Nation and/as Adaptation: 
Shakespeare, Canada, and Authenticity

DANIEL FISCHLIN

This chapter examines how Shakespearean theatrical adaptations reinforce, consolidate, and trouble polyphonic, and sometimes extremely dissonant, notions of Canadian national identity. Its thesis is that Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare (from a range of writing positions) puncture the reductive notion of an imagined community, to borrow Benedict Anderson’s controversial term, based on the illusion of shared values that authenticate that community’s identity. Imagined communities, as elaborated in over a century of Shakespearean adaptation in Canada, are highly variable and elusive: different imaginings produce different communities as mediated through the relationship to Shakespeare. Shakespeare serves multiple identity formations, with differing consequences for how nation is constructed in relation to differing theatrical discourses. Constituted by enormous regional and geographic differences, not to mention significant ethnic and multicultural diversity (at least in its urban centres), tense and complex relations to aboriginal peoples, and the constitutive problems associated with decolonization in the wake of contested relations between two so-called founding peoples, Canada cannot but complicate national identity as an expression of authentic coherence or difference. Moreover, adaptation, because it implies revision of an ‘authentic’ source, is one locus where issues surrounding identity are fruitfully pursued. The problem of Shakespeare’s iconic centrality to critical thinking generally has particular relevance in a national entity like Canada, still dealing with a colonial legacy and the effects of a less-than-complete decolonization.

Instructive in this regard is Linda Hutcheon’s summary of Canada’s colonial history: ‘It took a long time to loosen imperial ties never historically severed by revolution: becoming a nation in 1867
through the British North America Act, a British act of Parliament, Canada achieved full legal independence only in 1982, and this legal independence was tied to the shedding of its English and French cultural heritages, the genuine form of diction in a revisionary, neo-colonial context. Goldwin Smith's absurd pre-what Northrop Frye calls 'interpenetration' of Shakespearean adaptation with canonical authority, but that authority can then be turned, in that relation. Shakespearean adaptation in Canada links colonial heritage with canonical authority, but that authority can then be turned, in what Northrop Frye calls 'interpenetration' (Divisions 15-25), to advantage in a revisionary, neo-colonial context. Goldwin Smith's absurd prediction in 1894 that 'no such thing as a literature Canadian in the local sense exists or is ever likely to exist' (qtd. in Findlay, 'Literature') is refuted by Canadian theatrical adaptations that revise canonical texts as a function of a specifically Canadian context, historicity, and territoriality. Frye summarizes, not unproblematically, the general direction this revisionary impetus has taken in Canadian literary culture: 'In proportion as Canada shook off its external and subordinating assumptions about its English and French cultural heritages, the genuine form of cultural development became more obvious. This genuine form is what I mean by interpenetration ... What [the language of the creative imagination] does is to create a vision that becomes a focus for a community' (Divisions 24).

In short, the question 'Why Shakespeare as a “focus for a community?”' morphs into 'Why adapted Shakespeare in Canada?': why perpetuate Shakespeare-centrism in the name of complex national signifying practices supposedly seeking a degree of autonomy from their colonial precursors as embodied in the iconicity of Shakespeare, the fraught symbol of colonial cultural dependency?

A simple answer to the question, Stratford aside, is that theatrical and dramaturgical practices in Canada, however divergent and at odds with 'the Shakespeare effect', are highly invested in Shakespearean configurations. To adapt John Metcalfe's debatable formulation, 'We read what we are' (104), 'we' (whatever illusory collectivity this pronoun stands in for) are (at times) what 'we' write and perform. And what 'we' write and perform in Canada has at least a partial relation to Shakespearean adaptation. Adaptation is a genre, if one takes the significant increase in adaptations produced in Canada over the last thirty years as any indication, that suits the aesthetics of Canadian self-representation. An ongoing bibliographical and anthology project associated with this chapter has shown that, from the late nineteenth century to the present, there have been a significant number of Shakespearean theatrical adaptations made and produced in Canada. To date, the bibliography comprises over one hundred and sixty entries in little over a century: from McGill University professor Charles Ebenezer Moyse's ('Belgrave Titmarsh pseud. ') satiric, nineteenth-century reworking of Shakespearean motifs in Shakespeare's [sic] Skull and Falstaff's Nose (1889) to Marjorie Price's reworking, with faint Shakespearean overtones, of the Caesar story in God Caesar, which won the 'Sir Barry Jackson prize for the best play by a Canadian presented in the Dominion Drama Festival, 1955' (title page); transplanted Parisian Robert Gurik's adaptation Hamlet, prince du Québec (1968), a parody of Canadian politics; and Ken Mitchell and Humphrey and the Dumptrucks' Cruel Tears (1977), a 'country opera' adaptation of Othello in which the main character is a Ukrainian truck driver from Saskatchewan.

In addition, there is an extensive production practice associated with adapted Shakespeare that attests to the generalized cultural presence of Shakespeare in Canada. Many of the Shakespeare alfresco productions in cities like St John's, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Vancouver predicate their stagings on innovative and experimental adaptations of source texts, again calling into question the extent to which staged productions are themselves, always necessarily, adaptive. The Saskatchewan Festival, for instance, produced an (in)famous version of Romeo and Juliet (1989-90) in which the Montagues and Capulets were divided linguistically into English and French. The feud took on obvious resonances in the Canadian national context, and each group was directed by a person of different linguistic origins in order to emphasize the linguistic differences the production explored (Gordon McCall directed the English Montagues and Robert Lepage the French Capulets). Similarly, 1986 saw the Future Shakespeare Company of Toronto put on a version of Julius Caesar with an entirely female cast. Regina's Globe Theatre, founded in 1966 by Ken and Sue Kramer, initially the only professional theatre company in Saskatchewan primarily devoted to educational theatre for younger audiences, had an early repertoire...
that made use of Shakespearean adaptations ‘staged arena-style to encourage audience participation’ (Farfan).

In the 1997 adaptive hybrid MacHomer: The Simpsons Do Macbeth, an anglophone Montrealer, Rick Miller, toured Canada with a one-man theatrical production that ‘features over 60 voices from TV’s favorite dysfunctional family, in a performance of Shakespeare’s bloodiest tragedy. Over 300 colour slides, handpainted by the author, as well as an original musical score, accompany the 50 minute show. The script (85% of which remains the words of William Shakespeare) is embellished with popular cultural icons, creating that rare jewel: an educational and entertaining show’ (qtd. from the publicity poster). The contradictions, cultural displacements, and overlays of Miller’s production are significant and worth noting: Shakespeare is conjoined to an epic (the TV character Homer Simpson); the one-man ventriloquism of sixty voices; dysfunctional families and violence, yet an audience favourite, a family show; the cultural value of it all signalled through the three hundred hand-painted slides, original musical score, and the 85 per cent retention of true Shakespearean material in an egregious display of cultural de-formation and adaptation; and the assumption that popular cultural icons are necessary to create an educational and entertaining show. Perhaps most significant is the way in which the show symbolically iterates crucial aspects of the cultural politics of Canada as a nation-state. Miller himself assumes a unique and doubly minoritarian position (of the English minority in a province that is itself a French minority in the larger North American context), hybridizing American and colonial culture so as to produce cultural value in a theatrical context that can tour the country. In short, the production is an exemplary display of adapted Shakespeare in the national context I have been describing, where different theatrical practices of adaptation that challenge the nation’s tolerance of difference are subject to an effect of integration that sustains the difference in the face of its assimilation to the corporate national entity.

