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IMAGE, MUSIC, TEXT
Notes on The Digital Video Disc edition of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann

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Abstract – The DVD (or Digital Video Disc) has fundamentally changed "the way we interact with movies" (Barlow 2005, p. XI); the DVD is indeed a digital resource offering possibilities which analog equipments such as VCR and VHS – which had always remained a linear medium – could not offer in the 1970s and 1980s. The DVD can be considered not only a media resource but also, and most importantly, a space to investigate the fascinating dialogic relationship involving image, music and (verbal) text. In this sense, if, according to Brummett, "a text is a set of signs related to each other insofar as their meanings all contribute to the same set of effects or functions" (2006, p. 34), then the DVD stands as a "multimodal text" (Kress, van Leeuwen 2001), one where the visual, the musical and the literary are engaged in a fascinating dialogue which allows them to constantly redefine themselves. Interestingly, the DVD format was born in the very same year – namely 1996 – of one of the most fascinating and successful Shakespearean filmic adaptations, that is *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* by the Australian director Baz Luhrmann. In the film the poetic and canonic aura of the Shakespearean verses – which are pronounced in their integrity – is somehow transgressed by their contrapuntal juxtaposition to images and sounds belonging contemporary pop culture. In our view, the DVD edition of the film – which includes many extras (on which we will focus in the present essay) such as photo galleries, music videos, interviews, TV trailers, audio commentaries and an introductory essay by the director himself in which he makes reference to the strong relationship between Shakespeare and popular culture (Lanier 2002) – represents the format which seems to be more *in tune* with the film's hypertextual quality *staging* its very capacity to exceed the world of cinema to interrogate our own age through the double lens of Shakespeare and contemporary popular culture.

Keywords: intermediality; literature; film; song; pop.

1. The Digital Video Disc and its legacy

According to Aaron Barlow, the DVD has fundamentally changed "the way we interact with movies", throwing us "into a whole new cinematic possibility where the integrity of the film is of higher importance than ever

before and its life is immeasurable"; in this sense, thanks to the DVD, "classic movies are beginning to be treated as respectfully as classic books" (Barlow 2005, p. XI).

Of course, books and films can be described as belonging to the same category: *texts*, a complex and arguably problematic category which has been approached from very different angles. According to Roland Barthes,

> A text is […] a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations […] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in a such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (1977a, p. 146)

This definition by Barthes importantly points to the text as an open and not a closed entity, a space in which different voices and discourse modes speak to each other. In 1977, Simon Heath edited a volume entitled *Image-Music-Text* which collects seminal essays by Barthes on the analysis of narrative processes, key semiotic issues in literature, cinema and photography, and instrumental and vocal practice in music. Heath's collection is defined by a fascinating shift from work to text: the volume is characterized by an attention to the very "grain" (Barthes 1977b, p. 179) of the semiotic process and by the intention to focus – in literature, photography, film and song – on all those aspects which, within the signifying dimension, seem to displace, shift, disperse.

In this perspective, the DVD can be considered not only a media resource but also a space to investigate the fascinating *dialogic* relationship involving image, music and (verbal) text. In this sense, if, according to Brummett, "a text is a set of signs related to each other insofar as their meanings all contribute to the same set of effects or functions" (2006, p. 34), then the DVD stands as a "multimodal text" (Kress, van Leeuwen 2001), one where the visual, the musical and the literary are engaged in a fascinating dialogue which allows them to constantly redefine themselves.

