

## In love with Shakespeare

Immense number of Hollywood remakes proves 'you can't get too much of a good thing'

Forget George Lucas. Forget James Cameron. There is only one true king of the cinema, and he is back and as cool as ever. From turning feminism in its ear to echoing the OJ Simpson trial, this man is a storyteller who understands the times and the culture.



MANISHA PAREKH

Did I mention he has been dead for over 400 years? Yep, William Shakespeare is once again giving the Hollywood hacks ideas for teen blockbusters. However, poor Billy boy must be turning over in his grave to see some of the incarnations his creations and his life have taken.

For instance, Shakespeare was in love. While Shakespeare is somewhat of a celebrity, is that any reason to broadcast his philandering ways on the big screen? He is only a playwright, not President of the United States. And even though the movie won many Oscars, do Shakespeare's descendants feel any better about having their dirty laundry aired out in front of everyone?

Probably not. While the details of Shakespeare's life are one thing, his plays are another thing. Hollywood has been enamored with filming his plays since the beginning. However, as good as Shakespeare is, there is too much of a good thing — Kenneth Branagh's rendition of "Hamlet" for example. If one can't stand the four-hour running time, the movie is sorry, I could not get beyond the four hours stuck at a theater.

And while Shakespeare might be the bane of high school English classes, he is a boon to companies trying to attract teenage audiences. "Romeo and Juliet" turned into a box office bonanza thanks to Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio.

However, Billy boy probably would have had a hard time identifying his story of teenage star-crossed

lovers amidst director Baz Luhrman's rapid-fire sequences and pulsating score. Yet, Shakespeare's words still had the same dramatic impact of Franco Zeffirelli classic version. Even if they were spoken by Leo.

Shakespeare is the workhorse of the cinema and theater. No matter what age, no matter what period, Shakespearean plays are easily adaptable. But one wonders how adaptable they really can be.

One had a hard time believing Keanu Reeves as villain Don John in "Much Ado About Nothing." However, William cannot be blamed for Reeves' dramatic shortcomings; the script can only carry so much of a scene.

Taking "The Taming of a Shrew" and setting it against the background of an American high school is also workable. But taking Calista Flockhart and placing her in "A Midsummers Night's Dream" — Ally McBeal meets Puck? The jury is still out on that one.

When it comes down to it, Shakespeare's plays have been so successful and lasting because they are universal in theme and exquisite in language. Shakespeare had talent, and in a world full of Britney Spears and Sylvester Stallones, talent is a refreshing thing. It is only natural for people to capitalize on something as precious as true talent.

And thankfully, most of the time, cinema and theater do it rather well.

Blockbusters may come and flood away, but true artistry is forever. Even when it is watered down and spoon-fed to the MTV generation, Shakespeare still retains its luster, the kind no actor or director can totally dull. Perhaps if more screenwriters strived to work for quality instead of box office quantity, more classics would be created instead of duds. Because if one counts all the receipts and the awards, it is easy to see what wins out in the end.

Forget the Jedi. This is the return of the Bard.

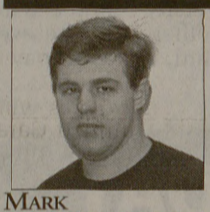
Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology and journalism major.



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

## Colorado school shooting result of poor parenting, lack of caring

On Apr. 20, 1999, the faculty and students of Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., went to school. Most of the students were enjoying themselves, as a spring semester was quickly slipping to their rear-view mirror.



MARK PASSWATERS

The chatter was probably what you could expect from high schoolers, talking about who is involved with whom, that was on TV last night, and where a big party was going to be on Friday. For some kids, walking around in John Deere or Joe Sakic jerseys, the conversation was probably about if the Bronco Quarterback would return next year how their beloved Colorado Avalanche would do in the Stanley Cup playoffs, which started the following night.

Those kids were targets.

By noon on Apr. 20, 1999, the simplistic life of these middle-class high schoolers had exploded. Fifteen of their classmates lay dead, massacred by their fellow students.