Theatrical adaptations reveal the contradictions of national self-fashioning as part of a larger cultural context in which similar disjunctions are evident. This staging occurs in varied contexts, including feminist discourses that examine Black othering, racist anti-indigenous discourses, and Acadian nationalist discourses – all of which are positions, as this essay will demonstrate, that have been taken in the name of a Shakespeare mutated by adaptation. Examples such as these merely foreground the way in which Shakespearean adaptation has taken on a life of its own in Canada, suiting the varied agendas of diverse regional theatres, whether reaching out to younger audiences, commenting on national political issues, addressing issues of identity politics and popular culture, or presenting more broadly based ideological and social critiques. Elizabeth Hanson has cautioned against criticism that makes simplistic assumptions about the Shakespeare effect in relation to a ‘reflexive Shakespeare-centrism’ (77) that makes of Shakespeare a sort of ‘default-mode’ (84) for critical pronouncements on the early modern period. The caution is well taken, especially in a critical practice that studies Shakespearean adaptation in relation to Canadian national identity. Neither Shakespearean adaptation nor Canadian national identity are necessarily coherent terms. Both are subject to immense and varying pressures to conform to different ideologies, different sites of national self-identification. Both pose definitional problems that do not necessarily come with stable answers: at what point is a play based on a distinctive Shakespearean character, for example, not an adaptation of Shakespeare? What degree of Shakespearean referentiality must a play have in order to qualify as an adaptation? What degree of Canadian referentiality is necessary to qualify as Canadian? At what point is Canadian national identity conceivable only as an illusive essentialism based solely on geography and not on any reductive qualities like ‘our’ proverbial niceness, tendency to compromise or self-deprecation, capacity for irony, and so on? To what extent does John Metcalfe’s skewering of Robin Mathew’s assertion that ‘Canadian writing in the true tradition ... celebrates collectivity and community’ (15) precisely represent that what it means to be Canadian is to resist such delusory pronouncements in the name of different truths about collectivity and community?

Shakespearean adaptation in Canada, then, fulfills a number of functions, not the least of which is the staging of contestatory sites of interpretation in which interpretation necessarily leads to adaptation. Even as adaptation represents an interpretive consumption of source that may radically change how that source is understood, it is necessarily mediated by its cannibalistic relation to source. In fact, part of the interpretative frisson generated by adaptations lies precisely in the extent to which recognizable aspects of the source-text are interwoven into the new contexts, however defamiliarized, of the adaptation. As a genre, then, adaptation pits the supposed normative orthodoxy of the original against its heterodox others, those interpretations that transgress...
against the expectations of the norm through the revisionary status of the adaptation.

Theatrical Shakespeare, in this last regard, is (and continues to be) the site of ongoing cultural warfare, ongoing transgression, and refashioning. English-born, African-Canadian Djanet Sears’s ‘rhapsodic-blues’ adaptation of Othello, Harlem Duet refigures Othello as a Black English professor teaching at Columbia University. Othello lives in Harlem at the corner of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King boulevards with his first wife, Billie, a graduate student, whom he abandons during the play for an unseen white woman. The play’s contemporation of Othello inverts the story, telling it from within the contexts of African-Canadian and African-American cultures. Sears uses three similar storylines from different historical periods to emphasize the traps of historical amnesia and repetition, all repeating the basic motif of a Black man leaving a Black woman for a white woman. Adaptation in this case calls attention to a particular sense of Black historicity and the need for its revaluation in terms that disallow the forgetting of past errors, past contingencies. The strategy is a radical revisioning of one of the essential factors in the formation of nation, which, as Ernest Renan puts it, is given shape out of ‘l’oubli et ... l’erreur historique’ (‘forgetting and ... historical error’) (qtd. in Hobsbawm 12).8 Obliquely, and despite its setting in Harlem, the play calls into question the silent history of African Canadians by articulating some of the historical contingencies that have contributed to the production of the Canadian nation-state, which has all but effaced, except in the most jejunee of ways, Black contributions to its make-up.

Sears’s use of background tapes and other archival materials having to do with the history of Black oppression (including Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a Dream’ speech and fragments of speeches and songs from prominent Black figures including Malcolm X, Langston Hughes, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, Louis Farrakhan, Jesse Jackson, Christopher Darden, and Anita Hill) overwrites her Shakespearean source, foregrounding the rich panoply of Black culture and voice that her play animates. Moreover, the play explicitly discusses racism, and especially internalized racism, from within the context of Black culture. Othello leaves Billie because, as a Black male, he has internalized self-hatred to such an extent that the only escape is via the allure of white culture, which then serves only to perpetuate the racist structures in which he is ostensibly trapped. Harlem Duet, then, reshapes Shakespeare in the service of a contemporary dialogue about racial issues that has an obvious import for race relations in Canada.

A national theatre critic gave the play two stars, stating, ‘The tragedy of Othello and Billie is that they cannot escape their racial consciousness, but it is also the tragedy of this script’ (K. Taylor, ‘Characters’). The implications of this assessment are clear. Forget difference. Remain colour-blind. Rise above politics. Racial consciousness is racist. In short, become (symbolically) white. Forget about history. The same critic also found the static moments in the play, in which the actors stare directly into the faces of audience members, unappealing and forced, as if all theatre should follow the Stanislavskian convention in which an actor, though knowing she is an actor, ‘consciously tries to be unaware of the presence of the audience’ (Boal 23), and reject the Brechtian technique in which ‘the actor is completely aware of the presence of the audience, which she transforms into genuine ... but mute interlocutors’ (23).

But having an all-Black cast of actors face into an audience that is predominantly white simply makes explicit the differences the play explores in relation to the Shakespearean original, which would have had an all-white cast performing for predominantly white audiences. Sears’s dislocation of Shakespeare into a contemporary discussion of race, then, is a way of transgressing through adaptation, a way of making the margin move to the centre, thus disturbing primarily white notions of national identity.

Harlem Duet’s performance history is unique in a Canadian cultural context because it is so closely tied to an emergent Black theatrical aesthetic, one that challenges Eurocentric practices even as it is implicated in mediating and revising them. As Alison Sealy-Smith, the creator of the role of Billie (Sybil), states, ‘what was wonderful about working on Harlem Duet is that we [Black actors] never get to have all Black people in a room. It doesn’t happen. And we weren’t working on Shakespeare, we weren’t saying to the world, “let’s just see what happens when these words come out of Black mouths instead of White ones”’ (Sears and Sealy-Smith, ‘Nique’ 28). Sears herself acknowledges that ‘in Harlem Duet I wanted a tension between European culture and African-American culture’ (29), while noting the historical circumstances that make Harlem Duet distinctive: ‘Before Harlem Duet, Canadian Stage [a major Canadian theatre] had never produced a work by an author of ... African descent. And the problem with Canadian Stage is that it’s called Canadian Stage, so it represents Canada, and I’m thinking, “I’m Canadian, so it must represent me”’ (30). Even as it uses contextual markers that link it to Shakespeare’s Othello (some names, some thematic materials, and some crucial imagery – the handkerchief, for instance, is a crucial prop in
that racial identity transcends political borders even as it contradictorily
emblematic of Black cultural experience generally. The setting suggests
use of the Canadian public stage.

Further, the American setting of the play makes problematic the play's Canadianness, if only by its implicit assumption of Harlem as
Black cultural experience generally. The setting suggests
that racial identity transcends political borders even as it contradictorily
troubles essentialist notions about national identity in which shared
assumptions about what constitutes identity are in play. (These
essentialist notions may include ethnicity, linguistic difference, found-
ing values and myths, and so on as determining factors in the con-
struction of an originary and essential national identity.) Does the play have
be set in Canada to be any more or less Canadian, whatever that may
mean? In many ways, the absence of Canada from the play, except for the
transitory appearance of Billie's father as a character named Can-
da, replicates the absence of Black culture from the Canadian stage, a
structure of disappearance that makes the play's politics all the more
provocative. Sears's adaptation, with its implicit challenge to assump-
tions of an easily achieved Canadian inter-, trans-, or multiculturalism
(its implicit acknowledgment of the existence of other groups who have
not achieved cultural presence), exemplifies the use of adapted Shake-
pere to address difference and its absence. So, in Canada in 1997, a
vestigial, dismembered Shakespeare becomes the site of an identity poli-
tics, a transgressive writing of Black culture that challenges those who
are its others to reconfigure whom and why they are what they are. And
Shakespeare, for better or for worse, becomes one of the chosen sites
around which the 'we' (that thinks itself Canadian) engages in the
'authentic struggle to transform' (Freire 29) the very dialogues and
interpretations that make us who 'we' are.

Adaptation has also garnered space in the popular press. Brian Mos-
soop, in a 1997 letter to the *Globe and Mail*, calls Shakespeare's plays as
obscene as *Beowulf* and *The Canterbury Tales*, both written in different but
related languages, provoking a response from Robert Cushman. The lat-
ter argues for the so-called original texts and against prefabricated adap-
tations like the *Compleat Works of Wllm Shkspr (Abridged)* - '37 plays in 97
minutes' (qtd. from the ad campaign). Cushman cites the example of
Robert Graves, hired in 1965 to rewrite in prose obscure lines from
*Much Ado About Nothing* for the British National Theatre. The produc-
tion, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, 'proved no more funny, touching or
comprehensible than others have done. The National never hired a
rewrite man again' ('Modernize'). In making his argument against the
'dumbing down' of Shakespeare via populist abridgments that are also
adaptations, Cushman Canadianizes the issue by referring to the Wayne
and Shuster 'Masterschuck Theatre' spoof (also, loosely, an adaptation)
of *Julius Caesar* that appeared in the 1950s. The spoof is startling because
it assumes its prime-time audience had a nodding acquaintance with
Shakespeare, and it even throws in jokes about Latin. (Wayne orders a
*m. rtinus*.) Here, the issue of Shakespeare as a form of cultural capital, an emblem of con-
testatory identity politics over which virtually anyone is free to inscribe his
or her revisioning, operates in a mode of ironic self-deprecation. The
skit assumes the general recognizability of Shakespeare as a cultural re-
ferent to a national TV audience even as it lampoons Shakespeare as a
synecdoche for academic prolixity. The crucial point is that Shake-
pere and adaptations thereof sparked a public debate in a Canadian
national newspaper over issues of authenticity, cultural value, and the
politics of adaptation, thereby reinscribing Shakespeare's iconicity as a
sign of a troubled form of cultural capital. Finally, as a clear indication
of the institutional recognition of Canadian theatrical practices involv-
ing Shakespearean adaptation, two recent winners of the Governor
General's Award for Drama, often seen as the most prestigious award in
Canada, have been for radical adaptations of Shakespearean source
materials (Ann-Marie MacDonald for *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morn-
ing Juliet)* [1990] and Djanet Sears for *Harlem Duet* [1998]), the former
writing from a strongly inflected lesbian and feminist position, the lat-
ter, as already discussed, from a feminist, African-Canadian perspective.

It is not the purpose of this essay to detail the numerous theatrical adap-
tations of Shakespeare written, staged, and produced in Canada over the
last century. Suffice it to say that, from the 1880s to the present,
and especially in the last thirty years, Shakespearean adaptations have
emerged as a distinct subgenre in Canadian theatre. In short, Canada's
history of Shakespearean adaptation is coincident with its emergence as
a nation-state. Shakespearean adaptation in the modern Canadian con-
text recapitulates a basic configuration associated with the genesis of the
nation: it links the iconicity of Shakespeare with the symbolic destiny,
however illusory, of nation. At the same time as this general and highly
conventional trajectory has been pursued, contrary pursuits under the
rubric of different national self-interests in Canada, whether Québécois, Acadian, aboriginal, African-Canadian, immigrant, or otherwise, have come to modify the notion of a monolithic adaptive practice associated with Shakespeare.

In such a context, Shakespeare is no longer 'Shakespeare,' but a discursive instrument whose adaptive suitability is tied to a generalized iconic presence that can be mapped on to a wide range of subjects in the public sphere. An early Canadian adaptation exemplifies this effect. Charles Moyse's 'fancy,' Shakspere's Skull and Falstaff's Nose (1889; published under the pseudonym Belgrave Titmarsh), condemns the 'academic fanaticism' promulgated in the name of 'researching the works of Shakespeare' (qtd. in A. Wagner, Brock 32). In addition to teaching in the English department at McGill University in Montreal 'for more than forty years,' Moyse served as dean of McGill's faculty of arts and vice-principal of the university from 1903 to 1920 (Fetherstonhaugh 105). Moyse, born in 1852 (Torquay, Devonshire), was appointed Molson Professor of English Literature at McGill in 1879, after graduating from London University in 1874 with a prize in physiology (Morgan 664).

Capitalizing on the late-Victorian taste for farce, Shakspere's Skull depicts a pedant, Dryasdustus, under the delusion of being a descendant of Shakespeare, speaking in a take-off on Elizabethan blank verse. Dryasdustus proclaims:

My brain I'll prove of substance nonpareil;  
My soul, his [Shakespeare's] worthy counterpart: these two  
Beget ten mighty folios of new thoughts...