Paul McDonald – in his 2007 study entitled *Video and DVD Industries* – writes about the birth and the early impact of this optical disc in the media context:

> Digital Versatile Disc or Digital Video Disc (DVD) was introduced in the consumer market in 1996. […] DVD not only replaced the VCRs and videocassettes but also introduced a new media object. Videocassettes had always remained a linear medium, working along the single plane of record, play, rewind and fast-forward. DVD, however, provided access to many different sources of content via menus. DVDs increased the storage capacity of video software units, providing space for the inclusion of other types of content beyond the main programme. By multiplying textual content, DVD has raised questions over whether there is a core or essence to the video commodity. (2007, p. 1)

In the last twenty years, and in particular in the Noughties, the DVD has also deeply affected media production strategies, marketing, distribution and consumption. If on the one hand producers have found in the DVD a means of retaining or expanding existing markets and an opportunity to develop new ones, consumers have also recognized a chance to exert some control over the media they consume, using their purchasing power in stores and online to assert forms of social and cultural identity.

The DVD has posed new challenges for scholars in the field, in particular for literary and, notably, for Shakespeare scholars (Ferguson 2019, Worthen 2003), forcing them to keep pace with the ongoing transformation of the landscape of media and culture industries.

A central issue of this process is represented by the very fact – as Sebok and Destemeyer (2013) note – that the DVD is a digital resource, offering possibilities which analog equipments such as VCR and VHS could not offer in the 1970s and 1980s:

> The fact that the DVD entered into and helped define a shift in technology and culture from "analog" to "digital" is of paramount importance to the processes involved in making DVD meaningful. "Digital" suggests a massive shift in culture and industry, away from a particular understanding of technology and technology-user interface into an age of instant, random access to information and entertainment. (Sebok 2007, p. 227)

Many commentators have pointed to the analogy between DVDs and the most innovative of the platforms of the mid-late 1990s, namely the internet. They resemble each other not only in the hypertextual structure of their interface – allowing each user to freely, creatively (and vertically) construct his/her reading of the text – but also in the encyclopaedic access to knowledge they both offer. We witness, in short, a shift from a critical discourse *on* the text, offering contents strictly related to the film or series (as we see in critical para-texts) to a larger public discourse *about* the text which expands its context (Franchi 2010).[1]

Of particular relevance is also the aura (in the Benjaminesque sense) of quality which is associated with the DVD (McDonald 2007), lent by its superior video and audio quality. On the one hand this has had a significant impact on both cinema and television productions, or better *re-productions*, with iconic TV series published in DVD format; on the other, it has contributed to a fetishization of the DVD by an increasingly hi-tech-obsessed

[1] A very interesting format in this regard was the one offered in the Mid-Noughties by Italian publisher Feltrinelli with the *Real Cinema* series which expanded the film beyond the digital dimension, featuring a film on DVD and a film-related book in the same case; remarkable titles in the series were Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Michael Epstein's *LennonNYC* and Mark Achbar and Jeniffer Abbott's *The Corporation.*

society.[2] In Italy, for instance, in 2002 eight million discs were sold and the DVD rentals amounted to more than twenty million,[3] while almost 4 million players were sold in 2003.

The Great Recession of 2007-2009 affected the DVD market and the Hollywood industry more generally, which relied and still relies on home entertainment for most of its income. A further reason for the crisis was the advent of the Blue-Ray technology, which offered higher definition but scarcely had an impact on the media market. The 2010s were largely dominated by the success of streaming services such as Netflix; somewhat ironically, Netflix – which was founded in 1997 – started out in the late Nineties/early Noughties as a service for DVD sales and rental by mail, before introducing its streaming service in 2007. If the streaming offers some of the basic options included in DVDs – such as language/subtitles selection – it lacks others, particularly all the *extra,* meta-textual contents which have made the DVD a unique form of textuality, a whole which is more than the sum of its parts.

2. The DVD edition of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann

The Digital Video Disc format was born in the very same year – namely 1996 – as one of the most fascinating and successful Shakespearean film adaptations of the past three decades, *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* by the Australian director Baz Luhrmann, featuring Leonardo di Caprio and Claire Danes in the title roles. In the film, the poetic and canonic aura of the Shakespearean lines – which are pronounced in their integrity – is transgressed by their contrapuntal juxtaposition to images and sounds belonging to contemporary pop culture. This basic idea goes some way to explain the unprecedented success of this film, particularly with younger viewers not commonly attracted to Shakespeare films. The film enunciates Shakespearean language in a post-modern space – an imaginary location, Verona Beach, which coincides with Mexico City – and sets Shakespeare's words into a dialogical relationship with other discourse modes such as music

[2] Laura Mulvey notes how the possibilities offered by DVDs also allow the cinephile the fetishization of the object/star: "with electronic and digital viewing, the nature of cinematic repetition compulsion changes. As the film is delayed and thus fragmented from linear narrative into favourite moments or scenes, the spectator is able to hold on to, to possess the previously elusive image. In this delayed cinema the spectator finds a heightened relation to the human body, particularly that of a star" (2006, p. 161).

[3] *Anche in Italia boom dei DVD 8 milioni venduti nel 2002*, in "La Repubblica", 10 January 2013: https://www.repubblica.it/online/spettacoli_e_cultura/dvduno/scheda/scheda.html.

and the visual arts, amplifying its beauty while preserving its qualities as "a lover's discourse" (Barthes 1978) capable of questioning the ideology of power and money. In the film, Juliet is an affluent girl who lives in an imposing villa, while Romeo is of a different social class, belonging to a community of Cuban exiles.

In the present analysis, I want to argue that the digital format of the DVD edition of the film – which includes a multitude of extras such as photo galleries, music videos, interviews, TV trailers, audio commentaries and an introductory essay by the director himself – amplifies the film's hypertextual qualities and its capacity to interrogate our own age through the double lens of Shakespeare and the multiple languages of contemporary popular culture.

Franchi points to the "multifunctionality" (2012, p. 20) of the DVD, highlighting the gradual increase in the number and typology of extras offered by specific editions over the years since the DVD's introduction to the market. The DVD edition of Luhrmann's film – with its very rich extras menu – offers a multiplicity of access points to the film not available to those who watched the film at the cinema.

It is worth noting that the DVD case is made of cardboard, not plastic, and therefore somewhat resembles a book. The case contains a booklet – quite similar to the ones featured in music CDs – which includes an *Introduction* by the director in which he refers to the close relationship between Shakespeare and popular culture, both Elizabethan and twentieth century. Luhrmann remarks how, in Shakespeare's day, everybody – from the Queen to the dustman – would attend Shakespeare's performances, so that in order to conquer his audience the Bard used every sort of subject available, and lays claim to continuing this Shakespearean tradition in his film. The subjects range from contemporary politics to classical histories, and all registers of language and music, including modern day pop songs, as contemporary equivalents of Elizabethan ballads and *ayres*, to comment and interact with scenes and specific characters. Luhrmann's argument is powerful and born out by the success of his film, which indeed stands as a remarkable achievement in translating Shakespeare's play into a pop-cultural idiom (pop music, fashion, media) while preserving his language, reaching a vast and inclusive audience.

Inserting the DVD into the player, we are introduced to the Main Menu where we see a still image coming from the film with the two lovers kissing on a screen (something which points to the meta-filmic dimension of the DVD itself), and we also see the Language Menu and the link to the Extras. Yet the most remarkable element is not what we see but what we hear: a loop

of an instrumental fragment of the Radiohead song “Talk Show Host”[4] mixed with a field recording of the sound of the sea. This aural loop refers to the film sequence in which we are first introduced to Romeo.

As Mark Sutherland observes, “significantly, Radiohead are first heard in the film just as the characters are discussing Romeo’s *black portentous humour*” (2003, p. 84). Radiohead’s music is often described as melancholic and introspective; in this sense, “Talk Show Host” perfectly responds to the dialogue between Montague and Benvolio. At the same time the song aurally introduces Romeo to the scene. Monica Popescu (2002) makes reference to the director’s choice of presenting Romeo’s character in multimodal terms, that is, through the lines: “Why then, o brawling love, O loving hate /O anything of nothing first create” (1.1.176-7), which he at once recites and writes in his diary. The lines are thus emphasized not only by this verbal and visual doubling but also by the music and words of Radiohead, which convey a sense of division and conflict in tune with the Bard’s verses.

“I want to be someone else or, I’ll explode” – the lines written and sung by the band’s leader Thom Yorke – introduce a theme which is central to the entire play; that is, the lovers’ desire to be someone else. Silvano Sabbadini notes how for the two Shakespearean heroes the first rite of passage implies the loss and not the acquisition of a name (1991, p. XL). Names, as symbols of social belonging, are the cause of the lovers’ separation; a name is an arbitrary, conventional sign, which nevertheless mortifies human relationships. Love, as Roland Barthes has shown in *A Lover’s Discourse,* needs motivated, intracorporeal, often unexpected signs and gestures, rather than the re-production of pre-scribed and codified behaviours and symbols.

At the musical level the song presents a riff in the minor key – the most “escaping” according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) – which is repeated a consistent number of times, always presenting a pause when Shakespeare and Yorke’s words come to the foreground. Music and words seem to speak to each other through a song which, even though not appositively written for the film, creates dynamic semantic contexts.

I will return to Radiohead’s contribution to the film at the end of this essay, but – before analysing in detail the Extras featured in the DVD – I think it was important to stress the relevance and intelligence of the choice of a sample from this song for the main menu’s soundtrack, as its use – consisting, as we have seen, of the reiteration of an instrumental fragment in the minor key written by one of the most experimental and fascinating bands of the 1990s – may influence, with its meditative, unsettling potential and

[4] “Talk Show Host” is a b-side of the single “Street Spirit” and is included in the soundtrack of *William Shakespeare’s Romeo+Juliet* published by Parlophone in 1996.

through the association of the music with the words (words which we do not hear in the menu, but only in the film, yet with which, nevertheless, the band's fans are familiar) the user's experience of the menu and of the DVD as a whole.

The first of the extras accessible through the Extras Menu is the "Audio Commentary", spoken by the Director, script writer Catherine Martin, co-author Craig Pearce and director of Photography Donald McAlpine. As Bombes notes:

> In the same way that punk showed how it was possible to make music without the experts, so too DVD shows us how to learn about film without the expert professors. One obvious place where this happens is in the Director's Commentary, which is […] a standard feature on many DVDs. (2004, p. 344)[5]

The enunciation by the four members of the film staff – as often happens with the audio commentaries featured in DVDs – is characterised by an easy, direct tone expressing fun and inclusiveness, in which the viewer/listener has the impression of being personally involved in a conversation between the four members of the film crew. The four different perspectives also offer insight into the writing of the film, which is, as we have seen, nourished by many forms of writing, by many semiotic practices (music, literature, fashion etc.) simultaneously.

The second extra included is the "Director's Gallery" which itself includes six different subsections. The first entitled "Impact", features Oxford professor Jonathan Bate – author of *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1998) – and focuses on the relevance of Luhrmann's film in contemporary culture which Bate describes as "one of the greatest achievements of our time", since according to him "it keeps the authentic text but updates the setting and makes Shakespeare familiar to a whole new generation" (Luhrmann 2002); then two sections entitled "Why Shakespeare" and "Narrating Shakespeare", which are actually two segments of a single 1998 Luhrmann's interview; and finally three sections in which the director literally dissects three iconic sequences from the film: the gas station scene, the swimming pool sequence in which the two lovers kiss, and the dramatic scene featuring Tybalt's execution. Taken together, in this section of the extras menu we thus have a kaleidoscopic assemblage of different approaches and perspectives echoing the strands of artistic, popular and academic engagement intersecting in popular Shakespeare in general (see Lanier 2002) and Luhrmann's film in particular: an academic (Bate) talking about the director and his film, the director speaking in an interview, and then the director *as academic* analyzing the three key sequences of his film.

[5] See also Distemeyer (2013).

The third extra is the "Director of Photography's Gallery", which features a number of shots from the film, with commentary, through which we are invited to appreciate the centrality of the photographic language in the movie; this section also invites us to investigate the iconic dimension of the semiotic processes at the core of the film. In Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics,

> the icon stands as a specific type of sign along with the index and the symbol; while the index is a sign that signifies its object by a relation of contiguity, causality or by some physical connection and the symbol is a sign which acquires its meaning in consequence of a habit (usually determined by a code), the icon is characterized by a relation of similarity between the sign and its object. The icon is the most independent sign from both convention and causality/contiguity: an icon stands for something or for some particular meaning in an unpredictable, often escaping way. (Martino 2012, p. 12)

In this sense, the film – in which the iconic dimension seems to be privileged – invites us to read the story of the two lovers through a vertical and not a linear approach, that is, through a reading – which the DVD edition, with its still function, also allows us to embrace (as we have seen with the still of the lovers' kissing featured in the main menu) – in which every single image and sound is pregnant with meaning in itself. And yet,

> in contemporary culture, the notions of icon and iconicity, even preserving their semiotic, Peircean connotation, can cover a vast and complex range of meanings; for instance, with the term 'cultural icon' we may refer, indeed, to a person regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration. (Martino 2012, pp. 12-13)

This perfectly defines the status of the young and successful Leonardo Di Caprio in 1996.

The fourth extra is the "Project Gallery", where set designer Catherine Martin focuses on different aspects of her work: Books, Verona Beach's Weapons, Cars and Maps. Each chapter is fascinatingly presented in a form which resembles a Power Point presentation with slides commented on in real time by Martin.

A type of extra which is included in almost all DVD editions is the Interview Gallery with actors and other members of the film team. In the *Romeo+Juliet* DVD it is the order in which the interviews[6] are presented

[6] The success of the interview as textual document dates back to the nineteenth century: Oscar Wilde, for instance, became a global celebrity in 1882 during his American (reading) tour at least in part thanks to the (at least) ninety-eight interviews he sat for (Hofer, Scharnhorst, 2010). Interviewers, as Wilde himself recognized, "were a 'product' of American civilization. Celebrity

which deserves close attention. In sequence, we get interviews with: the script co-writer, the film editor, the costume designer, the choreographer, John Leguizamo (who plays Tybalt), Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. The order in which the interviews are presented – which however, the DVD user is of course free not to follow – stresses the centrality of the film as a process, as a choral, multidimensional, collaborative effort.

The last two extras are dedicated to "Music Videos" and to the "Marketing" of the film. The final extra includes the subsections TV spots, Trailers and Posters. In this section, the team who has designed the DVD edition, exhibits the different campaigns with which the film was promoted in different countries. In this sense it constitutes an example of what Torop (1995) defines as the "metatextual translation" of a filmic source text in a target culture.

The Music Videos section includes only two of the songs featured in the film's soundtrack, namely: Kym Mazelle's "Young Hearts Run Free" and "Kissing You" by Des'ree, and yet, in the film, pop plays a central role. It comments, explains, introduces characters, themes and actions in a way which besides Shakespeare himself also recalls Wagner, whose "Liebestod of Tristan und Isolde" in a version sung by Leonytine Price accompanies the last dramatic scenes of the film. It is not the only classical piece in the film: we also have fragments from Mozart's "Symphony No. 55", which are juxtaposed to pop songs in line with the postmodern aesthetic of the film, in which, according to Hodgdon, one can perceive "a sense of identification from dissonance and disjuncture" (1999, p. 90). The very idea of dissonance is at the core of the play itself and is perfectly translated by the sonic image of "straining harsh discords" voiced by Juliet (3.5.28) that captures the complex interplay of harmony and disharmony in Shakespeare's tragedy.

The film soundtrack includes contributions from key pop artists of the 1990s: Gavin Friday, Radiohead, Garbage, Cardigans, One Inch Punch, Wannadies, Des'ree. The last is also present in the film, performing her song "Kissing you" during the feast in the Capulet household. The song perfectly translates the experience of making music at the Elizabethan Court to a modern setting and, at the same time, comments and acts as an aural counterpoint to the lovers' kissing scene. A more complex and original function, however, is played within Baz Luhrmann's multimodal discourse

interviews began to appear in American newspapers in the early 1870s, and traveling lectures were a convenient source of copy for reporters. While Henry James and Mark Twain decried the new celebrity culture, Wilde, like Walt Whitman, embraced it, creating a paradigm to perform one's personality for generations up until the new millennium" (Martino 2015, p. 434). In this sense, a disciple of Wilde, namely Andy Warhol, famously founded a 1969 magazine entitled *Interview*, in which, among other things, the magazine's team sent a celebrated name to interview the month's cover star.

by Radiohead's music. The film features two songs written by the Oxford quintet: the already mentioned "Talk Show Host" and "Exit Music (for a film)" which was commissioned for *Romeo+Juliet* by the director himself.

In *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, Douglas Lanier, speaking about the relationship between *Romeo and Juliet* and pop, writes:

> Given pop music's abiding concern with courtship, it is unsurprising that its most important point of Shakespearian reference has been *Romeo and Juliet*, the very embodiments of adolescent passion and rebellion against parents. The last generation [...] has seen significant changes in how these figures are musically evoked. (2002, p. 72)

Lanier quotes Buhler, who notes how "Romeo at one time the embodiment of suave insincerity, was recast as passionate commitment personified, [while] Juliet, formerly presented as merely reactive to her lover's blandishments has shown signs of increased independence and agency" (2004, p. 244). In this case of "revisionism from below", the two lovers are, however, quite often just named but not quoted, because "their youthful rebellion is directed precisely against what Shakespeare's language represents: authority, age, propriety, respect and tradition" (Lanier 2002, p. 72).

This is also the case in "Exit Music (for a film)".[7] In the song there are no quotations from Shakespeare's text; Yorke decided to write original lyrics which evoke some key images of the film, as the scene in which Juliet aims a Colt 45 at her own head.

The song can be heard at the end of the film over the end credits – and directly accessed through the skip function of the DVD, which also allows us to read the lyrics – inviting the audience to rethink an important sequence of the play, the one about the morning following the night spent together by the two lovers, in which the last verbal exchange between the two lovers is inhabited by the very idea of death:

> JULIET
> O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
> Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
> Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.
> ROMEO
> And trust me, love, in my eye so do you:
> Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu, adieu! (3.5.54-9)

[7] The song is included in Radiohead's album *Ok Computer* (Parlophone, 1997) which is a very fascinating and powerful meditation on communication and alienation in the digital era.

The song works at two different levels: it poetically responds to Juliet's death but it also stands as an alternative to death itself (but also to a death in life) – in short as a postmodern alternative – through the words of Romeo which invite Juliet to wake on the day of their escape: "Wake… from your dreams/The drying of your tears/Today we escape, we escape" (Radiohead 1997). In "Exit music" the escape turns into a way out not only of the Shakespearean tale, but also of the public, official space which – with its emphasis on identity and power – preserves no room for the lovers' discourse. Yorke's words come out of everyday language; it is a private, low key language apparently shared only by the two lovers which preserves the dialogic connotation of Shakespeare's words. The imperatives and vocatives of the song's protagonist are addressed at Juliet, inviting her to perform simple gestures: "Pack… and get dressed/Before your father hears us/Before all hell breaks loose". This imperative of love perfectly complements the first line of the song ("Wake from your sleep"), composing a discourse of the two lovers' gestures which Yorke opposes to the official discourse represented by such words as "father" and "hell".

In terms of the rich and fascinating musical articulation of the song – which the high quality audio of the DVD edition enhances – we can note how, while the first two verses present the same melody (a quite uniform and monotone one), the third verse introduces a descending scale which sounds particularly attractive due to the urgent and suffering vocal performance of Yorke, who gives voice to another imperative of love – "Breathe, keep breathing/I can't do this alone" – gives a body and a shape to the very act of breathing. The beauty of this moment is intensified by its enunciation in a space which is at once of life, love and death. "Breathe" becomes an invitation, made by Romeo to Juliet, to keep calm before their escape, but also a call for life in a context of death.

The last verse before the closing section directly refers to the contraposition "us" vs. them, that is love vs. social order, an order which is perceived as extremely cold and rational in comparison with the lovers' need for heat and passion: "Sing… us a song/A song to keep us warm/There's such a chill, such a chill". The very reference to a song within a song is quite Shakespearian and turns music into a space of resistance to the order of discourse. Sadly, the song closes with the awareness that the social order with its obsession for power and identity leaves no room for the two lovers; rules and wisdom make people literally laugh at passion and love as impulses which escape the logic of productiveness (which is at the core of capitalism); love produces nothing but relationships, dialogues, connections. "Exit music" celebrates the very idea of relationship, of dialogue, through a desperate speech addressed to a dead body, murdered by a collective strategy, which Yorke hopes can destroy itself, choking on its own laws: "You can laugh/A

spineless laugh/We hope your rules and wisdom choke you/Now we are one in everlasting peace".

As Jim Irvin observes: "when a distorted bass and mellotron start up, the track billows into a moving gothic chiller" (2003, p. 58); the love ballad, the prayer turns into a gothic tale to sonically translate Yorke's disturbing images. The singer's final verses are sung with an extraordinary intensity in order to articulate the idea of a big time (a time to come) in which love has finally recovered its own space – that of death, which no discourse of power can predict or contain, a death become myth through art – in which the "us" has become unity, metaphor, we might say, of a consciousness in love with the other, inhabited by the other, in its uniqueness and unrepeatability. Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers access a new life in that eternal and eternally escaping language which is music; the most erotic, unpredictable and de-centered of the arts. The innocuous myth Sabbadini speaks about (1991) directly addresses our body, making it vibrate beyond any intentional project, reminding us of the ineluctable presence of the other and of others in our life.

As Jacques Derrida has shown in *The Margins of Philosophy* (1982), philosophers have traditionally prioritized the focal over the marginal, and yet 'supplementary' margins very often shed a precious light on 'central' issues; we can use Derrida's 'philosophy' of the margin to assert the vital importance of what apparently seems a marginal element within the film's narrative and within the DVD edition itself. The very choice of presenting the Radiohead track over the end credits has a strongly subversive value which seems to question the imperatives of cinema. Here Radiohead's music does not comment on any scene, but stands as a musical accompaniment to the audience's final emotive response, to what they have watched and listened to, which often becomes compassion for the story of two young lovers, a story which is also the story of each of us and will probably never be listened to (or performed) in the society we live in. Yet since we can directly access the song/end-titles sequence through the chapter menu of the DVD edition, we can decide to subvert the film order, to play the song as a 'reading key' to the film itself and as a postmodern rewriting (*per se*) of Shakespeare's play.

3. Conclusion

It is possible to conclude suggesting how *playing* the DVD of the film becomes in this sense a way to perform the story, potentially an infinite number of times, *staging* each time, in our private/domestic spaces, an

interruption[8] and subversion of the ideology of power (and identity) and of its official, pre-established narratives. The many links included in the DVD become multiple *exits*, semiotic paths written and constructed in real time by us, through a semiotics of the unpredictable and the unexpected. The Digital Video Disc – and in particular the DVD edition of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* – becomes in this way a critical commodity, a product but also a deconstructive resource and precious critique of capitalism itself.

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[8] On the idea of (critical) interruption see Chambers (2003).

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