For hours on end, these children cowered in corners, hoping to save their lives from members of the "Trenchcoat Mafia," a group of outcasts that were out for revenge.

The school's daily announcements, posted on the school's Website, reminded children to see their counselors to inform them which colleges they had selected. It also told the boys to register with Selective Service. By noon, these things were far from the minds of the students of Columbine High School, who could think of one thing — survival.

All of this on Apr. 20, 1999 — the 110th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler.

These kids in the "Trenchcoat Mafia" were a morbid bunch. They were referred to as "Goths," and put on make-

up like war paint. Dressed all in black, they often made comments about death and destruction. They also were White Supremacists, who had a special hatred of not only minorities, but the "jocks," who they felt had tormented them through their first three years of high school.

The "Trenchcoat Mafia" had made repeated comments about how they were going to show that they had "the power" and had told people that something big was going to happen on April 20. Nobody listened.

As a result, these children who had been pushed down the road of torment finally jumped into the chasm of lunacy. Their cries for help — for someone to pay attention to them — finally became screams of help from students and teachers who had been hurt in this disaster.

Some people are trying to make this into a platform for more regulations on handguns. In its typical wrong-headed fashion, the Clinton Administration has

already come out with new proposals on handgun legislation.

Of course, the fact that these children also had bombs and were using illegally obtained automatic weapons and rifles is being ignored.

What is also being ignored is that all of this could have probably been avoided had the parents of these children paid attention to them.

Children who dress in all-black and spout Nazi propaganda are reasons for parents to be concerned, even if they do not shoot up their high school.

However, it appears that in this case the parents of these kids were blissfully innocent of what had happened to their children and how they intended to get payback.

American society has become too egocentric and self-absorbed. The results of this can be found in the hallways of Columbine High School, where (as this is being written), the corpses of the victims still lay since the halls are booby trapped.

People are always stunned about this and vow to never allow it to happen again — and then look to the government to stop it. This is not the answer. Something like this can only be stopped by average citizens.

In 1992, the media and the Clinton/Gore campaign mocked President George Bush when he talked about a return to "Family Values."

By 1996, the concept did not seem so absurd. Even though both parties claim to embrace "Family Values," this event shows that it really does not matter what the politicians say as long as the people do not follow suit.

Maybe this is the prodding that the nation needs. Our children need people that are willing to listen to them, to hear their pleas for attention. America needs to listen to its young, to care-to simply give a damn. Then, and only then, will these disasters cease.

Mark Passwaters is a graduate electrical engineering student.

## Readers discuss Littleton shooting

In response to Caleb McDaniel's Apr. 21 opinion column.

As usual I have to disagree with another Caleb McDaniel article.

Although he made some very valid points as to why the tragedy in Colorado occurred — poor parenting and society's openness for macabre entertainment — again he missed the main point.

Guns are not the problem. People are the problem. Criminals who use guns to commit crimes will get guns whether or not law-abiding citizens can. All laws that restrict access to guns will do is leave people at the mercy of those that go around the system instead of through it.

This problem is not going to be solved by more laws and regulations.

The only thing that is going to reverse this growing epidemic is changing society's basic values. We need to value the sanctity of life and the importance of parenting.

Parents need to actually parent instead of expecting our educational system to teach and nurture our children.

I do not know what is going to bring about the needed changes, but I hope this tragedy will open people's eyes to the reality of this problem and the

underlying issues. One of these issues is not gun control.

Jana Page  
Class of '99

If McDaniel believes adding another anti-Second Amendment law to the other 20,000 gun control laws, he is sadly mistaken. Everything these boys did was prohibited by harsh anti-gun laws, yet it did nothing to stop them. McDaniel should note that: True "assault rifles" have been outlawed since the 1930's.

Sawed-off shotguns are already illegal.

Pipe bombs are already illegal.

Carrying a gun on school property is already illegal.

It is already illegal for minors to buy guns.

Murder, obviously, is already illegal.

