

## SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMATURGIES IN QUEBEC

**Lois Sherlow**

Memorial University of Newfoundland  
Canada

“It is just this which characterizes translation: the fact that it must be perpetually redone. I feel it to be an image of Art itself, of theatrical Art, which is the art of infinite variety. Everything must be played again and again, everything must be taken up and retranslated.”

An Interview with Antoine Vitez, “The Duty to Translate.”

Since 1980, the theatre of the province of Quebec has been in the grip of a passion for Shakespeare. During this period, Shakespeare’s texts have often been retranslated and have also been vehicles for radical challenges to theatrical conventions. Best known among these experiments internationally are the productions of director Robert Lepage, among them his Shakespeare cycle (*Coriolan*, *Macbeth*, *La Tempête*) performed in Mauberge, France (1992), Japanese versions of *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* staged in Tokyo (1993), and, above all, his *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (with its infamous ‘mudwrestling’ scenes) at the National Theatre, London (1993). But Lepage’s productions should not be allowed to overshadow the many other encounters with

Ilha do Desterro	Florianópolis	nº 36	p.185-218	jan./jun. 1999
------------------	---------------	-------	-----------	----------------

Shakespeare in Quebec theatres, which, even in an era which is obsessed with rewriting Shakespeare, constitute an extraordinary cultural development.

In order to better understand the fortunes of Shakespeare in the theatre of Quebec, it may be useful to review briefly some of the historical factors which have defined the province's cultural life. Following the conquest by the British in 1759-1760, French Canadians endured a period of cultural isolation which lasted until after World War II. The British colonial government considered assimilation the best fate for French Canadians, whom they viewed as culturally impoverished. Lord Durham's Report, which followed rebellions in 1837, characterized them as "a people with no history and no culture" (qtd. Doucette 122). Of French Canadian theatre, Durham observed, "Though descended from the people that most generally love . . . the drama—though living in a continent, in which almost every town . . . has an English theatre, the French population . . . cut off from every people that speaks its own language, can support no national stage" (122). Theatrical activity and theatre going were indeed limited among French Canadians by the disapproval of the Church from the earliest days of the colony until well into the twentieth century (Laflamme and Tourangeau). The cultural isolation of French Canada from the rest of North America, and from the French speaking world, was perpetuated in the twentieth century by governments as well as by the Church. The most powerful figure in Quebec politics until 1960 was the premier Maurice Duplessis, "a traditionalist and a conservative who sought to make Quebec a closed society, isolated from the rest of the world" (Nardocchio 21). While there were significant developments in the cultural life of Quebec during 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, it was not until the end of the Duplessis era that the province began to emerge from its 'dark age.' With the political reforms of the government of a new premier, Jean Lesage, and the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, began a nationalist era which has separated Quebec from its colonial past forever. In the cultural revolution, language—the French spoken in

Quebec, not that of France—became the central issue. The preservation of the French language and the distinct culture of Quebec have been the central issue in subsequent movements towards political sovereignty.

The force of cultural and political nationalism in Quebec since 1960 has been such that paradigms of postcoloniality do not fit easily in this context. To properly consider the issues surrounding the position of Shakespeare in Quebec, it is important to distinguish them from those which preoccupy English Canadians. Both English Canada and Quebec have enacted their own disengagements from European culture since the 1960s, and thus the fundamental dictum of Joanne Tompkins can be applied to the theatre of both cultures: “One of post-colonial drama’s principal aims is to dismantle colonial authority and its effects in favour of articulating an identity that is both distinct from and equal to that of the imperial centre” (15). Presupposing a former dominance of the English language, Tompkins states:

Given that ‘Shakespeare’ has been generally figured as a prime signifier of imperial cultural authority, it is not surprising that many plays from former British colonies target Shakespeare’s plays in their attempts to restructure Eurocentric literary canons: Shakespeare’s plays are fractured, fragmented, reworked, revised, and deconstructed to demythologize this authority. (15)

In English Canada, Shakespeare has indeed proven to be the central symbol of colonial culture: the Stratford Festival, founded in 1953, has on the one hand, given Canada a continuing international reputation for excellence in classical theatre, while at the same time it has symbolized the traditional past from which an indigenous theatre has diverged. In Quebec, however, Shakespeare has not served specifically as a symbol of colonial domination: there the canonical playwrights of

the French tradition had dominated, not only in the theatre, but in the education system.

When the indigenous theatre of Quebec began to emerge, it found itself, like that of English Canada, impeded by the preferential treatment afforded companies performing the classics and modern imports. In the emergence of a nationalist culture, it is not yet possible to engage with the texts of the past: the first business is to devalue their importance. Thus, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the new generation in both English Canada and Quebec set about the estrangement of the entire international repertoire as a necessary step in self-discovery. Michel Bélair called for the explosion of “[le] mythe du ‘Grand Théâtre’ véhiculé par les Grandes Compagnies” as the prelude to rectifying the marginality of indigenous culture (21). A satire staged by Théâtre du Même Nom (its name a reference to the leading company of Montréal, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde), *Les Enfants Chénier dans un Grand Spectacle d’Adieu* (1969), depicted a ‘boxing match’ in several rounds, in which the Quebec team knocks out the Greeks, the French, and with them “Shakespeare (*un Anglais!*)” (Bélair 71). Bélair did not foresee the permanent rejection of the international repertoire, but rather its displacement from the centre, where “*la fabulation de l’univers québécois*” was properly to take place (15). The force of nationalist creativity abated after a decade in both English Canada and Quebec, having permanently ensconced theatre rooted in the language, culture, and political aspirations of each culture, and having initiated the first stages of the interrogation of postcolonial identity. The international repertoire again became a source of inspiration. Now, however, it did not preclude local identity, but rather became a resource for its expression.

It is important to recollect that the nationalist movement in Quebec during the 1960s and 1970s differed radically from that of English Canada. Quebec was not concerned with divesting itself of the British past, whose cultural influence had been limited, but with refusing the dominance of English Canada. While English Canada has shown

considerable interest in the culture of contemporary Quebec, the reverse has not been the case. Quebec, in its emergence from its own past, has shown itself more interested in American and international cultures than in the culture of the rest of Canada. Politically, since the initial election of the Parti Québécois in 1976, many people in the province have envisioned a separate future, discounting an identity defined by a place in federal Canada. Thus, the new relationship of the Québécois to foreign culture cannot be viewed in the same light as that of English Canada, or many formerly colonized countries.

Denis Salter offers a valuable and accurate assessment of the new place of Shakespeare in contemporary Quebec culture:

For many . . . Quebec is *not* even vestigially a postcolonial society: It is an independent or sovereign nation, in principle if not (yet) in fact . . . strategically placed to assimilate Shakespeare, both as . . . playwright and . . . cultural metonymy, to their sovereignty through . . . translation/adaptation—what has [been] . . . described as “tradaptation.” In this new alliance of power and authority, Shakespeare does not figure as a crypto-imperialist demanding and receiving the kind of deferential attitudes that have prevailed at Stratford. Nor is he (re)presented as a symbol of English-Canadian cultural superiority that must be resisted at all costs. . . . (English Canada tends to function as an empty signifier) . . . [but as] a playwright of extraordinary dramatic interest through whom [Quebec] can create explicitly allegorical—and sometimes carnivalesque—**re**readings of its own history. Displacing Shakespeare within allegorical frames . . . has a programmatic function: . . . to nullify the universal/timeless values . . . ascribed to him by reconfiguring those values within a particularized, sometimes aggressively decolonized, context. (123)

Whether the means of conveying Shakespeare to the public is primarily a matter of translation or of textual deconstruction, the primary

consideration is clearly the audience for whom it is presented. Annie Brisset emphasizes that translation of foreign texts is not done for the sake of the original culture, but for that of the translator and the intended audience: "What is the purpose of theatrical translations if not to create a difference wherein the distinct identity of the *québécois* collectivity will be recognized?" (Language 73). Translation, Brisset argues, is the "privileged place from which to observe the manner in which collective identity defines itself by and against what it is not" (61). Thus, in the selective review of the history of Shakespeare production and adaptation in Quebec which follows, the emphasis will be on the evolution of a collective identity: once the preserve of the conquering British and of visiting Americans, Shakespeare has entered the discourse of Quebec by stages to become the predominant touchstone of identity, a means to reach beyond the political circumstances of the present to a deeper source of self-creation.

### **Shakespeare in Quebec before 1967**

The division of cultural life in Quebec since the conquest in 1759 has profoundly formed the contemporary sense of the Other. French settlers of course had always shared the territory with Native peoples; until the arrival of the English, they enjoyed the position of the dominant culture. After the arrival of the British, however, the geographical isolation of the French Canadians was compounded by the presence of another European culture, which was identical with political and economic dominance. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic solidarity of French Canadians was maintained by the Catholic Church, which discouraged participation in theatrical activity. Thus, from the early days of the British garrison, with its amateur performances, through decades of tours by notable professional performers from Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century (among them Edmund Kean, Charles Kean, James O'Neill, and Henry Irving), French Canadians remained virtually uninfluenced by the English repertoire

(Ripley, Doucette, Béraud, Bolster). A rare exception was facilitated by Firmin Prud'homme, a Frenchman, who in 1831 introduced a Montréal group called the '*Amateurs Canadiens*' to French adaptations by Ducis of *Hamlet* and *Othello*, at the same time as he assisted with productions of Molière (Doucette 104-06). While English Canadian amateurs performed Shakespeare, it was not until after World War II that a real context for the production of Shakespeare in French existed.

Father Émile Legault founded Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent in 1937 in Montréal as an amateur company dedicated to improving the quality of theatre: "*Les Compagnons sont fermement déterminés à ne jouer rien de banal, et en même temps à nous faire connaître des oeuvres qui honorent plus particulièrement l'art dramatique*" (qtd. Bolster 418). To this end, the company produced both classical and modern plays from the European repertoire. In 1946, they mounted an extraordinary production of *Le Soir des rois* (Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*). It is hard to imagine a production such as this in any theatre which acknowledged Shakespeare as the figurehead of its theatrical tradition, such are the liberties it took in interpretative style. It stands as a significant act of transculturation at a time when local productions of classical texts were rare enough, let alone experimental treatments of them. The overriding feature of the production of *Le Soir des rois* was its design, executed by the Quebec modernist painter, Alfred Pellan. Two members of Father Legault's company, Jean Gascon (later to become artistic director at Stratford, Ontario) and Jean-Louis (the future artistic director of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde), suggested that Pellan design the production: Legault himself was more reluctant to entertain such a departure from tradition. The costumes contained some elements of Elizabethan dress, but these were translated into abstract, geometric forms, with a surreal use of colour, generally inspired by clowns:

*Chaque personnage prend l'aspect d'un tableau surréaliste ou abstrait orné de motifs décoratifs, parfois symbolistes, découpés dans les teintes les plus vives. Les visages*

*n'échappent pas à cet envahissement multicolore. Chacun est partagé verticalement suivant l'arête du nez, en deux sections: l'une apparaît blanchie, la seconde ... verte ... jaune ... rouge ou bleue.* (Lefebvre 27)

Malvolio's costume, for instance, combined clownishness with symbols of death: "*Et que dire de l'allure squelettique du sombre Malvolio, enveloppé dans une jupe de vinyle transparent, de sa coiffure surmontée d'une pierre tombale!*" (25). The set contained sombre elements, contrasted with vivid colours. The designs suggested faëry, with touches of the Peking Opera and Balinese theatre (27). It is important to note that Pellán did not have the time to read the text, and his designs were based merely on plot and character summaries provided by Gascon (28). The result of this method and style of design was a contest or confrontation between the text of Shakespeare "*déjà considérablement altéré par la traduction [de François-Victor Hugo]*" and the powerful designs of Pellán. Headlines read "*Le combat Pellán-Shakespeare dans le Soir des rois aux Compagnons*" (review, Eloi de Grandmont) and "*Pellán versus the Bard*" (review, Robert Ayre) (qtd. Lefebvre 27). Such was the impact of this production, whether or not it had been universally approved, that, in 1968, Jean-Louis Roux mounted a new production of *Twelfth Night* (now entitled *La Nuit des rois* and adapted by Roux himself) to revive the original designs. Pellán oversaw the reproduction of the costumes, which were this time made by professionals with a significant budget. The designs suited the tastes of the 1960s: "*Après tout ce temps, elles ont conservé un avant-gardisme étonnant. ... Elles rivalisent d'audace avec le psychédéisme actuel [de l'époque]*" (29). So appealing were Pellán's designs that, after the production in 1968, they were exhibited in museums in Montréal and Ottawa. The final impression left by this production is that Shakespeare's text served primarily as a vehicle for Pellán's art. This production affirms Brisset's view that translation (here visual rather than verbal) serves to reflect the identity of the collective more than the



text. In the battle between Pellan and Shakespeare, it was the Quebec artist, not the play itself, who won an important place in recent cultural memory.

In the years following World War II, professional theatre began to emerge for the first time in Canada. In Montréal, a number of new companies were inaugurated, among them Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (1951), which, with Jean Gascon and Jean-Louis Roux of Les Compagnons among its founders, became the leading company in the field of international and classical production. Other companies included Théâtre-Club (1953), Théâtre Rideau Vert (1956), and La Nouvelle Compagnie Théâtrale (1965). The majority of these new companies relied on a repertoire of international classics and modern plays, since locally written scripts were still relatively rare. As well as the foundation of a professional theatre community, the post-war period saw the introduction of television, which provided another medium for dramatic production. Before 1970, the repertoires of the French theatre companies in Montréal and its surrounding summer communities included no more than fourteen Shakespeare productions. The tragedies and histories were rare: *Richard II* (1962) and *Hamlet* (1970) were undertaken by Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (Tard). (The same company presented *Jules César* in 1972, during the season following the political assassination of a Quebec provincial minister). Two productions of *Roméo et Juliette* were mounted: one by Les Compagnons (1950) and the other televised by Radio-Canada (1958). In general, it appears that the audience's taste tended to the comedies, the most popular being *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* (the last of these especially popular because of a successful television production in 1953). At the end of the war, according to Pierre Dagenais, founder of L'Équipe, which produced *Un Songe d'un Nuit d'Été* in 1945, fantasy was more appealing to audiences than realism (Bolster 419). At the same time, Father Legault devalued realism on other, more aesthetic grounds, favouring instead a poetic theatre (419). One production at least, *La Mégère Apprivoisée*, performed by the

summer company, Théâtre Chanteclerc in 1956, attempted to bridge the gap between the audience and the world of the text by using a local reference point. Christopher Sly appeared outside the tavern carrying a bottle of local beer. Paul Hébert, the director, commented, “*Ce mélange de fantaisie (la pièce) et de réalité (Sly) fut conçu pour permettre à l’auditoire de mieux saisir les événements comiques de la pièce elle-même*” (qtd. Bolster 422).

The problem of selecting a suitable text elicited a variety of solutions in these early productions of Shakespeare, when no versions by Quebec translators were yet available. A wide variety of translations were brought into play. The literary texts of François-Victor Hugo were still widely used; *Richard II* at T.N.M. was presented in a translation by Jean Curtis; a less ‘musical,’ but theatrically apt *La Nuit des rois* by Jean Anouilh was used by Théâtre-Club (1954); Théâtre Chanteclerc combined elements of translations by Hugo, Pierre Messiaen, and a third, unknown translator for *La Mégère Apprivoisée*; and Jean-Louis Roux audaciously translated not only *La Nuit des Rois* for the Pellan production at T.N.M. (1968), but also *Hamlet* (1970). Roux appears to have been very aware of the problem posed by presenting Shakespeare in French translations for Quebec audiences, in whose daily linguistic environment literary French was alien. His own translation for the 1968 *La Nuit des rois* at T.N.M. was undertaken to make the text accessible to the contemporary Canadian francophone:

I was not pleased with . . . existing translations and . . . I cannot understand why we should pay French people to make our own translations, since practically all of them know less about English than we do. . . . Although I did not translate [it] into a ‘French-Canadian’ or ‘North American’ French . . . I translated Shakespeare’s unintelligible puns into contemporary ‘jokes.’ To avoid the ponderous . . . alexandrines . . . I tried to maintain the tempo and economy for . . . the verse

by writing decasyllable French lines, using not many more words than the original . . ." (qtd. Bolster 427)

Roux's attempt to create a viable contemporary translation, which reflects his own audience's language and at the same time minimizes the intrusion of French idioms and the alien alexandrine, was the first step in the naturalization of Shakespeare in Quebec, although it was relatively conservative. It was undertaken at the same time as Quebec theatre was undergoing its most radical break from the past, with the introduction to the stage of *joual*, the distinctive dialect of French Canada. With Michel Tremblay's first major play, *Les Belles-Soeurs* (1968), the theatre suddenly ended the past dominance of the French literary canon, and began to decentre all international influences. Bélair's call for the discrediting of "*le mythe du Grand Théâtre*" reflects the revolution which occurred at this time, in which the actual language of the Québécois became the most powerful political weapon.

### **"Être ou ne pas être libre:" *Hamlet Prince du Québec* and the Parodic Turn**

In 1967, the year Canada celebrated the centennial of Confederation, and Montréal hosted Expo 67, General de Gaulle uttered from the balcony of Montréal's city hall the inflammatory words, "*Vive le Québec libre!*" To a people in the early stages of cultural and political revolt, de Gaulle's call provided a striking impetus. In the theatre, the provocative de Gaulle provided the inspiration for a parody of *Hamlet*, which had considerable success. *Hamlet, Prince du Québec*, by the Montréal playwright, Robert Gurik, was first performed by Théâtre l'Escale in 1968.

Variously viewed as satire and parody, Gurik's play followed Shakespeare's text (adapted in a French prose version) quite closely, but substituted figures from the Canadian and Québécois political scenes for Shakespeare's characters. Hamlet represented Quebec itself,

hovering on the brink of self-determination, but still hesitating to commit itself to that direction. In this version, de Gaulle figured as the Ghost (appearing, in reference to his famous speech, on a 'balcony,' not the ramparts). Claudius became "*l'Anglophonie*," that is, English-speaking Canada which had so dominated Quebec in every sense, and continued to do so, in the form of the federal government. Hamlet's mother became the Church. Other characters were divided generally into federalists (Prime Minister Pearson/Polonius, Laertes/Pierre Trudeau, Ophelia/provincial premier Jean Lesage, Guildenstern and Rosenkrantz/Laurendeau and Dunton, the originators of the current federal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism) and Québécois patriots (Hamlet and Horatio/René Lévesque, leader of the separatist party). Numerous other prominent political figures of both federal and separatist sides were also represented, along with founding figures of the Montréal professional theatre, Gratien Gélinas, Yvonne Brind'Amour, and Jean-Louis Roux, in the role of the players.

Gurik's parodic version of *Hamlet* was not alone in Quebec in addressing current political concerns. *Le Chemin du roy* (1968), by Françoise Loranger and Claude Levac, also responded satirically to de Gaulle's visit by placing political figures from federalist and separatist sides on a hockey rink to fight out the current issues. In a different vein, Gratien Gélinas, whose pre-war satirical revues, *Les Fridolinades*, had anticipated current theatrical tendencies, was dramatizing the generational conflict between a liberal, federalist politician and his son, who is engaged in separatist terrorism in *Hier les enfants dansaient* (1968). Jacques Ferron turned to the heroes of Quebec's past as dramatic material.

As parody of a classical text, Gurik's play was part of a rapidly growing theatrical trend. Réjean Ducharme, in *Le Cid maghané* (1968), responded to Artaud's call, "No more masterpieces," with an anti-heroic version of Corneille in degraded everyday speech (Godin and Mailhot II, 304; Le Blanc 15). Yvan Sauvageau's *Wouf wouf* (1967), a kaleidoscopic, psychedelic underworld journey through the cultural

influences both North American and European on contemporary Quebec culture, set the tone for innumerable theatrical deconstructions of the cultural heritage to be staged during the 1970s. Mailhot cites numerous contemporary plays, Québécois, British, and American, as context for Gurik:

*Ce centième, ce millième Hamlet se situe ici au carrefour dramaturgiques: le théâtre pasticheur ou parodique . . . (Le Cid maghané) . . . et le théâtre engagé dans l'actualité . . . (La Tête du roi ou Les Grands soleils de Ferron). Hamlet, Prince du Québec se trouve dans la ligne des récentes adaptations socio-politiques de Shakespeare: du Hamlet des faubourgs de Kops (1957) au Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern sont morts de Stoppard (1967) et au MacBird . . . de Barbara Garson, où la maison Blanche est accusée du meurtre du président Kennedy. (Foreword, Gurik 11)*

Of these various texts, *Hamlet* carried special significance in Quebec, which had so recently begun to emerge from its long isolation. Mailhot notes how numerous were references to Hamlet in Quebec literature of the 1960s. Above all, both Mailhot and Gurik acknowledge influence of the novelist and philosopher Hubert Aquin (*Trou de mémoire* and *Prochain épisode*), who had adopted Hamlet as the figure for Quebec's hesitancy to break with its past: "*Le Québec, c'est cette poignée de comédiens bègues et amnésiques qui se regardent . . . et semblent hantés par la platitude comme Hamlet par le spectre . Ils ne reconnaissent le lieu dramatique et sont incapables de se rappeler le premier mot de la première ligne du drame visqueux qui, faute de commencer, ne finira jamais*" (*Trou* 56). Thus, Gurik's play, while it is not dramaturgically radical, invites its audience to recognize the hesitancy to which Aquin alludes, not only in the politicians of the day, but in themselves.

Gurik's parody is based on a neo-Brechtian marriage of the conventions of Shakespearean tragedy with images of current affairs from the contemporary media. (The use of media characterizes a number of his plays (Mailhot 155-88)). It opens metatheatrically with two gravediggers of differing political persuasions playing cards (as a link to the kings and queens of Shakespeare's text) under a statue of the late premier, Duplessis. A radio provides a supplementary text of echos from the recent political past. The Ghost (de Gaulle) appears as a projected image from television news coverage. The establishment of a dual identity for all characters permits the playwright to embroider Shakespeare liberally with topical and local references. To emphasize the hypocrisy of politicians, the characters all wear masks—another echo of Brecht—with the exception of Hamlet, who represents Quebec itself, the subject of the drama. The death speech of Hamlet explicitly articulates the problem posed by the inadequacies of the various characters in the play:

*Je meurs . . . qui viendra nous conduire vers la lumière . . .  
Vous sentirez-vous assez fort pour le faire, assez courageux  
pour le vouloir? Il est tellement plus facile de pourrir dans  
l'habitude. . . . Qui nous sortira de la fange des compromis, de  
l'esclavage, qui brisera les chaînes qu'hypocritement nous  
avons nous-mêmes forgées? . . . Il faut . . . que vive . . . un . . .  
Qué . . . bec . . . libre. (Il meurt). (125)*

Melodramatic as it may be, such a direct appeal to the audience could not fail to encourage some engagement.

Critics generally responded enthusiastically to Gurik's play. Lawrence Sabbath applauded the reappearance of satire, absent from the Montréal stage since *Les Fridolinades* (Gurik 127-28). Even English Canadian critics praised the play (which was produced in translation in London, Ontario in 1968). Jean Garon, however, remained reserved as to the success of Gurik's dramaturgy. Satire, he suggested, required

“virulence,” and a deeper understanding of the issues instead of mere presentation of evidence. He found that Gurik’s adherence to Shakespeare’s characters and plot limited the development of his thesis: “*Il aurait voulu grossir ses protégés qu’il aurait détruit le parallèle dans lequel il s’était engagé*” (Gurik 132). Gurik had stopped short of incisive political commentary, and settled instead for a representation of the current spectrum of local political opinion, couched ironically in the famous text of the great Anglo-Saxon playwright. At this early stage in the development of Quebec dramaturgy, pleasure in recognition of the familiar was still rare enough on the stage. In this humorous presentation of contemporary politics, entertainment value no doubt muffled the call to political action.

### **Shakespearean Translation in Quebec since 1970**

The exceptional vitality and originality of the Quebec theatre since the late 1960s has depended on more than original approaches to *mise en scène*: the most fundamental impetus for creativity in the theatre is the dynamic evolution of the Québécois language—in life as in writing. In the 1970s, the nationalist project centred on defining identity through an affirmation of Quebec’s distinct form(s) of the French language. After validation of the culture had led to political self-confidence with the first election of the Parti Québécois in 1976, it became increasingly possible to move beyond the isolation—and celebration—of cultural particularity, to a more inclusive view of identity. From 1980 to the present, Quebec artists have been increasingly open to international art and language. (Many have in turn contributed to the cultural life of other countries.) The theatre especially has shown a strong tendency to appropriate foreign texts as vehicles for creativity. Shakespeare rapidly attained the central place in this postmodern phase.

No longer simply a figure in the pantheon of colonial cultures (an English one at that), at the end of the 1970s Shakespeare became the key to expansiveness and iconoclasm in the language and form of

theatre . After a decade of adaptations and translations, Sherry Simon assessed the value of such activity to Quebec's cultural evolution:

*D'après la logique incertaine des échanges littéraires, il était prévisible que le Québec se mettrait un jour de manière sérieuse à la traduction des pièces de Shakespeare. D'abord, le théâtre québécois est fasciné depuis toujours, et de plus en plus, par les enjeux de langues nouveaux. Et le texte shakespearien, n'est-il pas avant tout un lieu où se croisent et se multiplient les langages d'un monde en mouvement? Ensuite, si le Québec est assez réfractaire à la traduction dans la plupart des domaines littéraires, il s'adonne volontiers à cette activité quand ils'agit de théâtre. Là, la traduction devient non seulement un travail d'appropriation culturelle . . . mais aussi un champ d'exploration et de création de nouveaux moyens d'expression. (83)*

Not only is Shakespeare useful to Québécois theatre as a locus of cultural interchange, but because, argues Simon, he has historically represented a resistant otherness for the French literary tradition: "[il] est venu à représenter ce qui reste résolument étranger . . . ce qui manque, et donc ce qui ne fait jamais "oeuvre' en français. Ni les traductions exsangues des Classiques, ni les versions plus passionnées des Romantiques, ni même les quelques efforts des Modernes n'ont réussi à rendre crédible un Shakespeare français" (82). Since the true colonial heritage of Quebec is the French literary tradition, it is then natural that Shakespeare as other (and regardless of his being elsewhere the symbol of British imperialism) should be seized on to assist in the linguistic liberation of Quebec from France.

The new Quebec theatre was founded with the displacement of literary French by the representation of local, popular speech, with its distinctive accent and syntactical forms, its archaisms, and its anglicizations (Bélair). The dramatic representation of that speech was



a significant nationalist advance, since, as Antoine Vitez puts it, theatre is “a place where people come to hear their language” (qtd. Brisset, *Language* 62). That, after a decade, this new theatrical language had served its purpose in validating collective identity and then tended to be replaced on the stage by a new literariness does not alter the fact that the original valorization of popular speech permanently erased the former division between an ‘official,’ colonial French literary culture and language and a ‘French-Canadian’ colonial ‘subculture.’

Joual (from the pronunciation of ‘cheval’) had its first significant impact in the plays of Michel Tremblay, whose characters were primarily from the working class of East End Montréal. As Lucie Robert has pointed out, joual has been ill-defined: in Quebec—a vast territory—there naturally exist many dialects, both urban and rural (116). When joual reached the stage as the medium for “the imaginary and symbolic representations” of the audience’s society, it had already been “refined and readied as a literary language . . . [given] graphic representation and a space” (Brisset, *Language* 62; Robert 116-17). Mailhot goes so far as to state that, in the theatre, “joual isn’t used as a dialect or patois, but as a dramatic language, either comic, tragic, grotesque, critical, or lyrical, to create the effect of the real, of action and recognition” (qtd. Robert 117). The popular language of Quebec was very apt for dramatic purposes, because it carried many emotional connotations. In the plays of Tremblay, for instance, it is the language of impotence, passivity, rage, frustration, and at the same time nostalgia (Bélair 114). It is not surprising that the introduction of the vernacular to the stage caused some outrage: it threw in the audience’s face the old sense of cultural shame, the long inculcated sense of inferiority to the language and literature of France (114). Because of its validation in the theatre, however, joual became less and less a mark of inferiority and, for the 1970s at least, transformed itself into the medium of self-assertion. In effect, dramatization of the language on stage led to its use for self-dramatization in daily life.

Although joul was first fictionalized in realistic—or hyperrealistic—form in plays about the present and recent past, the poet and playwright Michel Garneau brought it to a new level of fictive significance in his translation/adaptation of *Macbeth* (1978). (Garneau calls this work “tradaptation,” a term that has gained considerable currency among critics.) Garneau’s *Macbeth* has gained wide recognition as a Shakespearean translation both through the important analysis of Annie Brisset and through a new staging by Robert Lepage, performed in Paris in 1992. Before Garneau came to Shakespeare, he had already produced several original scripts in a ludic, poeticized version of Québécois language, and an unpublished translation of *The Tempest*. The language into which he translates *Macbeth* is neither the language of the street, nor is it any language found in contemporary culture. As in Garneau’s other dramatic work, this is a created language, an “*artifact*,” as Annie Brisset calls it: not a dialect but “a language reconstituted from a lexical base that has fallen into disuse” (Language 65). Antoine Berman calls it “*un français dialectisée*” to distinguish it from actual Québécois speech (15).

Garneau’s archaic language recreates the witches’ “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” couplet (I,i) thus: “*C’qu’y’a d’l’air beau, c’est laitte,/ C’qu’y’a d’l’air laitte, c’est beau,/ L’méchant dans le bon, l’bon dans l’méchant,/ Toute rôdaille tout partout dans brouée/Dans l’air chaude sale!*” (15). The different register of Macbeth’s soliloquy (I, vii), “If it were done when ’tis done,” is rendered as well in dialect: “*Si c’qu’y’est su’l’bord d’arriver arrive, j’a’m’r’as aussi ben/Qu’ç’arrive vite*” (39). A graphic rendering of the text (difficult for the actors at first reading) cannot convey the aural impression which this text made on audiences and critics: “*Garneau désire prouver la richesse du langage québécois et le mettre sur un pied d’égalité avec les autres langues. À partir d’archaïsmes . . . de la poésie rurale des vieilles plaintes . . . il crée une sorte de langue québécoise idéale . . . riche, souple, très sonore . . . riche en évocation*” (Andrès, Lefebvre 84). This version appeared to the critics as much closer in spirit, given its strong poetic qualities, its

sense of dialect and archaisms, than the more familiar translations such as those of Hugo: "*le texte est une réincarnation de la parole de Shakespeare*" (80). Interestingly, when Lepage chose this version to take to Paris in 1992, he added elements of Japanese cinema to Garneau's Québécois text. While the critics were struck by the visual elements, they did not overwhelm the poetry, which again suggested to French ears a strong affinity with Shakespeare; "*Avec Macbeth, Lepage gagne so pari: essayer de retrouver un souffle et une rythmique, bref une énergie proche du texte anglais*" (Philippe du Vignal, qtd. Costaz, Robert 161).

The purpose of Garneau's archaic text is not primarily aesthetic, nor is it specifically intended to create the sense of an equivalent to Jacobean English. It is directed at creating a linguistic myth of origin for Quebec, as Brisset has explained at some length. Garneau, she argues, uses archaic dialect to demonstrate the status of the language of Quebec:

He is effectively saying that although the *québécois* collectivity possesses its own language, that language has been lost. The goal of translation then must be to reconstitute this element. . . . The language of translation is thus a language of memory, reconstructed from the remaining vestiges of a dialect identified as that of the Gaspé Peninsula, where Jacques Cartier took possession of what would become New France. The language chosen . . . is thus the original language of the country-to-be, an ancestral, Edenic language. (Language 64)

As Brisset shows, the choice of *Macbeth* as the vehicle for this language permits a correlation between the dispossession in that play and the dispossession of Quebec by the British Conquest. In this translation, which she terms perlocutory (propagandistic), Shakespeare's text is systematically purged of references to the holiness of the King of

England, while all references to Scotland as “poor, miserable, down-fall’n” are emphasized to suggest the myth of victimization which underlies Quebec’s emergence from colonialism (Sociocritique). Brisset cites texts by numerous modern Quebec poets which contain language analogous to Garneau’s *Macbeth* in their expression of the bitterness of defeat. Thus, in establishing an axiological relation between the fictional Scotland of Shakespeare’s play and the historical pre-conquest Quebec, Garneau creates a distance which permits the audience to relate to “*les valeurs et les idées qui, dans le discours social, rendent compte de ce qu’on a coutume d’appeler le fait québécois*” (Sociocritique 197). In effect, an English text is translated into a fictive Edenic Québécois language, which is “free from any infiltration by the language of the British conqueror” (Language 65). The language of the translation, applied to the subject of the suffering Scotland of *Macbeth*, “conveys not so much nostalgia for the early days of colonization as the ‘utopia’ of liberation” (65). Thus, Garneau’s translation enacts a linguistic confrontation between Self and Other, in Brisset’s terms, in order to permit the contemporary audience to grasp utopian ideology of autonomy.

Garneau’s *Macbeth* stands as a central creation in the process of investigating of collective identity which was enacted during the 1970s. Its myth of oppression reflects Quebec’s recognition of the extent to which it had become culturally occupied territory. Furthermore, as Brisset has argued, it exemplifies the impulse towards “*l’éclipse de l’altérité,*” which accompanied the creation of the collective identity: “*Il est naturel . . . que dans un pays où l’Autre occupe une position hégémonique et dévorante, c’est le Soi qu’il faut ‘inventer’*” (Traduire 56). The translation of Shakespeare into an invented territorial language subordinates the Other to the myth of Self. Brisset argues that, from *Hamlet, Prince du Québec*, through numerous parodies of international and classical texts which came to the stage in the 1970s, the theatre of Quebec intended to subordinate all extraneous texts to the ideology of the Quebec ‘fact,’ and the spoken language which signalled a separate identity. Not only

*Macbeth*, but all other texts, whether European or American, were subjected to the new discourse, “*crystallisé autour d’un ensemble d’idéologèmes dont les points d’appui sont la colonisation, l’aliénation, l’exploitation et la marginalisation, le versant positif de cette doxa étant l’indépendance*” (57). With the 1980 referendum on independence, Brisset notes, Québécois translations proliferated, assisting the displacement from the institutional centre of companies which had relied on imported translations of international texts. The alternative theatre, which promoted the spoken language of place over literary French had succeeded in becoming the ‘official’ theatre. Translation has thus played an ambiguous role in cultural development, “*puisqu’elle doit répondre au besoin qu’on éprouve d’être dit par l’autrui: ce serait la meilleure preuve qu’on existe*” (59). It is no longer necessary, however, to relocate foreign texts so literally in the Québécois language and locale. Once the official status of Quebec culture had been attained, it became possible to turn to broader issues of linguistic creation, freed from the stringent nationalist ideology of the first stage. The theatre of the 1980s and 1990s has exhibited a return to the written text, albeit often in the spirit of deconstruction. The numerous Shakespearean translations which have been generated in the last two decades exhibit the varied interests of their creators rather than adherence to cultural orthodoxy.

The sense of a dialect, or particular language of place has, by no means disappeared from Shakespearean translation. In her accomplished version of *Twelfth Night* (*La Nuit des rois*, 1993), the novelist and playwright Antonine Maillet has combined a careful attention to the rendering of Shakespeare’s verse (in decasyllables) with a particular facility in conveying the wordplay, for which she draws at times on her native Acadian French, in which many of her works are written. Her metaphors draw on the living cultures of the Maritimes and Quebec, to produce an effect which is, unlike the *Macbeth* of Garneau, “*très contemporaine par son souffle, son vocabulaire et ses sonorités*” (Lévesque 31).

Jean-Louis Roux, whose early initiatives in translating Shakespeare for Quebec theatre preceded the nationalist movement, has continued to translate. His *Le Roi Lear* (1992), in which he played Lear himself, has been commended for its respect for the original. His version avoids the reproduction of 'Elizabethan' English, instead "*privilégiant une sobriété moderne, voire les néologismes, lorsque la durée, le rythme ou les sonorités s'en trouvaient mieux servies*" (Cambron 172). As an actor—as well as a playwright—it is to be expected that Roux should have a good ear for dramatic poetry. The principles which guide his translation demonstrate a different approach from that of those nationalists who would subsume foreign texts to a Québécois language: "*je suis de la vieille école; j'essaie de servir l'auteur*" (40). Roux does not value the original text above comprehension, however, any more than he values cultural nationalism over the power to communicate with the rest of the francophone world. His translations constitute an effort to revalorize the French language in Quebec, without a return to the alien literary values of the French heritage. Roux has stated that Quebec has erred in isolating itself linguistically: "*Je déplore que les divers membres de la francophonie puissent se comprendre mais le Québécois fasse exception . . . je trouve bien dommage qu'on en soit venu, ici, à une langue aussi limitative sur le plan de communication. Alors j'essaie de norlaiser, n'ayons pas peur du mot, la langue parlée*" (39). The apparently conservative values of Roux have, in fact, guided other translations of the postnationalist period, in which the French language no longer poses a hegemonic threat, but can be viewed, as Roux would wish it, as a medium of great diversity, as is English.

It has become the norm to retranslate Shakespeare in Quebec theatre, but the motives for the work vary. Normand Chaurette, one of Quebec's leading playwrights since 1985, has undertaken several translations of Shakespeare, two of which, *Un Songe d'un nuit d'été* (1995) and *La Tempête* (1996), have been used by Lepage. Chaurette's encounter with *Richard III* led not to a translation, but to a completely

independent play, *Les Reines* (1990). Michelle Allen's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, used by Lepage for an earlier production (1988), is disciplined and professional, "*une traduction très textuelle, qui relève d'ailleurs un défi majeur: donner une version rimée qui soit en même temps très près du texte anglais . . . la rime ne semble donner lieu à aucun sacrifice sur d'autres plans de signification*" (Simon 86). In contrast, director Alice Ronfard's *La Tempête* (1988) was translated for her own production of the play, which featured a female (as well as a male) Prospero, and extensive use of video (Lavoie). Given the original conception of the *mise en scène*, it not surprising that the text is closer to "tradaptation" than some of the others cited here. Although she finds it modern and direct, Simon notes that the version of Ronfard contains inaccuracies which cause confusion, no doubt caused by the haste required by the production process (85). Thus, the relation between the text and theatricality is variously construed by contemporary translators. Roux and Allen valorize accuracy, clarity, and fidelity to the original text. In contemporary theatre, however, the translation must frequently compete with—or be overwhelmed by—the *mise en scène*, and scenography.

### **Shakespeare as Pre-text and Performance Text**

The transmutation of Shakespeare in recent years from literary text to performance text, from imperialist icon to theatrical liberator is not the exclusive preserve of the theatre of Quebec: it is worldwide. It is now possible to theorize the significance of the contemporary Shakespeare phenomenon across the cultural boundaries. Bennett sets out to examine "how particular vested interests project their desires for the present (and . . . the future) through a multiplicity of representations of past texts as well as through the attempt to trespass into already-(over)coded traditions." Where the once "monolithic History of great men and major events" had been, there is now "a multiplicity of histories which compete . . . in representing the past" (3) The postmodern

representation of these pasts, Bennett, proposes, is a nostalgia which generates “the representation of the past’s ‘imagined and mythical qualities’ so as to effect some corrective to the present.” Such nostalgia then is “a marker of both what we lack and we desire . . . in lived experience . . . it leans on an imagined and imaginary past which is more than the present . . . [it is] the dynamic of the good past/bad present” (5). The substitution of an imaginary past for history, and for the reality of the present is very much at the heart of the ‘shakespearemania’ which has gripped Quebec theatre for almost two decades.

Garneau’s *Macbeth* clearly falls under this rubric of nostalgia. But so too does Pellán’s *La Nuit des rois* of the 1940s, in that it produced a fantastical, surreal world based on a text translated from an alien language. Neither observes the pieties with which English Canadians would endow Shakespeare. In English Canada, any experimentation with his texts is still undertaken in the shadow of the Stratford Festival, where a direct line to the colonial past symbolically exists. Shakespeare is not a French playwright: he is therefore all the more useful as a locus of desire, and for framing a playing space in which history and present reality can be creatively reordered. In Quebec, Shakespeare has come to be viewed as the great liberator of representation from realism: “‘*Poète dramatique*’ dont l’oeuvre fut un espace de prédilection du mélange des genres . . . [il] semble actuellement donner lieu et forme à une expression scénique débridée et fertile, que nos créateurs privilégient ses pièces historiques ou le volet plus fantaisiste de son oeuvre” (Camerlain 5). Shakespeare, as Brisset points out, represents what is missing from French literature, “ce qui reste résolument étranger . . . ce qui lui **manque**” (Traduire 82). He permits the interpreter to go behind the difficult realities of the millennium to examine moral issues and to mythicize contemporary issues, and to deal with universalisms:

[Son] oeuvre parvient-elle par ses thèmes comme par le potentiel théâtral qu’elle recèle, à donner une expression



*satisfaisante, dans le contexte—historique, humain, et théâtral—qui est le nôtre, des forces antithétiques de la lumière et des ténèbres, du bien et du mal, elle qui exprime autant les forces et les contradictions humaines que les bienfaits ou les maléfices du monde surréel, les violences guerrières que la fragilité de l’amour naissant, la tempête que le songe . . .” (Camerlain 5).*

To Françoise Faucher, the actor who created the female Prospero of Ronfard’s *La Tempête*, Shakespeare is also seen as a balm for millennial angst, and a potential source of answers to contemporary woes:

*Nous vivons une fin de siècle où les gens éprouvent le besoin de se ressaisir et la nécessité d’un environnement pur, pour respirer comme il faut, pour se prémunir contre une mort . . . imminente. C’est une respiration qu’on va chercher là . . . On replonge vers les racines, aux sources de la culture, pour voir si les aînés ne pourraient pas avoir des réponses à proposer à notre désarroi . . . des échos à nos angoisses. On les questionne . . . l’angoisse humaine ne change pas tellement à travers les siècles; elle s’exprime différemment. ( 71).*

It is clear from these and numerous other comments that Shakespeare is regarded at once as the missing, fictional ancestor and at the same time as a contemporary in the Kottian sense. In Quebec there is little sense of the reservation expressed by Salter that “Kottian contemporaneity . . . is in effect an interpretive strategy that encourages deference to Shakespeare as it suppresses the suspicious and resistant textual readings that the postcolonial position activates” (115). Rather, as Salter argues, “is is the insight that Shakespeare belongs not to ‘us’ but to ‘them’ that postcolonial actors find oddly **liberating**” (115). In any case, Salter would argue that Quebec since 1980 is no longer necessarily postcolonial, but rather viewed by many as “an independent or sovereign nation, in principle if not (yet) in fact” (123).

Quebec's realized after the first referendum of 1980 that it was potentially free from its past (even if unready to take political steps towards separation). The old postcolonial victimization myth which had informed consciousness in the 1970s had been largely exorcized through the realism of Tremblay and others: a radical shift in theatrical perspectives now occurred. Power, not impotence, became a preoccupation. Shakespeare's history plays provided the fictional basis for revisioning historical and mythic uses of power and a medium for their transposition to the milieu of Quebec. The particularities of Quebec's history were marginalized by experiments with broad and fantastical canvases. The carnivalesque—not absent from the 1970s, but usually tied to the project of postcolonial demythification—became the vehicle of liberation.

Jean-Pierre Ronfard's *Vie et Mort du Roi boiteux*, performed by the Théâtre expérimental de Montréal in 1982, is a cycle of six episodes, with a prologue and an epilogue. It was originally performed in one day, in numerous locations, over a period of almost fifteen hours. The central plot concerns the internecine rivalries of two Montréal dynasties, the Ragones and the Roberges, whose local existence is doubled with multi-layered historical and literary allusions. Episodes of the play were performed in the *quartier de l'Arsenal*, where the characters are supposed to live. The cycle re-enacts the drama of the hero-king as it is known in the Western heritage through the Greeks, the French classicists, and, most centrally, Shakespeare. Richard Ragone (Richard Premier) is the protagonist: the cycle follows his family's foundation, his birth, his life, and his death. He is, in effect, Richard III, unlimited in his lust for power, and yet, like Oedipus as well as Richard, lame, "*profondément infirme*" (Godin, Lavoie 18). Numerous scenes in Ronfard's epic refer to *Richard III*: a visit to 'Annie' (VI, 7); the dominant mother (Catherine Ragone); the québécoisized allusion to Shakespeare's "winter of discontent" in Catherine's line, "*Enfin l'hiver inconfortable achevé! On serre la shoeclaque, le capot et la mitaine . . .*" (III, 2). There are references as well to *King Lear* in the presentation of Richard's infirm father, François Premier. Ronfard had arrived at his cycle via a

parodic *Lear* (1977), in which he had explored the axis of bastardy and royalty; he had taken textual bastardization further in his "Shakespeare Follies" (1979). Richard becomes Hamlet in one scene (IV, 13). Shakespearean references, however, vie with innumerable canonical allusions in this vast fresco of Western culture: Ubu, Orestes, Brecht, Moses, Corneille, and, at the same time, the common markers of popular Montréal culture. Ronfard makes out of theatrical space and time the maximum historical simultaneity possible. Lefebvre notes that this gives a completely new perspective on political progress: "le Roi Boiteux rejoint la réflexion de Régis Debray [que] 'le temps de la politique relève d'un éternel présent'" (113).

Ronfard's project is at once environmental theatre, medieval pageant, totalizing parody of Western literature, and political subversion. As Louise Vigeant points out, Ronfard seizes on the failure of separatism in the recent referendum to shift cultural and historical perspectives and undermine nationalist certainties: "[II] a proposé une remise en perspective de nos rapports avec la culture officielle, avec les discours rassembleurs et enrôleurs. Il a pris le pari de rire de nos peurs et de nos servitudes, et nous a retournés sens dessus dessous dans un geste non pas cynique mais tout à la fois interrogateur et libérateur" (334). Ronfard makes a *tabula rasa* of the past; he pushes hybridity, polyphony, and signifierism to the limit: he valorizes 'bastardy' and 'impurity' (335-36). Gilles Lapointe concludes that he makes of the theatre an empty sign, in which the map of the known world is symbol of that which is to be destroyed, so that knowledge and truth become radically questionable terms (224). With *La Vie et Mort du Roi boiteux*, the theatre of Quebec left behind its accustomed forms of parody and intertextualism, designed to ritualistically purge indigenous culture of its 'others,' and entered into the interrogative mode of postmodernism, with all the intertextuality and referentiality which it implies.

Interest in Shakespeare's history plays, absent from Montréal stages since Jean Gascon's *Richard II* (1962), was sustained by Jean Asselin's presentation of Shakespeare's history plays (*Richard II, Henry*

*IV*, and *Henry V*) under the general title *Le Cycle des rois* (Omnibus, 1988). An innovative set conveyed into contemporary terms the Elizabethan sense of theatrical space. Asselin's *mise en scène*, based on edited versions of Hugo's translations, exploited the allegorical dimensions of the history plays by non-realistic means, which included the combination of mimes with speaking actors, cross-gendered casting, and a ludic approach which was well outside traditional interpretation of the histories. As is so often the case in Quebec, the cycle affirmed the triumph of theatre over history, as well as demonstrating to the public that Shakespeare was the source of unlimited universality: "*L'Angleterre médiévale . . . est citée ici d'une façon qui la rapproche radicalement de l'expérience contemporaine: les drames sont joués sans distance historiographique, sans cette sorte de respect hiératique pour la tradition. Les jeux de pouvoir, la soif de justice, la spiritualité et la superstition qui habite les textes shakespeariens auront une humanité de tous les instants . . .*" (Pavlovic 19). The history cycle was the crowning glory of a year in which immense theatrical liberties were taken with Shakespeare's texts, and in which adulation for his contemporaneity reached a new height.

A completely different approach to Shakespeare's histories is that of Normand Charette in *Les Reines* (1991), a play whose characters are the queens of *Richard III*. Charette, well-established as one of the leading playwrights of the postnational theatre who had reinstated the values of text and linguistic experiment, had already begun to translate Shakespeare when he wrote this play. Here, however, he evolves an independent text in which none of the male characters appear, although they haunt the speech of the female characters. The queens await the death of Edward, plagued by imminence of Richard and by the memories of past murders. There is an element of absurdism in the constant complainings of the queens: liberated from Shakespeare, they wind themselves into their own preoccupations—with power, loss, fear, and mutual envy—and enact rituals (the elevation of the queens) to affirm themselves in their meaningless, because powerless, positions.

Queen Margaret makes cosmic, fantastical journeys and returns to tell of them. Anne Dexter, a non-Shakespearean character, who has lost both her speech and her hands, confronts her mother, the Duchess of York, with her rejection of her daughter in favour of her obsession with producing a King. Chaurette creates his own poetry from Shakespeare's, introducing many mysterious elements to the play: references to the symbols of tarot (the tower, the moon, the chariot), a surreal account of the disintegration of the body of King Edward, curious lists of personal effects, and images of the flora and fauna seen in tapestries among them. At the end of the action, the Duchess, nearing one hundred years old, a witness to and victim of the brutalities of the Wars of the Roses, expires: "*Ma vie s'achève et l'Occident commence/L'univers était prisonnier de mon souffle/J'expire à présent/Et je libère/ Les lévriers, les cerfs/Les oiseaux et les biches/La lune ô la merveille/De luire!*" (92). For Gilles Costaz, the play conveys the effect of an absurd and imaginary battle for control of the world by those who patently have been deprived of power. The Duchess's dying words, however, point to a future promised to new nations ("*nations à venir*") (Douanes 30). *Les Reines* is above all a reinstatement of poetic drama, parasitic on Shakespeare, but dedicated to the invention of a metaphysical language which can only exist at the borders of the discourses of political power.

In the 1990s, Quebec Shakespeare has come to be identified with the imagistic, iconoclastic productions of Robert Lepage. His *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the National Theatre, London (1992-93), with its mudwrestling, its contortionist Puck, and its dense intercultural references, has become an important site of interrogation of postmodern, postcolonial Shakespearean dramaturgy. Barbara Hogdon's account of Lepage's performance text, and its mixed reception in London, demonstrates that "'Shakespeare' . . . performed Shakespeare, is now caught up in . . . an attempt to incorporate the global array that forms the imaginative landscape of contemporary cultural life and includes crossings, graftings, and modes of articulation between high- and low-culture media as well as among nations" (86). Lepage's imagistic, scenic

re-inscriptions of Shakespeare's plays are too complex to be adequately examined here. He continues to revisit a small number of plays (*Dream* and *The Tempest* most frequently), seemingly unlimited in his capacity to unite his own subjectivity and theatrical inventiveness with the source texts.

Of the range of theatrical texts originating from Shakespeare's plays in Quebec only an indication can be given here. In addition to those mentioned, we might allude to Gilles Maheu's influential production of Müller's *Hamlet-Machine* (Carbone 14, 1988) (Denis). Antonine Maillet, in addition to her translation of *Twelfth Night*, authored a play about Shakespeare, *William S*, in which she presupposes ignorance of Shakespeare, to explore the attitudes of the playwright through his characters (1991). Her conception was greeted with qualified praise, and deemed to be a somewhat superficial exercise (Letourneur). *Le Marchand de Venise à Auschwitz*, a critical metaplay based on Shakespeare's comedy, by Elie Wiesel and Tibor Egervari, dealt with the subject of anti-semitism through a fictional staging of the play by imprisoned Jews (Théâtre Distinct de l'Université d'Ottawa, Salle de Jésus, Montréal, 1993) (Hellot). Jean-Frédéric's *Le making of Macbeth* (Pigeon International and le Musée d'Art contemporain, 1996), an exploration of the frontiers between life and art, eros and thanatos, concerns a director who is rehearsing Shakespeare's tragedy while she waits to give birth (Godin). And, finally, in 1997, Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui and Théâtre Urbi et orbi collaborated to stage an event called simply 38. For five days, amid the live music and graffiti of an 'underground' setting, thirty-eight playwrights, all under the age of thirty-eight, set about creating their interpretations of Shakespeare. Naturally, the results were mixed. Diane Godin singles out an accomplished version of the death of Falstaff by the established writer, Dominic Champagne (168). The liberties generally undertaken at this event led Godin to conclude that this was not the event at which to succeed in 'looking for William' (169).

Engagement with Shakespeare continues, perhaps surprisingly, to afford unlimited opportunities to Quebec writers and directors for expansion of their concept of theatricality. Less now a vehicle for exploring identity through relations with the Other than in the past, Shakespeare has become in Quebec, as elsewhere, the primary metonymy for theatre itself. Pellan's surreal and clownish designs for *Le Soir des rois*, over fifty years ago, prefigure aptly the absence of that regard for tradition which has so haunted Shakespearean production in English Canada. In Quebec, such critical negatives as 'universality,' 'imperial authority,' 'contemporaneity,' and 'utopianism' have not impeded the ludic exploitation of the theatrical resource that Shakespeare freely offers.

### Bibliography

- Andrès, Bernard, and Paul Lefebvre. "Macbeth/Théâtre de la Manufacture." *Jeu* 11 (1979): 80-88.
- Aquin, Hubert. *Trou de Mémoire*. Montréal; Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1968.
- . *Prochain Épisode*. Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1965.
- Bélair, Michel. *Le Nouveau théâtre québécois*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1973.
- Bennett, Susan. *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the contemporary past*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Béraud, Jean. *350 ans de théâtre au Canada français*. Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1958.
- Berman, Antoine. Preface. *Sociocritique de la traduction*. By Annie Brisset: 9-19.
- Bolster, Charles. "Shakespeare dans le théâtre québécois." Translated by Marguerite Charron. In *Le Théâtre canadien-français* Montréal: Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne française de l'Université d'Ottawa, Fides, 1976. Vol. 5 of *Archives des lettres canadiennes*: 417-29.

- Brisset, Annie. "Language and Collective Identity: When Translators of Theater Address the *Québécois* Nation." Translated by Dean Detrich, Leonard Rahilly, Keith Palka. In *Essays on Modern Quebec Theater*. Edited by Joseph Donohue, Jr., and Jonathan M. Weiss. Canadian series no. 6. East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1995.
- . *Sociocritique de la traduction: Théâtre et altérité au Québec (1968-1988)*. Montréal: Éditions Balzac-Le Préambule, coll. "L'Univers des discours," 1990.
- . "Traduire pour s'inventer." *Jeu* 54 (1990): 55-60.
- Cambron, Micheline. "Le Roi Lear." *Jeu* 64 (1992): 168-72.
- Camerlain, Lorraine. "Échos shakespeariens." *Jeu* 48 (1988): 5-6.
- Chaurette, Normand. *Les Reines*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac/Actes Sud-Papiers, 1991.
- Costaz, Gilles. "Ni douanes ni frontières." In *La Société de Normand Chaurette: Figures et manières*. Edited by Stéphane Lépine. Montréal: Théâtre Ubu, 1996.
- . "Robert Lepage à Paris." *Jeu* 65 (1992): 160-64.
- Denis, Jean-Luc. "Hamlet-Machine." *Jeu* 46 (1988): 166-73.
- Doucette, Leonard F. *Theatre in French Canada: Laying the Foundations 1606-1867*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Ducharme, Réjean. *Le Cid maghané*. Unpublished. First performed 1968.
- Faucher, Françoise. Interview. "Chercher une respiration." By Solange Lévesque. *Jeu* 48 (1988): 69-72.
- Garneau, Michel, translator. *Macbeth*. Montréal; VLB Éditeur, 1978.
- Gélinas, Gratien. *Les Fridolinades*. 3 vols. Montréal: Éditions Quinze, 1980, 1981.
- . *Hier les enfants dansaient*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1968.
- Germain, Jean-Claude. *Les Enfants de Chénier dans un grand spectacle d'adieu*. Unpublished. First performed 1969.
- Godin, Diane. "38: Shakespeare Graffiti." *Jeu* 82 (1997): 165-69.



- . "'Le Making of de Macbeth.'" *Jeu* 81 (1996): 157-59.
- Gurik, Robert. *Hamlet Prince du Québec*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1977.
- Hellot, Marie-Christine. "Le Marchand de Venise à Auschwitz." *Jeu* 69 (1993): 168-76.
- Hogdon, Barbara. "Looking for Mr. Shakespeare after 'the Revolution': Robert Lepage's Intercultural Dream Machine." In *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*. Edited by James C. Bulman. London: Routledge, 1996: 68-91.
- Laflamme, Jean and Rémi Tourangeau. *L'Église et le théâtre au Québec*. Montréal: Fides, 1979.
- Lapointe, Gilles. "Vie et mort du Roi Boiteux de Jean-Pierre Ronfard." *Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadienne* 9 (2) (1983): 220-25.
- Lavoie, Pierre. "Je me nomme Circe. Mon père était soleil et ma mère océane." *Jeu* 48 (1988): 65-68.
- Le Blanc, Alonzo. "The Cross-Fertilization of Cultures in Quebec Theater." In *Essays on Modern Quebec Theater*. Edited by Joseph Donaghue, Jr., and Jonathan Weiss. Canadian series no. 6. East Lansing: University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- Lefebvre, Germain. "Pellan et *La Nuit des rois*." *Jeu* 47 (1988): 25-39.
- Lefebvre, Paul. "Notes sur *Vie et mort du Roi Boiteux* de Jean-Pierre Ronfard." *Jeu* 21 (1981): 105-14.
- Letourneur, Micheline. "William S." *Jeu* 60 (1991): 124-27.
- Lévesque, Solange. "Une nouvelle traduction." *Jeu* 67 (1993): 27-31.
- Loranger, Françoise, and Claude Levac. *Le Chemin du roy*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1969.
- Mailhot, Laurent. Preface. *Hamlet Prince du Québec*. By Robert Gurik: 9-17.
- Mailhot, Laurent, and Jean-Cléo Godin. *Théâtre québécois*. 2 vols. Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1988.

- Maillet, Antonine, translator. *La Nuit des rois*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1993.
- . *William S*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1991.
- Nardocchio, Elaine. *Theatre and Politics in Modern Quebec*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986.
- Pavlovic, Diane. "Le Cycle des rois/Omnibus." *Jeu* 48 (1988): 18-35.
- Ripley, John. "Shakespeare on the Montreal Stage 1805-1826." *Theatre History in Canada* 3 (1982): 3-20.
- Robert, Lucie. "The New Quebec Theatre." In *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value*. Edited by Robert Lecker. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991: 112-23.
- Ronfard, Jean Pierre. *Vie et mort du Roi Boiteaux*. 2 vols. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1981.
- Roux, Jean-Louis. Interview. "Shakespeare . . . en québécois?" By Jean-Luc Denis and Pierre Lavoie. *Jeu* 54 (1990): 39-44.
- Salter, Denis. "Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space." In *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*. Edited by James C. Bulman. London: Routledge, 1996: 113-32.
- Sauvageau, Yves. *Wouf wouf*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1970.
- Simon, Sherry. "Shakespeare en traduction." *Jeu* 48 (1988): 82-86.
- Tard, Louis-Martin. *Vingt ans de théâtre au Nouveau Monde: Histoire d'une compagnie théâtrale*. Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1971.
- Tompkins, Joanne. "Re-siting Shakespeare in Post-Colonial Drama." *Essays in Theatre/Études théâtrales* 15 (1) (November 1996): 15-22.
- Tremblay, Michel. *Les Belles-Soeurs*. Montréal: Éditions Leméac, 1972.
- Vigeant, Louise. "Le carnavalesque comme stratégie postmoderne: le cas de *Vie et mort du Roi Boiteux*." *L'Annuaire théâtral* (Fall 1988/Spring 1989): 327-36.
- Vitez, Antoine. Interview. "The Duty to Translate." In *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. Edited by Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996: 121-30.