

mark of societalized chosenness, 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).

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 reinterrogate 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' (3).

Salter's two statements are in different registers, one more prescrip-

tive, the other more descriptive – although the registers are intertwined. Together, they could be taken to imply a number of propositions specifically about the adaptation of Shakespeare and more generally about the relations between the cultural past and present: that Shakespeare and the culture of the past are definable, limitable, and graspable; that it is possible and advisable to work in the present and momentary independent of the past; and that the appropriate relation in the present to works of the past such as Shakespeare's is confrontation and hostility. There is also, however, an opening up, in what these passages say and leave unsaid, of other ways of seeing the issues: as I am going to argue in this chapter, Shakespeare, like other cultural entities, is sublimely unknowable; the past haunts the present inescapably; and if our relationship with works of the past is often one of confrontation, it is often confrontation bound to collaboration.

First, I want to rethink the situation of adaptation, and to do this I turn to some notions from Slavoj Žižek's *Tarrying with the Negative*. Žižek begins his book with a discussion of a recent political image: during the fall of communism in Romania, the national flag was carried around with the red star cut from its centre (1–2). For Žižek, this image reveals the moment when the master signifier has been lost and not yet replaced, but it also reveals something about the master signifier at all times: that it covers over an absence or lack, or a sublimely unknowable object, the 'sublime object of ideology.' In the photograph of this hollowed-out flag on the cover of Žižek's book, we see, in black and white, two dark vertical strips on either side of a white central section missing its centre. If one did not know better, one could think it a Canadian flag with its maple leaf missing. One could think this not only because the physical form of this flag resembles Canada's, but because this sublime image speaks to a Canadian sense of identity, or its lack.

Following Kant, Žižek differentiates between two forms of the sublime: the noumenal and the phenomenal (53–6). The noumenal sublime is the unrepresentability of what is in essence unrepresentable: his examples are God and the soul. The phenomenal sublime is the unrepresentability of infinite or complex phenomena: for example, the universe as a whole. Canadian identity, exemplary, perhaps, of (national) identity in general (although the specifics will vary widely), partakes of both forms of the sublime. What would be missing from Žižek's flag, if it were Canadian, would be the maple leaf, which is the representation of Canada's identity as noumenon. The maple leaf, that is, stands for something unrepresentable in essence: nation, state, nationality. Moreover,

historically, the current Canadian flag was put forward only after an earlier version was rejected by parliament. This earlier flag, more representational, had blue edges, representing the oceans, and three maple leaves, representing English, French, and other Canadians. This earlier flag was a more phenomenal than noumenal representation. What is clear, however, is that three maple leaves are simply not enough: to represent the complexity of Canadian identity as a multicultural, multidimensional phenomenon would call for an indefinite number of maple leaves. Therefore, what the flag with the hole in it captures, as Canadian flag, is the sublime double unrepresentability of Canada, as both noumenon and phenomenon. There cannot be, in this light, a unified, or even representable, Canada, or, it follows, a graspably Canadian response to Shakespeare or to anything else.

But posit this image: the Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare from the First Folio with the face cut out. Does not such an image open up the sublime unrepresentability of Shakespeare? As noumenon, Shakespeare is a thing in essence unrepresentable, not text, person, intention, but the name for something ineffable: genius, spirit, creativity. As phenomenon, Shakespeare is, as Graham Holderness has said, 'here, now, always, what is currently being made of him' ('Preface' xvi) – and, I would add, what has been and will be made of him. The unavoidable confusion is there in the second of the quotations I began with: is it Shakespeare who is to be punched, or is it traditional interpretations of Shakespeare? Are they the same thing? In Salter's terms, if we try to give him/it a bloody nose, there is no thing – or too much – there to punch. To say, in this light, 'I hate Shakespeare' or 'I love Shakespeare' becomes inevitably a statement about the hole in the picture, about our personal or culturally limited Shakespearean imaginary rather than about the unlimited complexities of the phenomenon itself.

Adapting Shakespeare (in Canada), therefore, is a confrontation between two complexly sublime unrepresentables: one phantom of identity and an indefinitely complex actuality facing another. On this general level, Canada and Shakespeare are much like other sublime objects of ideology, other nations, for instance, or other complex and ongoing cultural formations.