The worser sort,  
Although not all mine own, are intermixed  
With others all mine own, tending to this,  
That Shakspere's writ by one called Dryasdust. (19)

Central to the play's thematics is a satire of the Shakespearean authentic: how lunatic scholarship allows the spurious possession of Shakespeare's writings, to the point that Dryasdustus stands convinced of his own authorship of Shakespeare. The attempt to possess Shakespeare is metaphorized in Dryasdustus's attempt to rob Shakespeare's grave of its skull only to discover that the body-snatchers he has employed to do this 'didn't get to the bottom of the grave' (60). As with other moments in the play, the attempt to essentialize Shakespeare, either in scholarly writing or in the materiality of uncertain relics, is exposed as absurd.

When Dryasdustus, now on the lam for the robbery of Shakespeare's grave, encounters another Shakespearean (Second Gentleman), the talk turns to how Shakespeare is transposed and adapted in the name of egomaniacal, literary careerism:

Then I made the acquaintance of a so-called True Shakperian [sic] scholar, who told me I had been utterly misled [about what Shakespeare truly wrote]. He hacked Shakspere in his own style, and presented me with a still bulkier volume of plays [than a preceding critic who has done the same], even more obscure, which he had published, and in which he had caused the portions he was positive were Shakespeare's to be printed in italics likewise. (57–8)

This Second Gentleman determines to write 'a true Shakespearian book' (58) on two subjects: 'one, to present to the world for the first time the real face of Shakspere by blending, according to a modern process, all the representations of Shakspere in stone or on canvas that have come down to us; the other, to write what my True Shaksperian mind conceived to be the real key to Falstaff's character—his nose. I chose the latter, buried myself in literary rubbish, became disgusted, unlike a True Shaksperian, and resolved to return to mental health' (58). In Moyse's spoof, Shakespeare figures as an endlessly plastic material in the service of ludicrous ends, forever adaptable in the name of truth. That the spoof was published in 1889 in London, ten years after Moyse had become a professor of English at McGill University, hints, however obliquely, at the relations of colonial servitude to, and independence from, Shakespearean authority that the play addresses.9

The culminating scenes of the play— in which Dryasdustus assumes a new identity (Mr Robinson) and boards with a mother and her daughter (Janet Fluter), the latter engaged in Elizabethan scholarship with 'keen critical insight into the development and expression of lines of thought peculiar to, and common among, the best exponents of our national literature in the Elizabethan age' (64)– make explicit the relationship between nation and adaptation. Janet, in a speech that invokes Columbus and Cabot, associates her scholarship with a 'New' world (later she will call Dryasdustus/Robinson 'Ferdinand,' figuring herself implicitly as Miranda), and asks why
Shakespeare is taken to be central to an English canonical literary tradition, adaptive in relation to so-called source texts.” That is, even as Shakespeare (as a sign of undisputed origins, truth, and genuineness) is realigned with authentic Shakespeare (no). Shakespeare’s extensive literary borrowings and transformations, what Frye calls his ‘fusions,’ contribute to his vexed authenticity, his authentic inauthenticity or his inauthentic authenticity. Authentic here is no guarantor of fidelity to a source, nor is it a guarantor of the Oxford English Dictionary’s (OED) definition of authentic as meaning ‘of undisputed origin,’ having to do with the establishment of truth, validity, or genuineness. The complex debates over Shakespearean authorship brought about by highly technical editorial instruments, and by changes in critical ideologies bearing on early modern texts generally, point to Shakespeare as the site of an authenticity in dispute.

The dispute is founded on a misunderstanding of what authenticity signifies: namely, a form of self-authorization that has less to do with ‘undisputed origins’ than with a form of self-fashioning that seeks autonomy in its relations to originary truth, value, or genuineness. That is, Shakespeare is self-authenticating insofar as he is self-authorizing. In the Greek sense of the authentic, he practices an adaptive revisionism in relation to source texts in the name of self-interest. Yet, at the same time, that self-authORIZATION cannot escape the dialogical contingencies (of source and of immediate performative and historical context) that create the contexts for the revisions – no Coriolanus without Plutarch, no A Midsummer Night’s Dream without Ovid, no Macbeth without Holinshed. In short, the authenticity of Shakespeare, his construction as the originary source of English national and literary genius, is, as I am reading it, a form of inauthenticity, precisely because Shakespeare achieves difference in the name of a misperceived monological authenticity. This observation has bearing when transposed into the context of Canadian adaptations. When inauthentic Shakespeare is adapted in the name of authenticating an emergent and troubled sense of nation, critical pathologies flourish, especially when synecdochic Shakespeare (as a sign for all that is culturally good) is realigned with authentic Shakespeare (as a sign of undisputed origins, truth, and genuineness).

Charles Taylor avers that ‘the understanding of identity and authenticity has introduced a new dimension into the politics of equal recognition, which now operates with something like its own notion of authenticity, at least so far as the denunciation of other-induced distortions is concerned’ (37). In the case of the appropriation of Shakespeare by way of adaptive writing strategies in a Canadian national context, this
comment resonates powerfully. Identity and authenticity conspire to produce the trope of nation, even as identity and authenticity come to be used as tropes for identity politics that controvert nation, putting its assumptions of homogeneity and coherence to the question. ¹³ Shakespearean adaptation is merely one of the sites in which these terms paradoxically align themselves to give shape to an unresolved, dia(poly)logical process, in which multiple contexts and registers of meaning are engaged. Nation assumes assimilation into the authentic bosom of an originary identity, however spurious or illusory such an idea may be. Canada's widely disseminated myth of two founding cultures (English and French), for instance, is counterpointed by indigenous and immigrant histories that make such an 'origin' more than arguable.¹⁴ But, as Taylor points out, 'this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity' (38). The authentic, because it is always predicated on a belatedly assimilative effect, signifies an identity crisis by way of a dialectic that presumes and requires the inauthentic (that which is assimilated) in order to give it meaning. Shakespeare's appropriation by state (read 'authentic') culture is used as a bulwark against incursions into state culture by its 'inauthentic,' nomadic margins.

Adaptations work both sides of this coin, whether confirming a myth of authenticity and origin or interrogating such a position through alternative and revisionary definitions of authenticity. Jacques Attali has defined 'Shakespeareanism' as the 'Théorie de l'Histoire qui attribue un rôle déterminant aux passions, aux luttes, aux bassesses et aux pulsions des puissants. Toujours nécessaire pour comprendre les principales bifurcations géopolitiques' ('Theory of History that attributes a determining role to the passions, the struggles, the baseness, and the drives of the powerful. Always necessary for understanding the principal geopolitical divergences') (294). That is, Shakespeare signifies history, power, geopolitical difference, and, by extension, nation. For Alan Filewod, speaking to the question of a specifically Canadian national theatre, 'the rhetorical proposal of a national theatre in effect means the canonization of a theatre and drama that reflects the national ideals of the governing elite' ('National' 23). Filewod traces the 'obsession with a Canadian identity' (16) to the nineteenth century, which 'fuelled the movement of romantic poetic drama that produced the ponderous pseudo-Shakespearean tragedies which plague today's students of Can-Lit' (16).

It is no accident that Filewod associates national identity with 'pseudo-Shakespearean tragedies.' The pattern of constructing national identity in a colonial context, as the example of India forcefully shows, was facilitated by the use of Shakespeare, if only as the easily imported sign of a transcendental civilized excellence and cultural identity (in the supposed absence of the latter). As Filewod argues, 'the idea that Canadian national drama was an appropriation of British cultural models gathered strength in the years after the Great War, and led directly to the model of public regional theatres advocated by the Canada Council in the 1960s' (18). Under the direction of anglophile culture czar Vincent Massey, the mark of 'civilization' was understood as an 'extension' of English culture adapted to the Canadian context. Here, nation, the politics of literary canons, the aesthetic proclivities of those in power, and the specific historical contingencies that underlie a colonial past conjoin under the name of that inauthentically authentic guarantor of difference and self-sameness that is Shakespeare. Shakespearean theatrical adaptations in Canada represent a particular formation of this larger trope.

Elizabeth Hanson proposes reading plays 'as traces of complex interactions between literary resources and the social fantasies of particular groups' (84). I take this to be an effective strategy for discussing the notion of Shakespearean adaptation in Canada as a literary and social practice with implications for how the nation gets 'worried,' to borrow Jonathan Kertzer's term. Just as adaptation presupposes a transformational process whose revisionary politics serve the particular self-authorizing ends of the adapter, so nation, when conjoined with adaptation, operates under the sign of what Michel Seymour calls the 'perpetuelle transformation de l'identité civique commune' ('the perpetual transformation of the shared civic identity'). Adaptations, like other cultural artefacts, work to produce a range of possible responses to national identity, including its very thinkability. National identity is an imaginary entity, an ideality based on the simultaneous production and eradication of difference through the filter of communal values, in this case, putatively embedded in Shakespeare and the Shakespeare effect. The latter are both guarantors of a dubious authenticity linked to literary and state cultures.

Adaptations, then, as they attempt to efface in the name of a national singularity, consolidate, assimilate, and produce difference, effectively showing such assimilated difference(s) to be inauthentic. Radical adaptive practices, such as those evident in previously discussed plays like Harlem Duet and Shakspere's Skull and Falstaff's Nose, challenge simplistic
Adaptation exposes the sham of nation as a sign of meaningful coher-
pertaining to the presence of ethnic difference on the national stage. I met her, but a Gros Ventres [Big Belly] when I left. (Laughs) That’s what
be found. And Sears’s more recent adaptation explicitly addresses issues
scholarship in pursuit of an authentic, true Shakespeare that will never

tion in Canada,

have seen, one of the earliest known examples of Shakespearean adapta-
tion of a national drama, and without ... a specifically defined national theatre’ (‘National’ 16). Similarly, adaptation questions the essentialist qualities associated with Shakespearean authority, canonicity, and cultural value. In short, adaptations serve multiple positionings with regard
to national self-identity as mediated by a cultural icon like Shakespeare.

To be sure, the way in which national identity gets ‘worried’ by Shake-
pearean adaptation in Canada is not necessarily always particularly enlightened, politically sensitive, or without controversy. In English-
born, western-Canadian Warren Graves’s play Chief Shaking Spear Rides
Again (or the Taming of the Sioux), ‘commissioned by Walterdale Theatre
Associates for their 10th annual Klondike Days Melodrama at the Citadel
Theatre, Edmonton, 1974’ (Graves),15 the Corn Exchange Theatre is
threatened at the turn of the century by a rapacious land developer, Cramden Twinge. The theatre is run by a hodgepodge of English expa-
triates, an ‘alien group’ (23). Their only recourse to save the theatre is through ‘the old Cultural Identity Preservation Clause,’ which states that if the group can find someone “whose residence in the area commenced at birth and continues to be extant” then Twinge will be unable to ‘foreclose’ on the contract (22). To the rescue comes an ‘authentic’ chief, literally a literary chieftain, Shaking Spear, who has had a vision: ‘The spirit tell me that my name from that day will be Shaking Spear... And he tell me that I shall write the stories that he will tell me and that these stories will tell of my people and their ways’ (26). The chief then goes on to name, in a series of painfully bad puns, the plays he has written: ‘First, there was “A Midsummer Night’s Sweatlodge” – a comedy. After that, the words came quickly and I wrote “Two Gentlemen from Kelowna,” “The Factor of Venice,” “Henry Hudson Parts One and Two,” “Troilus and Calymchuck” ... then I got into the story of my people on the reserves applying for municipal status’ (26). Walter Dale, the manager of the Corn Exchange, asks, ‘What did you call that?’ Shaking Spear responds, ‘Hamlet’ (27). In a final series of increasingly offensive jokes,

Walter asks Shaking Spear what inspired him to write The Taming of the
Sioux. Shaking Spear first invokes ‘the story of my people and Sitting Bull when he fled from the longknives south of the Medicine line’ before
leading into the following exchange:

Chief. Then there was this girl I met once in Winnipeg. She was a Sue when
I met her, but a Gros Ventres [Big Belly] when I left. (Laughs) That’s what
we call an Indian joke.

Walter. Oh I see.

Chief. Ethnic.

Walter. Yes, of course.

Chief. Like, ‘Hi, there Chief. What do you think of bilingualism? Do you
know what the Chief says?

Walter. I can’t imagine.

Chief. (Folds arms) ‘White Man speak with forked tongue.’ (27)

The passage puts racist, white dialogue into aboriginal mouths. Ethnic jokes here are the domain of Native culture even as offensive stereo-
types are implicitly promulgated by white, settler culture. Shakespeare is refigured in aboriginal terms precisely as a means of diminishing the threat of alterity through racist belittlement. Furthermore, the smug irony is that Graves has the aboriginal saviour of the colonial theatre being told the stories ‘of my people’ by a spirit who has him writing take-
offs of Shakespeare put into an explicitly Canadian context. So, a neo-
colonial, English-expatriate (Albertan) Canadian usurps the cultural authority of Shakespeare to foreground racist stereotypes of aboriginal culture in the name of a language not its own. The dynamic is exemplar-
y of the sort of inauthentic striving after authenticity that gives shape to some aspects of Canadian identity formations.

The dream of eradicating aboriginals’ special status by way of a stra-
egy of assimilation is one context for understanding the Graves play. In 1969, five years before the first production of Graves’s play, a federal
government White Paper that raised the possibility of eliminating natives’ special status became the focal point of bitter opposition which
ded to the government’s repudiation of its proposed policy change. The Taming of the Sioux trope, in this context, reminds the white audience of its own material dominance in relation to Native culture. Moreover, the
play shows Shaking Spear to have internalized the lessons of Sitting Bull’s defeat (read ‘taming’) by conforming to the stereotype of the randy Native, impregnating Sue in Winnipeg and making light of west-
ern Canada's other national fixation, official bilingualism. Shaking Spear voices the regional anxieties of English-Canadian, western culture with regard to its own capacity to deal with difference, whether aboriginal or French. Aboriginal culture is shown to allow itself willingly to be co-opted to colonial purposes (in this case, the saving of the Corn Exchange Theatre as a metonym for settler culture), thus perpetuating long-standing falsehoods about Native cultures' complicity in their own demise. The precise point of all this is to expose, in a western Canadian regional context, the difference between a presumed Shakespearean authenticity and aboriginal inauthenticity, thus validating the former at the expense of the latter.

Inauthentic difference, then, is a function of the very fissures that underlie Canada's national imaginary based on supposedly multicultural and bilingual values, the essentialist myth of a constitution grounded in two founding peoples. At the core of relations between nation and adaptation in Canada is the desire to conform to an unsundered affiliation (A mari usque ad mare) even as that myth is haunted by the realities of racism, linguistic intolerance, and the dream of a domesticated (assimilationist) difference, at the service of hegemonic culture. In this scenario, Shakespeare serves as the symbolic capital that consolidates difference, even as that difference and its consolidation are shown to be inauthentic, forever under the sign of a scepticism that destabilizes notions of origin (and thus of tradition), truth, and genuineness. In the community that is no community (other than as shorthand for a recognizable structure of power), Shakespeare mediates the illusion of nation that serves various interests, from those at the margins of Canadian culture to those at its imagined core. Shakespearean adaptation is one of the discourses by which a 'cultural construction of colonialism, the ways in which colonialism was helped by and in turn produced images of both the Self and Other' (Pennycook 15), is achieved.

In his discussion of how Shakespearean tropologies are useful in understanding the relations between literatures of alterity and their canonical counterparts, Max Dorsinville notes that one does not have to go beyond the Shakespearean meaning to find in the Prospero-Caliban set of symbols an appropriate metaphorical application for the dilemma brought about by the sprouting of a number of minor, regional, national or ethnic literatures. African, Antillean, French-Canadian and Black American writers need not hurl abuse at their French or English/American Prosopos, but they do claim a metaphorical or actual land of their own, and an experience of the world differentiating them from linguistic or geographic congener (15).

Or, as François Paré puts it:

Les écrivains et leurs personnages y sont particulièrement susceptibles à la métamorphose et ultimement à la perte de l'identité formelle. Tout le discours du colonisé semble intérioriser les modes de comportement du colonisateur, semble épouser les rôles du dominant; ce discours devient ainsi le théâtre d'une aliénation, d'une présence en soi de l'altérité. (188)

( Writers and their characters are particularly susceptible to metamorphosis and ultimately to the loss of formal identity. The entire discourse of the colonized seems to interiorize the modes of comportment of the colonizer, seems to wed the roles of the dominant culture; this discourse thus becomes a theatre of alienation, of the presence in oneself of alterity.)

Shakespearean adaptation locates one site of this interiorization that threatens identity, that takes alterity and makes it over in the name of dominant culture, thus producing a theatre of alienation.

But this is hardly the whole story. Alterity can and does write back. Shakespearean adaptation can signal a productive interiorization that challenges and remakes dominant culture in the name of alterity, threatening dominant culture with the 'spectres d'altérité' ('spectres of alterity') (188) discussed by Paré. A good example of this 'writing back' occurs in Acadian writer Antonine Maillet's theatrical adaptation of Shakespearean motifs, William S, first staged in 1991 at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert in Montreal. The play poses the problem of what Shakespeare's characters might ask him if he were given a chance to respond 'aux craintes, plaintes et récriminations...des créatures incomplètes, inachevées, condamnées comme vous et moi à un destin trop petit pour elles' ('to the fears, complaints, recriminations... of incomplete, unfinished characters condemned, like you and me, to too limited a destiny') (7). The play stages a meeting between Shakespeare and eight Shakespearean characters, including Lady Macbeth, Falstaff, the Shrew (La Mégère), King Lear, Hamlet, Juliet, Shylock, and Juliet's nanny (Nounou). In its basic structure and premise, then, the play sets itself up as an interrogation of the relationship between authorial source and his creations.
The characters enunciate a litany of complaints against Shakespeare in the early stages of the play, with Shakespeare present in his disguised role as fool. Lady Macbeth and Shylock, in a crucial passage, articulate one of the play’s central concerns:

Lady Macbeth. Nous sommes tous sortis de lui. Et pourtant, lui-même est né de nous. Qu’il ne se trompe pas: sans Prospero, Othello, Richard III, Antoine et Cléopâtre et Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare ... n’est rien.

Shylock. Rien du tout, c’est un Anglais mesquin, médiocre et anti-sémite, comme la plupart des chrétiens de son espèce. Sans nous, personne aujourd’hui ne se souviendrait même du prénom de ce scribouilleur dramatique. (39)

(Lady Macbeth. We all come from him. And yet, he’s born of us. Let him not be mistaken. Without Prospero, Othello, Richard III, Antony and Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare ... is nothing.

Fou. [Shakespeare]. Shakespeare ... is nothing.

Shylock. Nothing at all. He’s a mean-spirited Englishman, mediocre and anti-Semitic, like most Christians of his kind. Without us, nobody today would even remember the Christian name of this dramatic scribbler.)

Shakespeare’s dependence on the characters he has created reveals a profound split between the authoritative source and the way in which source is mutated by adaptation. Maillet’s adaptation thus shows how necessary adaptation is to the ongoing memorialization of Shakespearean cultural presence, in this case in an Acadian and French-Canadian theatrical context. The gesture is significant in this latter context because it subverts a basic colonial relation, using the very instrumental-ity of Shakespearean cultural and colonial presence as its primary tool. Thus, source culture is shown to be reliant on its colonial adaptations, deserving of critique from a perspective that recognizes the interdependence of the particular cultural, social, and national identities that emerge from the colonial enterprise.

Shylock’s attack on English national identity as mean-spirited, anti-Semitic, degraded Christianity cannot be detached from the larger context of Acadian nationalist sentiment. This is especially the case in relation to the massive deportation and diaspora of Acadians effected from 1755 to 1762 by the English under Governor Charles Lawrence. An estimated three-quarters of the Acadian population was displaced along the east coast of Canadian and American territories (to make room for English and American settlers) and was stripped of basic civil and legal rights (to own property or to vote). A climactic moment in William Shakespeares’s hands and feet being chained by his characters, where-upon the Shrew states: ‘À ton tour, miserable, de goûter à la douceur des chaînes et de l’asservissement’ (‘Your turn, miserable one, to taste the sweetness of chains and of slavery’) (75). The symbolic import of this moment is significant in the Acadian colonial context for obvious reasons, not the least of which involve the transgressive repositioning, by way of adaptation, of Shakespeare’s cultural presence as slave—not master. The play ends with Shakespeare acknowledging that his characters have good reason to complain about him: ‘Au fond, vous n’êtes pas tellement réussis. Je crains de vous avoir ratés’ (‘Basically, you weren’t that much of a success. I’m afraid I failed with you’) (104). Shakespeare goes on to recognize that what his characters desire is l’éternel recommencement. Une nouvelle chance, une autre vie ...’ (‘eternal renewal. A new chance, another life ...’) (107).

Maillet literally has Shakespeare authorizing the liberation of his characters from their confined destinies in the plays, suggesting that alternative modes of their being given life in adaptations is one way of instituting the renewal they seek. Enslaved Shakespeare thus stands trial for his creations and is forced to recognize both his failure and the need to release his characters from their enslavement in/as Shakespearean texts. The move symbolically recapitulates the examination and condemnation of colonial relations that underlie the play’s seemingly universalist themes having to do with creator and created. And it refigures the notion of authentic Shakespeare as radically dependent on creations that are inauthentic and incomplete, yearning for an unpredictable renewal that remakes their experience as authentic while deauthenticating Shakespearean monumentality. Maillet’s general importance to the Acadian literary revival is not to be underestimated. Nor is her decision to write a play that radically appropriates a major icon of English colonial culture (Shakespeare) in the name of a parodic attack on that icon’s self-authorizing influence and power.

Adaptive to both authoritative discourse and transgressive counter-discourse, Shakespeare’s use-value is exploited in a symbolic economy of literary and theatrical values that give shape to the national imaginary. Shakespeare is the potentiality of ideology, form, and identity that pits the ‘heterological discoveries of self and other’ (Siemerling 212) against the inauthentic singularity of his authority. The inauthenticity of Shakespeare as a cultural force capable of effacing the differences that form the imagined singularity of Canada is exposed, as is the impossibil-
ity of the 'authentic' (more generally) as it relates to notions of state provenance and historical veracity. This is not to neutralize the general project(s) of Shakespearean adaptations in Canada. A certain kind of power is at stake, one that has to do with who has access to modes of cultural representation and dissemination, who gets to realize aspirations of difference or similitude in the public arena of the theatre: in short, who gets to have a public at all, who gets to do what, where, and why. As Frank Davey states in his discussion of Canadian literary power, the 'imbrication [or overlapped arrangement] of literary "power" within the texts of generalized social aspiration and conflict means that, while literary "power" may seem limited and unspecifiable, it is also neither illusionary or trivial... How we map literary power is itself one of the discursive means by which power is constructed, disputed, contained, and allocated' (6–7).

Shakespearean adaptations in Canada cannibalize Shakespearean authenticity in the name of the inauthentic upon which any adaptation is predicated – they exemplify a form of literary and theatrical expression in which various contingencies, personal, historical, economic, and otherwise, combine to produce a text or a performance that 'fits' its moment. In Shakespearean adaptations particular to the Canadian context, this process of being made 'fit' puts to the question issues of national self-identification and self-formation. Why, in Canada, has there been a sustained body of theatrical work that maps itself onto the Shakespearean 'authentic' in ways that consistently deform that authentic, reveal it to be inauthentic? If anything, the answer lies in Shakespeare's phantasmal capacity for permutation. Permutation occurs both as a function of canonical authority and identity and as an index against which differential registers of that authority and identity are measured. In this phantasmal guise – dismembered, cannibalized, spectral, consumed, and consuming – the Shakespeare that is no Shakespeare in Canada (or elsewhere) gives shape to the fraught imaginary of nation and/as adaptation.

Notes

1 I am indebted to a number of people for help in writing this essay. Jennifer Ailles provided much needed research support, as did Ric Knowles, Harry Lane, Alan Filewod, Leanore Lieblein, and Leslie Lester. A small portion of this essay reproduces (in modified form) materials published in Adaptations of Shakespeare. Finally, I am grateful to the Department of English at the University of Manitoba, on whose invitation I had the opportunity to present these ideas in their earliest form, and to the Shakespeare Association of America, at whose April 2000 annual conference a truncated version of this paper was given in the plenary session on 'Theorizing Adaptation: Shakespeare in Canada.'

2 Competing theories of how to address ethnic, racial, and class difference in Canada have further complicated the scenario: on the one hand, the vertical-mosaic model, with its assumption of a static hierarchy divided along class and ethnic lines, and, on the other, the melting-pot model, with its assimilationist dream of the erasure of all such differences into a national whole. Lest we forget, in 1971, when Pierre Elliot Trudeau 'officially declared Canada a bilingual and multicultural nation... only 5% of Canadians were non-white' (Driedger). From the early 1970s to the 1990s, 'visible minorities in Canada doubled from 5% to 10%.' (Driedger). Jean Burnet notes that 'diversity, heterogeneity and multiculturalism has [sic] increasingly been recognized by Census Canada, when in the 1981 census they allowed multiple ethnic designations which 1.2 million chose. By 1996, 10.2 million respondents reported multiple ethnic group heritages.'

3 For the purposes of this chapter, I distinguish two forms of Shakespearean adaptation: the first based on the Shakespeare effect that is a function of Shakespeare's cultural pervasiveness, in which echoes, resonances, and direct integration of that effect are in evidence in a given play; the second based on thematic and formal adaptations of specific playtexts in which the adapted play retropes the Shakespearean original(s). For further discussion of the different senses of adaptation, see Fischlin and Fortier 2–7.

4 Frye argues that 'the beginning of the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford turned out to be a very important event in the history of Canadian drama' and that 'Shakespeare at Stratford does not stand alone, because Molière played a very similar role in the development of French Canadian drama, at roughly the same time' (Divisions 23-4).

5 For more on the Shakespeare effect, see Fischlin and Fortier 8–19.

6 Entries continue to be made to this bibliography as research progresses (see CTR III, Adapting Shakespeare in Canada, co-edited by Daniel Fishlin and Ric Knowles, for the most recent version of this bibliographical work). The bibliography does not include non-theatrical adaptations, like those of Charles Heavyside, the Victorian poet born in England who emigrated to Montreal in 1853 and published a series of bombastic religious poems heavily influenced by Shakespeare (among others), or, more recently, musician and actress Loreena McKennitt, whose 1994 album The Mask and Mirror uses a
range of musical styles and texts from Shakespeare and the Spanish mystic John of the Cross.

7 For instance, would American-born John Murrell's *Farther West*, *New World* (1985), with its island setting, its title's oblique reference to Miranda's phrase 'brave new world' from *The Tempest* (5.1.183), its examination of characters whose experience is shaped by the colonial frontier in which they have gathered, its depiction of otherness and border-crossing within a Canadian national context, and its various thematic motifs (like the intrusion of technology into personal relations à la Prospero), be considered an adaptation, however distanced, of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*? Or would the seven-play cycle *La Vie et mort du roi boiteux* (1981–2), loosely based on Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Richard the Third* and written by French-born Jean-Pierre Ronfard, who came to Canada in 1960 as director of the French section of the National Theatre School in Montreal, be considered a Canadian adaptation? Would Normand Chaurette's *Les Reines* (1991), about the women affected by Richard III's accession to power, with its distinctive Shakespearean echoes, constitute a specifically Canadian adaptation, especially within the nationalist contexts of Québécois theatre? Would a French-language production of *Hamlet* (1999; the Geordie Space and La Licorne) by Alexandre (Sasha) Marine, a Québécois with Russian roots and theatrical training, in which Yorick makes an actual onstage appearance (as opposed to the Shakespearean original, in which he is absent), be considered an adaptation, especially when that director's aesthetic is marked by 'intervention' and an aversion to the 'respect timide des textes' (R. Lèvesque, *Hamlet*)? Further definitional problems exist with regard to both adaptation and national identity. Anton Wagner notes some of these in relation to Canada's long history of immigration: 'The frequent migration of writers to and from Canada makes it very difficult to determine Canadian nationality. To define what constitutes a Canadian play, we have maintained the definition set out in the 1972 edition of the *Brock Bibliography* [of Published Canadian Stage Plays in English 1900–1972], "plays written by Canadians, native, naturalized or landed immigrant." Therefore, plays written by an immigrant before he or she came to Canada are not Canadian, and presumably plays written by a native Canadian after he or she becomes a citizen of another country are not Canadian either' (Introduction v). These definitions, though workable, are hardly unproblematic.

8 All French translations are mine.

9 Stanley Brice Frost notes that 'in the 1920's, a new sense of national identity began to emerge in anglophone Canada which expressed itself first in literary activities, particularly the writing of poetry, and a little later in social and political activism. In literature the movement took the form of a rejection of Victorian models and canons of judgement, and particularly of colonial dependence on British traditions in poetry and creative writing' (9–10). Moyse's play anticipates this larger literary 'movement,' its anti-colonialism figured implicitly in its anti-Shakespearianism.

10 'Her first contribution to literature,' we are told in her imaginary description of a biographical entry that will be written as a result of her scholarly fame, 'is entitled *Shakespeare Settled*, in which she has proved, with great ingenuity, that the Swan of Avon must give place to the philosopher of Gray's Inn' (65).

11 Lionel Trilling traces the etymology of 'authentic' in greater detail: 'Authentic: to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. Authentique: not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide' (131). Murderous Shakespeare, then, would signify Shakespeare's capacity to overwrite his sources, to murder them in the richness of his own fashionings. Suicidal Shakespeare would signify the energy thereby released as a model for further adaptive fashionings of Shakespeare, the creative energy (falsely thought to originate in Shakespeare) that effectively gives others the means to do away with him through adaptive revisions. That is, the underlying problem of the authentic in relation to adaptation is one of violence and mastery over source and self and their respective fashionings and erasures. Even as Shakespeare is symbolically murdered through adaptation, his ongoing cultural presence is acknowledged and resurrected within the Shakespearean adaptive tradition.

12 For a more complete discussion of this, see the section of the general introduction entitled 'Virtual Shakespeares' in Fischlin and Fortier.

13 Kertzer discusses this dialectic in relation to Canadian critical models that attempt some form of national self-definition: 'Earlier literary historians, who were anxious that English Canada find its literary voice, listened for what is most authentic in that voice: the call of the wild, the colonial compromise, the ironic tone. By the mid-twentieth century, several critics were claiming that only a tentative/unending/fruitless quest for authenticity defines our literature. The questing itself grants authenticity, even when it is unsuccessful. Today's critics, always vigilant against essentialist thinking, characterize our literature by the way it studiously/playfully/sensuously renounces all claims to authenticity. Although these views differ drastically in their faith in authenticity, they all assume that a literary community, however combative, will produce "our" literature, however conflicted' (22–3). See Kertzer 22–3 for a more complete discussion of this issue. See also Adorno's discussion of fascism in relation to Germany. His linkage of national self-identification with the 'jargon of authenticity,' whose 'language is a trade-
mark of societalized choseness, noble and homey at once—sub-language as superior language' (5-6), speaks to the significance of the authentic as a signifier of national self-interest. In such a context, the political side-effects of a de-authenticated Shakespeare are not to be underestimated.

14 As Peter Dickinson argues, "the challenge to Canadian literary nationalism is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the work of contemporary First Nations writers. The term "First Nations" itself—in daring to posit prior origins, nationalities, and pluralisms—thoroughly destabilizes the bicultural model of Canadian literature at the same time that it raises problematic questions of cultural authenticity' (9).

15 Graves was the former artistic director of the Walterdale Playhouse at the time of the play’s publication, and later its membership chairman. Walterdale Theatre Associates, Western Canada’s longest-running amateur theatre group, runs the Walterdale Playhouse. Walterdale Theatre Associates is located in the heart of Old Strathcona in Strathcona’s old Firehall No. 1 (later Edmonton No. 6), which the WTA converted into Walterdale Playhouse, its third location since 1958.

16 The Canadian motto, derived from Psalm 72:8, literally means ‘from sea to sea,’ a trope of dominion that technically applied to Canada only in 1871, after British Columbia became a province. The motto came to be an official part of the Arms of Canada in 1921 only after it had been approved by King George V of England in May of that year (almost twenty-eight years before Newfoundland entered the confederation).

15

Undead and Unsafe: Adapting Shakespeare (in Canada)

MARK FORTIER

In this chapter, I want to explore certain aspects, theoretical/situational and ethical/political, of adapting Shakespeare in light of a specific set of Canadian adaptations that are part of a larger theoretical and political pattern. In undertaking this exploration, I have been spurred on by my fellow Canadian academic and Shakespeare scholar Denis Salter, specifically by two passages in his writings on contemporary dealings with Shakespeare.

The first passage is from his essay ‘Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space,’ in James Bulman’s Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance. Speaking of ‘tradaptations,’ translation-adaptations of Shakespeare, Salter writes:

I would argue that tradaptations, like postcolonial acting, should never be granted timeless status, for to do so would inadvertently reinforce the mystifying assumption that Shakespeare, and the values that he has been made to represent, can never be changed. Rather, tradaptations should be exercises in radical contingency, responsible only for the particular historical moment in which they attempt to decolonize and reinterpret the Shakespearean text. They should vanish once their particular historical moment has passed and new tradaptations should take their place. (126)

The second passage is from Shakespeare and Postcolonial Conditions, a special issue of Essays in Theatre edited by Salter. He begins his introduction: ‘At times I wonder if there’s anyone left who wants to create and defend traditional interpretations of “Shakespeare.” It’s beginning to seem as if everyone wants to give him a bloody nose or, at the very least, a good talking to’ (5).

Salter’s two statements are in different registers, one more prescri-