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RE-SETTLING THE "BARD": POSTCOLONIAL PARODY IN CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN APPROPRIATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

by

Melanie Ann Stevenson

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Re-Settling the "Bard": Postcolonial Parody in Canadian and Australian Appropriations of Shakespeare

Ph.D. 1998

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Until recently, postcolonial theory and criticism largely ignored Canada and Australia. Both colonized and colonizing, these predominantly white, Anglo-Celtic cultures were considered too ambivalent towards their imperial heritage to produce significant forms of literary resistance to it. But now ambivalence is recognized as inherent in the colonial experience, and scholars are reconsidering what can be learned from the former settler-invader colonies. Since rewriting canonical British authors has proved a popular form of resistance writing in non-settler colonies, this study considers Canadian and Australian dramatic reworkings of Shakespeare, a cultural icon inseparable from British imperialism.

Australia’s struggles to develop both a national identity and a unique theatre culture reflect mixed feelings about the British colonial heritage: pro-empire sentiment, republicanism, deference to British cultural models, the assertion of Australian distinctiveness, pride in their pioneer history and guilt at their oppression of the Aborigines. Several dramatic "re-visionings" of Shakespeare reflect this ambivalent
history. For example, Hewett's *The Man From Mukinupin* recontextualizes *The Tempest* to Australia, parodying Shakespeare's paradigm of colonialism to criticize Australia's bloody settlement history. In contrast, Williamson's *Dead White Males* defends a traditional view of Shakespeare, and by extension, a reactionary white, British, male definition of Australia.

Canada's position at the nexus of three empires has produced a highly regionalized culture with an anglophone population fearful of American expansionism and inclined to be "dutiful daughters" of the British Empire. Consequently, anglophone Canadian appropriations of Shakespeare are less overtly postcolonial and oppositional than Australian ones. However, some, like MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, do explore Canada's postcolonial identity through identification with Shakespeare's female characters, who (like many Canadians) feel both privileged and marginalized. In other Canadian plays, like Mitchell's *Cruel Tears* or Gurik's *Hamlet, prince du Québec*, Shakespeare is parodied to express regional culture and concerns. But Bond's *Lear* shows how English playwrights, too, can parody Shakespeare to critique post-imperial Britain.

Parody is a useful literary decolonization technique for settler-invader cultures: it maintains some connection to the British heritage, while allowing for critical distance from it and the celebration of local identities.
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CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

WORKS CONSULTED
Chapter One

The Poor Rich Cousin: Postcolonial Studies and the "Problem" of

Settler-invader Nation Narrations

This study takes as its subject selected Australian and Canadian plays of the last three decades and considers how they engage, directly or indirectly, with white (and especially British-descended) settler-invader ideas of national identity and culture. These ideas have been re-evaluated under the pressures of evolving nationalism, feminism, multiculturalism, and postcolonialism—and the plays reflect these pressures. For reasons that will be outlined later in this chapter, I focus specifically on plays that "re-vision" aspects of Shakespeare, the "universal genius" and national poet of England, the settler-invader colonies' "Mother Country." I submit these plays to close, contextualized readings within a postcolonial framework. These

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1 Although the adjective "settler" is more common (and less awkward sounding), I shall use the more accurate term "settler-invader" throughout this work. In "non-settler" or "invaded" colonies, such as India, the British conquered and administered large areas, but did not settle permanently in large numbers. The indigenous populations continued to outnumber the British and, despite the influx of British political and cultural influences, the indigenous culture remained in many ways dominant. Places like Canada and Australia were called "settler" colonies because the British not only conquered the land, but also settled there permanently in substantial numbers and made their transplanted British culture the dominant one (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back 25). However, while the simple descriptive "settler" is partially accurate, it is historically associated with a conscious or unconscious desire on the part of such former colonies to preserve the imperialist nation-founding myth that the land the colonizers settled was empty and that no one was harmed or wronged in its taking. In fact, settlement was predicated on the violent dispossession of indigenous peoples, making colonialism in "settler" colonies as much an invasion as the conquests in India or Africa. Hence, "settler-invader" is a more accurate term.
readings are geared to address the study's other purposes, one of which is to situate and understand the settler-invader cultures of Canada and Australia better within the postcolonial debate, since they have often been either unproblematically incorporated, or ignored, rejected, and misunderstood as areas for postcolonial study. The other purpose is to use these settler-invader redeploymens of Shakespeare to question and possibly expand postcolonialist ideas of what can constitute effective resistance literature. To complement this project, I have dedicated one chapter to reading English playwright Edward Bond's drama Lear as a contemporaneous re-evaluation and critique of Britain's post-imperial identity (another area often overlooked by postcolonial scholars). In this first chapter I shall situate this study's concerns within the larger context of postcolonial studies, state the questions that I hope to address, explain my methodology, define some key terms, and offer a brief outline of the chapters to follow.

I. Classic Postcolonialism

Defining a Slippery Term

I want to begin with a discussion of earlier models of postcolonialism, since my project is part of current responses to their inadequacies. The first step is to address the question: "What does 'postcolonial' actually mean?" Although postcolonial studies has become a popular academic specialty in recent years, a definition of "postcolonial" is still necessary: the term has become like "postmodern," so widely,
even indiscriminately, applied that it is in danger of losing its original specificity and force of meaning (Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire" 31). The hyphenated word "post-colonial" first came into use to refer to a historical stage: the period after colonialism (Mishra and Hodge, "What is Post(-)Colonialism?" 400). In particular, it meant the time after a colonized country, such as India, gained political independence from a European (usually British) imperial power. "Colonial," not surprisingly, referred to the pre-independence period (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back 2).

However, "postcolonial" has evolved to refer less to a narrow historical period than to a cultural condition and a political orientation or way of seeing.² For example, in The Empire Writes Back, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin use "postcolonial" as a descriptive term "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). As a political orientation or way of seeing, "postcolonial" or "postcolonialism" has often been synonymous with "anti-colonial," although in "What is Post(-)Colonialism?" Mishra and Hodge use the term to designate two possible ideological orientations towards imperialism/colonialism and its aftermath: "oppositional postcolonialism," which as its name suggests is anti-colonial, and "complicit postcolonialism," which is "equally a product of the processes that constituted colonialism but with a different inflection" (407).

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² As the term has become less focused on time, writers have begun to omit the hyphen. However, "post-colonial" remains common and it is even still used occasionally in its original chronological sense, with context providing the clue. Normally I shall use "postcolonial"; when I wish to emphasize the chronological aspect of the term, I shall spell it "post-colonial."
Within the academy, the relatively new discipline of postcolonial studies has retained these broad cultural and political definitions, and it has applied them both to particular bodies of texts and to certain kinds of politicized and contextualized reading strategies. In general, the body of texts considered "postcolonial" includes creative works by writers in the former colonies--particularly Britain's colonies in the Third World, such as India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Caribbean, and so on. In this choice of texts, postcolonial studies resembles its predecessor, Commonwealth Studies. However, this latter discipline grouped non-British literary works from highly diverse cultures together on the basis of a rather optimistic, little-examined sense of a "shared history" and membership in the British Empire's successor, the British Commonwealth (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* 23), and pretended to a kind of political neutrality. In contrast, postcolonial studies is highly politicized and historically aware. It has focused on the negative aspects of that "shared history" of colonialism and how they are reflected in works from the former colonies; and it has tended to privilege Third and Fourth World texts that actively critique and oppose colonialism, imperialism or neo-imperialism.

Postcolonial reading strategies are equally highly political and historically aware, and have usually (though not always) supported an anti-colonial agenda. A wide variety of modern Euro-American reading practices--Marxism, post-

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3 Works from the "Fourth World"--Native and Aboriginal writers within the former settler-invader colonies--are also common objects of postcolonial study.
structuralism, deconstruction, feminism—have been adopted, adapted, and combined with each other and with non-European-based approaches for use in postcolonial analysis. Scholars have applied these various strategies not only to oppositional literary texts written by postcolonial writers, but also, in colonial discourse analysis, to virtually any text in which some aspect of imperialism, colonialism, or neocolonialism is operating and can be exposed, analysed, and understood.

To summarize what has been, until recently, the dominant or, as I would call it, "classic," understanding of "post(-)colonial," or "post(-)colonialism," I offer Alan Lawson's description:

... post-colonialism does not imply some naive chronological end of (or sequel to) colonialism (or end of history as has been suggested recently): like the "post" in post-modernism, it means "engagement and contestation with the power and meaning of". Post-colonialism, as a textual effect, as a reading strategy, as a politically-motivated historical-analytical movement, engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural-

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4 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, has made interesting use of feminism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, Marxism, and subaltern studies in her work.

5 For example, in his ground-breaking work, Orientalism (first published 1978), Edward Said studied the scholarly texts of the European Orientalists in order to analyze and critique the operations of imperial discourse working within them. In his more recent book, Culture and Imperialism (1994), Said reads the British and French canons in the light of their mutual interdependence with colonialism. In "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Spivak used a postcolonial reading strategy to critique the treatment of the Caribbean Creole, Bertha Mason, in the classic English novel Jane Eyre.
political, pedagogical, discursive, and textual domains . . . the post-
colonial moment is implicit in the colonizing moment and therefore in
its discourse. . . . ("Comparative Studies" 156. Emphasis Lawson’s)

Underlying the classic understanding of postcolonialism is a master narrative of
binary opposition. One is either for or against colonialism; one is either a colonizer or
colonized; one is at the centre (Europe) or at the margin (everywhere else). Indeed,
the list of binaries evoked—self/other, White/Black, Western/Eastern, male/female,
good/bad, normal/deviant, and so forth—is almost endless. Of course, as many
postcolonial scholars have pointed out, this system of binaries originated in the
discourses of European imperialists as a way of justifying European domination. To
give a crude example, the self-defined ‘good,’ ‘adult,’ ‘civilized,’ white colonizer had
a ‘natural’ right to rule the ‘bad,’ ‘childish,’ ‘savage,’ black colonized.6 Oppositional
postcolonialism, based on Third World models, kept the binaries, but reversed the
value of the terms to privilege the oppressed.

Controversial Settler-invader Cultures

This tendency towards binary thinking has often made postcolonial scholars
uncomfortable or dismissive when faced with phenomena that do not fit neatly into
one or other side of the binary divide, such as the settler-invader cultures of Canada,

6 For two classic analyses of the oppressive function of binary oppositions in
European discourses about the colonized, see Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks
and Abdul JanMohammed’s Manichaean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in
Colonial Africa.
Australia, and New Zealand. Some critics have lumped these cultures in with non-settler-invader cultures like India, failing to appreciate significant differences between their respective experiences of colonialism. Conversely, until recently many postcolonialists have either ignored or questioned attempts to consider settler-invader cultures under the postcolonial label. For example, in "What is Post(-)Colonialism?," Mishra and Hodge quite reasonably ask scholars to make better distinctions between the experiences of non-settler-invader and more privileged settler-invader cultures (411). However, they also assert that non-settler-invader and settler-invader are separated by an "unbridgeable chasms" of race (408), claiming that, unlike non-settler-invader resistance movements, attempts by settler-invader nations to gain economic and political autonomy are just instances of the empire striking back under guise of its "loyal White colonies" (409). In this way of thinking, settler-invader

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7 In *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (xii), Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra accuse Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin of doing this in their overview of postcolonial studies, *The Empire Writes Back*.

8 For further discussions of this tendency see Stephen Slemon's "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" and Alan Lawson's "Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject" (22) and "Comparative Studies" (157). See also Diana Brydon's 1995 article, "Reading Postcoloniality, Reading Canada," an introduction to a recent special issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* on postcolonial theory and Canadian literature. In explaining the importance of the collection, Brydon notes that national studies of Canadian literature and postcolonial literary studies have rarely crossed paths (1-2).

9 They also make the rather bold claim that non-settler-invader cultures are "more exciting" in their postcolonialism than settler-invader cultures (413).

10 Mishra and Hodge make a number of important distinctions between settler-invader and non-settler-invader colony experiences of colonialism, but they often overstate their case and miss key complications. They are correct to argue that it is
culture literatures are often assigned unproblematically to the same category as First
World literature and the literature of empire (Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire" 37). 11

Why these arguments about the postcolonial status of these nations? Because
the position of settler-invader cultures in relation to empire, colonialism, and--in the
case of Australia and Canada--Britain has been a deeply ambivalent one. 12 Two recent
theorists of settler-invader cultures, Alan Lawson and Stephen Slemon, call them the
"Second World," not because they came after or rank second to Europe, but because
they are "caught between two First Worlds, the originating world of Europe as
Imperial Centre and the First World of the (ab)original peoples" (Lawson,

inaccurate to see moves for greater independence in countries like Canada and
Australia as "heroic and revolutionary ruptures" with the Empire in the way that
independence movements in India or non-settler colonies were ("What is
Post(-)Colonialism?" 409). However, as I shall show in later chapters, the "loyal
White colonies"(409) were not as unproblematically loyal to the "Mother Country"
(408) as these critics suggest, and they are even less so now. For example, Mishra
and Hodge fail to address the fact that, even early on, not every settler-invader saw
Britain as the "Mother Country"--consider the Irish convicts of Australia or
francophones in post-conquest Canada. Even those for whom Britain was the "Mother
Country" were not always whole-hearted in their support, as often appeared in
controversies over participation in Britain's war efforts. Fundamentally, Mishra and
Hodge fail to recognize the significant ambivalence, duality, and changing nature of
these nations.

11 Lawson hypothesizes that the motive for the "sometimes overdetermined
repudiation of invader-settler postcolonialism in the US academy . . . may derive from
what outsiders often recognize as a desire in US nation-narration to forget its own
colonizing status in favour of a more urgent attention to recent problems of race . . ."
("Postcolonial Theory" 23).

12 See Slemon's "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second
World," and Lawson's "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject."
They are "suspended between 'mother' and 'other,'" that is, they are "simultaneously colonized and colonizing" (Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory" 25). They are colonized because they were once controlled by the British Empire and are now heavily influenced by Britain's world power successor, the United States. At the same time, they are colonizers implicated in the past and continuing domination of indigenous peoples, and sometimes other, non-British immigrants within their borders. This ambivalence is reflected in settler-invader discourse, which is preoccupied with dichotomies, polarities, and disjunctions, yet transforms them from their antagonistic binary relationships into a relationship of doubleness, of ambivalence (Lawson, "Cultural Paradigm" 69). As a result, postcolonial critics influenced by the classic binary model have seen places like Canada and Australia as too complicit with imperialism, insufficiently opposed to it, to be capable of criticizing imperialism or to be equated in any way with non-settler-invader colonies.

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13 Lawson and Slemon's terminology is idiosyncratic. Since World War Two, "First World" usually refers to Europe, North America, and Australia/New Zealand, "Second World" to Communist nations, and "Third World" to virtually everything else. In referring to Aboriginal peoples as "First World," Lawson notes the politically significant practice of Canadian aboriginal peoples of referring to themselves as "First Nations," reminding us of their status as the original inhabitants of the land ("Comparative Studies" 157).

14 Sometimes this colonizing has gone beyond their borders, as in the case of Australia, which had its own colonies in the Pacific region (Hodge and Mishra, Dark Side of the Dream xiii).
Narrative, Identity, and Resistance Writing

Two common interests of postcolonial study are particularly relevant to my discussion. One is the connection between narrative and constructions of a distinct identity (or "subjectivity"). The identities of interest are usually national, regional, tribal, or some other form of group identity, as opposed to strictly individual ones. Identity is often closely tied to or defined in terms of nationalism (or a regional or ethnic equivalent). The second area of interest concerns the ways narrative can be used in resistance writing to challenge the oppression or distortion of one group identity (usually the colonized’s) by the discourse of another group (usually that of the imperialists or colonizers).

Benedict Anderson and others have argued that what we think of as nations are as much "imagined communities" as actual physical entities (e.g., Anderson 5-7). Narrative in various forms—myths, folk legends, epics, histories, novels and so forth—helps to express, create, promote, challenge, or revise our ideas of who we are as a group. Sometimes this self-definition involves imagining who we are not, and

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12 "Subjectivity" has become a popular term in some academic circles, replacing the plain English "identity" and confusing non-specialists more familiar with the word’s usage as the antonym of "objectivity." One advantage of "subjectivity" is that it emphasizes the idea that "identity" is at least as much something we construct for ourselves as something that we actually "are." The term is a kind of corrective to simpler, popular understandings of "identity" that tend to think of it as something essential, existing "out there" on its own, apart from our intellectual and emotional formulations of it. However, there is nothing in the term "identity" itself that has prevented more sophisticated understandings of it, and it has indeed been used in this more complex way. Accompanied by a clarification—"when I say ‘identity,’ I mean the concept of identity that we create out of our biases, subjective perceptions, etc."—there is no reason not to use it. Thus I shall often use the more familiar "identity" in this discussion.
constructing a distorted view of "Other" people in order to contrast it with our "Selves."  

Postcolonial scholars (particularly discourse analysts) have devoted much attention to understanding the interworkings of narrative and group identity in postcolonial milieus. Some focus on showing how proponents of imperialism used narrative to create distorted images both of themselves and the communities they colonized—images that justified their imperial power. For example, in Black Skin, White Masks (83-108), Antillean scholar Frantz Fanon contested Octave Mannoni's 1950 book Psychologie de la colonisation, 17 which used The Tempest as a metaphor and characterized colonized Malagasy Malgasies as Calibans suffering from psychological dependence and inferiority complexes in relation to their French Prospero masters. 18 Others have analysed classic literary texts of the British canon such as The Tempest, Robinson Crusoe, Jane Eyre, Heart of Darkness, or the novels of Rudyard Kipling to expose racist, imperialist constructions of native identity. 19 Some, like Homi Bhabha,  

16 This impulse appears most obviously, perhaps, in imperial discourses that construct the native as an exotic "Other," whose purported "superstition," "savagery," or "lust" serve to highlight the supposed rationality, civilization, and self-restraint of the European colonizer.  

17 In English editions, the book's title is usually translated as Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, emphasizing The Tempest metaphor.  

18 Fanon's critique of narrative imperialism went further than Mannoni's work. According to Edward Said, he saw conventional narrative in general as "central to imperialism's appropriative and dominative attributes" (Culture and Imperialism 273).  

19 This challenge to the western literary canon is not restricted to postcolonialists. It is part of a larger challenge by feminists, gay/lesbian or queer theorists, and other minority groups. The larger challenge includes attempts not only to establish new, more inclusive lists of "great works," but also to question the process of canon
have engaged in more general, theoretical explorations of the role of narration in conceptualizing the postcolonial nation. Until very recently, most analyses have focused on prose narratives, particularly novels.

However, interest in what one might call the nation narration question is not restricted to scholarly critiques of imperialist identity formulations. Having had their sense of identity marginalized and distorted under colonialism, there has been a strong urge in postcolonial countries actively to assert and privilege a distinctive group identity (Lawson, "Acknowledging Colonialism" 135). This urge has often been expressed in the work of creative writers in the former colonies, who use various forms of narrative to assert alternative visions of identity. In many cases these narrative visions do not simply assert a positive postcolonial identity, but also write back to, and thus actively resist, the imposed colonial one. An often-used technique of this resistance writing is the rewriting or "re-visioning" of the canonical literary works of the colonizer, usually works that promote negative or limited views of the

formation itself (Lawrence, "Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Canons" 1).

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20 See, for example, the essays in the collection edited by Bhabha, Nation and Narration (1990).

21 As I shall show later, it is just now (since the mid 1990s) that a substantial number of postcolonial scholars are beginning to pay serious theoretical attention to the role of dramatic narrative in constructions of national and group identities.

22 The Négritude movement of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s—led by colonized francophone writers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal), Aimé Césaire (Martinique), and Bernard Binlin Dadié (Ivory Coast)—is one such example. They reworked and dismantled the racist stereotypes of "darkest" Africa imposed on them by their European colonizers, turning supposedly degrading "traits" around and celebrating them as positive (Boehmer 105).
colonized—or ignore them altogether. Some canonical texts in anglophone literature that have proven particularly popular for postcolonial re-visioning include Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and, especially, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Of course, not all rewriting, or even re-visioning, of canonical texts is oppositional. Allusions or adaptations can be made for other reasons than to oppose colonialism. For example, Audrey Thomas' novel, *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* (1971), which rewrites *The Tempest* in a Canadian setting, is not particularly interested in questioning the imperial paradigms within the Shakespearean text (Zabus 45). And even in cases where an author consciously intends his/her re-visioning to be oppositional, there is the danger of the postcolonial paradox or double-bind: that in rewriting a text to challenge its assumptions, one inadvertently preserves aspects of that text and its assumptions and accords them a certain centrality. This inadvertent, even undesired reinforcement of the canonical text in a rewriting is called "reinscription." Some postcolonial writers—most famously Kenyan writer Ngugi wa

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23 Here I am borrowing Adrienne Rich's resonant term "re-visioning" from her article "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision." I think it works well not only in the feminist context in which she originally coined it, but in a postcolonial context too. I use it to suggest a process in which something old is seen through new eyes, from a new, often challenging, perspective.


25 Reinscription has been a major concern for oppositional postcolonialists, and not just ones rewriting canonical texts. Many postcolonial scholars have been trained in European and North American universities, or in universities modelled after them. As
Thiong'o—have attempted to avoid the reinscription problem by turning away from the oppositional use of English language and literature, writing instead in their local, indigenous (and thus pre-imperial) languages and narrative traditions. As will be discussed later, this strategy is not an option for everyone, and it poses particular problems for writers from settler-invader cultures.

II. Newer Directions in Postcolonial Studies

Complicating the Binary Model

In the past decade, postcolonial scholars have begun to revise the older models of postcolonialism, pointing out their limitations and opening them up to a greater recognition of the complexity of the postcolonial experience. Challenges have been made to the binary oversimplifications of the earlier theories, binaries of the type that portrayed the West as monolithically pro-empire and evil. Attention is being paid to the ambiguities, the ambivalence inherent in both colonialism and postcolonialism.

Critics such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Abdul JanMohammed, a result, many scholarly critiques of empire in the former colonies have been written in English (or other languages of colonization), using European concepts such as Marxism and so forth. Had they not been, arguably they would not have been read and understood by the western powers at whom the critiques were often aimed. However, ironically, such critiques also reinscribe the centrality of European languages and theories.


27 See Bruce Robbins’ essay “Colonial Discourse: A Paradigm and Its Discontents” (especially 212-13) for a discussion of this revisionary trend.
and Benita Parry are re-examining the nature of Third World resistance literature, questioning the idea that literary resistance is transparent, easily (and only) locatable in Third World works, and without ambivalence. Summarizing key common elements in these theoretical re-evaluations, Slemon notes:

. . . first . . . you can never easily locate the sites of anti-colonial resistance--since resistance itself is always in some measure an "effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority" . . . and never simply a "reversal" of power--and secondly, that resistance itself is therefore never purely resistance, never simply there in the text or the interpretive community, but is always necessarily implicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress. . . . 

"[T]he colonial subject who can answer the colonizers back is the product of the same vast ideological machinery that silences the subaltern" . . . [A] theory of literary resistance must recognize the inescapable partiality, the incompleteness, the untranscendable ambiguity of literary or indeed any contradictory or contestatory act which employs a First-World medium for the figuration of a Third-World resistance, and which predicates a semiotics of refusal on a gestural mechanism whose first act must always be an acknowledgement and a recognition of the reach of colonialist power.

("Unsettling the Empire" 36-37. Emphasis Slemon's)

In addition, while earlier movements such as Négritude sought an idealized,
pre-colonial culture, more recently Edward Said and the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* have recognized the interdependent nature of imperial and colonial histories and the cultural hybridity of postcolonial nations—an issue of increasing interest as worldwide immigration changes demographics. Studies of race and colonialism are taking into account feminist and sexuality concerns and vice versa.

**Increased Interest in the Settler-invader Second World**

Such re-evaluations of the nature of the postcolonial, and the place of ambivalence and hybridity in it, have opened the door to arguments for including properly contextualized and differentiated studies of settler-invader colonies within postcolonial studies. As Canadian critic Slemen points out:

\[\ldots\text{there is a contradiction within the dominant trajectory of First-World post-colonial critical theory }\ldots\text{ for that same theory which argues persuasively for the necessary ambivalence of post-colonial literary resistance, and which works to emplace that resistance squarely between First- and Third-World structures of representation, also wants to assign "Second World" or ex-colonial settler literatures}\]

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28 See *Culture and Imperialism* 259, 317.

29 See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Feminism and Critical Theory” (1985, reprinted in 1996 in Landry and MacLean’s *The Spivak Reader*), Andrew Parker et al.’s *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (1991), Laura Donaldson’s *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, & Empire-building* (1992), or Rachel Bowlby’s “Breakfast in America—Uncle Tom’s Cultural Histories” in *Nation and Narration* (197-212), edited by Homi Bhabha.
unproblematically to the category of the literature of empire, the
literature of the First World, precisely because of its ambivalent
position within the First-World/Third-World, colonizer/colonized
binary. Logically, however, it would seem that the argument being
made by Spivak, Bhabha, Sharpe and others about the ambivalence of
literary and other resistances—the argument that resistance texts are
necessarily double, necessarily mediated, in their social location—is in
fact nothing less than an argument for the emplacement of "Second
World" literary texts within the field of the "post-colonial" . . .
("Unsettling the Empire" 37)

Similarly, Alan Lawson argues that, in excluding settler-invader colonies from
consideration, postcolonialists

. . . have bracketed off from examination the very place where the
processes of colonial power as negotiation, as transactions of power, are
most visible. That foreclosing risks capitulating to the notion of the
operation of imperialism as a one-way imposition of colonial power
from above, thereby reinscribing the moment of imperialism's
discursive capture of history. In doing so those critics overlook the fact
that the colonial "moment" (as in physics) is a transaction of forces, a
relationship—unequal, certainly, but a relationship nonetheless. . .

[Locating resistance either in the contradictions of the colonialist text
or in an essentialist Third World consciousness serves to conceal the
actual operations of resistance. ("Postcolonial Theory" 22)

Lawson argues that it is imperative for postcolonialists--increasing numbers of whom are located in privileged positions in Second World universities and are descended from settler-invaders--to examine their history more closely:

I argue here for the ethical as well as the hermeneutical value of locating a particular kind of postcolonial site--the "settler" subject. This is not only a reading strategy of some value but a political and ethical necessity. To overlook the particularity of the settler site, to collapse it into some larger and unspecified narrative of empire or metropolis, or even to exclude it from the field of the postcolonial altogether, is to engage in a strategic disavowal of the actual processes of colonization, a self-serving forgetting of the entangled agency of one's history as a subject with that of the displaced Native/colonized subject. ("Postcolonial Theory" 20)

Thus, the re-evaluation of the settler-invader role can serve two purposes: first, since ambivalence is especially obvious in the Second World, such a re-evaluation can expand our understanding of its operation in the larger colonial and postcolonial world (without necessarily re-marginalizing the non-settler-invader or erasing differences between colonial experiences). Second, re-evaluation has the potential to aid anti-colonialism and the decolonization project by forcing those of us in settler-invader cultures to develop greater awareness of our past and continuing role in colonization, a role we have frequently hidden under the carpet by choosing to focus instead on the...
ways in which we are ourselves colonized.

III. National Identity, Narrative, and Resistance Writing in Second World Cultures

As was noted earlier, postcolonial countries have a special urge to assert a unique national or local identity—often through narrative—as an alternative to the marginalization and distortion of their image in imperialist characterization.¹⁰ A version of this impulse is also present in Second World cultures, an impulse to assert that they are no longer temporary British visitors, nor mere "backwoods colonials" or "dutiful (but inferior) offspring" of the Empire. However, when it comes time to define what being a post-colonial Canadian or Australian means, their ambivalent position presents particular difficulties.

Culture cannot emerge ahistorically out of a vacuum, but what history or heritage can settler-invaders draw upon to create their "imagined community"? Unlike non-settler-invader cultures, settler-invader nations tend to have short histories (Lawson, "Acknowledging Colonialism" 135). In Africa, members of the Négritude movement who wished to resist and replace racist imperial stereotypes of black Africans could draw on their own ancient local traditions to formulate an alternative

¹⁰ Of course, nationalism and the urge towards national self-definition are by no means restricted to postcolonial communities. European imperialism was in many ways driven by European nationalism. However, I am interested in the special issues involved in the intersection of colonialism and national self-definition in the postcolonial world and, as Hodge and Mishra suggest, self-definition is something of an obsession for postcolonial settler-invader cultures (Dark Side of the Dream x).
cultural identity—even if the recuperation of a completely pure pre-colonial culture, uncontaminated by the after-effects of colonialism and globalization, was not practically possible. But in the absence of an ancient, established "settler-invader" culture rooted in the "new" land, white Anglo-Celtic Australians, Canadians, or New Zealanders have had to look to other, problematic histories.

One option is to continue to evoke the inherited culture of the colony's founding "Mother Country"—Britain. Certainly in the early stages of colonial development this is done almost automatically. However, as settler-invaders and their descendants come to feel more nationalistic and post-colonial in the historical sense, the "Mother Country" is precisely the culture that the no-longer-immigrants must try to distinguish themselves from—however politely. After all, one cannot be distinct if one is identical to someone else; the more one depends on an old history and culture, the less distinctive one's "new" culture is. In addition, the landscape and lifestyle the settler-invaders had to adjust to in the colonies were often very different from those of the "Mother Country," hence the old culture did not always "fit" the new situation. Could the gentle colours and watery light of Constable's painting style adequately capture the rugged contours and brilliant colours of Algoma in the fall? Could the dainty tropes of eighteenth-century English topographical poetry fit the parched Australian outback of a new continent in which even the seasons were reversed? Did nineteenth-century immigrant Susannah Moodie's ideas of gentility survive her introduction to bush farming in Ontario? And what about the non-English or non-British immigrants, who have been present in Canada and Australia from early days
and form an increasing percentage of their populations? What valency does "Mother
England" have for them? They complicate the binary of "colonizer/colonized" even
more.

If the "Old World" culture did not quite fit the "New World" experience of the
settler-invader, over time the settler-invader no longer quite fitted the "Old World"
and, ironically, this has also presented a problem in the form of the nagging cultural
inferiority complex that is characteristic of many settler-invader communities. There is
the anxiety that they are only attenuated Brits, "backwoods colonials," the "offspring"
of the "Mother Country" (never the parents), and that their culture (dress, theatre,
poetry, manners, etc.) is at best a pale imitation of what goes on in London.31

Drawing on Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry, Lawson puts the cultural identity
problems of Anglo-Celtic settler-invaders in theoretical terms, pointing out that they
can end up merely mimicking the "authentic" imperial culture from which they are
separated—that is, they no longer are British, they just act like them. Quoting Bhabha,
he suggests they are "almost the same, but not quite" ("Postcolonial Theory" 26).

One of the most famous descriptions of settler-invader inferiority complexes comes
from Australian critic Arthur Phillips in his famous 1950 essay on the "Cultural
Cringe":

The devil of it is that the assumption [that any settler-invader cultural
product is worse than the imported one] will often be correct. The
numbers are against us, and an inevitable quantitative inferiority easily

31 Or since World War Two, New York, the centre of the American Empire.
looks like a qualitative weakness, under the most favourable circumstances—and our circumstances are not favourable. We cannot shelter from invidious comparisons behind the barrier of a separate language; we have no long-established or interestingly different cultural tradition to give security and distinction to its interpreters; and the centrifugal pull of the great cultural metropolises works against us. Above our writers—and other artists—looms the intimidating mass of Anglo-Saxon culture. Such a situation almost inevitably produces the characteristic Australian Cultural Cringe—appearing either as the Cringe Direct, or as the Cringe Inverted, in the attitude of the Blatant Blatherskite, the God's-Own-Country and I'm-a-better-man-than-you-are Australian Bore. (299)

Such cultural insecurity may be attenuated over time but, as Phillips suggests (299) and as we shall see in later chapters, attempts to deal with it often resurface in expressions of settler-invader cultural nationalism.

The imperial heritage also raises the problem of legitimacy for settler-invaders. At heart, colonialism has always been a controversial enterprise and, even when it has seemed most hegemonic, required constant rationalization to "justify" itself: "We're bringing progress/civilization/salvation to the savages"; "Australia is a terra nullis" crying out for development"; and so forth. For settler-invader cultures, their history as "children of the Mother Country" and "loyal colonies" means their identity is also

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32 Empty land.
inextricably caught up with their past (and continuing) role as agents of
colonization/invasion. The national identity of a settler-invader culture is based upon a
dubious foundational act: the unjust aggression of imperial power (Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream* x). This has threatening implications for the settler-invader’s
self-image. It has led to the whitewashing of colonial history and an insistence on
epistemologically deceitful concepts like "terra nullis" and the "New World" (a world
with no prior history of settlement).°° Settler-invaders may be haunted by a sense of
not really belonging in the colonial landscape, of being themselves the foreigners, the
"Others" (Lawson, "Cultural Paradigm" 68).

Given the problems associated with the British imperial heritage, the idea of
adopting some part of the indigenous culture—First Nations, Maori, Aboriginal—might
seem an attractive alternative. Whose historical presence stretches back the further?
Whose language and culture are more distinctive and more fully developed in relation

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°° Hodge and Mishra point to a quest in Australian literature for symbolic forms to
legitimate the dubious national foundation (*Dark Side of the Dream* x). Ella Shohat
asks whether the desire to preserve the settler-invader self-image extends to current
academic practice too. She suggests that some Anglo-American (and Anglo-Celtic)
academics in settler-invader nations prefer "postcolonialism" over terms like "third
worldist critique" or "neo-colonialism" because of its potentially "depoliticizing
implications" (99). The "post" signifies not only the supersession of an "outmoded"
aesthetic or political theory, but the "movement beyond a specific point in history,
that of colonialism and Third World nationalist struggles" (101). It carries "... the
implication that colonialism is now a matter of the past, undermining colonialism’s
economic, political, and cultural deforming traces in the present" (105). This—
combined with the tendency to homogenize the different experiences of settler-
invaders and native persons under one "postcolonialism"—"masks the white settlers’
colonialist-racist policies toward indigenous peoples not only before independence but
also after the official break from the imperial center, while also de-emphasizing
neocolonial global positionings of First World settler-states" (102-03).
to the land? Whose presence seems more legitimate? Yet this too is problematic, both from an anti-colonial and a complicitly colonial perspective. On the one hand, we are aware today of issues like "appropriation of voice," and question whether settler-invaders could unproblematically or completely adopt an indigenous culture for their own. By definition colonizers are not indigenous and their experience of the land as settler-invaders is different from that of the native peoples. Again, Bhabha’s theory of mimicry is useful, in reverse form. Even more than the settler-invader imitating the imperial centre, the colonizer can only act the part of the Native, become a "mimic man." Bhabha uses this term to describe an anglicized, near-assimilated native person in a non-settler-invader colony, someone who is "almost the same, but not quite" white and English (Location of Culture 86). To adapt the phrase, the most a settler-invader mimicking the indigenous person can do is to become a sort of Grey Owl figure: "almost, but still white." Such mimicry is also suspect in that it can aid colonialism. For a settler-invader to pretend to be indigenous is analogous to making the imperialist "terra nullis" claim again. It is an arrogant denial of historical reality used to legitimate the appropriation of land from the truly indigenous.

At the same time, even from a more complicitly colonial point of view, "going native" is problematic for the settler-invader. Even if perfect mimicry—where one might transcend "mimicking" to achieve "being"—were possible, it is not in the

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34 Thus necessitating considerable imperial propaganda about "terra nullis" and the "white man’s burden" to counter it.

35 See also Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory" 26-27.
colonizer's more selfish interests to allow it. As Bhabha points out, in the case of a British colonizer "civilizing" a native, the discourse of mimicry is ambivalent (86). The colonizer wants the native to be very like him, yet insists that the mimicry be imperfect, that there be "slippage" and "difference" (86)—in other words, the native can be "anglicized," but never "English." Why this ambivalence? Bhabha's subtle and highly theoretical explanation of the "menace" of mimicry is excellent, but pointing out a simple, practical ramification will convey the main point: if there is no "difference" between colonizer and colonized, what justification can colonizers offer for their privileged and controlling position over the colonized? The problem is the same if the setter-invader becomes virtually identical to the colonized native.36

What then is the Anglo-Celtic settler-invader attempting to construct a narrative of national "self" to do? What "usable past," as Lawson calls it ("Acknowledging Colonialism" 144), can he/she draw on to make an "imagined community," to create a sense of shared past when the history available is felt to be inadequate, ethically compromised, or "Other"? The Native identity is not easily appropriable. Nor can the imperial "Mother Country" be fully embraced without erasing distinctiveness and raising troubling issues of legitimacy. At the same time, for the settler-invader to enact amnesia, to deny the British influence, is to inhabit a cultural vacuum—without even a first language. Kenyan writer Ngūgi wa Thiong'o—an inhabitant of a non-settler-invader colony—could say farewell to English because it was a foreign, imposed language and culture and because he had his own mother tongue. Is this really an

36 Such fears also underlie colonial prohibitions of miscegenation.
option for the Anglo-Celtic settler-invader? Somehow the settler-invader must create an "imagined community" in the ambivalent space between "Mother" and the "Other," and within simultaneous roles of "colonizer" and "colonized." Increasingly, this binary is complicated by new, non-British immigrants, some (but not all) of whom are from other former British colonies.

This brings me to some important questions. Is it possible for settler-invader writers of British descent to reject the negative aspects of colonialism without rejecting the one older cultural heritage to which they have some claim, some connection? Can something of the heritage be retained or adapted into a settler-invader identity and produce more than implicit postcolonialism? Can the settler-invader find a "useable past" and use it to create nation narrations that qualify as resistance literature? What forms might such literature take? Are the dangers of reinscription the same for a settler-invader as for the native inhabitant? In the next section I shall explore why drama is a useful site for exploring some of these questions, and why for many postcolonial Canadian and Australian playwrights Shakespeare provides a "useable past" with a wide range of potential effects.

IV. Settler-invader Plays Re-visioning Shakespeare

Until very recently, postcolonial theories about nation narration have tended to

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37 Similarly, is the complete rejection of the European mother tongue and culture an option for French Canadian settler-invaders?

38 And by negative aspects, I refer to the problems involved in the settler-invader's role as both oppressive colonizer and as marginalized, culturally insecure colonized.
use prose fiction (especially novels) as their models. However, critics are beginning
to pay more attention to postcolonial drama, and it is becoming evident that the nature
of dramatic narrative and dramatic writing, production, performance, and reception
dovetails in interesting ways with negotiations of postcolonial communal identity,
especially in the ambivalent former settler-invader colonies.

Most drama is written not to be read in private, but for performance in the
theatre, and theatre (being a public art) is a natural forum for the task of developing
or renegotiating a community's sense of self. Plays are often very closely associated
with particular places and communities in ways that other genres or media are not.
Their production and reception are conditioned by their locale. Even in their writing
they can have special ties to a particular community, for, unlike fiction, theatre is
inherently collaborative, and dramatic narratives are frequently written for
performance by specific companies, in specific communities, in specific theatres, and

39 While there have been some rather conventional studies of individual
postcolonial dramatists or theatre practices in very specific locales, it was not really
until the mid 1990s that large-scale studies began appearing that took both broader and
more theoretical approaches to postcolonial drama and theatre. While the January 1995
"Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition" special topic issue of PMLA contained
eight articles on postcolonialism, but only one concerned with drama (Aparna
Dharwadker's "Historical Fictions and Postcolonial Representation: Reading Girish
Karnad's Tughlaq"), by 1996 at least three whole books dedicated to postcolonial
drama had appeared: editor J. Ellen Gainor's Imperialism and Theatre (1995), Helen
Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins' Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics (1996).
and Brian Crow and Chris Banfield's An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre (1996).
Post-colonial Drama is concerned with the interaction of a wide range of postcolonial
dramatic literature, performance, and theory. An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre
is less theoretical, but examines the work of several of the best known postcolonial
playwrights, such as Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard.

40 The one exception to this, of course, is closet drama.
sometimes even to celebrate or critique very specific local events or "hot" issues of the moment. This is borne out in the fact that local communities commission plays, statues, murals—all very public forms—but rarely, it seems, novels.

The representative nature of theatre also makes it useful. As Tompkins points out: ". . . everything on a stage stands for something else, [so] it is possible to 'translate' the personal actions of a character on stage to 'represent', signify, and even allegorize national events" ("The Story of Rehearsal Never Ends" 143).

Postcolonial studies is interested in subjectivity: the ways in which we construct and represent our ideas of people's identities. Theatre literalizes this process, as characters are first sketched in words, then constructed and represented in rehearsal and on stage. (In more metatheatrical plays, this very act of subject representation is analysed and exposed, as in Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author.) In addition, dialogue and the (re)presentation of a body on the stage can provide both a literal and figurative space for the voice of the marginalized to be heard—or for its absence to be noted (as in the case where Aboriginal peoples are played by non-Aborigines, with dialogue written by non-Aborigines).

Joanne Tompkins' analysis of postcolonial nationhood, identity, and theatre is

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41 As we shall see, a number of the plays noted in this study were written in response to very immediate and public events in their writers' communities. Robert Gurik's Hamlet, prince du Québec tackled English-French relations in Canada around the time of Charles de Gaulle's famous "Vive le Québec libre" speech. Dorothy Hewett's The Man From Mukinupin was commissioned for the sesquicentenary of the founding of Western Australia. The Australian bicentenary in 1988 led to the commissioning of many plays about Australia, including Louis Nowra's adaptation of Xavier Herbert's classic Australian novel, Capricornia, and controversial anti-celebratory plays such as Michael Gow's 1841 and Stephen Sewell's Hate.
also very pertinent here and worth outlining. She notes that "[r]econfiguring nationhood is characteristic of post-colonial countries" and that "identity" has been used by many postcolonial writers as "the principal trope in establishing national selfhood" (142). In the politicized postcolonial world, "... identity—often in conjunction with nationhood—becomes a crucial establishing factor (or metaphor) for a region’s political, cultural, and literary independence, and often as an end in itself" (143). Drawing on newer postcolonial theories, she notes that a key feature of postcolonial identities is that they are not static, fixed stereotypes (e.g., Switzerland equals mountains, chocolate, yodelling, and banks), but a "more or less continual renegotiation of cultural authenticity" (142). The emphasis in postcolonial identity is not on the final end product—some static, completed identity—but on process, the ongoing evolution of a multivalent, continuously added-to, multiple, hybrid identity.

There are obvious parallels here with the nature of theatre, which is also focused less on the completion of a static product (like a novel), than on process, on

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42 I shall be drawing frequently in this discussion on her excellent 1995 article "‘The Story of Rehearsal Never Ends’: Rehearsal, Performance, Identity in Settler Culture Drama." All further page references to Tompkins in this chapter will be to this article, unless otherwise specified.

43 Arguably, no national identity is ever truly fixed—though it often becomes reified by ahistorical critics, politicians, and other national myth-makers.

44 When, in his introduction to Nation and Narration (1-7), Bhabha talks about narration and the construction of nations, he too emphasizes the "process," the ongoing-ness of postcolonial national identities.
constant repetition with change (Tompkins 144).\textsuperscript{45} Rehearsal, improvisation, repeated performance,\textsuperscript{46} revised scripts, and new productions of old plays emphasize evolution, change, reinterpretation, and the renegotiation of relationships and character identity. Perhaps it is not surprising that Guyanese writer Wilson Harris uses rehearsal as a trope in describing his postcolonial society (Tompkins 143-44). Many Canadian and Australian plays also use rehearsal as "a metaphor that remains on stage beyond the dress rehearsal" (Tompkins 143).\textsuperscript{47} In his introduction to \textit{Nation and Narration}, Bhabha stresses the "performativity of language in the narratives of the nation" (3).

Theatre also allows for incompleteness of character and an awareness of multiple (even simultaneous) possible personas, since "in virtually all cases, an actor presents an identity separate from her own. This multiplication of identities (the actor's and the character's) invests identity with immediately apparent multivalent personas that are not as inevitably discernible in other literary genres" (Tompkins 143). If actors double roles, the effect is increased. This connects structurally and ideologically with the hybrid, unfinished nature of postcolonial societies, and the multiple roles in colonialism played by the settler-invader.

Theatre also intersects with postcolonial issues in the fact that the "play experience itself is inherently conducive to the revisionist strategies that post-colonial

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\textsuperscript{45} I shall return to this idea of repetition with change later on when discussing Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody, a key concept in my play analysis.

\textsuperscript{46} Even when the same play is acted night after night, it is never performed in exactly the same way.

\textsuperscript{47} Scenes of rehearsal appear in several of the plays to be studied in later chapters, such as Malouf's \textit{Blood Relations} and Gow's \textit{Away}. 
literatures deploy: in preparing a play for production, actors and/or directors re-vision or 're-see' how to play a particular role, each contributing his or her own knowledge, experience, and cultural position" (Tompkins 144). Playwrights often rewrite their scripts during rehearsal and after a first production.

According to Tompkins, many Canadian and Australian playwrights challenge the few cartoon stereotypes that sometimes pass for national identity in settler-invader colonies using theatre, as genre and trope, to reveal postcolonial national identity as a process of continuous identity formation. Instead of a monolithic national type, what is revealed is a multiple, diverse complex of identity possibilities (Tompkins 144-45). The diffusion is "a consequence of life and place in a second world post-colonial setting" (Tompkins 144). A dialectic ensues between the quest for unity and recognition of diversity (Tompkins 144). The challenge to the idea of a fixed national identity is often geared to achieve particular political ends (Tompkins 144-45) (as in the case of multiculturalist, feminist, Aboriginal, or gay plays that seek to broaden the definition of the Canadian or Australian "norm").

Rather than simply discarding old identities or stripping one down to an essential core, recent plays like Canadian Djanet Sears’ *Afrika Solo* show a process of the accretion of identities (Tompkins 145), of a heritage that is "richly multiple"

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4 The fact that settler-invader colonies are ambivalent and hybrid has not stopped them from trying to develop national identities, but as will be shown later, these are very limited and contingent in nature. I’m thinking here of Canadian stereotypes such as the working-class white, male, toque-wearing, beer-swilling Canadian "hoser" (in French and English-speaking versions) and the white, male, working-class, shorts-and-undershirt-wearing, beer-swilling Australian "ocker."
(Tompkins 147). This breaks out of the old binary model of identity. Old stereotypes and icons are often recombined and rehearsed to expose them as the constructs that they are (usually white-invented); they are "re-used with a critical distance that invests the performer with the cultural power" (Tompkins 151-52). Stereotypes do not have to be completely refused, but can be transformed for new purposes and can even be used to create new signifiers (Tompkins 153).

Although Tompkins bases her observations primarily on Aboriginal, feminist, and what might be called "multicultural" plays, much of what she says fits the works I shall be examining later. And her discussion of the ways in which old cultural material is re-used leads me into the discussion of why Shakespeare is a resonant icon when deployed in Canadian and Australian settler-invader nation narrations as a "useable past."

Why Use Shakespeare?

One reason a scholar might examine postcolonial Shakespeare is that he provides a manageable focus in the sea of postcolonial resistance writing and offers a control factor to facilitate cross-cultural comparison. However, Shakespeare is a useful focal point for other reasons. Like the settler-invader, Shakespeare is an ambivalent figure in the postcolonial scheme of things. On the one hand, he has been

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49 This idea will return again in my discussion of parody later in this chapter.

50 In Canadian and Australian contexts, "multicultural" usually refers to works by and about Canadians and Australians who are not of the majority British or French descent, but are from "ethnic" or sometimes "visible" minorities.
constructed in much western popular and scholarly thought as the "universal genius."

In an admittedly reductive, but very common and suggestive formulation, he is the ultimate writer, portraying eternal truths of human nature and in immortal poetry. He is the litmus test by which writers, dramatists, and theatre workers are measured. As such, he belongs to "the world." According to this viewpoint, Shakespeare is a benign or politically neutral figure.

On the other hand, in a particular and important sense, this image of benign universality is not the whole picture. In another formulation, he does not really belong to everyone. And I do not mean simply that an informed scholar could argue that Shakespeare's works are the products of a particular time and place—sixteenth- and seventeenth-century London—and of someone of the male sex and the emerging bourgeois class. More than that, Shakespeare is also the iconic English national poet. When I say "English national poet" I mean quite exclusively the national poet of England: that is, he is seen as belonging to England more than he does to anglophones outside of England in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Australia, or elsewhere. In The Making of the National Poet, Michael Dobson shows how Shakespeare has been constructed, since the eighteenth century, as a locus of English nationalism and cultural pride. Simon During also locates the English national co-option of

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51 This viewpoint has been adopted by enthusiasts in non-Western cultures too. Consider, for example, Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa's choice of Shakespeare's King Lear as a model for his own epic masterpiece, Ran (1985).

52 As will be seen in chapter five, the Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ontario embodies this phenomenon.
Shakespeare in the eighteenth century (epitomized by Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee), but makes the imperial implications of this movement clear:

[The Shakespeare Jubilee] marks the moment when the idea that Shakespeare was England's supreme literary genius became a truism. And Shakespeare's canonisation is a central strut of the value-system by which literature formed a heritage which might justify the nation's will to power and wealth, and be transported to distant lands uninhabited by Europeans. (60-61)\(^3\)

Shakespeare's value in the imperial enterprise stems from the dual view of him as both "universal" and "English national." That which is the "best," the "universal" standard, becomes conflated with that which is English. Shakespeare becomes an example, not of one man's transcendent talent, but of English cultural superiority. And indeed, as During suggests, Shakespeare has been implicated in the project of British imperialism, in which England sat at the "core" of the Empire. Shakespeare did not become known around the globe solely on his own merits, however great they may be. As Gauri Viswanathan points out in her study of education in British India,\(^4\) imperial policy-makers consciously used the teaching of English literature to spread the English language, culture, and values amongst certain sectors of the colonized.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) During also points out that the Jubilee was in preparation just as Captain James Cook sailed off on the voyage of "discovery" that would bring Australia and New Zealand into the British Empire (60).

\(^4\) See *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989).

\(^5\) Official policy was aided in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by British theatrical touring companies that brought the "Bard" to the masses.
Shakespeare, the heart of the canon, was included in curricula around the Empire as another example of Britain's (and particularly England's) civilized greatness, and by reductive extension, her fitness to rule. In contrast, local languages and culture were not only marginalized, but sometimes suppressed altogether—as in parts of Africa or amongst Canada's indigenous peoples, where school children were punished for speaking anything other than the Queen's (and Shakespeare's) English.

Anglo-Celtic settler-invaders were believed to need Shakespeare's civilizing influence too, if not in quite the same way. This attitude was manifest in turn-of-the-century debates about the possibility of establishing a national theatre in England. Many of England's most influential critics, directors, actors, and writers wanted to establish a national theatre that would offer classic English and European plays (as well as some new dramas on contemporary life), but that would emphasize Shakespeare. As Denis Salter notes, "[t]his projected national theatre was not simply intended for people living in Britain, but was also meant to spread cultural enlightenment throughout the colonies," including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa ("The Idea of a National Theatre" 77-78). This belief that even Anglo-Celtic settler-invaders needed cultural re-education may seem surprising: after all, were not most white Australians and Canadians descended from the culture of the

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56 Proponents of an English national theatre included such major figures as Harley Granville Barker, William Poel, Henry Arthur Jones, John Martin-Harvey, Frank Benson, Augustus Harris, Bram Stoker, Matthew Arnold, and William Archer (Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre" 77).

57 See also Loren Kruger's The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America (127), which Salter draws on here.
"Mother Country"? However, there seemed to be a perception that the more "Canadian" or "Australian" settler-invaders became, the more attenuated their English- or Britishness was, and hence, they needed cultivation. This perception also meant settler-invaders could take less communal "credit" for cultural icons like Shakespeare. Proud members of the Empire, but not at its head, settler-invaders faced the "cultural cringe" problem: any art they produced in the colony would seem marginal in comparison with that of England and its transcendent national poet, Shakespeare. Of course, some kind of "anxiety of influence," to borrow Harold Bloom's suggestive phrase, is potentially shared by all writers facing their intimidating literary predecessors; however, in the case of the settler-invader countries, it applies not just to individual writers, but to the culture as a whole.  

So, one could argue that Shakespeare seems "universal" not only because his work is aesthetically adept and may indeed portray some universal human truths, but also because the machinery of empire has made him widely known and has told us he is the best. Moreover, it is clear that from a postcolonial point of view, the use made of Shakespeare is not necessarily politically and culturally benign. Even today, though the British Empire has long since collapsed as a political and economic force,

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58 To give one striking example of this cultural cringe, it was not really until the 1960s—when the British Empire as political and economic entity was virtually dead—that university English departments in Canada and Australia began to consider Canadian and Australian literature as subjects worthy of serious academic study. Even now, they often remain somewhat marginal sub-disciplines.

59 Although I am using a bit of the terminology from Bloom's book The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry, I do not intend to evoke his entire psychological theory.
Shakespeare remains culturally powerful: the representative, the epitome of the English language in its global power and significance.⁶⁰

Not surprisingly, the deployment of Shakespeare-as-imperial-icon has created postcolonial resistance. One form of resistance has been expressed in challenges to literary canon formation and the centrality that has traditionally been given to "dead white male" writers like Shakespeare. One goal of the challengers is to make room for other writers, other voices—a goal which has implications for communities trying to assert their own postcolonial identity narratives. As was noted earlier in this chapter, another form of literary resistance has centred around the interpretation of a particular Shakespearean play: The Tempest. Whether Shakespeare would have agreed or not, in the 1950s and 1960s many analysts of colonization in Africa and the Caribbean—such as Octave Mannoni, Frantz Fanon, John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, Roberto Fernández Retamar, and George Lamming—read The Tempest as a paradigm of European imperialism and used it to explore the nature of the colonial experience.⁶¹

In this paradigm, Prospero was the white European invader colonizing land overseas

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⁶⁰ The politicization of Shakespeare within a colonial/postcolonial context, with which I (like Viswanathan) am concerned, can be seen in a larger context in company with recent studies of Shakespeare by cultural materialists (especially in the United Kingdom). I am thinking of critics such as Jonathan Dollimore, John Drakakis, Graham Holderness, Jean Howard, Marion O’Connor, and Alan Sinfield. These scholars question the assumption that literature encapsulates universal human values and focus instead on its complicity with past and present political goals.

⁶¹ Although interest in The Tempest as a text with resonance for colonial/postcolonial issues has boomed in the latter half of this century, Denis Salter traces the seeds of such readings back to the late nineteenth century ("Introduction: The End(s) of Shakespeare?" 5).
and oppressing the non-white (usually indigenous or mestizo) inhabitant, Caliban.\textsuperscript{62}

Decolonization occurred at the end of the play when Prospero gave up his power over the island's inhabitants and returned home to Milan, the imperial centre. This interpretation proved so popular that it became the vogue amongst modern theatre directors producing \textit{The Tempest} in the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s—even in London, the heart of the former Empire.\textsuperscript{63}

Re-evaluation of \textit{The Tempest} also inspired postcolonial writers, particularly in the Caribbean, to "re-vision" it in their own resistance works. Playwright Aimé Césaire's 1969 play, \textit{Une tempête}, is a prime example.\textsuperscript{64} Césaire gave the play an overtly Caribbean setting, made Prospero a petty, tyrannizing European colonist, Ariel a mulatto collaborator, and Caliban a black slave whose rebellion against Prospero's rule became a positive struggle for freedom and decolonization. Another good example is George Lamming's novel \textit{Water With Berries} (1971) in which he rewrote \textit{The Tempest} to emphasize an independent-minded Caribbean Caliban's views on the

\textsuperscript{62} See, for example, Mannoni's \textit{Psychologie de la colonisation} (1950; published in English as \textit{Prospero & Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization}), Fanon's \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} (1952), Lamming's \textit{The Pleasures of Exile} (1960), and Fernández Retamar's \textit{Caliban} (1971).

\textsuperscript{63} For example, Jonathan Miller's 1970 Mermaid production of \textit{The Tempest} featured both Caliban and Ariel as black islanders; he retained black casting of the parts in his 1988 Old Vic revival. Peter Hall's 1974 National Theatre production portrayed Caliban as Mohican. Ron Daniels' Royal Shakespeare Company revival of \textit{The Tempest} in 1983 had Bob Peck play Caliban with a "suggestion of a Rastafarian haircut" (Berry, "Within the Bermuda Triangle: Reflections on Recent Tempests" 129).

\textsuperscript{64} Césaire himself was from the French colony of Martinique, but his re-writing of \textit{The Tempest} influenced many anglophone postcolonial writers.
colonial experience. Derek Walcott also evoked Caliban, as well as other Shakespearean references, in his poetry.⁶⁶

Of course, postcolonial writers are by no means the only ones to revisit or "re- vision" Shakespeare to suit the political agendas or simply the cultural tastes of their own time and place. As early as 1681, Nahum Tate rewrote King Lear in his own The History of King Lear, changing the tragic ending that to a Restoration audience was morally and politically disturbing.⁶⁶ Perhaps inspired by Jan Kott's claim that Shakespeare is "our contemporary," Shakespeare has not only been alluded to, but adapted and rewritten in a wide range of twentieth-century plays and films.⁶⁶ In

⁶⁶ See, for example, Walcott's use of The Tempest, Othello, and Shakespeare's sonnets in poems XXIII and XLVIII in his Midsummer collection (1984). Of course, not every postcolonial creative writer using The Tempest has come from the Caribbean. For example, Pakistani novelist Zulfikar Ghose re-worked Shakespeare's play in Figures of Enchantment (1986), and as shall be shown in later chapters, The Tempest has been popular with Australian and Canadian writers too.

⁶⁶ In Tate's version, not only does Cordelia defeat and survive her evil sisters, but her victory is portrayed as the natural triumph of virtue, promising a beneficent reign (Leggatt, King Lear 4, 6-7).

⁶⁷ Kott's claim in Shakespeare Our Contemporary (1961) is a version of the "universal" Shakespeare myth, claiming his universality not so much over space as over time.

⁶⁴ To name just a few examples, in post-war Britain John Osborne, Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, Arnold Wesker, and Tom Stoppard have re- visioned through a post-war perspective plays like Coriolanus, King Lear, Macbeth, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet. On the European continent one finds diverse appropriations such as Samuel Beckett's Come and Go, Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine, and Kosintsev's very Russian film of King Lear. In North America, Shakespeare shows up overtly in Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night and in numerous Broadway musicals, like West Side Story—not to mention the recent spate of film adaptations. Shakespeare has been re- visioned in Asian theatres in Calcutta, Bengal, the Philippines, and even in the annual rituals of a remote village in Mizoram (Niyogi De 9-12). Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's film
academe, feminist and gay/lesbian critics have re-examined gender and sexual orientation issues in Shakespeare, expanding their work more recently to consider issues of race as well.\textsuperscript{69} But of particular relevance to my discussion, in the 1990s scholarly interest about what can be learned from the intersection of Shakespeare and the postcolonial has been revived and expanded beyond Caribbean re-visionings, and increasingly, beyond considerations of The Tempest. For example, Gauri Viswanathan, Ania Loomba, and Jyotsna Singh have written about Shakespeare and imperialism in India. Martin Orkin has examined the political implications of Shakespeare's dissemination and reception for apartheid in South Africa. Denis Salter, Diana Brydon, Leanore Lieblein, Mark Fortier, and others have begun analysing Shakespeare in a Canadian postcolonial context. Joanne Tompkins, Helen Gilbert, and the contributors to anthologies such as Shakespeare's Books: Contemporary Cultural Politics and the Persistence of Empire (1993) (see Mead and Campbell) are providing Australian perspectives. Interest has been sparked in the postcolonial issues raised by plays like Othello, Titus Andronicus, Antony and Cleopatra, Troilus and Cressida, and The Merchant of Venice.\textsuperscript{70}

adaptations, such as Ran, are well known. There are also innumerable novels, poems and theoretical works that deploy Shakespeare, but my focus here is on performance-oriented media.

\textsuperscript{69} See, for example, Peter Erickson's Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves (1991), Ania Loomba's Race, Gender, Renaissance Drama (1989) or the collection edited by Marianne Novy, Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare (1993).

\textsuperscript{70} For an excellent discussion of recent developments in postcolonial Shakespeare studies, see Denis Salter's 1996 article "Introduction: The End(s) of Shakespeare?"
Now what in particular can be offered by studying original plays using Shakespeare, as opposed to postcolonial productions of his plays? Let us consider once more the ambivalently positioned settler-invader dramatist trying, consciously or unconsciously, to contribute to the creation of an appropriate post- and postcolonial "imagined community." For that writer, Shakespeare has the potential to be a loaded and ambivalent signifier. He is part of the British descendant's inheritance, but also an intimidating, seemingly unsurpassable foreign model that reduces the colonial artist to mere mimicker. Shakespeare is a beneficent symbol of the best of human art, a world treasure, yet also a tool of oppressive eurocentric colonialism. Certainly "universal" in the sense of being "widely, if not well, known," Shakespeare offers easily recognizable material for allusion, adaptation, and parody. He is a fascinating touchstone and potentially resonant "useable past" for the settler-invader attempting to renegotiate a changing and ambivalent relationship to the legacy of British culture and imperialism.

In considering settler-invader attempts to define their community creatively, there are advantages to looking at original settler-invader plays that re-vision Shakespeare, rather than at postcolonial-themed productions of Shakespeare's own works. In many ways, the modern playwright is less confined by the original text than even the most inventive director, and can thus select only what he/she considers most relevant and use it in unique ways. Shakespeare can be made less central, leaving room for the postcolonial voice to be heard, even dominate. Looking at original settler-invader plays also allows me to address more directly postcolonial concerns.
such as resistance literature, rewriting, and reinscription, as well as issues of mimicry and cultural hybridity within the settler-invader context. A further practical consideration is that scripts are available for these plays, offering a substantial body of evidence, whereas postcolonial productions of Shakespeare's own works are more ephemeral and therefore more elusive for the researcher.

Of course, a focus on plays that use aspects of Shakespeare excludes in-depth study of other creative works that also investigate settler-invader identity. However, as I have suggested above, while not offering the last word on Canadian and Australian identity problems, the dramatic re-visioning of Shakespeare does raise many key issues, offering a useful window on a variety of topics. My choice of focus also runs the potential risk of being seen to fall into the very phenomena of "cultural cringe" and reinscription that are being studied. However, if these phenomena are to be resisted, they must be better understood and I believe that an analysis performed with the proper awareness of the latent dangers is a tool that justifies the risk.

71 However, at times I shall certainly make reference to such works in order to contextualize the main objects of my study.
V. Other Methodological Issues and Terms

Choice of Countries

Before going on to my main analysis, there are a few more methodological and terminological questions to be addressed. First, as this study is particularly interested in settler-invader colonies, why have I not examined South Africa, the Caribbean, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, or the United States—all of which might appear to have some claim to the category? While all are worthy of study in their own right, there are a variety of reasons why they do not fall within the particular parameters of this project.

Unlike Canada and Australia, South Africa and the ambivalent position of its white settler-invader "resistance" writers—such as Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, and J.M. Coetzee—have not been ignored by postcolonialists. South Africa has attracted the attention of postcolonialists because in many ways it is not predominantly a settler-invader colony. While settler-invaders may have ruled South Africa until the recent end of official Apartheid and the ascendancy of Nelson Mandela and the ANC, white South Africans are demographically in the minority compared to the black African population, making it harder for the black population to be conveniently forgotten in the way many indigenous people in the Americas and Australia were. As the paranoia of Apartheid showed, the white settler-invader was always aware of the possibility that black South Africans would take back control of the state, as in non-settler-invader colonies. As a result, the dynamics at least of white South African
identity formation are very different from those of whites in settler-invader colonies like Canada or Australia. In addition, although productions of *Othello* have had interesting political implications in South Africa, Shakespeare has not been a very popular author for re-visioning in South African literature.²² If anything, Greek drama has attracted more interest in African dramatic literature in general.²³

The Caribbean is also a potential settler-invader colony, since the indigenous peoples, the Caribs and Arawaks, were exterminated and the current population of inhabitants are all descended from Old World communities in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Much has been written about the Caribbean and Shakespeare, and I have discussed this briefly earlier in this chapter, as it forms the background for my debate. However, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out, the Caribbean is not a typical settler-invader area (*The Empire Writes Back* 26-27). Particularly key is the fact that the bulk of the population in many Caribbean nations is descended not from privileged white colonizers, but from oppressed slaves transported against their will across the notorious Middle Passage, and later from exploited Indian and Chinese indentured labour. For this reason, writers like Césaire and Lamming have tended to identify

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²² One original African play re-visioning Shakespeare is Murray Carlin’s *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (first performed in 1968). For a discussion of the politicized reception of Shakespeare’s own *Othello* play in South Africa, see Martin Orkin’s *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (1987).

²³ See, for example, *The Island*, a play by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona that re-works *Antigone* to comment on life in an Apartheid-era prison for political activists. Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka has re-worked Euripides in *The Bacchae of Euripides*, while his countryman, Ola Rotimi, Africanizes *Oedipus Rex* in *The Gods Are not to Blame*. 
with Caliban and thus with colonized and oppressed peoples, not with Prospero and Britain. The extreme hybridity or creolization of culture in the Caribbean also makes it unique.

New Zealand is clearly a Second World, former settler-invader colony along the models outlined by Lawson and others, and Shakespeare has a history there. His work was brought over by early settler-invaders, played in local theatres and universities, and formed a key part of the educations of New Zealand writers as diverse as Katherine Mansfield, Ngaio Marsh, and Janet Frame, who allude to him companionably in their fiction, often while portraying local subjects. According to Mark Houla han, there has also been in the 1990s an increased enthusiasm for Shakespeare in New Zealand, evidenced by such phenomena as the creation of new student Shakespeare clubs, the founding of a bi-annual Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Taranaki in 1990, and the huge Globe tapestry project in which over 500 New Zealand needleworkers worked to create a tapestry for the new Globe Theatre in London, England. Also, particularly in the '90s, some productions of Shakespeare have experimented with New Zealand and Pacific settings. However, with only a tiny population to support it, New Zealand's homegrown theatre culture is not nearly as developed as that of its larger neighbour Australia, or of Canada, and has not yet produced the same large body of local dramatic literature. One recent

74 I am indebted here to Mark Houla han's article "Shakespeare in New Zealand," forthcoming in The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature in English.

73 "... where all the streets are named for Shakespeare" (or for his characters) (Houla han n.p.).
original dramatic re-visioning of Shakespeare is Jean Bett's *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (1994), but it is predominantly a feminist work with virtually no resonances for postcolonial issues.76

Now, the question of why New Zealand pakeha (settler-invader, non-indigenous) culture still manifests considerable enthusiasm for Shakespeare, while its own dramatic literature and theatre culture languish by comparison, might be worth examining in its own right in another project. Looking at Shakespeare's recent upswing in popularity, Houlahan suggests that the "Bard"'s prominent place in the High School examination syllabus, combined with recent high profile Shakespearean films starring popular actors like Mel Gibson and Leonardo DiCaprio, have made him fashionable with younger people.77 However, Houlahan does not go into the postcolonial implications of why Shakespeare remains the only pre-modern author high school students in New Zealand are required to read and why most New Zealand literary allusions to Shakespeare seem to take a very chummy, unproblematized approach. Could it be that white New Zealanders are not as "far along" somehow in the process of decolonization as Canada and Australia are? Demographically more white and "British" (due to a history of carefully controlled immigration policies), and lacking either Australia's convict history or Canada's complicated relationship with

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76 As Houlahan notes: "Though written for the centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand 1993, its appeal too seems more international than local." In contrast, Canadian Ann-Marie MacDonald's play *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (which shall be studied in a later chapter) raises postcolonial issues in conjunction with feminist ones.

77 The influence of such films is an international trend.
French Canada and the United States, do white New Zealanders identify more heavily with the "Mother Country" and thus see Shakespeare more unproblematically as their "own"? It could simply be that economic considerations—Shakespeare sells—have influenced struggling local productions. Or some combination of these factors could be at play. At the present time, one can only make rather premature speculations about the particular nature of the pakeha relationship to the imperial Shakespearean icon. I prefer to concentrate on Australia and Canada, where the greater number and wide range of original dramatic redeployments of Shakespeare crack open postcolonial issues and allow them to be seen more clearly.

I also shall not treat Ireland in my study. Ireland was the first English colony and Northern Ireland remains one, even to the point of requiring a British army presence. In one sense Northern Ireland is a settler-invader colony because of the presence of the pro-British Protestant population, which forms the demographic majority of the inhabitants. The minority Irish Catholic population in Ireland are the colonized "indigenous" Celts. However, the sense of having a very long history in Ireland, the creation of a republic for Catholics in the south, and the near impossibility of distinguishing between Catholic and Protestant Irish on the basis of visual, "racial" clues, means that (whether the Catholics agree or not) the Northern Protestant population can feel "native" to Northern Ireland in a way that settler-invaders in other countries cannot. And, although Ireland is itself represented in Shakespeare's plays—notably in Captain MacMorris in *Henry V*—Shakespeare is rarely
represented in original Irish plays in a major way.78

The United States' potential status within postcolonial studies as a settler-invader culture is controversial. First, unlike other settler-invader colonies, the Thirteen Colonies fought a war with Britain for independence, breaking the link with the "Mother" country. Second, the U.S. as a whole (leaving aside internally oppressed groups, such as African, Hispanic, or Native Americans) is seen in postcolonial circles as a First World imperial successor to Great Britain, particularly since World War Two. In economic, military, and cultural, though not overtly administrative terms, the U.S. as "superpower" is a neo-imperial power engaging in neo-colonization. These factors—successful decolonization followed, ironically, by successful development into a colonizing power—contribute to a radically different national self-image today, one seemingly more distinctive, self-confident, and less ambivalent than those of Canada or Australia, if at heart no less contradictory. On the

78 There are a couple of near exceptions to this generalization. One small, but interesting, one is Brendan Behan's vicious satire of the IRA, The Hostage (1958). At one point in the play, the IRA cell leader, Monsewer—who prefers to speak only Gaelic—is prompted by his hostage's cockney slang to reveal, ironically, his love for the "language of Shakespeare and Milton" (62). Meditation on these canonical figures leads Monsewer into more revelations about his past as a member of the aristocratic, Protestant, Anglo-Irish absentee landowner class. Despite his pretensions to Irishness, he is revealed to be more English than Irish. Monsewer is a "mimic" man, trying unsuccessfully to become one of the colonial underdogs. Shakespeare functions here not as universal genius, but as a sign of "Englishness." Another near exception is George Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra. On the surface, Shaw's play looks ripe for postcolonial analysis: an Irish dramatist writing about a general of the Roman Empire conquering Egypt. A writer with a consciously postcolonial sensibility—like Behan—might have used this scenario as a paradigm for England's relationship with Ireland. However, Shaw and his 1898 play are of an earlier era and the comments he makes in the preface to Caesar and Cleopatra reflect aesthetic concerns, not political or colonial ones (Preface xxix-xxxix).
other hand, some postcolonial scholars have argued that American literature should be studied for its settler-invader qualities as well as its neo-imperial ones. African American literature—as a literature of oppressed, though not indigenous, peoples—has received attention as a special part of the Black or African diaspora. More controversially, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* have argued that the U.S.—particularly in its developing years—should be studied as a model for all later postcolonial writing, since it was the first post-colonial nation and the first to develop a distinctly post- and/or postcolonial literature (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 16). The U.S. certainly contained the first post-colonial settler-invader community, inheriting a British cultural tradition, yet struggling to differentiate itself from that tradition. However, the sheer size of the American literary tradition and the number of controversial issues relating to early and later American imperialism that would have to be addressed put this topic beyond the scope of this particular study’s discussion. Nevertheless, my concluding chapter will contain a very brief discussion of Michael Bristol’s *Shakespeare’s America, America’s Shakespeare*, a fascinating examination of the institutionalization of Shakespeare in the U.S. and the forces behind it. I shall offer an additional postcolonial hypothesis to Bristol’s explanation, suggesting an area for future research.

What my study will focus on in detail are two large settler-invader countries, Canada and Australia. Of the former colonies with settler-invader populations, they are the most clearly in the ambivalent Second World, "in-between-colonizer-and-colonized" position. In addition, both have well developed local theatre cultures and
both have produced a significant number of re-visionings of Shakespeare that resonate in important ways with postcolonial issues. Each country will be examined in its own two-chapter section, with one chapter outlining the historical context for the plays and one analysing the plays themselves in detail.

One shorter chapter is offered to complement the main chapters. It is dedicated to examining what I call "post-imperial" dramatic nation narrations from England, the "heart" of the former British Empire. Just as classic postcolonialists have undervalued what can be learned from settler-invader colonies, many have only looked at England abroad in its imperial period and in its role as promulgator of empire. Much less attention has been paid by scholars to England's post-imperial period, and its consequences in England itself.\(^7\) Like Canada and Australia, England too has experienced an identity crisis in the aftermath of the Empire and many British scriptwriters (for theatre, television, and film) have attempted to deal with this crisis in art. As a cynic might expect, some have turned to nostalgic costume-drama fantasies of Britain's ascendency periods, such as the Raj and pre-World-War-One Edwardian England; they present either idyllic fantasies of (aristocratic) life at "home"\(^8\) or sophisticated versions of "Boy's Own" adventure stories abroad.

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\(^7\) By post-imperial in this case, I mean the period after Britain really lost its world power status to the United States after World War Two and the colonies began to become independent. As Ann Wilson has noted, many British playwrights (e.g., David Hare) seem to interpret the Suez Crisis as a particularly key turning point for Britain's view of itself as a world power (Personal interview).

\(^8\) See, for example, popular series like ITV's *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971), Granada's *Brideshead Revisited* (1981) (Kingsley and Tibballs 120-22, 200); films like *Chariots of Fire* (1981), or the recent spate of Merchant/Ivory adaptations of E.M.
focusing on the foreign dangers faced by the individual imperial British "heroes," rather than the deprivations faced by millions of subordinate "native" characters.\(^1\)

Postcolonial critics have tended "to overlook the range of anti-colonialist gestures which inhabit First-World, or imperial, writing itself" (Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire" 35). Other British/English works re-evaluate England's past (and, in Ireland, its present) role as imperial power and consider the after-effects--including the de-homogenizing influence of immigration from the former colonies--on England's national self-definition. Many attempt to undo the self-congratulating propaganda of the Empire to redefine England and Englishness, showing a gritty, unglamorous, decaying, and far from superior society.\(^2\) Sometimes these internal re-evaluations have been hard-hitting critiques of imperialism, which bear comparison to postcolonial resistance writing.\(^3\) Others, such as the Granada television series *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984) (Kingsley and Tibballs 219-20) or David Lean's film *A Passage to India* (1984), occupy a more ambivalent position. In post-World-War-Two English theatre there has been an explosion of dramatic re-visionings of Shakespeare. Most

\(^{\text{1}}\) See, for example, Channel 4's romantic view of the nineteenth-century Raj in *The Far Pavilions* (1984), bizarrely starring Jewish American actress Amy Irving as an Indian princess (Kingsley and Tibballs 225).

\(^{\text{2}}\) *Made in Britain*, David Leland's 1983 television drama starring Tim Roth (Kingsley and Tibballs 217), presents a fascinating contrast with old imperial constructions of England as the cradle of civilized humanity. Roth plays a violent, amoral punk teenager--a savage--who, as the title suggests, is a product of British society and its institutions.

\(^{\text{3}}\) See, for example, John Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*, Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain*, or David Edgar's *Death Story*. 
have been read as "postmodern" or "left-wing"; I shall suggest that some can also fruitfully be read through a postcolonial lens as "post-imperial" critiques. I shall use Edward Bond's Lear as a case study of an English nation narration attempting to come to terms with England in the aftermath of the Empire.

Defining Additional Critical Terms

I wish to define a few more key terms, beginning with "parody." One could try to describe works re-using Shakespeare as adaptations, or satires, or burlesques. However, these conventional categories have not proved very useful for the kinds of highly original, often ambivalent plays I am examining. What has proved useful for this project is a newer conception of parody. Many traditional definitions of parody assume it is a form of imitation that ridicules another work's form or content: its effect, always comic and its intent, critical. It is also often confused with satire, as well as other related forms like travesty and burlesque. However, such restricted or contradictory definitions of parody do not always account for the late twentieth-century phenomena that will be studied in this thesis. Thus, I shall draw on Linda Hutcheon's broad-ranging, twentieth-century-artform-based definition in A Theory of Parody (1985), which I believe is particularly useful in the context of settler-invader re rewritings of Shakespeare. Hutcheon defines modern parody as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the

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See, for example, The Harper Handbook to Literature 337-38 (Frye, Baker and Perkins).
parodied text" (6) and as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). At the same time that parody marks how it is different from the original, it also implies a certain sense of continuity (4). It is "one mode of coming to terms with the texts of that 'rich and intimidating legacy of the past,'" via its process of "transfer and reorganization of that past"—or, to use a Russian Formalist term, its "refunctioning" of old forms for new needs (4).

This kind of parody is particularly relevant to the situation of former settler-invader colonies. In order to develop from a colony into a separate nation, the new nation must differentiate itself from the "Mother Country" and its colonial past in order to claim that it is in fact a separate entity. At the same time, since the settler-invader cannot unproblematically adopt a pre-colonial indigenous culture and an identity cannot be built in a vacuum, some continuity with and repetition of the inherited past are useful, perhaps even unavoidable. Parody, says Hutcheon, inscribes both "continuity and change" (36). The change that comes from the ironic distance parody creates gives a writer freedom, emancipation from the material of the past, and can even be used to enlist that material in the writer's own cause (35). At the same time, ironic transcontextualization or inversion can also create something new for the reader (35)—even a new sense of national identity. The idea of continuity again comes from the Russian Formalist idea that in parody a "new form develops out of the old, without really destroying it; only the function is altered . . ." (35-36).

Parody often involves transcontextualization: the moving of a text's forms and/or content into a new setting, "altering meaning, and perhaps even value" (8).
The transportation of Shakespeare into exotic settler-invader colonies is a veritable form of transcontextualization: both literal (with scripts and British touring companies appearing in a new land) and literary (as Shakespeare is rethought in the context of settler-invader colony literature).

The ironic inversion characteristic of modern parody (6) is also characteristic of much postcolonial literature. If imperial ideology insisted that England was the centre, civilized and superior, while anything colonial was marginal, savage and inferior, the project of many postcolonial writers has been to invert that hierarchy.

Hutcheon’s distinction that modern parody does not necessary entail ridiculing the target text (6) is particularly important in this study of settler-invader appropriations of Shakespeare, since their relationship to Shakespeare is problematized by the ambivalent relationship to the "Mother Country": to ridicule the canonical poet would be, in some sense, to ridicule part of themselves.

I shall also follow Hutcheon in stressing the importance of the whole context, or "énonciation," in understanding a parodic work: the conditions of production (ranging from broad historical circumstances to the specificity of perceived authorial intent) and reception of a parodic work, not just the work itself. Authorial intent, the bugbear of postmodern deconstruction, cannot easily be avoided in the frequently activist postcolonial context. Audience reception—though notoriously difficult to measure—is also important in a postcolonial context. Early postcolonial writers often wrote to incite their audiences to action against their marginalization by empire.

Hutcheon also defends parody against its disparagers, critics influenced by the
Romantics' privileging of individual genius and originality. She points out that parody, far from being a sterile, unoriginal, uncreative slave to tradition, can be a fruitful and creative approach to it (4, 7). There are obvious similarities in this debate to those in the postcolonial sphere about the dangers of mimicry and re-inscription in "(re)writing back."

In some of the texts I shall examine, Mikhail Bakhtin's somewhat different understanding of parody is also useful. According to Bakhtin, all repetition is parodic. It also always produces a double-voiced discourse in which two voices intersect: the author's and another's. However, Bakhtin distinguishes between two types of repetition. The first is stylization or un-ironic parody (for example, allusion, quotation, imitative recasting or pastiche), in which the parodist uses the voice of another for his/her own project. The second is unstylized or ironized parody, in which the voice of the parodied author and the voice of the parodist clash, and the new voice forces the original to serve aims that are in opposition to the original voice's intentions—something seen in much non-settler-invader postcolonial literature. However, again the problem of reinscription arises. As Slethaug notes, despite parody's transgressive nature, both Bakhtin's parody and stylization "offer a certain tribute to the original in their embodiment of the original voice. Arguably, both also function conservatively and normatively in perpetuating the host forms, figurations and ideas whether or not the original is the object of irony" (604).

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45 I draw here on Bakhtin's discussion of double-voiced discourse in Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 102-12).
Allusion is also a useful term for the upcoming discussion of plays. Hutcheon differentiates "allusive variation" from parody, claiming the former just "echoes past works in order to borrow a context and to evoke an atmosphere" (6). She notes, like Bakhtin, that allusion lacks parody’s "critical ironic distance" (34):

... [it] is "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts" (Ben-Porat 1976, 107), but it does so mainly through correspondence—not difference, as is the case with parody. However, ironic allusion would be closer to parody, although allusion in general remains a less constricted or ‘predetermined’ form than parody (Perri 1978, 299), which must signal difference in some way. (43).

Most theorists believe there are more varied reasons for using allusion (or quotation) than for parody (50):

One might want to circumvent criticism, to hint without directly stating; one might choose to parade one’s knowledge or to use the texts of others for authoritative support; one might just want to save time (50).

Parody, says Hutcheon, "is a particular and complex form of ironic allusion" (95).

These terms will all be used in the following chapters. Chapter two contextualizes the Australian plays in this study by outlining the history of Australia’s relationship with Britain and the struggle to define a distinctive national identity, as well as the related struggle to create homegrown theatre in Australia. Chapter three will concentrate on the postcolonial analysis of Australian settler-invader plays that revision Shakespeare parodically and that attempt to come to terms with national identity
issues. Chapter four will offer a historical context similar to that in chapter two, but for Canada. Chapter five will analyse a wide range of Canadian settler-invader plays re-visioning Shakespeare, while chapter six will look at Edward Bond’s *Lear* as a post-imperial nation narration. And chapter seven will offer some conclusions about the nature of resistance writing performed from an ambivalent position within the history of colonialism.
Chapter Two

Whose Country’s Good?: Australian Attitudes Towards Britain and the Development of National Identity and National Theatre

Several of Australia’s best known white settler-invader playwrights have used Shakespeare extensively in their own works—works that reflect and critique Australia’s postcolonial condition (and the settler-invader’s role in it) in a variety of ways. Dorothy Hewett does so in The Man From Mukinupin (first performed 1979), Michael Gow in Away (first performed 1986), David Malouf\footnote{Malouf is extremely well known as a writer in Australia, but he is better known as a novelist than as a playwright.} in Blood Relations (first performed 1987), and David Williamson in Dead White Males (first performed 1995).\footnote{Louis Nowra evokes Shakespeare’s King Lear in The Golden Age (first performed 1985), but does not make extensive use of it. Similarly, one can see King Lear as a possible subtext in Stephen Sewell’s Hate (1988), but the connections are somewhat tenuous. More obvious canonical subtexts for Hate, as most critics have noted, are the Biblical Christ stories (Gilbert, ”Monumental Moments” 38; Fitzpatrick, Rev. of Hate 204).}

However, in order to understand just how these plays engage with postcolonial Australian identity and how Shakespeare fits into the picture, I must first provide some historical context, or ”énonciation,” which, as I noted in chapter one, is so important to studies of postcolonialism, theatre, and parody. Two key aspects of a settler-invader colony’s situation are its changing relationship to the imperial centre(s) and its closely related struggle to develop its own national identity (or identities).

Hence, I shall begin by discussing the evolving Australian Anglo-Celtic settler-invader
identity and its relationship to empire and nationalism.\(^3\) A third key contextual aspect concerns trends in Australian theatre history, particularly Australia’s slow shift from being a colonial outpost that looked to imported British and American drama for its culture, to being a more nationalistic, self-confident culture with an interest in writing and producing plays by and about Australians.

Now, one might ask: is knowing the history of Australian theatre from its colonial beginnings to the present necessary in order to understand recent postcolonial dramatic redeployments of Shakespeare? I would argue that it is. The development of Australian theatre runs parallel in key ways to the development of Australian nationalism and identity. In addition, playwrights rewriting Shakespeare evoke the inherited British theatrical tradition and must necessarily position themselves and their work in some relationship to it. While any writer must come to terms with the intimidating and potentially marginalizing pressure of his/her artistic forbearers, settler-invader playwrights addressing the inherited Shakespeare of the imperial centre

may choose to carry a double burden: not just the desire to move beyond inherited
tradition to express the individual writer's own identity, but the desire to move beyond
inherited tradition to express a new, emerging national or regional post-colonial
identity with its own new theatrical traditions.

I. Ambivalence Towards Imperial Britain and the Development of
Australian Nationalism and National Identity

The development of the identity of a white settler-invader colony is closely tied
to its relationship with the imperial centre, the "Mother Country." If one generalizes
broadly about Australia's relationship with Great Britain, one could describe the
relationship as falling, for much of its history, somewhere between the relationships
that Canada and the United States each had with Great Britain. Most descriptions of
this relationship paint a picture of competing attitudes. On the one hand, one finds in
Australia's history an old-fashioned colonial loyalty or Anglophilia in the form of pro-
British, pro-Empire sentiment, partnered with what Arthur Phillips famously called the
"cultural cringe" (299)—a sense of colonial cultural inferiority relative to Britain and
Europe (and later, the United States).4 On the other hand, there is a strong strain of
Australian nationalism, republicanism, and individualism.

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4 See Stephen Alomes' A Nation at Last?: The Changing Character of Australian
Nationalism 1880-1988 for an in-depth discussion of the causes of the Australian sense
of inferiority relative to Britain (213-16).
Pro-British, Pro-Empire Sentiment and Australian Identity

For much of the continent's post-conquest history, many Australians identified with Britain and saw it as the centre of civilization. Why? Most settler-invaders in Australia, until after World War Two, were from Britain or of British "stock," providing some natural identification with the "Mother Country." In addition, Australians were dependent on Britain in various practical ways. The imperial economy was designed so that the colonies provided cheap raw materials, which British manufacturers then used to produce more "civilized," finished products to be sold back to the colonies. As the settler-invader colonies lacked capital, technology, and culture in their early days, these things had to be imported from Britain, along with law, medicine, and science. Until the establishment of Australian universities in the 1850s, even the professional classes (lawyers, doctors, engineers, clergymen) had to be "imported" from England. This sense of Britain, and especially England, as the seat of civilization persisted long after Australia overcame these practical impediments (Alomes 207-09).

Australia was only important insofar as it contributed to the greater glory of Britain, through its support for the Empire. A major expression of this attitude was Australia's support of Britain's foreign war efforts. For example, Australia sent 16,000 troops to aid Britain's colonial Boer War, which began in 1899 just as the separate Australian colonies were about to federate into one nation (Rickard, Australia 113-14). This was more than just a practical gesture; in fact, Australia's own newly

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5 Which they did in 1901.
emerging identity was symbolically conflated with proud support of the Empire. As one Australian politician, H.B. Higgins, said at that time, "... the moment the first drop of Australian blood was drawn and the first Australian life lost in South Africa, that moment Australia merged into an integral part of the Empire" (Rickard, *Australia* 113).

The identification of Australian nationhood with imperial service to Britain was solidified with one of the landmark events of Australian history: the attack at Gallipoli in World War I. There specially picked Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) troops were introduced into Britain's war. The troops were picked partly as an image-building exercise for Australia: they had to be particularly "physically fine specimens" (Rickard, *Australia* 119), representing British blood honed to perfection in the rough Australian environment. Even though Gallipoli turned into an evacuation more than a battle, it was glamourized in the British press and, thanks in large measure to the war histories of C.E.W. Bean, came to be seen as the "baptism of fire" that made the colony a nation. This interpretation has since been questioned (Alomes 56-62), but it is still a well known and powerful signifier.⁶

Pro-British, pro-Empire sentiment was also expressed at home, and in less military ways. One symptom was the adoption in Australia (from Canada) of Empire Day in 1905. Celebrated on May 24 (Queen Victoria's birthday), it was geared towards "inducting school children to imperial citizenship" with an "Empire

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⁶ See also Alomes' description of the conflation of Australian nationhood with imperial service and self-sacrifice (56-62).
Catechism” (Rickard, *Australia* 115). Another symptom of a more sinister nature was the development of "White Australia" sentiment: the belief that only members of the "white race" should live in Australia. This arose during the economic depression of the late nineteenth century, when white Australians became concerned about increased non-white immigration, such as the presence of Asian or Melanesian labourers who had been imported by greedy local employers to replace convict labour. "White Australia" hysteria was part of a larger racial anxiety about the future balance of the races, an anxiety that permeated the European imperialism of the time. Locally this was expressed in calls by papers like the *Bulletin* for "Australia for the white man" and the writings of Charles Pearson in *National Life and Character*, which "saw the future of Europeans as threatened by the multiplying numbers of the black, brown and yellow races" (Rickard, *Australia* 108). "White Australia" policy was most obviously displayed in laws instituted by the Australian federal government in 1901 to curtail immigration from Asia: their goal was to preserve the British racial and cultural character of Australia from "the possibility and probability of racial contamination" by non-white races (Rickard, *Australia* 117). This same brand of thinking relegated Aborigines "to either extinction or irrelevance" (Rickard, *Australia* 108).

**Republican and Independent Pro-Australia Sentiment**

Through its history, not all sectors of Australian society have been pro-British or pro-Empire, and not all have seen these sentiments as key to Australian identity. From early settlement days on, Australia had a significant Irish Roman Catholic
population, which had already experienced the negative aspects of colonialism via the continued colonial oppression of Ireland by the English. Many Irish Australian settler-invaders supported the emancipation of Ireland from British rule and were traditionally suspicious of British imperialism and statements of pan-imperial enthusiasm. For example, most Australian Catholic schools chose not to celebrate Empire Day, after it was instituted officially in 1905. The Cardinal of Sydney changed the May 24th event to "Australia Day" and the cathedral flew Irish and Australian flags, rather than the Union Jack. Hence, Catholic pro-Australian nationalism had a somewhat ambiguous character: rather than being a pure expression of Australian patriotism, it often served as a "tactical means of avoiding the rhetoric of imperial loyalty" (Rickard, Australia 115-16).

There was also an independent Australian spirit separate from the Irish Catholic issue. Rickard sees evidence of this in the questions that were raised in Australia criticizing imperial war participation (e.g., 113, 114). Even the national legend surrounding Gallipoli blamed British strategic incompetence, not Australian lack of valour, for the defeat. There are probably numerous factors behind this more independent, ambivalent attitude. One may be Australia’s peculiar settlement history: the origination of several of its states as convict colonies. To be transported by force to a sometimes forbidding, alien landscape for penal servitude was to be made an outcast, to be rejected by British society, particularly by the British authorities. In addition, as Alomes notes, "[t]he English and Irish convicts, while not always immediately liking the alien land to which they were sent, had liked even less the
poverty and class society of Britain" (208).

Although it is not a history text—and although it was commissioned by the English Stage Company—Timberlake Wertenbaker's bicentennial-year drama, Our Country's Good, offers a powerful portrait of the effects of transportation on the attitudes of convicts. The play depicts the life of convicts at the first Botany Bay penal colony in 1788-89. While being outcast from Britain inspires some of the convicts with a deep nostalgia for their home, it also engenders great bitterness, as is suggested by the deeply ironic prologue written and recited by one of the convicts, Wisehammer:

> From distant climes o'er wide-spread seas we come,
> Though not with much éclat or beat of drum,
> True patriots all; for be it understood,
> We left our country for our country's good;
> No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
> What urg'd our travels was our country's weal,
> And none will doubt but that our emigration
> Has prov'd most useful to the British nation. (107)

Some convicts appreciate the opportunities offered in the new land. For example, the same Wisehammer says:

> I don't want to go back to England now. It's too small and they don't

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7 For example, one convict woman, Dabby, constantly dreams and talks of England and of the possibility of running away back to it (102).
like Jews. Here, no one has more of a right than anyone else to call you a foreigner. (103)

The frequent result of all this is shown in the play to be a split identity/attitude, as evidenced by the convict woman Liz Morden: "I hate England. But I think English" (68).

The ambivalent and more independent attitude might also stem from facts of geography. Geographically, Australia is more isolated from Britain and Europe than many other former settler-invader colonies, and this is true even with modern air travel. As a result, Australia has increasingly come to see its strategic and economic future as tied more closely to nearby Asia than to Europe. In addition, Australia boasts a unique topography, flora, and fauna, quite alien to anything found in Europe, or even North America. This affected the pattern of Australia's exploration and economic development, leading to activities such as long-range and dangerous surveying expeditions, sheep and cattle ranching, sugarcane plantations, mining, etc.

Drought, fire, and flood offered constant threats to these enterprises (Alomes 211). Ultimately, the demands of these physically difficult, often geographically isolated, forms of labour in the colonies, combined with the legacy of convictism, and Australia's participation in World War One, to develop certain peculiarly Australian "characteristics" or stereotypes of national (largely white male) identity. One "characteristic" was a fatalistic or pessimistic worldview, modified by sardonic

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* For discussions of Australian national characteristics and types, see Alomes (especially 68, 211), Alomes and Jones (especially 367-68), and Rickard *Australia* (especially 54, 125, 265-67).
humour. Key "national types" were the bushranger, the digger, the ocker, and the larrikan. Since not all these types may be familiar, let me explain. The bushrangers, originally escaped convicts, were independent white male outlaw figures who had learned to live off the land; the most famous of these was Ned Kelly, who was captured in 1880, and became a folk hero. After the romantic but lawless bushranger came the digger, the more positive expression of the Australian ethos. The digger was a romanticized view of the ordinary Australian soldier of World War One, a colonial "child" come to maturity through events like Gallipoli. The digger, whose myth owed much to the *Official War History* edited by English-born journalist C.E.W. Bean, supposedly represented the positive side of bush values, ignoring Australia's urban reality. Both types were associated with qualities such as self-reliance, resourcefulness, social egalitarianism, rough and ready masculinity, and the intense importance of male-bonding or "mateship" (no doubt as useful for survival in uncivilized, outback environments as on the battlefield).

An important characteristic associated with these figures and Australian national identity in general is a strong anti-authoritarianism. This can be directed towards Australian or British authorities, but has obvious implications for the ambivalent Australian attitude towards that most authoritarian of structures, imperialism. Interestingly, Rickard suggests this anti-authoritarianism is expressed mostly through a sceptical outlook towards authority's outward trappings, rather than in actual disobedience to it (*Australia* 265). One can imagine again a settler-invader colony chafing somewhat under its marginal position in the imperial scheme, but not
attempting a non-settler-colony-type violent overthrow of the system.

Later on, the bushman stereotype developed into a more ambivalent figure: the modern, more prosperous, urban working-class "ocker." The ocker was a "representative of a brand of genial boorishness," "an affable, pot-bellied boozer . . . a bit of a smart aleck"; he was perhaps typified by Barry Humphries's cartoon character "Bazza" McKenzie and the early career of actor Paul Hogan, before he began playing on the old bushman myths in the persona he used in films like Crocodile Dundee (Rickard, Australia 266). However, as Rickard, Alomes, and Jones note, the ocker stereotype was and is a subject of controversy in Australia. Despite its geniality, it has a negative side associated with drinking, gambling, patriarchy, and an aggressiveness stemming from insecurity. As a stereotype of the working-class, it has aroused class antagonism. Humphries and Hogan were sometimes criticized by fellow Australians "for presenting the wrong sort of image of Australia abroad" (Rickard, Australia 267). Ironically, the ocker caricature became a cult fad in the 1970s, right at the time when more and more Australians were defining themselves as middle-, rather than working-class. A figure related to the ocker was the "larrikan": a member of a gang of smart aleck, rowdy, trick-playing young hooligans.

These new national types have never been truly representative of all Australians--particularly not women or Aborigines--and contain elements of a colonial inferiority complex at times. However, these types were more closely associated with the living conditions and the land of Australia than older British types and, thus,

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9 See Rickard, Australia 267, and Alomes and Jones 367-68.
provided an alternative sense of identity, of national myth. Interestingly, none of the types address the settler-invaders' role as *invader*. The oppression of the runaway convict bushranger or the digger by British officials has been part of the national mythology, but the Anglo-Celtic Australian oppression, even massacre, of Aboriginal peoples has been continuously swept under the rug. Hodge and Mishra suggest that white Australian myth-makers could accommodate this guilty history's threat to settler-invaders' sense of national legitimacy "only by not mentioning the matter" (*Dark Side of the Dream* xiii). In his study of Australian nationalism, Alomes suggests that "[w]hite Australians' failure to come to terms with their destruction and corruption of Aboriginal society and culture has been a lasting legacy which has impeded their own ability to come to terms with the land" and, thus, he continues, their own identity (208).

A final factor to consider in discussing Australia's national identity and its ambivalent relationship with Britain and British imperialism is the effect of immigration, especially since World War Two. Australia's demographics have changed radically since 1945 with the influx of immigrants from Greece, Italy, eastern Europe and Asia, making it an increasingly multicultural society. This has led at times to tensions between "Old" Australians (descendants of nineteenth-century Anglo-Celtic settler-invaders) and "New Australians" (the post-war, usually non-British immigrants). "New Australians" were often regarded as second-class citizens and expected to assimilate to "Old" (i.e., Anglo-centric) Australian ways. However, in recent decades (particularly since the 1980s) many Australians have embraced
multiculturalism, with its implications of a more open and less patronizing attitude towards co-existing with and learning from new cultures (Carroll, *Australian Contemporary Drama* 343). Aboriginal rights and culture movements have also grown—side effects of which have included challenges to white-washed versions of settler-invader history. Feminism has challenged the patriarchal assumptions of both traditional European and Australian male-oriented culture. The imperial pressure of Britain has been replaced in large part by the imperial pressures of the neo-imperial United States. As we shall see, these changes are reflected in recent Australian plays.

Thus, it is safe to say that the Australian relationship with Britain is a complicated, highly ambivalent one, reflecting a history of conflict between "the Anglophiles . . . who emphasised Australia's inheritance and debts as a colonial extension of Britain and Europe, and the Australophiles who saw a future Australia free of old world evils" (Alomes and Jones 58). For many white Australians today there is still some emotional connection, a sense of an inherited tradition, maybe even a little "cultural cringe"; but because of its geographical placement, its convict history, the Irish colonial factor, the effects of the land and its economy on creating national types, and more recent non-British immigration, Australia seems to be more

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10 Neo-imperial pressure from the United States on Australia has included not only the cultural sphere, but also the political. It has led, among other things, to Australia's controversial participation in America's Vietnam war effort.

11 For an excellent discussion of how contemporary Australian theatre reflects these changes, see Dennis Carroll's *Australian Contemporary Drama*, especially Chapter Thirteen (339-82).
republican, to have distanced itself more from the imperial "Mother Country" than
English Canada has. Even if it has not yet broken official ties, as the United States did
just before the Botany Bay colony was founded, Australia is now the site of a renewed
republican debate about whether to sever what is perhaps the last official tie to her
British imperial past, the monarchy. While an eighteenth-century convict character
in Wertenbaker's play could say "I hate England. But I think English" (68), a late
twentieth-century Australian might more likely say "I don't care much about England.
And I don't think particularly English." It is out of this late twentieth-century period
of questioning that the plays I shall study in chapter three come.

II. Australian Theatre History: From Colonial to National Theatre

Of course, Australian theatre began with rich and varied Aboriginal dance and
drama traditions, which are still vibrant today. However, I shall not discuss these
traditions here, since the focus of this particular study is the development of white
settler-invader drama, which was not greatly influenced by Aboriginal drama. This is
to suggest, not that Aboriginal drama is not significant in its own right as an art form,
but that, for the above and other complex reasons, it deserves separate study.

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12 This movement is not totally new. There was some republican sentiment
amongst the colonies in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but this largely died
out in the twentieth century (Rickard, Australia 115) until recently. For an example of
a recent discussion of the issue, see J. Beaumont's Where To Now? Australia's
Military Beginnings: The Convicts and The Recruiting Officer

Settler-invader theatre began early—in 1789, the second year of the first penal colony’s existence—with a production of Farquhar’s The Recruiting Officer put on in the Sydney penal colony by convicts. Timberlake Wertenbaker’s historical play, Our Country’s Good (1988), dramatizes the creation of this first Australian production and, while not a conventional historical account, usefully encapsulates many key issues. In particular, Wertenbaker explores the competing tensions between nostalgia for Britain on the one hand and anti-British sentiment and rootedness in Australian reality on the other. These tensions plagued Australian theatre as it negotiated a relationship between its inherited British theatrical traditions and its own emerging local theatre. Our Country’s Good highlights the ironies and implications of a group of oppressed, working-class convicts playing Farquhar’s eighteenth-century comedy of English aristocratic manners in a harsh, alien environment. Wertenbaker shows how the English theatre takes part in the civilizing mission of imperialism. In a key speech, the governor of the colony, Captain Phillip, expresses his belief that the English theatre tradition of Shakespeare and his contemporaries can have a civilizing effect on the convicts, who are seen as needing civilizing as much as the new land does:

The theatre is an expression of civilisation. We belong to a great country which has spawned great playwrights: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and even in our own time, Sheridan. The convicts will be speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to. It will remind them that there is more to
life than crime, punishment. (29-30)

Phillip also hopes it will temporarily unite and reconcile the prisoners and gaolers as they enjoy a common artistic experience (30).

Wertenbaker also explores the various responses the convicts, the first Australian settler-invaders, have to the very British, upper-class play. On the one hand, Farquhar’s play offers some convicts a temporary escape from their harsh colonial realities into an idealized fantasy of English life (see Wertenbaker 31-32, 89). As the convict Ascott says:

I don’t want to play myself. When I say Kite’s lines I forget everything else. I forget the judge said I’m going to have to spend the rest of my natural life in this place getting beaten and working like a slave. I can forget that out there it’s trees and burnt grass, spiders that kill you in four hours and snakes. (89)

On the other hand, Our Country’s Good also points out that Farquhar’s English, upper-class play does not reflect the lives of the lower-class, oppressed convicts and their new Australian life. Two convicts, Dabby and the would-be poet, Wisehammer, express their belief that they could write plays that properly reflect their colonial lives. Says Dabby, ”I could write scenes, Lieutenant, women with real lives, not these Shrewsbury prudes” (86). She adds: ”I want to play myself” (89); and ”I want to see a play that shows life as we know it” (89). Wisehammer actually begins the process by writing a new prologue for the traditional English play in order to better reflect settler-invader realities (86, 107).
Professional Theatre in the Nineteenth Century: Foreign Plays,

Foreign Stars

Wertenbaker's play looks at early Australian theatre from a 1980s perspective, highlighting the seeds of tensions that only really emerged full blown much later. When Australia's early intermittent garrison theatre was replaced by regular, professional theatre in the nineteenth century, the preference for British drama reflecting British life was still dominant. The first regular theatre, operated by former convict Robert Sidaway, opened in 1796 in Sydney, offering typical London plays such as Young's Revenge and Rowe's The Fair Penitent. The colony's governor, John Hunter, closed the theatre after two years, most likely because it was a site of much pocket-picking and burglary (Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 6-7).

Professional theatre really established itself in 1832 when theatre-lover and businessman Barnett Levey staged an English melodrama, Black Ey'd Susan, in a Sydney saloon. He opened the first professional theatre building, the Theatre Royal, on the fifth of October 1833 (Williams, "Australia" 57; Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 7). As theatre expanded in the 1850s, the entrepreneur George Coppin started the practice of importing overseas stars (usually British or American) to tour major cities and provincial towns (Williams, "Australia" 58). This deeply colonial practice, in which Australian theatre was dominated by the touring plays and players of the imperial centres of England, and sometimes the United States, continued until well into the twentieth century. The repertoire that British actor-

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13 As in the case of the famous J.C. Williamson company (Rickard, Australia 98).
managers and entrepreneurs brought over to perform in the big commercial theatres was predominantly traditional British repertoire, consisting mostly of lighter, more popular entertainments, such as melodrama, farces, burlesques, pantomime, and operetta, although opera was also popular (Rickard, *Australia* 98; Williams, "Australia" 58). Productions of more serious "literary" entertainments were less common, but when they were produced, Shakespeare was often represented (Williams, "Australia" 58).

However, it is important to remember that it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the distinction between "popular" and "highbrow" theatre became as strict as it is today. While Shakespeare was considered a great playwright—far superior to the hacks who produced burlesques, melodramas, and comic afterpieces—throughout most of the nineteenth century in Australia he was also considered a source of popular entertainment. Companies put Shakespeare on the boards along with what we would now call "popular" culture not only to lay claim to his greater artistic respectability, but also because on one level Shakespeare's works fell into the same category as the "commercial" fare: they were all crowd pleasers. Rickard notes the "currency of Shakespeare in colonial parlance," reflected in such slang terms as "Madam Desdemona": a name for a white woman romantically involved with a black man ("The Bloke and the Bard" 129). Even the least educated, lowest status group in the colonies identified with Shakespeare. In his *The Drama and Music in New South Wales* (1892), F.C. Brewer provides the example of a convict

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14 As elsewhere in the Empire.
"bush performance" of the judgement scene from *The Merchant of Venice* that proved very successful (and no doubt piquant) with its rough audience (qtd. in Rickard, "The Bloke and the Bard" 129). When the gold rushes gave Australia an economic boost, allowing for more theatres and productions, tragedians often ended up competing against each other, playing Hamlet or some other Shakespearean part simultaneously at different theatres in the same city (Rickard, "The Bloke and the Bard" 130). In keeping with the tendency to look to England for theatrical culture, the style of Shakespearean acting, as well as the texts used, followed English trends. As in Victorian London, audiences preferred truncated adaptations of plays like *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *Henry VIII*—plays that suited the nineteenth century's "full-blooded and declamatory" acting style ("The Bloke and the Bard" 130).\textsuperscript{15} However, in the latter part of the century, attitudes towards Shakespeare began to change. He became less associated with popular entertainment and more associated with literary and moral virtues. He was performed less on the popular stage, and studied more in the middle-class Shakespeare societies that sprang up in many colonial cities (Rickard, "The Bloke and the Bard" 131). He was becoming what he is today, an elite institution associated with certain middle-class values.

Australian content did occasionally appear on the nineteenth-century Australian

\textsuperscript{15} As a more understated style took hold in London in the later half of the century, its influence was also felt (via touring companies) in the Australian colonies. However, according to Rickard, studies of controversies over competing productions of *Hamlet* (new style and old style ones) suggest "colonial audiences remained more attuned to the grander style inherited from Macready" ("The Bloke and the Bard" 130).
stage. However, it appeared not in the more respectable forms of "tragic" or "serious" dramatic literature, but in the less reputable theatrical forms: farces and comic afterpieces with local settings, pantomime, and melodrama. Australians were represented, in most cases, by minor, and usually comic, stock figures of bushrangers, larrikan buffoons, convicts, and so forth. The Australian landscape was sometimes evoked as an exotic backdrop. Perhaps the first real "settler-invader" drama was *The Bushrangers*, a melodrama written in 1828 by David Burn about a Tasmanian convict (Rees, *The Making of Australian Drama* 7). However, these Australian-content plays faced many obstacles. In the early part of the century, such plays could be seen, in convict colonies, as potentially inflammatory. Authorities in Sydney, for example, were concerned about the theatre's effects on the convict population, and a censorship system was set up that favoured plays without local content. Even later, when convict control was no longer a concern, Australian subjects found little support in the theatre. Australia's dominant theatrical entrepreneur of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, J.C. Williamson, had little interest in the drama of his adopted country, and consolidated the policy of importing known hits with foreign stars, claiming "Australians don't want Australian" (Williams, "Australia" 59). The trend of importing foreign stars "inevitably fostered the attitude that 'the best' came from abroad and consolidated the emerging Australian theatre in the mould of British and American tradition" (Williams, "Australia" 58). Local settings and topicality were
largely swamped by imported plays and players.¹⁶

Early Struggle for Truly "Australian" Drama: Louis Esson and the Little Theatre Movement

While overseas theatre continued to dominate Australian professional theatre in the first half of the twentieth century, there was some movement outside the professional realm towards training homegrown talent and developing serious homegrown writing and subject matter that went beyond the occasional addition of local colour to sensational melodramas or pantomime. Leon Brodzky, for example, tried to organize an Australian Stage Society in 1904 (Williams, "Australia" 60; Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 104). The earliest work of Louis Esson, "Australia's first realistic playwright," was staged at William Moore's annual Australian Drama Nights in Melbourne (Williams, "Australia" 60; Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 113-14). Esson co-founded the Pioneer Players in Melbourne in 1922 to produce only Australian plays; he was attempting to create folk theatre on the model of the Abbey Theatre of Dublin. Unfortunately, this project fell apart just four years later (Williams, "Australia" 60).

While Australian cultural nationalists attempted to create an original grass roots theatre, the once populist Shakespeare that even a convict could love was becoming

¹⁶ For more detailed discussion of the representation of Australia on the early Australian stage, see Margaret Williams's "Australia" 58-59 (which I have summarized here), or her book Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929.
associated increasingly with support for the Empire: \(^{17}\)

... with the rising tide of imperial sentiment which culminated in the
Great War, Shakespeare was increasingly promoted as "the Great Poet
of our race." So in 1929 Dr. R.S. Wallace, Vice-Chancellor of Sydney
University, could justify the study of Shakespeare because "as he taught
his countrymen to think nobly of their own country, he has also taught
us to think nobly and feel nobly about those virtues on which the British
Empire depends." (131)

In keeping with his increasing imperial status, Shakespeare was institutionalized
outside the theatre in things such as the Sydney Shakespeare Memorial, the State
Library of New South Wales' Shakespeare Collection, and, most importantly, the
school syllabus.

A key figure in the imperialization and institutionalization of Shakespeare in
Australia was Allan Wilkie, a transplanted English actor-manager whose
Shakespearean provincial touring company was designed to bring the classical
repertoire to the Far Eastern corners of the Empire and did so in Australia in the
1920s. If nineteenth-century actor-managers had seen Shakespeare as popular
entertainment for the masses, Wilkie promoted an elitist view of Shakespeare--a
Shakespeare who was not only a symbol of England’s racial glory, but a missionary
tool for "educating a nation" in respectable, middle-class, English-oriented culture

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\(^{17}\) For more on the connection between Shakespeare and imperialism in Australia, see
Rickard’s "The Bloke and the Bard," which I shall only summarize here.
(qtd. in Rickard 135). He sought and gained the support of the viceregal set, the education departments, the Shakespeare societies, and even Prime Minister S.M. Bruce, who praised the company on the occasion of its 1000th performance of Shakespeare as "performing a duty of national character" (qtd. in Rickard 134-35). Rickard attributes Wilkie's success to the anxieties of middle-class Australia in the 1920s—a period in which the social divisions exposed by World War One, fears of Bolshevism and Sinn Fein power, and concerns that American influences were undermining the Britishness of Australian society, led many middle-class Australians to reaffirm, for a time, a commitment to the imperial ideal. It was also the time when, in the face of new media like radio and film, strict distinctions were being drawn between "high" and "popular" culture. Wilkie positioned Shakespeare firmly on the side of high culture, Englishness, and imperialism. When Wilkie did allow a little "low" culture, and a recognizably Australian flavour, to creep into a production—as in the case of his broadly caricatured, Australian-accented representation of Audrey in As You Like It—he was criticized. In general though, Wilkie's success was such that, in the late 1920s, he even promoted his company as the basis for an Australian National Theatre—a very different kind of national theatre than his contemporary, Louis Esson, envisioned. However, this particular dream of Wilkie's did not materialize. Rickard sums up his contribution to Australian theatre rather damningly:

For middle-class, British-oriented society, Wilkie's venture was a timely one. It placed Shakespeare in an imperial context and made the promulgation of his plays part of a national agenda. Yet for all its
decade of success in mobilising colonial audiences, it served to divorce Shakespeare from the Australian environment, both theatrically and culturally. High culture had appropriated the Bard, who found himself increasingly marooned on the shrinking island of middle-class morality and good taste. (136)

(Interestingly, despite the keen sympathy with postcolonialist concerns that Rickard shows throughout much of his article, at this point he almost seems more sorry for Shakespeare than for Australian theatre culture.)

In the 1930s, local professional theatre was hurt by the Depression and competition from new media. Wilkie's company waned and the early attempts of nationalists like Esson gave way to a movement of little amateur and semi-amateur theatre largely run by women, who tried to promote serious drama and provided essentially the only venue for Australian playwrights. In this respect Australia resembled the situation in Canada between the World Wars where attempts to create truly Canadian theatre took root in the amateur "Little Theatre" movements and the Dominion Drama Festival. Most of the playwrights who worked with these Australian theatres are forgotten now, but their work was "for the most part in the prevailing realistic style, drew on historical themes, or depicted the cultural clash between country and city folk, or whites and Aborigines, in the harsh 'outback'" (Williams,

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18 Examples of such "little theatre" companies included Sydney theatres such as Carrie Tennant's Community Playhouse (opened 1930), Doris Fitton's Independent Theatre (opened 1932), and May Hollingworth's Metropolitan Theatre. Melbourne theatres included the Little Theatre, Frank Thring Sr.'s Arrow Theatre, and Gertrude Johnson's National Theatre Movement. The left-wing New Theatre had branches in several cities.
"Australia" 60). These homegrown theatres faced many difficulties. Their finances were limited. They had to compete with the "spectacular high-budget" fare of the big, foreign-dominated commercial theatres and the glamorous tours of overseas stars like Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh (1948), or the members of the Stratford Memorial Theatre (1949, 1952-53) (Williams, "Australia" 60). Because there were few opportunities for local actors, given the dominance of overseas stars, promising Australian performers usually ended up seeking their fortunes on the stages of Britain and America, thus draining the little theatres of their best talent.19 The audiences for the little theatres' homegrown plays were very small. Nevertheless, the little theatres helped to keep the ideals of serious, local drama alive into the 1950s, when the next phase in Australian theatre began.20

A different development in the 1930s that would influence Australian theatre in the post-World-War-Two era was the coming of radio, particularly the founding of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932. Radio programmers encouraged local writers to produce radio plays and serials, and what started out as sideshow time filler became the highlight of many evening shows (Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 154-56). Radio encouraged local writers, providing them with a forum in which to hone their skills, as well as paid work. Radio, along with Little Theatre, prepared a

19 For example, consider Peter Finch, Frank Thring, Zoe Caldwell, Leo McKern.

20 For more on the Australian Little Theatre movement, see Margaret Williams's "Australia" (key points of which I have mentioned here), or Rees's The Making of Australian Drama: From the 1830s to the Late 1960s.
base of talent for the theatrical boom of later decades.  

The Post-War Boom in Homegrown Professional Theatre

Despite the valiant efforts of Esson and others, there was a prevailing belief in Australia that European, and especially British, culture was always superior to Australian culture. However, in the post-war period this sentiment, while still strong, at least began to be analysed and questioned. In that famous essay in Meanjin (1950), Arthur Phillips identified and lamented this sense of inferiority, which he called the "cultural cringe" (299). Others, such as Melbourne academic and play producer Keith Macartney, lamented the fact that Australia had somehow gained "nationhood" without achieving a recognizable national theatre or developing national playwrights of the stature of Ireland's Sean O'Casey or America's Eugene O'Neill (Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 240). The increasingly widespread sense that theatre ought to be part of the national agenda, and that maybe it was time to throw off the yoke of cultural insecurity vis-à-vis the culture of the imperial centre, emerged in the decisions of Australian governments actively to fund and support the development of Australian arts, including a theatre that was both homegrown and professional. For example, in 1943, an Australian Council for Music and the Arts was established to bring the arts to schools and rural areas (Williams, "Australia" 60).

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21 As we shall see in chapter four, radio and Little Theatre played a similar role in the development of Canadian theatre.

22 As we shall see in chapter four, government subsidy was also crucial in the development of homegrown, professional theatre in post-war Canada.
However, a real impetus to the development of Australian professional drama came from an ironically postcolonial conflict that illustrates Australia's ambivalent relationship with "Mother Britain." Wanting to create a national theatre, in 1947 the Australian government asked famous Irish director Tyrone Guthrie for advice (Rees, The Making of Australian Drama 249)—a gesture containing an ironic mix of nationalism and continued cultural cringe. Guthrie is sometimes called the "Johnny Appleseed" of theatre for, in a rather neo-imperialistic mode, he travelled around Canada and the U.S. helping "colonials" to establish "proper," British-modelled local theatres. However, Guthrie, the imported expert, declared in his report that Australia was not ready yet to establish a national theatre (Williams, "Australia" 60). What he suggested Australians do instead reeked of imperial condescension. As theatre historian Leslie Rees describes it:

Guthrie produced an export-import plan for taking all the best actors and actresses to England and developing them as a high-grade company mainly in standard dramas; when they had impressed the British public, and not before, they were to return and impress the Australian public, which meanwhile had been properly educated by seeing the work of imported British companies. (The Making of Australian Drama 249)

This pronouncement from the British authority created resentment in Australia and helped to fuel already present nationalistic determination (Williams, "Australia" 60). Such sentiment led to the creation of an institution critical to the development of Australian national theatres and also dramatic literature: The Australian Elizabethan
The Theatre Trust (AETT) in 1954.23

The history of the trust contains further postcolonial ambivalences and ironies. On the one hand, it was a very nationalist cultural institution. Its purpose was to provide the support necessary to develop homegrown theatrical production, actor training and writing, and it was established by a combination of government funding and public subscription (Williams, "Australia" 60; Hutton 58), showing it had both a political and a popular base. It provided the infrastructure to give homegrown Little Theatre a boost to the professional arena and to develop, produce, and publicize new Australian playwrights. One of the first and most famous playwrights to benefit from the Trust was Ray Lawler, whose ground-breaking tragedy of ordinary, working-class Australian life, _Summer of the Seventeenth Doll_ (1955), was a landmark in the development of serious Australian drama.24 The success of the play was interpreted by many as evidence not only that could Australians write good drama, but that Australian audiences wanted to see themselves represented realistically and seriously on stage.25

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23 The AETT was established one year after the Stratford Shakespeare Festival opened in Stratford, Canada.

24 For a more detailed account of the history of the Trust and its involvement in Lawler’s breakthrough, see Rees (The Making of Australian Drama 254-68). For more on the success of Lawler’s play, see Radic (20-24).

25 Reflecting on Lawler’s achievement, Bruce Grant wrote in 1958: "The most important pressure on the Australian theatre today is that of ordinary Australians who want to see themselves on the stage. We have finally moved from the tradition... that romance and drama suitable for the stage occurred only in the lives of people who lived overseas. The Russian peasant and the mid-West share-farmer lived profoundly; but the Australian cocky was allowed on stage only as an unrecognizable buffoon... Indoor Australian life was particularly dull; interesting things happened
On the other hand, the pull of the imperial centre and the cultural cringe remained. There were numerous ironies. The trust to establish Australian national drama to compete with British fare was named after the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth II, who completed a popular tour of Australia in 1953 (Hutton 58).

Intentionally or not, the trust’s name also carried reminders of another English queen, Elizabeth I, doyenne of the age of Elizabethan drama and the age of Shakespeare. The opening season also had an English director, Hugh Hunt, and offered two English plays (Williams, “Australia” 60). Indeed, building a truly Australian drama proved a slow process. In 1956 Geoffrey Hutton could still complain about the tendency to prefer overseas British and American products, as shown by the catalogue of plays produced in the 1955 season by Trust-sponsored theatres in Sydney:

[E]very one was a West End success or a Pulitzer Prize winner, or had some such stamp of sterling silver on it. There is little or no experimental theatre; when you are invited to see a play, you know in advance that it is playing to full houses in Shaftesbury Avenue or along Broadway—or that it did so some time in the past five years. You may call this policy reasonable; it is harder to justify the practice of importing stars, often unknown to Who’s Who in the Theatre, to lead Australian casts. . . . This determination to play safe has been the doom only in Surrey drawing-rooms or in New York penthouses or tenements in Dublin. Historically the Australian audience has therefore never associated enjoyment of the theatre with its own environment. . . . This has changed, or is changing so quickly that the end is in sight.” (60)
As late as the 1960s, the cultural cringe and a colonial mentality still afflicted some theatre-lovers here, as elsewhere in the Commonwealth. For example, the critic A.L. McLeod would lament, in a book on Australian culture, that the Australian government had not followed Tyrone Guthrie's advice in 1950 on how Australia could create the right conditions for a national theatre, thus "missing" an opportunity to create their own Stratford, Ontario with its "international reputation for its Shakespeare Festival Theatre" ("Theatre" 345-46). Of course, the comparison with Stratford, Ontario is interesting, given that Canada's "premier" showcase theatre was designed and implemented by an Irishman and focuses not on Canadian drama, but on Shakespeare. "To date," said McLeod, "Australia's principal contribution to the theatre has been in supplying talented individuals to overseas theatres" where they received their training and had their careers (346). Behind McLeod's discussion of the "jejune" state of Australian theatre was a still colonial sense that Australian theatre would be legitimate when it received approval from abroad, from the imperial centre. He concluded his chapter by expressing a desire that theatre arts would "become so significant in Australian culture as to merit international acclaim and emulation" (346).

In some ways more interesting is Hugh Hunt's discussion of the state of Australian theatre in 1960 in his article "The Making of Australian Theatre" (66-71). It represents an attempt to mediate between the two poles of an independent Australian nationalism and the cultural cringe towards the British theatre by recognizing the need
for new, local theatre, while at the same time recognizing theatre's rootedness in tradition. As was noted earlier, Hunt was the British director put in charge of the Trust's first season; as such he represented an Australian "cringe" need for the expertise and validation associated with the British theatre. However, in keeping with the Trust's mandate, Hunt was interested in developing Australian drama. Nevertheless, he argued that without maintaining grounding in its classical "roots," contemporary theatre would die. What he argued for in his article was a mix: the development of Australian dramatic literature, but along with that a necessary continuity with past theatrical tradition (i.e., British, European):

Today I am concerned with the making of theatre--of a national theatre--and this must include in its repertoire classic as well as contemporary plays. A theatre which has no place for classical plays has no roots, and however brilliant its contemporary manifestations, it will wither and die. . . . A national theatre must not, however, be only a storehouse of the classics, otherwise it becomes a museum; its actors and actresses will become fossilised and lose touch with contemporary life. To some extent, this is a criticism which could be levelled at the Comedie Française. So a national theatre must include in its repertoire the best contemporary plays, and clearly this must include the development of its own dramatists. For it is through the portrayal of the behaviour and atmosphere, as well as the current problems of its own people, that a theatre develops its style and keeps in contact with
contemporary life. It will be seen, then, that a national theatre’s
function is, firstly, to set a standard of performance which can act as a
stimulus to other theatres; secondly, to offer a permanent home for a
representative selection of classical plays; thirdly, to offer a home for
contemporary plays, especially those of its own country. In brief, it
must be a playhouse with a conscience, aware of its duty to the public
as well as to the health of the theatre as a whole. (66-67)

Hunt’s ordering of the national theatre’s priorities is conservative: classical plays still
rank above local, contemporary ones.

In the course of making this argument, he quotes liberally from Shakespeare,
assuming the poet is so well known that he does not even bother to identify the source
of his quotations:

We who make theatre are as much a part of the past as of the future;
and whatever we may wish of that future we cannot escape the past.

Behind the theatre of today stands the age-old ritual, that endless
procession of players who have strutted and fretted their hour upon the
stage, those millions upon millions who have watched and applauded
them.

*Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale*

*Her infinite variety.* (71)
Hunt's continued reverence for past traditions—in this case European ones—is in itself a theatrical tradition. Paradoxically, this conservative trend has been balanced in theatre, particularly in this century, by the impulse to be avant garde, and thus break with tradition in some way. A few years after Hunt expressed his philosophy of Australian theatre, a new group of young Australian playwrights wanted, if not to break with tradition, at least to challenge it, rework it, and expand from it to create their own Australian drama. They sought a compromise position.

New Wave in the 1970s: Alternative Theatre and Nationalist Dramas of Identity

In 1968, support for Australian theatre was reinforced by the formation of the Australian Council for the Arts (renamed the Australia Council in 1975) (Williams, "Australia" 61-62). This soon provided funding for a new outburst of Australian theatrical creativity characterized by an increased cultural self-confidence that included a desire to experiment. This time around playwrights not only recognized "that Australia could no longer pretend to be a slightly misplaced (and oversized) part of the British Isles" (Fitzpatrick, "After the Wave" 172), but were exuberantly nationalistic and attempted to create an earthy "folk" drama (Williams, "Australia" 64, 65). Central to many of these dramas was the realistic portrayal of the "average"

26 He cites here from Shakespeare's Macbeth (5.5.24-25) and Antony and Cleopatra (2.2.235-36).
The move to create really "Australian" plays did not come from the new state theatres. As in many western countries (including Canada) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, alternative theatre companies and writers sprang up, helped along by new government subsidies. In Australia, this period between 1967 and 1975 was called the "New Wave." New Wave theatres were more experimental than the relatively more conservative (if still young) major state theatres. The new groups were more committed to developing and producing Australian dramatic literature.

One such group was Betty Burstall's coffee-theatre, La Mama, which opened in 1967 in a working-class district of Melbourne. Drawing on American influences, it was modelled on New York off-off-Broadway alternative theatre venues and named after one of them (Jones, Burstall, and Garner 3; Williams, "Australia" 62). As La Mama playwright David Williamson recalls it, the theatre was born out of a sense that, despite the Trust and its offshoots, the new state theatres, Australian theatre was

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27 Perhaps the best examples of "ocker" plays are David Williamson's, such as The Coming of Stork (1970), The Removalists (1971), Don's Party (1971), and The Club (1977).

28 Of course, given that the United States had replaced Britain as a global, imperial power after World War Two, and the fact that American dramatic literature, managements and stars had a tendency to dominate Australian stages rather as the British did, it might seem odd that Burstall would follow an American model in seeking to create Australian theatre. However, one could argue that she was, after all, looking not to the mainstream, commercial American theatre, but to a more radical form that was challenging that very conservative tradition. In addition, while America was a neo-imperial power, it was not the "Mother Country." America could be seen more as a successful cousin to be emulated—one that had broken free of parental ties—than a parent.
still not really representing Australian life:

She [Burstall] felt that the Australian theatrical scene, dominated by commercial and repertory theatre, the former specialising in banal overseas shows starring overseas actors, and the latter concentrating on ‘museum piece’ theatre and contemporary plays drawn from other cultures, left Australia almost totally without any theatrical representation or exploration of her own culture, surely a serious neglect. (Williamson, "Actors, Writers and the Carlton Theatres" 103)

In contrast to the more conservative state theatres, La Mama had a popular and political focus that included anti-Vietnam-war street theatre and agit-prop theatre tours of factories. Some of the best known New Wave playwrights got started there: not only David Williamson, but Jack Hibberd, Barry Oakley, and John Romeril. David Williamson in particular became a major force in getting new, Australian playwrights accepted by the professional theatre, with the success of plays such as The Removalists and Don’s Party.²⁹ In 1970 the company renamed itself the Australian Performing Group (APG) and moved into a new playing space, the Pram Factory. As the APG’s name suggests, the group’s goal was to develop a truly Australian performance style and drama. And, interestingly, just as Australia had most often appeared on stage in the nineteenth century in popular, not serious, theatrical forms, so Pram Factory productions tended to be "robust and irreverent" works "drawing on

²⁹ Don’s Party even achieved what was still the ultimate accolade: it was produced in London, England.
the old Australian vaudeville, variety and pantomime traditions" (Williams, "Australia" 62). So in this sense, the New Wave did not break completely with tradition; they chose to highlight traditional forms of the sort looked down upon by the serious British theatre, whose idea of tradition focused on the "classical" plays.

The famous Sydney equivalent of La Mama/APG was the Nimrod Street Theatre, founded by John Bell and Ken Horler in 1970 in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst. Like La Mama, the Nimrod group was committed to the development of Australian dramatic literature. In its first three and a half years, it staged thirty-two productions—eighty percent of which were Australian plays; two-thirds of that eighty percent were premieres (Radic 85). However, while more experimental than the state theatres, it was less "alternative" than its Melbourne relative. Again, there was an "Australian" tendency to employ popular, comic, and irreverent forms. New playwrights, such as Ron Blair and Alex Buzo, also "bypassed traditional [serious] forms to create works of an almost journalistic immediacy" that demolished "the pretensions and hypocrisies of Australian society" (Williams, "Australia" 63). The first piece created at the Nimrod was the satirical farce Biggles, which "mocked traditional British ruling-class, public-school images of heroes confronted by ‘colonial’ savages," amongst other things (Rees, Australian Drama 22).³⁰ However, the Nimrod group eventually became a major mainstream company,

³⁰ See also Radic 73.
while the APG chose to remain alternative.  

Interestingly, Nimrod also did Shakespeare—suggesting that they did not see doing the British "Bard" as inimical to their desire to develop Australian plays. However, in keeping with a new colonial self-confidence, the productions were anything but reverent or classical. They were decidedly innovative. In 1972, for example, Nimrod put on Hamlet, but turned it into "an outrageous transvestite pantomime" and called it Hamlet on Ice (Williams, "Australia" 63; Radic 74). The Nimrod’s John Bell has since gone on to found Australia’s most prestigious Shakespeare repertory company, the Bell Shakespeare Company. For its logo, the company parodies the famous portraits of Shakespeare by substituting a picture of an Australian lizard wearing an Elizabethan ruff for the usual iconic image of Shakespeare’s head. The logo suggests the company sees what they do as more Australian than simply English.

Nimrod’s comic takes on Shakespeare were not unusual. Penny Gay (personal interview) notes that there has been a discernible trend in Australian theatre towards presenting things Australian as comic and working-class—a trend so strong it has appeared in productions of Shakespeare. In cases where a director wishes to update or "Australianize" a Shakespeare production, it has been common to make the comic

31 Margaret Williams outlines the basic history of La Mama, the APG, and the Nimrod group in "Australia" 62-63. See Jones, Burstall, and Garner for a detailed discussion of La Mama, and Radic 68-85 and 128-52 for more on the Nimrod group.

32 In this new version, Hamlet arrives in Elsinore after having fallen in love with Horatio and having had a sex-change operation (Williams, "The Alternative Theatre" 225; Love 254-55).
characters stock Australian working-class types, often larrikins. Australian
identification seems to be not so much with Shakespeare's upper-class tragic heroes,
but with the irreverent, lower-class clowns.

What might the origins be of this overall trend to see popular, comic theatrical
forms and comic characters as particularly amenable to expressions of
"Australianism"? Was it because vaudeville, pantomime, variety, and burlesque
tended to be more topical and local? Because "low" forms and characters were less
policing by the culturally conservative and could therefore include things that were
"marginal" (i.e., Australian), while the tragic heroes of "serious" drama were often
considered sacrosanct and therefore harder to tamper with? Did the trend express class
differences, since clowning, burlesque and the like were often considered lower-class
entertainments and might be seen to fit in with Australia's working-class history of
convictism, gold mining, bush rangers and so forth? Did the irreverence of these
forms and characters suit the anti-authoritarian, egalitarian, democratic strain in
Australian national self-fashioning? Perhaps it was a combination of these factors.

Diversifying "the" National Identity in the 1980s, 1990s

The 1980s and 1990s have seen the emergence of new trends in Australian
theatre that are of particular interest from a postcolonial point of view. Participants in
a panel on postcolonial criticism at a 1992 meeting of the Association for the Study of

33 As we shall see in later chapters, this trend was not seen in Canada.
Australian Literature (ASAL)\textsuperscript{34} analysed these changes and their discussion is worth summarizing, as the trends they describe are reflected in the plays I shall examine in chapter three.

Since, in the 1970s, Australian dramatists were just starting to get locally-written plays about Australian subjects produced in significant numbers, they tended to be very nationalistic. This nationalism often expressed itself in attempts to portray a monolithic "authentic" Australian "essence" on stage and this "essence" was usually seen as the white, male, working-class: "ocker."\textsuperscript{35} However, by the mid 1980s, many began to realize that Australian identity might not be so limited in scope. This change in self-perception may have occurred because Australian culture was now sufficiently self-confident that aggressive reactions against the old "cultural cringe" were no longer necessary. In addition, multiculturalism, feminism, Aboriginal rights movements, and a greater sense of Australia's connection with Asia, became forces that challenged the "Old Australian" idea of an homogeneous Australian identity.

Today, the goal of many writers and cultural scholars is no longer simply to establish Australia's separateness from Britain (or even the United States) using the 1970s oppositional technique of hegemonic, essentialist myths of Australian national identity. Newer writers have recognized a key flaw in that old strategy: although homogenizing nationalist formulas break free of the narrow ideas of nation and of

\textsuperscript{34} The panel proceedings were published as "Post-colonial Forum" in Australian-Canadian Studies 10.2 (1992): 111-59.

\textsuperscript{35} This actually started in the 1950s with Ray Lawler's Doll, but such drama then experienced a slump until the late 1960s, and '70s.
cultural value defined by the imperial centre, they only replace them with equally narrow, hegemonic myths of a homogeneous Australian national identity (Ashcroft, "The Present Crisis" 149-50). Neither set of myths fully reflects the Australian reality and the framework "remains curiously unthreatening to received cultural values" (Ashcroft, "The Present Crisis" 150). Thus, there has been a gradual shift away from an essentialist, narrow form of nationalism to the idea that there is no single form of Australian postcolonialism, but a plurality (Edwards, "Australian Literature" 142-43), a "hybrid profusion" (Ashcroft, "The Present Crisis" 151).

The shift away from simplistic assertions of separateness from Britain (or the U.S.) does not mean postcolonial Australian artists need to ignore the imperial powers' influence upon their culture. Rather, as Brian Edwards notes ("Australian Literature" 144-45), they can "reconsider" it, "while making space for the diversity of local discourse"; there is now a confidence in "the possibilities of the 'local' in its cultural diversity"; the emphasis is less on opposition to the imperial "centre," than upon "defining positions, relationships, influence and political particularities in the cross-cultural complexities of specific social conditions." This results in plays and criticism that are focused not solely on white, male, Anglo-Celtic ockers or bush rangers, but also on the multiple voices of women, Aborigines, and people of Asian, Greek, Italian or other descent. In the process, hegemonic ideas of nation and canon—whether British or Australian—are destabilized (Edwards, "Australian Literature" 144).
The local and specific become the focus.36

Lawson notes that "the interrogation of 'the national' from a post-colonial perspective" provides "an opportunity to re-work the complexity and hybridity back into those cultural organizations" ("Comparative Studies" 158). This new emphasis on hybridity/diversity, as opposed to a homogenizing nationalism, recognizes that people do not inhabit only one subject position: they can inhabit several (Edwards, "Australian Literature" 143). The settler-invader, for example, may be both colonizer and colonized, privileged white and oppressed female.

These new ways of thinking about Australian identity have, in turn, led to explorations of a more diverse Australian identity on stage: in Aboriginal theatre, in multicultural theatre from Australia's non-Anglo-Celtic, non-Aboriginal population, in feminist theatre, and even in more "mainstream" white theatre.37 These explorations of identity are also linked to a trend towards the re-exploration of Australian history and in particular its whitewashed originary myths. Plays show an interest in what playwright Louis Nowra calls the "secret history" of white-Aboriginal relations and a newly acknowledged guilt at the theft of Aboriginal land (Carroll, Australian

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36 This suggests the important role theatre can play, since, as was noted in chapter one, theatre can be very local and specific in nature.

37 One of the best known exemplars of this trend is Aboriginal playwright Jack Davis, who explores the conditions of Aboriginal life in both past and modern Australia in plays such as The Dreamers (1982), No Sugar (1985), and Barungin: Smell the Wind (1988). Several of the playwrights whose work I shall examine in chapter three are examples of more "mainstream" attention to Australian diversity. For a detailed discussion of these trends, see the revised edition of Dennis Carroll's Australian Contemporary Drama (1995).
Contemporary Drama 346). Carroll claims there is a new sense amongst many Australians that until this shameful history is acknowledged, a truly Australian identity will not develop (Australian Contemporary Drama 346).¹⁹

These trends are reflected in several of the plays under consideration in chapter three. David Malouf's Blood Relations, for example, considers the positions of non-British immigrants, Aborigines, homosexuals, and women in Australia, while Dorothy Hewett's The Man From Mukanupin explores the liminal position of the half-white, half-Aboriginal woman. Nevertheless, as Margaret Williams notes, there has been a polarization in Australian theatre between followers of the politicized local diversity trend and "those who see theatre in less localized terms" ("Australia" 65). Ironically, David Williamson—whose nationalistic plays helped to mythologize the Australian ocker stereotype in the 1970s—seems to argue for a universalist or internationalist position for Australian theatre in his 1995 play, Dead White Males.

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¹⁹ In the next chapter we shall see this sense reflected in Hewett and Malouf's explorations of Australian identity, which make the acknowledgement of injustice to Aborigines key to the exploratory process.
Chapter Three

The Tempest Transported: Re-visioning Shakespeare, Re-visioning the Aussie Settler-invader

I. Dorothy Hewett’s The Man From Mulinupin (1978)

Hewett’s play was commissioned in 1978 for the 1979 sesquicentennial of the founding of the state of Western Australia. Such a commission reflects two old Australian traditions: state pride and the tendency to interpret white colonial history as the glorious settlement and civilizing of empty lands, not as the invasion of Aboriginal territory. It also reflects the cultural nationalism of the 1970s theatre scene, which was interested in representing Australian life on stage. With such origins Hewett’s play could simply have validated and memorialized the British colonial past, while celebrating a particular postcolonial community and showing how far it had come from rough-and-ready colony to sophisticated, theatre-producing culture. However, The Man From Mulinupin eschews unthinking validation and anticipates the feminist and postcolonial historiographic re-visioning trends of the 1980s. The play explores the ambivalence, the dual nature, of the settler-invader position and re-visions the white-washed narrative of official white history. It does so not only by celebrating the

1 Although, as was noted in chapter two, most of the plays of this period offered a rather limited representation of Australian life as monolithically male, white, heterosexual, and Anglo-Celtic.

2 For a discussion of trends in the use of history in Australian drama, see John McCallum’s "The Development of a Sense of History in Contemporary Australian Drama."
settler-invaders’ achievements, but also by revealing the oft-censored history of colonialism’s dark side: the cost (to settler-invaders) of imperial service and the genocidal treatment of the Aborigines.

One way these themes are expressed is through metatheatre. *The Man From Mulinupin* parodies various shifting theatrical and performance styles (musical comedy, recitation, popular burlesque, Shakespeare) and is punctuated with scenes of acting: public ceremonies, touring theatre companies, amateur recitals, even the respectable roles people play in public and the shameful private roles they re-enact in their guilt-troubled sleep. Theatre becomes a metaphor in the play for aspects of colonial history that the community does want to see, remember, and memorialize through public re-staging, and those darker aspects that it would rather hide from view. As part of the metatheatrical activity, Shakespeare is transcontextualized to a Western Australian environment in a diversity of forms: an underlying, postcolonially-inflected *Tempest* paradigm; passing allusions to *Macbeth, Hamlet*, and the conventions of Shakespearean comedy; and a troop of touring Shakespearean players who enact "highlights" of *Othello*. These Shakespearean artifacts are refunctioned in various ways to help re-vision traditional ideas of settler-invader history and identity, both to celebrate and critique them.

**The Daylight World: An Irony-tinged Celebration of Colonial History and Identity**

Hewett sets her play in the fictional, but "typical West Australian wheatbelt
town" (4) of Mukinupin and recounts the lives of the town’s first generation of settler-invaders from 1912 to 1920. On one level, the play appears to offer the nostalgic memorial to white Western Australian history expected in an anniversary commission: it presents that history in the stereotypical forms (setting, time, character types) familiar to Australian audiences from the dominant regional and national mythologies. Hewett's setting clearly evokes a period Western Australian town "east of the rabbit proof fence": small, dusty, and isolated, with the forbidding Outback always looming on the edges of its civilization. As noted earlier, the time 1912-20 was a key period in Australia’s national mythology, covering the development from colonial "innocence," through the crucible of World War One, to "mature" nationhood. The narratives of national and regional history are expressed through the play’s individual characters, many of whom are recognizable folk types: Eek Perkins is the pioneering settlement founder and local shopkeeper; Polly Perkins is his daughter and the naïve village belle; Jack Tuesday is not only her sweetheart, but also a grocer’s boy, then a J.C. Williamson chorus boy, and a World War One "digger"; Harry Tuesday is Jack’s wilder twin brother, part bushranger, part trouble-making larrikan, and later a shell-shocked war hero; Touch of the Tar is the town’s outcast, half white, half Aborigine.

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3 As we shall see later, Hewett explodes the myth of colonial innocence and is aware of the ironies inherent in a "mature" nationhood arrived at not through the recognition and assertion of Australia's own national concerns, but through identification with the Empire and self-sacrifice to foreign interests.

4 These characters combine more generalized small town types, like the village beauty, with specifically Australian ones, like the "digger" or "larrikan."
Hewett uses particular styles of theatre and performance popular in Australia’s cultural history to complement the celebratory history of settlement. One major style used to represent the narrative movement from innocent colony to national maturity is romantic musical comedy. The optimistic “happy ending” tone of the genre is appropriate for celebratory purposes, but the genre’s basic plot fits the mytho-historical storyline too. In Man From Mukinupin, the development of the colony is represented on the character level by the lives of the young lovers, Polly and Jack, who move from naïve love, through obstacles (parental disapproval, rival suitors, separation by war) to “adult” love expressed through marriage. Reinforcing the connection with Australian history, many of the songs sung are about Australian life and landscape—either traditional Australian folk songs, or songs written by Hewett.5

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5 See, for example, the songs "An 'Am, An Egg and An Onion" (31-32, a traditional song), "Harry Tuesday’s Song" (52-53, about his convict experiences, based on the traditional song "Jim Jones"), "New Holland Song" (61-62, indebted to Australian writer Randolph Stow’s novel Tourmaline), "Flash Jack of Mukinupin" (71, a parody of the folk song "Flash Jack From Gundagai"), "I wanta go home . . ." (90, a diggers’ song from World War One), "Touch of the Tar's Song" (102-03, indebted to the traditional folk song "Old Black Alice"). The published sesquicentennial edition of The Man From Mukinupin contains notes (121-22) identifying the origins of all of these songs, as well as the play’s literary allusions to lesser known poems by Tennyson, Browning, and some Australian writers. The page and line numbers where the songs and allusions appear in the play are noted. Interestingly, the editor (or playwright) does not provide a similarly comprehensive list of Shakespearean borrowings. He/she assumes Shakespeare is so well known by audiences that they will have recognized him without such help: “Besides the Montebellos’ travesty . . . the reader will have recognised Lady Macbeth behind Edie’s sleep-walking scene and the marriage ceremony of Miranda and Ferdinand from The Tempest in the ‘wedding’ of Lily and Harry. . . . Below are the sources of other quotations and pastiches which may be less easily identifiable” (121). Ironically, while Shakespeare is assumed to need no explanation, more than half of the allusions that the author/editor fears the Australian reader will miss are to Australian works. Is this another example of the dominance of the British canon over the postcolonial
However, even this celebratory mode is not without irony. Romantic comedy is often viewed as a highly artificial, unrealistic, escapist genre; to conflate official history with this form is to hint that there may be something highly artificial, unrealistic, and escapist about the official story too. This irony expands into full-blown critique in the nighttime world of the play, which I shall discuss shortly.

Another form of performance used at the play's celebratory level is the public recitation of poems and ballads, most often performed for the townsfolk by the deaf Edie Perkins, who is Eek's wife and Polly's mother. Most of the works represent the dual British/Australian identity of the settler-invaders. Some poems are by canonical British poets taught in postcolonial schools, like Robert Browning (8) and Tennyson (17, 43); others are works memorializing Australian settler-invader history, particularly the common theme of the harsh struggle for survival faced by the early white settler-invaders.6

A third area of popular culture in early white Australia is evoked by the Hummer sisters. Clemmy Hummer is a former circus performer and her sister, Clarry Hummer, is a former costumier for the "Firm"—the J.C. Williamson company that dominated the actual Australian theatre scene for decades. The sisters reminisce about the kinds of popular professional entertainment firms like Williamson's provided: tours of foreign stars like Sarah Bernhardt, spectacles (high wire acrobatics, a "cat, rat

6 For example, Edie recites parts of Henry Lawson's "The Roaring Days" (21), an anonymous Western Australian anthem (43), and Will Ogilvie's "The Australian" (65).
and canary” act, freak shows), musicals, pantomimes, and so forth (19-20).

The fourth theatrical element employed in the celebration—and the one most pertinent to this discussion—is Shakespeare. He is evoked in the form of Max and Mercy Montebello, travelling actors who bring "high culture" to the colonies by playing the sexier and more violent highlights from Shakespeare’s plays.7 The Montebellos create much excitement in culturally isolated Mukinupin when they come into town to perform "The Strangling of Desdemona" (22-30). Through the Montebellos, and the townsfolks’ reaction to them, Hewett parodies early Australian theatre history, both celebrating it and poking affectionate fun at it. Max and Mercy represent her theatrical predecessors and the competitors of homegrown Australian drama: the commercial touring companies from Britain and America that firms like Williamson’s imported, and which dominated serious Australian theatre until well after World War One. The Montebellos’ absurd version of Othello—which reduces the complex tragedy to violent sensationalism—parodies the diet of mostly English and American melodramas, farces, and popular classics that the touring companies offered. Hewett also evokes stereotypes about culturally unsophisticated colonial audiences. Watching Max perform Othello’s strangling of Desdemona, naïve Jack Tuesday confuses art with reality and, thinking the actress is in real danger, leaps onto the

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7 The J.C. Williamson company was concerned mostly with lighter theatrical fare, but did put on grand opera, ballet, or a Shakespeare play for "occasional prestige seasons" (Love 57).
stage to attack "Othello" (29).*

How does a portrayal of early Australian theatre culture as comically unsophisticated and dominated by the imperial theatre centres of London and New York help celebrate the community? In part it works because there is nevertheless something appealing about the characters' cultural naïveté: it is part of the mythical innocence of the period, and what the Mukkanupin audience lacks in sophistication, it makes up for in sheer involvement in, and enthusiasm for, performance. More importantly, such a portrayal invites Hewett's own modern Western Australian audience to engage in communal self-congratulation. From the vantage point of 1979 (post-AETT and just after the boom in alternative, nationalistic homegrown theatre), Hewett's audience can recognize the parody of their earlier society and congratulate themselves that they have become more culturally sophisticated than their colonial predecessors. They can recognize and laugh at the poor quality Shakespeare production and at Jack's naïve colonial response to theatre. In the process of watching Hewett's very Australian play, they can be aware that they no longer depend solely on foreign imports, but write, produce, and act in their own plays too. As parody often does, it emphasizes critical distance and difference: here the distance of the modern

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* Later, as he begins to understand theatre a little better, Jack becomes stage-struck and runs away to join the J.C. Williamson company as a performer himself. That he has no choice but to leave home in order to become an actor is emphasized by Mercy who, with evident disdain for the state of the arts in colonial outposts, notes: "You could hardly make a career in the Mukkanupin Town Hall (She shudders. . . .)" (75). Here Hewett evokes a problem that existed for much of Australia's theatre history: as we have seen, talented Australians had to leave home to receive training and career opportunities in the arts.
audience from its colonial predecessor, and the difference between the colonial theatre and its modern, more Australia-oriented descendant.

Shakespeare’s role here is as a benchmark for the community’s cultural development—not surprising given his imperial and canonical history. But he is a benchmark that can be used to measure development in different ways. On the one hand, Hewett’s play suggests that, because Australian theatre has grown beyond simply importing the national poet of another country to produce its own drama, it is no longer colonial. And the comic way in which Shakespeare is used links Hewett’s play with a 1970s trend in Australian alternative theatres such as the Nimrod: producing Shakespeare’s tragedies, but in comically irreverent ways. And yet, on the other hand, Hewett’s play-within-a-play still recognizes and reinscribes much of Shakespeare’s status. A great deal of the humour of the "Strangling of Desdemona" scene comes from the real audience’s recognition that the Montebellos are not doing Shakespeare "properly" and that the Mukinupin audience is not responding "properly" to him—something that their very recognition of the "problem" implies the modern Australians know how to do. Knowing how to approach Shakespeare "correctly" is, for many, still a key litmus test of cultural sophistication. The British "Bard" may not be the only playwright, but he still looms as a universal standard.

The Night World: The Negative Aspects of Colonialism Exposed on Stage

If one version of Australian settler-invader history is celebrated publicly in
poetry, theatre, and song, another less welcome version keeps intruding onto the stage and into the public consciousness of both the characters and Hewett’s audience.

Underlying the respectable daylight world in which the Mukinupin settlement matures is literally a night world in which the dark side of settler-invader identity and colonialism—the side that the Mukinupinites want to forget—finds expression in guilt-racked nightmares and Doppelgänger characters. Through the night world, Hewett forces her sesquicentennial Australian audience into a recognition of another side of their history: genocide, rape, and the insanity of war.

To begin with war, Hewett takes the sanctified Gallipoli myth, in which national pride is associated with military sacrifice for the British Empire, and undercuts it with bitter irony. For instance, as Jack Tuesday goes off to war, the Mukinupinites sing a "patriotic" song ostensibly celebrating Jack’s service to the Empire. However, the song is really more of a parody of colonial patriotism than a real celebratory song.

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU IN THE TRENCHES

ALL: (except JACK)

Your country needs you in the trenches,
Follow your masters into war,
And if you cop it we’ll remember
You at the Mukinupin Store.

Economic domination
That’s what we’re fighting for,
Join up and save the Empire,
We’ve got to win this war.

You’ll murder them at Wipers.
And at Bathsheba Wells,
Only one more stunt, boys,
And then you'll get a spell.

Face the test of nationhood,
Keep Australia free,
England needs you, Jack, to fight
For me, and me, and me.

EDIE AND POLLY:
Your mothers and your sisters,
Your sweethearts and your wives,
Won't hand you a white feather,
If you'll only look alive.

EEK AND CECIL:
Look alive, for Crissake look alive,
The brasshats are all toffs,
But we've gotta beat the Boch,
ALL: For England Home and Beauty look alive.

Your country needs you in the trenches,
Follow your masters into war
And if you cop it we'll remember
You at the Mukanupin Store.
(42-43)

Lyrics such as "Economic domination/ That's what we're fighting for" suggest a more modern, critical distance from the naïve view of imperial war as a glorious enterprise fought for noble purposes and worth the sacrifice of thousands of young Australian men. The characters seem unaware of the irony, but the audience should not be.

Hewett continues her critique of the ANZAC mythology by having Jack return home from the war deeply disillusioned about the imperial enterprise, while his war hero brother returns a shell-shocked wreck.

Hewett's evocation of critical distance from militaristic pro-Empire ANZAC mythology could be linked to very early criticism of Australia's participation in British
wars (see Rickard, Australia 113, 114), but coming in 1979 it likely reflects both 1970s Australian nationalism and, in particular, the backlash against participation in a more recent imperial war: the highly controversial drafting of young Australians to fight an essentially American war in Vietnam.

However, while Hewett pokes holes in the history of imperial war participation, she saves her most scathing critique for the part of Australian history in which the settler-invaders were the aggressors, not the victims: the rape and genocide of the Aborigines. Gallipoli, for all its ironies, is something settler-invader culture wants to remember and re-enact in public: in the huge war memorials, in films like Gallipoli, and so on. However, the treatment of the Aborigines is a piece of history, Hewett suggests, that the settler-invaders want to remove from the daylight world of public view and to forget. Her corrective is not to enact the rape and genocide directly on stage, but to stage the attempts to forget it and the return, in the night world, of the repressed memories. The experience of the audience at the sesquicentennial play and of the characters becomes parallel as all are forced to remember things they would rather forget. Shakespeare is relevant to this discussion because, if musical comedy and nineteenth-century poetry dominate the celebratory side of the play, Shakespeare dominates in this nightworld of repressed memory and becomes a tool of the social critique.

One of the simplest ways in which Shakespeare is used is in allusions to Macbeth as an easily recognized short-hand for the unavoidable return of the repressed past and guilt— in this case the colonial past and settler-invader guilt. In one night
scene, Mukinupin's night world *Doppelgänger* characters—Touch of the Tar, the spinster Hummer sisters, Zeek Perkins, Harry Tuesday—discuss the past massacre of the local Aborigines by the daylight townsfolk led by Eek Perkins (58-60). While these marginal, outcast characters remember and discuss the massacre, in the rest of the play their "respectable" daylight counterparts, who actually participated in the massacre, do not. Guilt and memory are repressed, only for them to rise from the subconscious in dream. Hewett dramatizes this struggle to repress history through Edie Perkins, who appears in the midst of the night characters' discussion, sleepwalking like Lady Macbeth (58-59). It is immediately evident that, like Shakespeare's character, Edie's unconscious is oppressed by guilty memories of some bloody act she encouraged her husband to commit against innocents:

*(Enter EDIE in long white calico nightgown, sleep-walking and wringing her hands. She circles the stage. CLARRY wakes, startled.)*

Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, don't look so pale.

ZEEK: Where hast thou been, sister. Killing swine?

EDIE: Never again from the night, the night that has taken

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9 The night characters are *Doppelgängers* to ''ordinary'' ''respectable'' people of daylight Mukinupin. Touch of the Tar is literally the dark-skinned counterpart to her naïve half-sister Polly. Zeek Perkins is the mad, outback-loving brother of town businessman Eek Perkins. Harry Tuesday is the rough, bushranging, larrikan brother of Jack. The witch-like spinster Clemmy Hummer straddles both worlds, acting ''respectable'' in town during the day, but at night becoming a witch who participates in strange rituals on the fringes of the town.

10 Edie's deafness may also symbolize her desire to ignore the seamier side of settler-invader history.
Shall ever the tribes return to tell us their tale,
They lie in a sleep, whence none shall ever awaken . . .

*(She washes her hands as she walks.)*

Here's the smell of the blood still.

ZEEK: And all will vanish, stars, gas, dust, planets, moons.

EDIE: Driven to drown in the swamps—but the wind their dirge; the
hunted of the dogs: *(in her ordinary voice)*

and now you're a blackdog and I'm damned, damned.

ZEEK: The large dog Sirius and the little dog, Canis Minor, mark how
they move.

CLEMMY: *(firmly)* Go to bed now, Edie Perkins.

EDIE: To bed, to bed; Come, come, come, come, give me your hand,
Eek Perkins. What's done can't be undone. Their blood is black on our
hands that nothing can purge. *(59)*

From the comments of the night characters and Edie's murmuring we learn it was she
who encouraged Eek to start the massacre, because she was jealous of his sexual
relations with the Aboriginal women. As the modern audience watch Edie re-enact, re-
stage that which must not be memorialized in daylight and in public, they are
reminded both of the despicable side of colonization and of their own desire not to
remember this during the sesquicentennial celebration of founding/colonization. In this
scene, Shakespeare's text itself is not criticized; it functions to emphasize and explain
the process going on in the Australian setting by offering a similar story that the
audience might recognize, and encourages them to draw parallels.

A more complex and substantial use of Shakespeare occurs in the way Hewett makes *The Tempest* a parodic intertextual underpinning to her play and, like Fanon, Césaire, Lamming and other anti-colonialists, re-reads Shakespeare’s play as a paradigm for the colonial history she also wishes to re-read and critique. In order to use *The Tempest* for such purposes, she transcontextualizes it to Australia, where the setting and character relationships between Prospero, Caliban, Miranda, and Ferdinand are transformed to reflect a more specifically Australian postcolonial situation. The relationships in the play are then rewritten from a postcolonial point of view, refashioning the imperial Shakespeare text so that it helps critique the very imperial worldview with which it has been implicated.

Essential to *The Tempest* are its isolated, exotic island setting with the omnipresent sea surrounding it and its unique indigenous inhabitants, who have come into contact with European culture through the invasion of European travellers. Despite its continental size, Australia is also, essentially, a very large island: water-bound, isolated, warm, exotic and first inhabited by people quite different from the Europeans who invaded it. The omnipresence of the sea in *The Tempest* finds its parallel in the Australian tendency to settle in the greatest numbers near the coast and to make holidaying at the beach a national pastime. Mukinupin is also, in its own right, a kind of island—a small town isolated in the middle of a former seabed, now a

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11 Both *The Tempest*'s island and Australia seem exotic to the invading Europeans.
Many characters in Hewett’s play are associated with *Tempest* characters. The settler-invader Eek Perkins is an ambivalent Prospero figure: the colonizing European who, from his point of view, has brought "civilization" to the island, but from a postcolonial point of view, is an invader building a civilization at the expense of the earlier inhabitants. Like Prospero, he has one heir, Polly, a Miranda-ish naïve daughter whose marital future he attempts to control. Jack Tuesday takes on attributes of Ferdinand, another naïve young person and Polly’s first love; like Ferdinand, he must go through various trials to prove his worthiness before he can marry Polly.

Night figures like the Hummer Sisters and Zeek Perkins, who chant and engage in strange rituals, recall *The Tempest*’s spirits and the general atmosphere of magic. However, perhaps the key *Tempest* figure for Hewett’s postcolonial critique is Caliban, affiliated in her play with *Touch of the Tar*, a half-white, half-Aborigine

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12 The play is full of water imagery. Clemmy describes the salt bush plain outside the town as "under the sea" (13). On another occasion, the Mukinupin area is referred to as a sea of scrub (20). Water imagery is most often associated in the play with Zeek Perkins, a water diviner who explores the salt desert searching for water. Describing the land on which Mukinupin sits, Zeek refers to it in terms usually used to describe the ocean: "Water, water, everywhere but not a drop to drink . . . Bad water . . . too much salt in it" (45). Zeek talks in a mad, poetic, yet almost prophetic way about the lost or hidden water’s regenerative, cleansing powers (e.g., 45, 46, 104). From the point of view of the postcolonial critique of the community's settler-invader history, the area is in need of cleansing and regeneration.

13 Although these characters are settler-invaders, not original inhabitants of the place as *The Tempest*’s spirits are.
outcast both despised and feared by the settler-invaders. The equations between Tar/Caliban, Perkins/Prospero, and so forth, are not perfect, but, as in any parody, perfect resemblance is not the point; what is required is sufficient resemblance for the audience to recognize the parodied text and the aspects of it that are to be scrutinized. And again, as in any parody, what is often of most interest are not the similarities between the new text and the parodied text, but the differences that encode the new author’s point of view.

Tar/Caliban is key to Hewett’s postcolonial re-visioning of The Tempest and Australian settler-invader history. The presence of Tar’s dark-skinned body on the public stage becomes a powerful visual reminder of the dark side of colonialism that the settler-invaders want to forget. Like Caliban, she is living proof that the imperial myth of the island as empty space for the European’s taking is a lie; she reminds all that the land was the already occupied homeland of others and that white colonization was not just settlement, but also a violent invasion. In particular, Tar’s presence reminds the white “daylight” townsfolk of the massacre they committed, because she is the daughter of the creek-bed Aborigines that were killed (57-58) and has their dark skin—the “touch of the tar” (56). As Clemmy Hunter remembers:

All of them were in it, the whole town, egged on by the wives. And

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14 Tar’s mixed race is the subject of white imperialist fears of miscegenation, and links her (in that kind of racist worldview) with a long history of both productions and illustrations of The Tempest that portray Caliban as monster, half-human, half-something else. Also like Caliban, Tar is outcast from the Perkins/Prospero family and forced to live on the margins of their settlement.
now there's only Touch of the Tar—I mean Lily Perkins—\textsuperscript{14} to remind him. (60)

The second generation of settler-invaders who were too young to participate in the killing, like Jack Tuesday, still feel guilty discomfort in Tar's presence. For example, she frightens Jack by re-telling the story of her massacred kinsfolk, and claiming she can still "... 'ear 'em on the wind" (58).

Tar is also an unwelcome reminder of rape and miscegenation. These themes are found in The Tempest when it is revealed that Caliban was banished from Prospero's house for trying to rape the white virgin, Miranda. In the racist imperialist view, Caliban is the uncivilized savage, the racially different colonial, ruled by lust, who threatens to smear the purity of white women and the white race with miscegenation. However, Hewett reverses this racist propaganda, re-visioning the Tempest rape to effect a postcolonial reversal of the idea of the native "Other" as a sexual threat to the white colonizer. Just as some postcolonial critiques of The Tempest suggest Prospero projects his own rape desires onto Caliban, Hewett indicates that, in settler-invader history, it is the white settler-invaders, not the Aborigines, who are the rapists. Tar is a reminder of the rape and sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white male settler-invaders: Eek Perkins/Prospero exploited the Aboriginal creek-bed women sexually and Tar is the result, his publicly unacknowledged bastard

\textsuperscript{14} Lily Perkins is Tar's official white name. She has another, Aboriginal name, that she refers to, but never reveals (57). "Touch of the Tar" is the nickname given to her by the white settler-invaders, a nickname both derogatory and full of those implied fears of miscegenation.
daughter (54, 56).16

Tar may also be disturbing to the Mukanupin townsfolk because of what Homi Bhabha calls the "mimicry" phenomenon (discussed earlier in chapter one). As Bhabha describes it, mimicry arises when the colonizer attempts to "civilize" the native "Other" by forcing him/her to mimic the colonizer's ways. Prospero and Miranda attempt this with Caliban, teaching him their language. Tar is taken from the remains of her slaughtered Aboriginal kinsfolk, given a European name, educated in European dress, language, and religion by white Catholic nuns, and brought to live in "whitey town" (102). Later, Jack dresses her up like a white woman, specifically Polly, her half-sister (88-89), and she goes off with him to become an actress like the white star, Mercy Montebello. As an actress, Tar will engage in even more mimicry, for an actress imitates or mimics the characters she is playing.

However, even the best method actor never fully is the character—if that were the case, Max Montebello really would kill Desdemona/Mercy when he plays Othello. The actor is, to adapt Bhabha's terms, "almost, but not quite" the character, mimicking him/her closely, but remaining a separate, different being on some key level. While he does not make the connection to theatre, Bhabha describes this "almost, but not quite" quality as key to colonial mimicry. As he points out, although the colonizer pushes the native "Other" to be like him, he emphatically does not want the native "Other" to mimic so well that he/she becomes him. The colonizing

16 As Harry recounts: "They reckon she was fathered by Eek Perkins. She's a boong-basher's daughter. . . . Yeah. They reckon ol' Eek spent a lotta time down in the creekbed with them gins, before he took up murderin' 'em." (54)
Prospero-type wants the native "Other" to be anglicized, not English. Why? As we have seen, if the colonized native "Other" becomes everything that the colonizer is, there is no longer any separation between the two, and, therefore, there is no longer any justification for the white settler-invader to have special privileges and to rule over the native. The native "Other" can become competition. Thus, while mimicry is encouraged, even forced, the more successfully the "Other" mimics the white colonizer, the more threatening he/she becomes. Caliban uses his knowledge of Prospero's language and habits, and his understanding of European social hierarchy, to engage Trinculo and Stephano in a coup plot to take Prospero's position as ruler of the island.

Tar is perceived as a similar threat, all the more so because in addition to her mimicry she is half-white, Perkins' daughter and the privileged Polly's half-sister. Literally almost white, her threat as native woman is perceived as a sexual one: the white women fear her as the traditional "other woman" competition for the white man's affection. Indeed, Tar does succeed twice in temporarily luring Jack Tuesday (Ferdinand) away from Polly (Miranda): first, when he spends his last night in Mokinupin with Tar before going off to war and, second, when he takes her with him when he runs off to become an actor.

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17 Caliban is frightening to Prospero in his "almost but not quite" quality. He is too "Other" to be an acceptable suitor to Miranda, but human enough to be able to rape her.

18 This is a different kind of sexual threat from the one posed by Caliban. It reflects Tar's position as female: seductress, rather than rapist.
Tar's "threat" to the sanctity of colonial subject positions is perceived particularly acutely when Jack takes her to the Perkins' store to outfit her in nice clothes before leaving town. Edie is upset to see Tar treated like an equal to Polly by her daughter's former suitor and at first refuses to serve a black woman (88)--insisting on distinctions between herself as white woman and Tar as "inferior" black woman. However, Jack just increases the tension by demanding that Edie serve them and insisting in particular that she sell them "... somethin' like--somethin' like Polly'd wear" (88). Jack's insistence on breaking down the distinction between Tar and Polly deeply disturbs Edie. She responds faintly to his request by repeating it with disbelief: "Polly would wear?" (88). She sobs (89) after they leave and continues to harp on the issue later, alternately insisting on the difference between the Aborigines and whites and criticizing her husband for breaking down the barrier between white and black in the first place through sexual congress:

EDIE: I was a refined and cultured woman, Mr Perkins, before you brought me to this sink of Sodom. (Silence.) Dressing up a black gin to look like our Polly . . . I never speak, I cannot speak of these matters, without I . . . choke with emotion . . . Lowest creatures on God's earth. They're all only animals . . . animals . . . Well, I hope she's gone for good, that's all. I hope she's gone for good. (Pause.) Because I tell you, Eek Perkins, I've never been so humiliated--serving your bastard. (Eek drops his paper and stares at her. There is a long pause.

19 "Almost, but not quite. . . ," once again.
He picks it up again.) (89-91)

The strength of Edie's perturbation over Tar's competition with Polly likely reflects her own past jealousy of Eek's relations with Aboriginal women--a jealousy we are told that led her to spark the massacre (60). Interestingly, this is virtually the only time in the play that Edie talks consciously about the usually suppressed past, and then only when she feels the barriers have already been breached. Eek, significantly, pretends to ignore her comments, responding only with silence or irrelevant titbits of local news. He still hides from the past.

Because the settler-invaders do not want to be reminded by her presence of the negative and threatening aspects of colonialism that they wish to forget, Tar is marginalized, both socially and physically--a feminized Caliban. She is denigrated as "the town slut, the town joke" (105) and forced to live on the borderline between town settlement and the bush (the land to which the Aborigines are relegated), just as she exists on the border between white and black.20 Her mimicry--particularly her decision to become an actress--is her attempt to end the marginalization and gain public, societal recognition and acceptance. However, mimicry by its "almost, but not quite" nature makes this impossible; she cannot belong to either the lost black society or the dominant white one. Her acting adventure fails; as Mercy tellingly puts it: "I'm afraid she just . . . didn't fit in" (113). Tar returns to the borderlands of Mukanupin, but as she explains to Harry Tuesday: "I come home ter die. (Pause.) But I ain't got

20 Caliban, too, is forced to live on the borderline between Prospero's home and the bush, reflecting his status as part human, part "monster."
no home" (101). The question Hewett’s Caliban faces is where can she belong, where can she make a home with her liminal identity in postcolonial society?

It is this question that points to an important difference between Hewett’s settler-invader colony Tempest and both Shakespeare’s and black writers’ Tempests. Caliban in Shakespeare’s Tempest can be hopeful, since, even though Prospero defeats his coup attempt, Prospero is leaving the island. Caliban will re-possess it. The Caribbean and African authors who re-wrote The Tempest could take similar comfort: the British overlords did eventually leave. But Tar/Caliban is in a settler-invader colony and the invaders are there to stay. In this way, Hewett raises the issue: can Prospero and Caliban co-exist in anything other than the old colonial paradigm? Can there be recognition and reconciliation of some sort?

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that what comes out most strongly towards the end of the play is a sense of a need for communal recognition and healing reconciliation—something that (in conservative interpretations) happens at the end of The Tempest between Prospero, his brother, the King of Naples and their followers, and that is cemented by the marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand, the King of Naples’ son. In Hewett’s play, recognition and healing reconciliation are also represented by marriage: the staple of both highbrow Shakespearean romance and lowbrow romantic musical comedy.

The first marriage involves Tar. Towards the end of the play, Tar demands and receives at least some recognition of her personhood and human connection with white society from her long-time lover, Harry Tuesday. When they meet after long
separation, Tar immediately and persistently insists that he call her no longer by the racist nickname "Tar," but by her white name: Lily Perkins (100, 101, 102, 103). Harry resists at first, but after Tar/Lily attempts suicide, he relents, admits the name is hers and appropriate, and begins to correct anyone who does not call her Lily (105). At this point, the squabbling lovers are reconciled, and Harry decides to formally acknowledge his connection with Lily by marrying her. Interestingly, the words used in the ceremony to marry the lovers come not from the King James Bible or the Church of England Prayer Book, but from Shakespeare's The Tempest (107-08). Using Shakespeare in place of the Bible, or another religious text, ironically highlights Shakespeare's canonical status in colonial society. The Tempest is cannibalized for the wedding masque scene (4.1.60-138), which is recontextualized to Australia and ironically used to celebrate the traditional marriage not of an innocent Miranda and Ferdinand, but of their Doppelgängers, a female Caliban and Ferdinand's darker side—as again Shakespeare's lines are refunctioned for purposes opposite to what he might have intended.

ZEEK: Rain's easin', cloud's passin'. And now the moon like to a silver bow, new bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our

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21 The association of Lily with "lily white" affirms Tar's blood link with the Mukinupin society that has denied all human connection with her. Another, more radical, choice would have been for Tar to insist on the use of her Aboriginal name, to assert that aspect of her identity. But perhaps, as part of her reconciliation theme, Hewett was trying to emphasize similarity here, not difference; one senses an attempt to force the white characters, like her white audience, to stop "Othering" Tar/Lily/Caliban so much and to recognize their common humanity.
solemnities.\textsuperscript{22} Go . . . bring the rabble. [. . . HARRY and TOUCH
OF THE TAR kneel before ZEEK. There is the sound of a tapping stick
and the weird night music begins, interrupted by the tapping sounds and
the faint bullroarer.]

Highest Queen of State, Great Clemmy comes. I know her by her
gait.\textsuperscript{23}

[Enter CLEMMY . . . ]

CLEMMY: Why has thou, Zeek, summoned me hither to
this short grass’d green?

ZEEK: How does my bounteous sister? Go with me
To bless this twain, that they may prosperous be,
And honour’d in their issue.

CLEMMY: This is a most majestic vision, and
Harmonious charmingly.\textsuperscript{24}

HARRY: For Christ’s sake get on with it.

CLEMMY: Hush, and be mute,

\textsuperscript{22} This one sentence is borrowed not from the wedding masque scene in \textit{The Tempest},
but from \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} (1.1.9-11). It comes, appropriately, from
Hippolyta and Theseus’s discussion of their own impending nuptials.

\textsuperscript{23} Hewett injects some ironic comedy here, for Clemmy’s gait is a crippled limp,
not Juno’s stately, goddess-like glide as in \textit{The Tempest}.

\textsuperscript{24} Here Hewett has assigned Ferdinand’s line to Clemmy, and moved it up before
Ceres’/Clemmy’s song. Clemmy gets lines from most of the parts in the appropriated
masque: Juno, Ceres, Ferdinand, even Prospero.
Or else our spell is marr'd.

ZEEK: Look down ye gods and on this couple drop
A blessed crown, quiet days, fair issue and long life.
Give me your hands, and by the merry rite of spring
I charge you lovers you are eternally knit. [ZEEK moves off to gaze in
his telescope as HARRY and TOUCH OF THE TAR rise and embrace.
The music becomes more insistent . . . The FLASHER' and CLEMEMY
form an arch of gum leaves.25 HARRY and TOUCH OF THE TAR
dance under the arch as CLEMMY and the FLASHER sing . . .]

THE MARRIAGE SONG

CLEMMY: Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,

FLASHER: Long continuance and increasing,

ALL: Hourly joys be still upon you
As we sing our blessings on you.
Earth's increase and harvests plenty,
barns and cradles26 never empty;
vines with clustr'ing branches growing.
wheat with goodly burden bowing.

25 The gum leaves are another example of the very Australian touches Hewett
infuses into the scene.

26 Hewett has substituted "harvests" and "cradles" for the "foison" and "garners"--archaic Elizabethan words that would be beyond the ken of a modern Australian audience.
Spring come to you from the farthest,
In the very end of harvest!
Scarcity and want shall shun you.
All our blessings now are on you. (107-08)

Zeek also quotes bits from A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet. For example, he paraphrases Polonius' comment on the tragedians' play and applies it to Shakespeare: "Will Shakespeare: merry, tragical, tedious and brief" (107). This makes for an interesting kind of intertextual experience in which text is used to comment on itself. Shakespeare's little parody of the hack players of his day is turned back on himself by the colonial writer. Yet, for all its ironies, what dominates Hewett's wedding scene is an obvious respect for the so-called "universal" qualities of Shakespeare: beautiful poetry, and the elegant expression of "timeless" themes of healing, union, and love.

This first marriage is followed by a rapid series of similar reconciliations and double marriages amongst the daylight characters--Polly/Miranda to Jack/Ferdinand and Mercy to Polly's rejected suitor, Cecil the salesman. The marriages end with a typical Shakespearean comedy circular "dance of harmony"--similar also to a romantic musical comedy "grand finale"--reinforcing the reconciliation theme.

However, Hewett's play suggests full reconciliation and integration within the Australian landscape exist more in the desire than in an achieved reality.²⁷ Only the

²⁷ Depending upon how one interprets act 5, scene 1, the reconciliations in Shakespeare's Tempest can be questioned too. Alonso begs Prospero's pardon (5.1.118-19), but Antonio remains silent on the subject.
marginal night people attend Tar/Lily's wedding ceremony; the daylight settler-invader characters of Mukinupin are not involved in celebrating or recognizing the union between black/native colonized and their less reputable white/settler-invader compatriot. At the end, Lily and Harry are reported to have left town and "gone bush" into the unconquered Outback, while the "respectable" citizens remain isolated in their town. The two worlds remain separate and no official apology is offered by the settler-invaders for their participation in violent acts of colonization. In addition, the reconciliation value of the "respectable" citizens’ marriages is put in question by their farcical speed and comic repetition of each other. Can all the dark disillusionment be swept back under the carpet in a "happy ending" so obviously, self-consciously artificial it cannot help but be ironic? While Shakespeare's *The Tempest* allows the settler-invader Miranda and Ferdinand to retain their naïveté, despite attempted rapes and coups and tales of brotherly deception, Hewett's postcolonial project requires that they be disillusioned about their island/musical comedy existence, just as the playwright requires an awakening on the part of her sesquicentennial audience.

By gesturing towards reconciliation in her play, Hewett seems to recognize a need and desire for it in postcolonial Australian society, but by leaving the play's reconciliations incomplete and questionable, she seems to suggest that the real work of reconciliation still remains to be done, presumably by her audience.

The complex range of uses of Shakespeare here—from parodic critique to ironized respect—reflects the ambivalence inherent in the settler-invader situation.
Shakespeare is transcontextualized to Australia and parodied as a means of critiquing the side of colonial history that implicates Australian settler-invaders in imperialism and violence. In Hewett's use of *The Tempest* in particular, Shakespeare's text is read as an ideological precursor or even paradigm of the violent, imperialist attitude and parodied in order to force the audience to see that paradigm from a different, questioning perspective—with critical distance. At the same time, as was discussed in chapter one, for all that a settler-invader society may need to critique its colonial past, it cannot throw out the past tradition entirely and create a culture either in a vacuum or by appropriating the culture of the indigenous peoples. Some continuity—however scrutinized—must be maintained. Here, the ironized respect comes into play. There is ironized respect for Mokinupin's war effort, for early Australian theatre, and for Shakespeare—a prime representative of both British imperial tradition and theatrical tradition. For as Hutcheon suggests, while parody can critique, it does not obliterate that which it critiques; parody is always authorized transgression with an element of reinscription. As such, parody provides continuity with that which is parodied.

Hewett's parodies of Shakespeare provide continuity with what is best about the imperial and theatrical traditions, while allowing for postcolonial difference and critical distance from them. The reconciliation sought in her play is not only the reconciliation of the settler-invader with the Aboriginal peoples he/she has wronged, but a reconciliation with an imperial/cultural past about which he/she has ambivalent

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28 This may explain why Hewett does not posit a full scale adoption of Tar/Lily's Aboriginal heritage as the solution to her problems of identity and community.
feelings.

II. David Malouf's *Blood Relations* (1987)

Malouf's *Blood Relations* is another play that redeploy*ss* Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in order to reflect on and criticize postcolonial Australia. While it was not commissioned specifically for an anniversary of settlement like Hewett's play, it was written in the lead-up to the 1988 bicentennial of the founding of the first European colony on Australia. This national anniversary aroused controversy: many Aboriginal groups and other concerned Australians protested a "celebration" they feared would whitewash the less savory aspects of Australian settlement/invasion.29 The bicentennial inspired many artistic reconsiderations of Australia's colonial past and its aftermath—including plays such as Stephen Sewell's *Hate* and Michael Gow's *1841* (Gilbert and Tompkins 114), and art works such as Victor Burgin's untitled piece on changes in Australia between 1788 and 1988.30 Malouf's play, while produced a year earlier, fits in with this trend. Helen Gilbert has performed a detailed analysis of the ways in which *Blood Relations* acts counter-discursively to the oppressive imperial

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29 As Dennis Carroll notes, some Aborigines chose not to participate in the bicentennial at all, while others chose active resistance. For example, in the largest protest march in Australia since the anti-Vietnam war movement twenty years earlier, between twenty and forty thousand Australians marched on 26 January 1988 to protest the treatment of Aborigines (*Australian Contemporary Drama* 347).

30 Burgin's piece consists of two maps of Australia: one a black continent on a white background (1788), and the other a white continent on a black background (1988).
paradigms of *The Tempest* as they apply to Australia;31 for this reason, I shall not discuss it here in as much detail as I did for *The Man From Mullinupin*. However, because *Blood Relations* belongs to the critical side of the Australian dialectic with Shakespeare and Empire, and because it contains interesting similarities in approach to Hewett’s drama, it bears examination.

As in Hewett’s play, *The Tempest* is evoked and parodied in *Blood Relations* as a well-known paradigm of colonialism in order to make the audience aware of postcolonial issues at work within the society shown on stage. The parody encourages the audience to see not only Shakespeare, but colonialism and its aftermath, with greater critical distance. Since Malouf, like Hewett, wants to examine and critique Australian postcolonial society, he too transcontextualizes *The Tempest* to an Australian setting and equates his modern Australian characters with *Tempest* counterparts.

This equation of characters is key to the play. As Gilbert notes, Malouf uses this technique to explore and interrogate the complicated, ambivalent, and multiple subject positions people can hold in the former colony of Australia ("The Boomerang Effect" 52-57). The play’s first director, Jim Sharman, writes that the work "shares common ground with a growing tradition in Australian drama . . . that makes use of classic, epic and poetic forms to investigate, to confront, and to reveal, the true nature of our lives" (qtd. in Akerholt 10). In particular, *Blood Relations* is interested in the

31 See Gilbert’s “The Boomerang Effect: Canonical Counter-discourse and David Malouf’s *Blood Relations* as an Oppositional Reworking of *The Tempest*.”
complexity of the settler-invader-immigrant’s subject position in postcolonial Australia; this multiple subject position is represented primarily by the main character, Willy.

Willy, like Eek Perkins, is a macho white Australian settler-invader figure and patriarch, associated most obviously with The Tempest’s Prospero. Like Prospero, Willy once ruled his own mini-empire (Australianized from a Milanese dukedom into a modern mining empire), but is now isolated with the remains of his family at an exotic hideaway spot he has "civilized." Like Prospero (and Eek), he has a dark and mysterious past that he keeps from his one biological child, a naïve, sheltered daughter (Cathy), whom he subordinates and tries to control in patriarchal fashion. Part of the past includes the usurpation of an empire and betrayal involving a brother Antonio figure—his "mate" and former business partner, Frank. However, in Malouf’s version it is Willy/Prospero who initiates the betrayals, cheating Frank of his share of their mining empire. Later, Frank betrays Willy sexually by stealing his wife,

32 Mining, like sheep and cattle raising, is a key industry in the history of Australia’s colonization. It also has special postcolonial resonances, being associated with the imperialist’s "rape" of the land (and its people).

33 This time Prospero’s island is a beach house that Willy has built on the tropical coast of North Western Australia (16). The property is quite isolated, surrounded by sea and desert and prone to storms (72).