Two other notions from Žižek are helpful to understand specifically how the relationship of past and present is played out – in a way that I hope to show is relevant to understanding particular Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare. Žižek discusses what he calls the *noir* subject (9–12), as in *film noir* and, especially, its recent manifestations – his exam-

ples are drawn from the films *Angel Heart*, *Blade Runner*, and *Total Recall*, but also from literary works such as *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein* (40). The *noir* subject is one who does not know what he or she is and who comes to an awareness of a forgotten or hidden identity that is irreconcilable with and radically undermines his or her sense of the self. The *noir* subject faces the sublime other as the otherness of his or her own identity. The second notion from Žižek, also taken from popular film, is that of the 'living dead' or 'undead' (113). The undead is that sublime thing, neither living nor dead, from the past but haunting the here and now, the past that refuses to vanish. Shakespeare (in Canada) is, I would argue, the undead in this sense. It is interesting to note that Jacques Derrida, drawing upon the image of the ghost in *Hamlet*, has argued that we should see Karl Marx in a similar fashion – actually, not as a spectre but as *Specters of Marx*, not singular, but plural. The plural in two senses – as not one unified thing and as widespread – is as true of the spectres of Shakespeare as of Marx. To resort to reference to another popular film, as the little boy in *The Sixth Sense* says of the ghosts he sees, 'They're everywhere.' There is no escaping them. *The Sixth Sense* is a film Žižek, one would think, must inevitably write about, concerning, as it does, the *noir subject*, the one who is undead without knowing it. The point I wish to extrapolate from these notions is that there is always something un-Canadian about being Canadian, that the from-elsewhere is part of the being here. Shakespeare, therefore, is one manifestation of the from elsewhere at work in Canada. As such, Canadians confront Shakespeare as the cultural undead, neither dead nor living, not a person but an other forming part of living personalities, if only as part of the sublime personality I have been outlining, the otherness of the past the remains of which reside here. Canadians too, in their specific ways, are the undead, although as *noir* subjects they may not always realize this. I think it important to put something along these lines inside the simple opposition between timelessness and radical contingency. Only by opening up in this way the place of the present as irreducibly the place of the past, rather than as a 'particular historical moment' in any isolated sense, will we see the possibilities in the complex situation of adaptation.

There is a long and wide-ranging history of Shakespeare in Canada and within that a substantial tradition of adapting Shakespeare. The arguments in the first part of this chapter suggest that it would be futile to attempt to know fully or to represent adequately this tradition. There is

no single Canadian approach that would distinguish the Canadian situation from others and hence no simply representative Canadian adaptations. I have chosen to focus on a handful of works from the 1980s and 1990s. These works tell only the smallest part of the story. Nevertheless, what I want to point out in these particular pieces are echoes, in theme and event, of the condition I have been suggesting. Specifically, the notions of the *noir* subject and the undead seem helpful in elucidating these particular Canadian adaptations, which present the return of the undead amid *noir* confusions.

In early 1987 an interesting adaptation of Shakespeare debuted in Toronto. It was by Québécois playwright René-Daniel Dubois and coincided with an English-language production of his better known *Being at Home with Claude*. The adaptation of Shakespeare was called *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, by William Shakespeare, and it was Dubois's first English-language play and the first of his plays to premiere in English Canada – a situation that evokes one of the many alterities of Canadian identity. The premise of the play is that on 8 April a production of Shakespeare's *Pericles* opened. That opening was catastrophically disrupted by strange forces, and those involved were sent into a dreamland full of danger, death, and a hoped-for but deferred salvation. On 9 April and nights following, what the audience witnesses is Dubois's *Pericles*, which is the shambles left behind by the catastrophic disruption of Shakespeare's version.

The director of the play-within-a-play – although it is not quite that – had set out to 'make a statement about today using very old means' (19) and also 'to fight death' (14) by bringing the poet back to life. Rather than fighting death, however, opening night brings about the deaths of everyone involved: the living dead now wander the stage. What happened is that not Shakespeare but the much more ancient and primal Gower returned to walk the stage, not Shakespeare's domesticated Gower but a wild and uncontrollable force. Witworth, the actor playing Gower, is possessed by the spirit of the long-dead poet. 'I was a spectre,' Witworth says, 'but not even my own spectre' (34). The invocation of Shakespeare here calls forth another, older spirit, so that to produce Shakespeare is to produce something else: the dead return but not as we expected them to be. The ancient spirit of Gower is both apart from the sterility of a big modern city like Toronto and something that lingers behind the urban façade, a force for great destruction and, at the same time, a drive for poetic rebirth. Gower is something not us, yet waiting in us to erupt. Similarly, the play is set both in contemporary Toronto

and in a strange dreamland, a dreamland not Canada yet happening here nonetheless. Rather than Shakespeare's *Pericles*, therefore, it is 'an old, very very old play' (3) that is invoked. Shakespeare, like Witworth, is here a *noir* subject, haunted by an ancient otherness, as *Pericles* is a kind of *noir* play, revealing at its heart something other and darker than itself.

An 'old, very very old play' is invoked, but there is also in Dubois's play a spectre, intentional or not, of a relatively more recent work: Federico García Lorca's *The Public*, which enacts what happens after an attempted production of *Romeo and Juliet* is catastrophically disrupted by the spirit of the dead. What we begin to see are the multiple forces that haunt the production of Shakespeare on a stage in 'contemporary' Toronto. The present is ancient, Canada is Toronto, dreamland, Europe, French and English, and its people are possessed, the living dead, overcome by forces they did not know existed.

While *Pericles* haunted a contemporary Canadian location with Shakespearean and pre-Shakespearean presences, another recent Canadian adaptation of Shakespeare has little or no ties to Canada in its content and setting, which goes another direction in complicating the notion of a 'particular historical moment.' Michael O'Brien's *Mad Boy Chronicle*, which was first produced at the Alberta Theatre Projects playRITES Festival in Calgary in 1995, is an adaptation of *Hamlet*, but it works by turning back to the thirteenth-century *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus – again, Shakespeare is a *noir* subject, more than himself, harbouring within an older presence. The play is set in Helsingor, Denmark, in the winter of 999 AD. *Mad Boy Chronicle* is the story of Horvendal, the Hamlet character, who finds Christianity and turns away from revenge. However, monks arrive in Denmark and see politically in Fengo, the marauding Claudius character, 'God's Gateway to the Danes' (132). They convert Fengo and submit their Christian ethics to his self-interests. Horvendal encounters the ghost of Christ (the undead *par excellence*), who tells him to save his 'Strangled Gospel' (135) by returning to murder Fengo. Horvendal attacks Fengo, but he is killed by a monk who comes to Fengo's defence.

O'Brien claims that he set out originally 'to debase the greatest play of all time' (8) – to punch Shakespeare in the nose, so to speak – and the tone of his presentation has been compared to that of Monty Python (152). However, in the long tradition of adaptations of Shakespeare, I think more apt comparisons could be made to Alfred Jarry, as in *Ubu Roi*, and Bertolt Brecht. The tone of *Mad Boy Chronicle* owes much to the grotesqueries of expression and action of Alfred Jarry and features a

fractured, obscene, comic-book English in touch with the stupidity and libidinousness of the major characters. In its thematic approach, however, the play echoes (as Dubois's echoes Lorca) Bertolt Brecht's reading of *Hamlet*: 'It is an age of warriors ... [The events of the play] show the young man ... making the most ineffective use of the new approach to Reason which he has picked up at the University of Wittenberg. In the feudal business to which he returns it simply hampers him. Faced with irrational practices, his reason is utterly unpractical. He falls a tragic victim to the discrepancy between such reason and such action' (201–2). Heiner Müller, Brecht's follower and author of *Hamletmachine*, writes that he sees Hamlet 'quite as Brecht once defined him: The man between the ages who knows that the old age is obsolete, yet the new age has barbarian features he simply cannot stomach' (Weber 137). But here Müller follows Brecht only by reversing him: for Brecht, Hamlet is the new man of reason who fails to negotiate the transition from the old feudal barbarism to the new enlightenment; Müller's Hamlet is a man of the old reason who cannot deal with the necessary new barbarism. What *Mad Boy Chronicle* does is draw a complex complicity in the change from one age to another. Christianity is bureaucratic reason in service of irrational desire on the one hand, and a spirit of forgiveness driven to righteous yet impractical vengeance on the other – here the play also echoes the conflict between Christ and the institutional church in the 'Grand Inquisitor' section of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: Christ, in that *noir* work, discovers that he is not a Christian. Thus, O'Brien's play takes up a place in a high European intellectual debate, the from elsewhere that inhabits the Canadian; yet, in the lingo of the play, he states, 'Only in Canada could such a play get writ' (9).