Rather than place the blame on an inanimate object and project himself as intellectually superior to those who forged a system of constitutional state craft which has made the United States the most powerful and productive nation the world has ever known, McDaniel should have looked into the real cause of this tragedy, a lack of a solid moral foundation.

By all accounts the "Trenchcoat Mafia" described itself as atheists, Satan-worshippers and bisexual. In fact, the gunmen walked up to one young lady, and asked her, "Do you believe in God?"

When she looked them in the eyes and answered "Yes, I do,"

they shot her in the head and laughed.

This is the result of a culture of death and violence which mocks God, mocks morality and relishes hate, sexual deviancy and the occult.

This should be a time of prayer, spiritual reflection and an opportunity for this nation to reaffirm its Christian heritage rather than serve as a platform for those on the Left who believe our nation and our freedom are a mistake, and who ghoulishly await horror like this to advance their intellectually and morally shallow anti-Second Amendment agenda.

McDaniel, consider our painful moral crisis and stop using this tragedy for leftist gains.

Donny Ferguson  
Houston, Texas

I completely agree with McDaniel's view on regulation of firearms and weapons in America. I also share his overwhelming sorrow for what our society has become, as reflected by recent events.

However, I would like to encourage McDaniel and his readers not to look at the world and our society in particular so dimly.

There are many parts of our society that I would be happy to change. However, it is hard to motivate oneself to work toward a change when the world is portrayed in such a dim light.

Horrible atrocities such as the Colorado shooting occur in our world every so often, and we defi-

nitely should work to prevent these occurrences.

I would like to point out though, that there are many wonderful occurrences every day that do not make the headlines: giving, helping, etc.

We need to hold onto these events so as not to lose hope. They are the fabric which binds us together as a people. The tragedies only remind us of what a world is like without them.

Shane Hutchison  
Class of '00

## Abridging rights harmful to citizens

In response to Lisa Foo's Apr. 20 column.

"Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ..."

Apparently the founding fathers held the freedom of free thought very highly or they would not put it in the Constitution.

Now we jump ahead two centuries to the present. Yes, things have changed and there are problems now that were not around when the Constitution was written.

That still, however, does not mean it is okay to meddle with the Constitution for the sake of racism, bigotry or any other thought "crime" that is what its name implies, just a thought. I do not agree with the ignorance that these people display, but when our government begins to legis-

late our individual thoughts we have indeed entered a scary new chapter in American history.

Foox wants to legislate the freedom of speech and press to get rid of supposed thought "crimes." If the government is allowed to do this, what is to stop it from legislating other aspects of speech and press or other aspects of our inalienable rights such as freedom of religion.

The recurring theme here is thought. What good is thought without the freedom to express it? You cannot legislate what a person thinks and creating laws that simply stop them from expressing these views still will not change the way they feel. It is a task accomplished through education, not oppression of the ignorant and those around them.

Making certain types of speech illegal would not only prove to be a fruitless endeavor but would also be a direct violation of the First Amendment.

Once exceptions are made to the rule, they will never stop and that is why the First Amendment must be held up absolutely, no matter how good a change may seem at the time.

Shane Rotter  
Class of '01

The glaring fallacies of Foox's arguments demonstrate the ignorant generalizations from dismissing ideas without thorough study.

Foox's Hitler-like accusations and advocacy of Gestapo tactics of punishing those exercising free

speech makes one wonder which one point of view has more to lose from open discussion.

David Duke, however, welcomes debate; he writes, "I have no fear of free speech because I truly believe my position is consistent, factual and defensible. Of course, others are trying to limit freedom of speech. They are like witnesses who cannot stand the exposure of cross examination."

Finally, Foox's policy towards the suppression of historical debate is already law in Europe. A 78-year-old Swiss author was recently imprisoned for the "thought crime" of merely implying that parts of the Holocaust was exaggerated. And how does all of this relate to Texas A&M University? The Evans Library collection of Holocaust literature presents both sides of the issue, and I am proud to attend a world class university that leaves students free to find the truth on their own.

Israel Morrison  
Class of '01

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E-mail: batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu