.93.