For my third example, I move to Winnipeg, and, in this text, outside theatre to children's fiction, one of many other modes – opera, comic books, t-shirts, education, film, and so forth – in which Shakespeares continue to proliferate. *Cloning Miranda* is a 1999 novel by Winnipeg children's writer Carol Matas. Its title, as well as its originally intended name, *Rough Magic*, points to its connection with *The Tempest*. The novel, Canadian as it is, is set in a wealthy enclave of the southern California desert. Miranda is a beautiful and accomplished adolescent suddenly struck with a seemingly incurable disease. Her parents, being so very un-Canadian (unless they were from Alberta), are the owners of a chain of private, technologically cutting-edge health clinics. Miranda is admitted to one of her parents' clinics, but not before she discovers strange photo albums featuring pictures of her and her parents on vacations she has

never taken. At the clinic, Miranda happens upon a sequestered young girl who seems to be a younger version of herself. To give little more away than the title does, Miranda, it turns out, is a clone of an earlier daughter, Jessica, who died of the same disease Miranda has acquired – Jessica is the girl in the photo album; the young girl hidden away is a clone of Miranda, Ariel, who is to be sacrificed so that her organs can save Miranda. Miranda discovers the plan and forces her parents to adopt another course of action, whereby Miranda and Ariel are both saved and Ariel is admitted into family life as a full member.

Cloning suggests a number of significant connections with the acts of adaptation under discussion. The clone is the supposed perfect copy, the perfect reproduction, much as a certain critical stance, dated but haunting, demands or expects the faithful transmission, the traditional production, of Shakespeare and his works. But Shakespeare, like Miranda's sister Jessica, is dead, and the supposed perfect reproduction is a new being, even if it is one haunted in its very essence by the past. Miranda is, in this way, a model *noir* subject: she does not know who she really is; she is someone else in her very DNA. And yet, although Jessica is in Miranda and lives through Miranda an undead existence, Miranda is not simply Jessica, any more than Ariel is simply a subordinated entity of spare parts for Miranda. Miranda is a multiple being: clone of the dead, dutiful daughter, monster, self, other. Cloning functions in the parents' plan as an insurance policy against death, a way of armouring their offspring against corruption. This armouring, however, produces something inevitably other than its original, an Other that takes on a disruptive life of its own.

Although the novel is not closely based on the plot, characters, or language of *The Tempest*, there are significant echoes: in the names Miranda and Ariel; in Miranda's school project comparing Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest*; and in the themes of technology, power, and ethics, nature and nurture, the dutiful daughter, and the monster. Like many contemporary readings of Shakespeare's play, the novel's sympathies lie against the power-wielding parental figures of authority and with the child, the other, the monster, those intended only as 'spare parts.' In the end, the two daughters have moved beyond the fate intended for them, and Ariel, 'thrilled about everything,' cannot wait to enjoy 'new situations' (137). In this way, the novel moves toward the openness suggested in Shakespearean romance, while looking to difficult reconciliations between the daughters and their parents. Miranda writes: 'My parents, who I thought were so reasonable, who I never argued with because

there was no need, who stressed honesty over all else – they were honest in every little detail and lied about the biggest thing, my life. Suddenly Prospero from *The Tempest* pops into my mind. He used magic to make his daughter happy. It's what Mom and Dad have done. But their magic means someone must be killed. They'll be *murderers!*' (103). And later: 'I'm still trying to figure out how to forgive my parents. I'm very angry with them. They did it out of love, but that's no excuse, is it? I don't think their reasons excuse what they did. It was wrong. I spend a lot of time over at [a friend's] now. Her parents seem to know the difference between right and wrong' (137–8).

In *Cloning Miranda*, therefore, we begin to be confronted by ethical questions of the *noir* undead. To understand the situation of adaptation is to impinge on understanding the politics and ethics of adaptation. To want to give Shakespeare a bloody nose, when Shakespeare is not, noumenally or phenomenally, one thing to which we could give a bloody nose, is to replace the face in the empty portrait with something hittable, thereby inevitably limiting Shakespeare in order to have something to hit. There is nothing wrong in doing so – indeed to engage with Shakespeare is always to engage with some limitation of Shakespeare. And confronting the hegemonic imaginary is often a necessary and useful political strategy. But it is important to understand the complexities of this confrontation and to realize that the Shakespeare we wish to bloody is not the only story. Moreover, within a *noir* subjectivity, it is important to realize that it may be part of ourselves that we assault.

To elaborate further the ethics and politics of adaptation, I want to turn to two famous dicta from Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History.' The first is: 'There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' (256). This assertion has served quite justifiably as a kind of mantra for politically oppositional cultural critique. Its force lies in part in the removal of the thought-restricting aura that traditionally attaches to works of art. Adaptation of Shakespeare often entails seeing the barbarism in Shakespeare. What I want to emphasize here, however, is the phrase 'at the same time.' What Benjamin asserts is that the documents of civilization are *at the same time* documents of barbarism, not that they are simply one or the other. 'At the same time' complicates our relationship to these works and opens a space where the giving of a bloody nose or a hope for the past simply to vanish is a one-sided reaction that does not constitute the full range of possible and appropriate responses.

The other dictum from Benjamin is a more mysterious, indeed haunt-

ing, one: 'Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins' (255). Just before this, Benjamin writes, 'In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.' Tradition and conformism are not the same thing; the past hangs in the balance between the two. But the past is not, we are told, 'the way it really was.' Rather the past is something we seize hold of as it exists in the present, in a present moment of danger, Benjamin writes. The past is, dare we say, 'not safe.' An ambiguity hangs over this phrase: the dead are in danger; they are dangerous. The past cultural object is both an object in our care and a threat to us. Benjamin's regard for the past does not come out of an unthinking respect for the documents of civilization nor out of a sentimental desire to do justice to the dead. To turn one more time to *The Sixth Sense*, the boy in the film learns not to hide his head from spectres, nor to expect them to vanish, nor even to give them a good talking to, but rather to listen to their traumas in order to discover the ways in which the dead and the living are still not safe. The past is a danger and an opportunity because it lives on as part of the present.

Some of this dynamic of confrontation and collaboration, of danger and vulnerability, is at work in Dubois's *Pericles*. In this play, Dubois engages with Shakespearean romance, not only in the return of the past in the present, but also in the workings of destruction and renewal. There is in the play catastrophic loss, and recovery and resurrection are cast into an uncertain future. The play leaves us in the space of danger where nothing is yet safe, a place of 'Awful stories. Gentle endings' (48), an 'infinite land of never ending hope and despair' (89). Just as Shakespeare is not simply Shakespeare and his *Pericles* not simply his *Pericles*, the effect of the past on the present and future is not simply good or bad but complex and open.

I want to explore more acutely, however, this politics of adaptation as confrontation and collaboration in two feminist Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare. The first is Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, which premiered at the Annex Theatre in Toronto early in 1988. MacDonald's play is an adaptation, as its title suggests, of both *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In the play, Constance Ledbelly is a victimized Canadian academic who pursues the quirky theory that behind both of Shakespeare's plays lies the 'Gustav manuscript,' which contains earlier versions of both stories, versions truer to the strength of the feminine character and versions that Shakespeare dis-

torted. Constance finds herself magically transported into the two Shakespearean scenarios, where she realizes that she, partaking of a feminine archetypal power, is the author of the Gustav manuscript.

Once again we are in the realm of *noir* subjectivity. Constance comes to realize that she herself is the author she is seeking. Indeed, the three female heroes (Constance, Desdemona, and Juliet) are not three individuals at all, but aspects of one larger female psyche. Shakespeare's plays turn out to have an older, hidden identity. Genre itself is a *noir* categorization, and *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are really comedies. Moreover, if Shakespeare is a kind of *noir* villain in the play, distorting and covering over, for his own sinister, masculinist purposes, the way things really are, his works nonetheless serve as a conduit to a more sympathetic reality of which they are the corrupted image.

In its original production, *Goodnight Desdemona* was called 'a comical Shakespearean romance' (qtd. from the publicity poster), a generic label that has since been discarded. What this designation captures is the movement from the Shakespearean tragedy of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* through comic disruption to the romantic rearrangements of *Goodnight Desdemona* itself. As romance, the play finds a complex reconciliation with Shakespeare. It begins with Constance's dissatisfaction with and rejection of Shakespeare's weak tragic women. But the new-made women of the Gustav manuscript are made from aspects of character found, if unstressed, in Shakespeare's version. In this way, as well as through the appropriation of romance itself, *Goodnight Desdemona* aligns itself with Shakespeare. Ultimately, however, it is something other than Shakespeare that is being unearthed in this play: the name of the Gustav manuscript echoes Carl Gustav Jung, whose ideas work their way through this and other works by MacDonald. As universal archetypes (dare we say in this case, timeless representations of the feminine character), the old truths of the pre-Shakespearean manuscript are also the truths that emanate from Constance in the present. Here, as in Dubois's *Pericles*, the play looks past but within Shakespeare to a romantic resurrection of much older, yet ever-present, forces – forces that, consequently, are, and are not, Canadian. There appears, most sublimely, near the end of the play, a ghost. The ghost evades answering the question 'Who are you?' (73). In costume drawings we see only a white, featureless skull, a hole in the flag of identity. It seems to be in part an echo of two of the dead in *Hamlet*: Yorick and Hamlet's father. But it seems to be many others as well, including Shakespeare and Jung. The closest it comes to identifying itself is to say 'You're it': the spectre is Constance,

the archetypal everywoman of the play, or the audience, or Canadians, or everyone.

Gertrude and Ophelia is a play by Margaret Clarke, first performed by the Black Hole Theatre Company in Winnipeg in 1987. The play *Gertrude and Ophelia* consists of rehearsals for the play *Gertrude and Ophelia*, which tells the story of these two women from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* while keeping Hamlet himself offstage. By focusing on these two women and keeping Hamlet from taking centre stage, the play explores the complex dynamics of alliance and opposition that bind women in a male-dominated society. The playwright is a woman who also acts the part of Gertrude in scenes with Ophelia. These rehearsals are troubled by a male actor and an unseen male director who work intentionally and unintentionally to undermine the playwright's feminist vision. In part, they disrupt this vision by working to bring Hamlet back on the stage, by bringing more of Shakespeare's play back into the production. The playwright argues against this strategy:

Playwright. We cannot have your scene, because your scene is Prince Hamlet's scene and I will not have him in my play.

Actor. But you already have him; he permeates your play. These two women are obsessed with him.

Playwright. Yes, they are, but it is *their* obsession that I want to present on the stage, not his, not his body on the stage, his flesh invading my play.

Actor. You make it sound like a rape!

Playwright. The words of the play are of my body; they come out of my body. They are my flesh made words ... You must stop writing inside other people's plays.

Actor. But that's exactly what you are doing? Writing inside Shakespeare's play.

Playwright. Yes, but I'm doing it to write myself out of the world that Shakespeare had to write in. The world we still live in because of the power of his plays. (S14)

The playwright here adopts a somewhat uncompromising and purist rejection of the invasion of her work by Hamlet or Shakespeare. At another point she rejects the director's attempts to bring Tom Stoppard to bear on her work:

He wants word-play, he wants pastiche, he wants ... Stoppard! Damn that man. He's been reading his Stoppard as well as his Shakespeare. Tell him if

he wants Stoppard, he can pay the royalties for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. (S9)

What the Playwright does not admit here is the degree to which the very premise of her work – a play about two characters from *Hamlet* other than Hamlet in which Hamlet makes little or no appearance – resembles the work of Stoppard. Indeed, one must also note that Clarke's *Gertrude and Ophelia* is a different play from the playwright's *Gertrude and Ophelia*. Certainly, there is some degree of identification between Clarke, a feminist writing a play based on *Hamlet* called *Gertrude and Ophelia*, and the Playwright, a feminist writing a play based on *Hamlet* called *Gertrude and Ophelia*, but it is a *noir* identification. Clarke's play, after all, unlike the Playwright's, includes a scene from *Hamlet*, even if it is to be played suspiciously or ironically. Clarke's play follows a politics similar to that in the play-within-the-play, but it does so by a different relation with other texts. The Playwright admits to writing inside Shakespeare's play, but what Clarke's structure also does is to have Shakespeare write within hers. Even Clarke's understanding of Hamlet is neo-Brechtian with a feminist twist:

He is one of those representatives of a man on the cusp of history between the medieval world and the Renaissance world, a man who's called upon to act and to forget scruples, and a man who has had an education and wishes to live as a moral human being. And what I discovered in writing my script is that such a man when he's frustrated, put down in his public life, takes out that frustration and that anger in his private life. (qtd. in Burnett 19–20)

The tensions between the two plays called *Gertrude and Ophelia* and the interplay in Clarke's play of elements from Shakespeare, Stoppard, and Brecht indicate that the purist assumptions of 'my play' and 'my words' from which the Playwright works are not supported by the play in which she is character rather than author. *Gertrude and Ophelia* works, rather, by both confrontation and collaboration, guarding borders and incorporating others at once.

Looking back over these texts in an attempt to conclude, I find it impossible to draw from them a simple representation, or clone, of Shakespeare, of Canada, or of the relation of past and present between them. They do not as a whole work from the notion of a particular historical

moment separated from the past or of Shakespeare as someone who should be given a bloody nose. They engage with the relation of Shakespeare and the past to Canada and the present in ways that indicate a complex vision and a more entwined politics. But the theory I have outlined implies that that should not be very surprising. The undead and the unsafe demand a careful negotiation, not based on a simple and mystifying assumption of unchanging timelessness, certainly, but rather on a sense that the radical contingency of the particular historical moment is formed by things not wholly of that moment.

Finally, three of the five texts I have discussed have had something to do with Shakespearean romance, and I want to suggest that the spectres of romance bear thinking about. Romance deals with the relationship with the past, not, as I argue elsewhere about *The Winter's Tale* ('Married'), with the past as the way it really was, but with the past as it returns in the present, we could say as it arises in the present moment of danger. Often, romance entails a restoration, reconciliation, saving of this past, but again only as a past that is not anything that has happened before. But that is not the only relation to the past in romance. Elsewhere I have also argued, using Northrop Frye against his own readings of Shakespearean romance, that struggle is basic to romance ('Two-Voiced'). The past is a danger as well as something to be protected and restored. Ultimately, within romance the space of the unknown future opens up – Ariel free to the four elements, or *The Winter's Tale's* 'unpath'd waters, undream'd shores' (4.4.567), which offers the promise of something completely different. All of these trajectories are at work, for instance, in Phillip Osment's British adaptation of *The Tempest, This Island's Mine*. Susan Bennett, in her discussion of this play, traces the complex dynamics of past, present, and future possibilities that the play enacts. She captures the complexities of danger and possibility we have seen through Benjamin when she writes, 'We can best salvage the Shakespearean text when we savage it, when we plunder it for its gaps and blind spots' (*Performing* 149), when we look into those gaps and blind spots to see what lurks there for us.

What I want to suggest, to conclude this discussion, is that adapting Shakespeare – in Canada or anywhere else – is a romantic activity, no matter what specific generic conventions are at work in any particular production. Adaptation is a process of savaging and salvaging the undead who reside in the present – although, to call adaptations romance is to try to represent an unrepresentable complexity.

Normand Chaurette's *Les Reines*: Shakespeare and the Modern in the Alchemical Oven

LOIS SHERLOW

R udenesse itselfe she doth refine
E ven like an Alchymist divine,
G rosse times of iron turning
I nto the purest forme of gold
N ot to corrupt till heaven waxe old,
A nd be refin'd with burning.

– Sir John Davies (qtd. in Nicholl 17)

Normand Chaurette's *Les Reines* (1991) is a verse play derived primarily from Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Its characters are six royal women who, in 1483, are awaiting the death of King Edward IV, the assassination of George, Duke of Clarence, and the accession of Richard to the throne. To the four women, Elizabeth, Margaret, Anne Warwick, and the Duchess of York, appropriated from Shakespeare's play, Chaurette has added two more Plantagenet women, Isabelle Warwick, sister of Anne and wife of Clarence, and Anne Dexter (named for the historical Countess of Exeter), daughter of the Duchess of York and sister of George, Richard, and Edward. The play was first produced at the Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, Montreal, under André Brassard's direction. In November 1992 Linda Gaboriau's English translation was directed by Peter Hinton for the Canadian Stage Company, and in the same year the play earned Chaurette the Chalmers Award for best play produced in Canada. A revival of *Les Reines* by Théâtre Blanc, Quebec (1997, directed by Gill Champagne) afforded a very different interpretation of the script from Brassard's. In 1997 *Les Reines* was also performed at the Théâtre du Vieux