34 Cathy is clearly a Miranda figure, like Polly Perkins. However, in Malouf’s 1980s formulation she becomes a more overtly feminist character. Cathy rebels against Willy’s attempts to control her: she plans to leave their isolated house and, against her father’s wishes, takes Edward, a disreputable Ferdinand figure, as her lover (76). Edward is the son of Frank, Willy’s former friend and rival.

35 The importance of "mateship" male-bonding in Australian society makes it a useful Australian equivalent for Prospero and Antonio’s brotherly bond.
Thus, as Gilbert points out ("The Boomerang Effect" 53), Malouf quickly fractures and contaminates Shakespeare's character types, making the colonizing Prospero not just a victim, but also an Antonio implicated in guilt.

Also key to the play's exploration of Australian subject positions is Caliban, the colonized native "Other," represented by a young man named Dinny. As in The Man From Mukinupin, this Australian Caliban is re-visioned not as a threat to the settler-invader/Prospero's civilizing mission, but as its victim. Dinny/Caliban is not only identified with Australia's colonized Aborigines, but in particular with their modern-day descendants who have been "hybridized" by white culture.36 Dinny, like Hewett's Tar, is a half-breed and Willy/Prospero's bastard child, the product of the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white men. As Prospero taught Caliban his language and Tar was taught by nuns, so Willy "civilized" Dinny by sending him to a white school (66). There Dinny was inculcated with English language and culture—ironically, in part by a school production of The Tempest, in which he acted the part of Caliban (64-65). His role as actor in the play mirrored his role as Aboriginal youth acting like the privileged white students, yet still considered

36 Most Australian productions of Shakespeare's The Tempest have not played Caliban as an Aborigine—ignoring what one might think was an obvious parallel. One rare exception is Neil Armfield's 1995 production of The Tempest at the Belvoir Theatre, Sydney, which featured an Aboriginal actor as Caliban (Gay, personal interview). One could speculate about the rarity of Aboriginal Calibans in Australian theatre: does it reflect a desire to avoid the grimmer, guilt-producing side of Australia's settlement history?
"Other." Dinny has been a colonial mimic man.37

Like that of Caliban and Tar, Dinny's mimicry of white ways does not gain him real acceptance by his father or white society. Nor, with mixed blood and a white education, can he fit in easily with his Aboriginal relatives, despite his desire to reject his white colonial heritage and reclaim his native one (66-67).38 Like Tar, he is marginalized to the liminal space between white house and Aboriginal bush. Perhaps because Malouf wrote and set the play in the late 1980s, when Aboriginal rights issues were in the news, Dinny is presented as more politically aware than Tar. Dinny actively criticizes Willy (and by extension, other white settler-invaders) for making him an outcast in his own land, for "othering" him, for making it impossible for him to belong anywhere (66-67). Like Caliban, he turns the language he has been taught against his teacher, reciting Caliban's critique of Prospero to Willy just before he outlines his own mistreatment at Willy's hands:

DINNY:  . . . I was in a play, but. At boarding school. . . . 'This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother . . .'

HILDA:  [Suddenly starting up] What's the matter? Dinny?

37 Blood Relations also contains other, less key Tempest figures. There are two Ariels, representing the male and female sides of this androgynous character. One is Hilda the housekeeper, a former opera star and circus performer whom Willy saved from a life of misery. The second is Kit, her gay son, also a performer; Willy adopted him, but now repudiates him. Like Ariel, these characters are both privileged and oppressed by their Prospero. A Stephano and Trinculo comic relief duo are represented by McClucky and Dash, two investigative journalists out to uncover the truth about Willy's identity and his mysterious past.

38 In contrast, Césaire's Caribbean Caliban confidently draws on his African heritage—calling on gods like Eshu—when he wishes to rebel against Prospero.
DINNY: 'Which thou takst from me.' . . .

When thou camst first

Thou strokest me and made much of me;

would give me . . .

[He takes up the tequila bottle but does not drink.]

. . . Water with berries in it; and teach me how

To name the bigger light, and how the less,

That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee

And showed thee all the qualities of the isle,

The fresh springs, brine pits, barren places and fertile.

Cursed be I that did so. All the charms

Of Sycorax—toads, beetles, bats light on you.

[He swigs from the bottle.]

For I am all the subjects that you have,

That first was my own king; and here you sty me

In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me

The rest of the island.

[He finds himself standing directly opposite Willy. He looks hard at

him, then takes a long swig from the bottle, hisses and wipes his mouth

with the back of his hand.] (64-65)

Thus, Shakespeare’s own words are ironically recontextualized to form a counter-
discourse.  

_Blood Relations_ also resembles _The Man From Mukinupin_ in its use of other, more overt forms of metatheatre as a way of exploring Australian subjectivity. Characters put on performances: for example, Hilda sings and juggles (24, 35) and Kit puts on a costume play (62-63). Even more importantly, characters act out various life roles. The investigative reporters, McClucky and Dash, pretend to be a married couple lost on holiday. Hilda plays nurse, cook, opera star, and circus performer. Of particular relevance are Willy's roles. As the play progresses it is revealed that he has taken on completely different Australian identities during his life. He was born Spiros Kyriakou on a Greek island (19-20) and emigrated to Australia. As such he was a "New Australian," part of the wave of post-war, non-British immigrants, who were not always well-received by "Old Australians" (descendants of earlier, British settler-invaders). Once in Australia, Spiros changed his name to William La Farge, a more ethnically acceptable name, and took up mining, historically a typical Australian settler-invader activity. Later, he decides to escape from the public glare of his role as

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39 This moment is not without its problems. Gilbert points out that Dinny's opposition must be expressed within his oppressor's language, possibly leaving him contained by that which he is trying to escape (61). I shall say more about this problem towards the end of the discussion of this play.

40 Malouf's interest in exploring the experiences of "New Australians" reflects the increased interest in Australian theatre in the 1980s in recognizing and exploring Australia's increasingly multi-, not just bi-, cultural nature. Malouf's interest may also have been personal. Although in many ways Malouf and his family are "Old Australians"--they have lived in Australia for several generations--some of his ancestors were not Anglo-Celtic and, consequently, may have experienced some of the same difficulties as later, post-war immigrants like Spiros. As we shall see, Gow's _Away_ also raises the issue of "New Australians" and their reception.
La Farge, mining magnate, so he changes his name to Willy McGregor (20-21), an even more "Old Australian" name, in order to disappear into anonymity in Australian society. His acting is revealed as acting when two investigative journalists arrive at his beach house and try to confirm his identity and explore his shady past. In the face of this threat, Willy acts the part of an ordinary "ocker" bloke, the Australian "norm," even more fiercely. However, as Willy comes closer to death, his act breaks down. Just as repressed memories return to haunt the settler-invaders in The Man From Mukinupin, the secret thoughts running through Willy’s head begin to be dramatized on stage, and we observe him as he remembers his true history and practises his various Australian settler-invader-immigrant identities.

Willy is an excellent illustration of Joanne Tompkins’ "rehearsal trope" description of settler-invader subjectivity. As described in chapter one, settler-invaders rehearse and reconstruct various identities, which are radically unstable and keep constantly changing. Eventually, multiple identities accrue, creating a hybrid, multivalent identity. What Malouf does in Blood Relations is to take the supposedly natural, monolithic, and unitary settler-invader national identity—Willy MacGregor, white, Anglo-Celtic, Old Australian settler-invader, and Prospero figure—and reveal not only the artificial constructedness of this subject position, but the fact that it is only one part of a more diverse and complex Australian subjectivity. Willy’s carefully accreted roles are stripped away on stage, revealing the many layers: victim,

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41 Again, see her article "'The Story of Rehearsal Never Ends': Rehearsal, Performance, Identity in Settler Culture Drama."
victimizer, new non-British immigrant, old settler-invader, rich, poor. At the same

time, possible Australian identities that Willy has rejected are shown. These are

represented by his two sons: his bastard half-Aboriginal son (Dinny) and his gay

adopted son (Kit). They represent subjectivities excluded from the traditional

Australian stereotype of the macho, white, Anglo-Celtic, male bushman/digger/

larrikan/ocker: Aboriginality and homosexuality.  

The complexity of this Australian postcolonial subjectivity is tied in Malouf's

play to other themes in The Tempest: recognition and reconciliation. In The Tempest,

members of Prospero's fractured family must (re)learn to recognize each others' true

identities, see that they are also members of the same family, and achieve at least

some measure of reconciliation despite past grievances. Similarly, the members of

Willy's dysfunctional family meeting for a Christmas "reunion" learn to acknowledge

each others' true identities, reconcile despite past injuries, and admit their "blood

relations." In particular, it seems important for Willy-as-male-Old-Australian-
patriarch to recognize the other family members and for them to forgive his past

42 The Tempest can be read as suggesting that Prospero engages in a similar

rejection of "unacceptable" aspects of himself, projecting them onto a demonized

"Other," Caliban.

43 For example, the romance's "happy" ending is only achieved when Alonso and

Antonio recognize the magician of the isle as Prospero, reconcile with him (at least to

some degree) over past wrongs they have done him, and see that they are part of the

same family, as new in-laws and/or brothers.

44 For example, over the course of the play Willy ceases to disown Dinny and Kit,

begins to recognize them for who they are (half Aboriginal and gay respectively), and

reaffirms that they are his sons.
injustices. By evoking the colonial roles of the *Tempest* paradigm, and by identifying individual family members with different marginalized groups--Aborigines, gays, women, recent immigrants--Malouf makes the family dramatize the larger struggle of Australia's marginalized to be recognized as integral parts of the postcolonial Australian identity. The old imperialistic and patriarchal definition of Australia as monolithically white, male, heterosexual, and Anglo-Celtic--and the definition of everything else as "foreign," "other," and "marginal"--is challenged by a picture of a deeply hybrid nation that includes the old definition, but no longer privileges it. This challenge links *Blood Relations* with the trend in Australian drama in the 1980s to represent the country as more multicultural and diverse than the "ocker" nation portrayed in the nationalist plays of the 1970s.

Hewett's earlier 1979 play is also concerned with the recognition and reconciliation of dominant and marginalized groups in Australia, but depicts a less multicultural nation; it focuses rather on postcolonialism's British colonizer/native colonized binary. It is also less optimistic in its treatment of these themes than Malouf's play is. Tar achieves only a limited form of recognition and reconciliation within a still white-dominated society. In *Blood Relations*, all the family members are recognized and reconciled. Significantly, this occurs only as Willy/Prospero is dying and begins to recognize not only his past mistakes, but the real limits on his right and ability to control other people's lives. Final reconciliation occurs in the last scene, at his funeral (83-86). The play seems to suggest that Prospero/the colonizer does not give up his magic/imperial powers so much as realize that he never had a right to
them in the first place, and that they are being taken from him whether he likes it or not. Reconciliation amongst the diverse members of Australian society occurs when the "Prosperos" stop trying to rule. It is not clear whether Blood Relations suggests this has already happened, is happening, or that this is how it should happen. Hewett's play suggests that a problem still exists, but offers no specific solution.

Malouf's play also suggests that the characters need not only "inter"-recognition, but "intra"-recognition: that is, they need to see and accept the different aspects of identity within themselves. As Helen Gilbert notes, a key symbolic moment in the play occurs in act two, scene three when Willy, Dinny, and Kit line up tightly together, forming a symbolic tableau ("The Boomerang Effect" 57). Gilbert interprets the tableau to suggest that the aspects of Australian subjectivity that macho white Willy "othered"—the Aboriginal, the gay—become combined in a hybrid postcolonial subjectivity (57). As in Hewett's play, but perhaps even more strongly, there seems to be a suggestion that persons in settler-invader colonies should resolve their identity crises through an acceptance of hybridity, rather than through unsatisfying mimicry—the kind of mimicry Willy practises with his aliases and that Dinny rejects along with his white school.45

The play's breaking down of restrictive colonial roles into more hybrid, ambivalent ones reflective of modern Australian reality is represented formally and metaphorically by Malouf's counter-discursive parody of Shakespeare. The parody of

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45 Likewise, in The Man From Mukinupin Tar's attempt to mimic Polly Perkins and Mercy is also revealed to be an unsatisfactory solution to her identity problems. Her acting career fails too.
characters and power relations highlights both the similarities between the Australian and Shakespearean characters' colonial roles and their differences. In particular, as Gilbert points out, Malouf's "imperfect imitations" of *Tempest* *dramatis personae* fracture the neat boundaries between Shakespeare's characters and contaminate them ("The Boomerang Effect" 52-53) by mixing characters' attributes, having actors double roles in significant ways, and so forth. Malouf even suggests "Blood Relations" between "Prospero," the macho, white, male British colonizer, and those he wishes to think of as "other": new non-British immigrants, Aborigines, and gay men. Through such imperfect imitation, or parody—repetition with difference and critical distance—Malouf creates a counter-discourse to imperial ideology and its simple binary roles of colonizer/colonized, male/female, and normative/marginal. Thus, as in Hewett's play, Shakespeare is both critiqued and subverted insofar as he is associated with negative colonialism, and yet through the distancing and differentiating action of parody, he can be reinscribed in a way that is fruitful and less threatening. The play's deliberately imperfect imitation and its Australianization of Shakespeare

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46 E.g., Willy is both Prospero and Antonio.

47 For example, the actress playing Cathy/Miranda also plays the ghost of Prospero/Willy's wife, Tessa. Cathy/Miranda is the dutiful daughter struggling throughout the play to gain autonomy from her controlling father. Tessa/wife has already gained that autonomy, having left Willy years before for a kinder man. She offers Cathy/Miranda a model, showing that rebellion against Willy/Prospero is possible. As a theatrical technique (Gilbert, "The Boomerang Effect" 53), such role doubling expresses the idea of hybridity in a concrete way that fictional re-visionings of *The Tempest* cannot.

48 Malouf seems to literalize Prospero's line about Caliban: "... this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275-76).
explore and exemplify "the creative potential of cross-cultural contact" and hybridity (Gilbert, "The Boomerang Effect" 52).

*Blood Relations*’ postcolonial re-visioning could be critiqued for its portrayal of Dinny’s Aboriginal rebellion. As I suggested earlier, Dinny’s counter-discursive use of Caliban’s speech is not without its problems. Gilbert warns that despite Malouf’s expressed desire in interviews to "let an Aboriginal voice take control of a major stage," the fact that Dinny’s opposition must be expressed in his oppressor’s English means "language remains a strategy of containment in the play":

Unlike some of the characters in works by Jack Davis and other Aboriginal playwrights, Dinny’s attempts to escape linguistic capture are frustrated by his [or Malouf’s?] lack of access to an authentic Black language, or even a pidgin dialect, that could abrogate the privilege of "English" [and Shakespeare’s English in particular]. ("The Boomerang Effect" 61)

This is very true. Yet, can we expect Malouf, a settler-invader writer, to solve this problem? In today’s political climate we question whether it is possible for someone in his subject position to speak for the Aborigine, to construct an Aboriginal figure who is free and autonomous—not just a settler-invader construction. There is a need for some kind of authentic and liberating Aboriginal representation on stage, but I am not sure that *Blood Relations* is the play, or Malouf the author, to do that. *Blood Relations* focuses on the dominant settler-invader and so it reinscribes the centrality of the figure. Nevertheless, this kind of play is one part of the decolonization process: it
does push for a re-evaluation and critique of the colonizer and canon, which hopefully help to make more space for marginalized groups to express their own voice. And, in a country like Australia where, unlike Africa or India, the invaders are not going to go away, it seems particularly crucial for the postcolonial agenda not only for the colonized to critique the colonizers, but for the colonizers to critique themselves.

Malouf's reworking of *The Tempest* also resembles Hewett's in its concern with rewriting whitewashed settler-invader history. Willy's past is interrogated by the two investigative journalists who attempt to see through his disguises. More importantly, Tessa and Frank, ghost figures from Willy's past, return to challenge his self-serving autobiographical stories (48-50, 56-60). Gilbert links this battle over who controls the writing of history with Prospero's role as artist/director of spectacles, such as the masques and anti-masques that together create a narrative movement from conflict to harmony. Prospero attempts to control the depiction of history and to silence dissenting voices.

In contrast, Willy "finds that his attempts to preserve the myth he has created only reveal his role as illusionist and ultimately undermine his authority over representation itself." And by interrogating Willy's subjectivity, the monolithic imperial history is replaced by a variety of perspectives ("The Boomerang Effect" 62).

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49 I am indebted to Alexander Leggatt for pointing out how different are Prospero's and Caliban's accounts of Prospero's arrival on the island.
III. Michael Gow's *Away* (1986)

Michael Gow’s *Away* also deploys *The Tempest*, along with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *King Lear*, and brief allusions to *Twelfth Night* and *A Winter’s Tale*. As I hope to show, Shakespeare’s function is very different in *Away* than it is in *Blood Relations* or *The Man From Mkinupin*.

*Away* is set in 1967-68, a period in which Australia was losing its “innocence” and undergoing considerable change due to the Vietnam war, American cultural influences, and the increasingly multicultural nature of the population (Webby 54-55). *Away* tells the story of three Australian families, of different economic classes, as they attempt to work through particular crises. First there is a squabbling, middle-class, “Old Australian” couple, Gwen and Jim, and their teenage daughter, Meg. Second, there is the professional-class couple, represented by Roy, the school principal, and his disturbed wife, Coral. Coral is still in deep emotional shock after the death of their son in the Vietnam war; she is thus alienated from Roy, who supports the war. Third, there is a recently immigrated English working-class family, represented by Vic, Harry, and their teenage son, Tom. This family came to Australia seeking a better life than the one they had in class-ridden England; unfortunately, their dream is darkened by the fact that Tom is dying of cancer. Over the course of the play, the Australian-born couples come to terms with their past difficulties and

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50 The reference to this play occurs in one of two epigraphs included in the published version of *Away*. Gow quotes the shipwrecked Viola’s reaction upon reaching land: ‘What country, friends, is this? *Twelfth Night*, Act I, sc.ii.’ (3)
reconcile with their spouses and children after coming to know about Tom’s tragic illness and his family’s stoic endurance of suffering. In the course of telling their stories, Gow evokes Shakespeare plays and recontextualizes them in an Australian setting. These high culture references mix with the play’s realism to transform the characters from the level of the individual to the national and archetypal (Carroll, *Australian Contemporary Drama* 366-67). The play becomes as much about Australian culture as it is about individual families. However, while Hewett and Malouf’s postcolonial plays critique Australian society deeply and rework Shakespeare in complex ways as part of that critique, Gow’s play has been interpreted as very positive in outlook, towards both Australian society and Shakespeare. Gow’s play does in fact contain some social critique, though of a less postcolonial nature and in more muted form than Hewett’s or Malouf’s; however, he does not really "re-vision" or challenge the British "Bard."

A fragment of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is deployed first. *Away* opens as Tom and Meg finish performing Shakespeare’s comedy for their annual school show. The play-within-the-play signals what kind of generic conventions or themes the audience might expect in Gow’s piece. For example, a reconciliation theme is introduced when Tom speaks Puck’s "If we shadows have offended" epilogue, which

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51 Gow frequently evokes cultural myths and classic works in his plays, juxtaposing them against contemporary Australian life. For example, his first play, *The Kid* (1983), is "a tragedy of dispossessed adolescents contextualized by Wagner’s *Ring* cycle." *Europe* (1987) "explores an affair between a European actress and an Australian youth as a metaphor for Australia’s relation to its cultural heritage" (Williams, "Gow, Michael" 438).
expresses the idea of making amends for offences and receiving pardon from the audience. The epilogue also ties in with the reconciliation theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself, in which couples and families are reconciled. Shakespeare's play continues to be evoked structurally throughout much of *Away*. Gow divides his own play according to Shakespearean editing tradition into five acts, instead of the two or three acts more common in modern plays (Webby 56). His plot follows Shakespeare's in having troubled couples escape the problems they face in the rational, daytime world of the city by moving to a natural setting (a beach in Gow's version). There they experience greater freedom and, through the catalytic agency of a Puck figure (Tom), most of their problems are resolved and all the characters are reconciled to each other (Webby 56). Thus, Shakespeare's play functions to highlight and give borrowed poetic lustre to the "universal" theme of reconciliation that is played out amongst Gow's Australian families.

The second Shakespeare play Gow evokes is *The Tempest*. Given the play's history as postcolonial touchstone, one might expect a critical reading here. However, *Away*'s vision of the play is more traditional than postcolonial, that is, it is read apolitically as a magic romance with a happy ending. Allusions to *The Tempest* include an epigraph, a pastoral seaside setting, an atmosphere of magic, the

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52 Like the *Twelfth Night* epigraph with which it is paired (3), this *Tempest* quotation originates just after a shipwreck. In both plays, the shipwreck is eventually followed by a story of reunions, recognitions, and redemption after suffering. The borrowed line is Prospero's explanation to Miranda of why he has caused the shipwreck:

I have done nothing but in care of thee,
Of thee, my dear one. *The Tempest*, 1.ii.
concern of parents for their only child's future,\textsuperscript{55} two young potential lovers (Meg and Tom), a storm that sets the stage for the reconciliation of families after a period of suffering, and hope for regeneration through a new generation.\textsuperscript{56} Again, as with \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream}, \textit{The Tempest} is used to create a heightened atmosphere and to highlight the themes of reconciliation and regeneration through suffering.

In contrast with Malouf and Hewett, the colonial reading of \textit{The Tempest} is not evoked; in particular, the Aboriginal Caliban is conspicuous by his absence. At most, he is gestured to briefly in a reference to a tourist attraction at a holiday camping site: an Aboriginal rock painting (44). The painting and its creator's absence may function to remind us of the Aborigines who originally camped at the site and

\textsuperscript{55} The seaside setting is Australianized into a typical Australian holiday beach campground.

\textsuperscript{54} This is created by having the fairies of the school production of \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream} become the \textit{Tempest} spirits in charge of creating the storm at the beach (42-43).

\textsuperscript{53} All three couples are single-child families.

\textsuperscript{56} Two other plays, which are only evoked briefly, reinforce this theme. \textit{Twelfth Night} also begins with a shipwreck, and contains periods of suffering and the eventual coming together of young couples as a sign of hope for the regeneration of society. Similarly, \textit{A Winter's Tale} is evoked for its themes of reconciliation after suffering. This play is alluded to very briefly in act 5, scene 1 of \textit{Away} (58), when the previously cold and statue-like Coral is "brought to life" and reconciled with her rather harsh husband, Roy, who she believed caused the death of their only child (Gay 209). For a detailed discussion of the allusions to \textit{The Tempest} and other Shakespearean plays in \textit{Away}, see Penny Gay's article "Michael Gow's \textit{Away}: The Shakespeare Connection" (204-13).
who have been displaced by colonization. However, Caliban is never really dealt with directly and the play's political focus, such as it is, is elsewhere.

To step aside from Shakespeare allusions for a moment, what is the play's political focus? Despite its generally positive tone, *Away* does contain an element of socio-political critique, touching on two issues with some postcolonial resonance. First, Gow dramatizes the race prejudices and class consciousness of some "Old Australians"—particularly their rather ironic prejudice against "New Australians" settling "their" land. For example, in act three, scene two, a group of "Old Australian" vacationers come to Jim to complain about non-British immigrants taking the best camping sites. The "Old Australians" think these sites should belong to them, not the immigrants, because they have been coming to the beach longer (36-37). This land claim, ostensibly based on the principle of "who was there first," is later subtly ironized and undercut by the silent presence of the Aboriginal rock painting (44). This artifact can be interpreted as a reminder of the first, Aboriginal inhabitants of the spot, whom the "Old Australians" themselves have displaced. The campers' complaints against the non-British immigrants are revealed to be based on racism and a residual imperial sense of British superiority. A materialistic class consciousness is also exposed in *Away* through the neurotic, snobbish Gwen, who represents the ugly

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57 That these characters' ethnocentric behaviour represents a larger national trend, rather than the actions of a few individuals, was suggested in the Sydney Theatre Company production by having the campers wear "grotesque masques which reinforced the ritualistic nature of their dialogue" (Webby 62). Webby suggests that the campers' prejudices and desire to develop the natural landscape of the beach site into a mini city reflect 1980s concerns about the environment and "the debate over the decreasing Anglo-Celtic nature of the Australian population" (62).
side of post-war, middle-class Australian materialism (Webby 57, 58). Gwen looks down on Tom’s family of English immigrants because they are working class (13).

The second political issue Away touches on is Australia’s participation in the Vietnam war and the controversial conscription of young Australian men into the conflict via a birthday lottery. Much of Australian society was divided into those who supported the war as necessary to defend their way of life against Communism and those who saw it as an American neo-imperial conflict in which Australians should take no part. The war is evoked by references to the death of Coral and Roy’s conscripted son in Vietnam (before the play begins). Roy supports the war and compares the death of their son in an American-led cause positively to the much mythologized deaths of Australians fighting for the British Empire in the two World Wars (22-23). Coral, on the other hand, considers the death of the young a tragic waste. What is represented by the war is not only Australia’s post-war shift from a focus on Europe to a focus on nearby Asia, but also its shift from supporting the British Empire and its values to being complicit with the new American Empire and its values—values summarized scathingly in the play as a "high standard of living" (23, 25, 28, 30).

The play suggests these various divisions in Australian society—of race, class, political orientation—require a kind of Shakespeare-style reconciliation. However, Shakespeare is not used in Away to explore the conflicts themselves so much as to

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58 Coral’s distress evokes Alonso’s grief in The Tempest, over his supposedly lost son.
provide a kind of wish-fulfilment fantasy of conflicts resolved.

Moving from the reconciliations of Shakespearean comedy and romance to tragedy, *Away* ends with a redeployment of *King Lear*. The setting is a classroom in which Australian schoolchildren are being taught *King Lear*. Their teacher, Miss Latrobe, reinforces the value of "Shakespeare’s greatest tragedy," chuckles at their uneducated (or simply modern) reactions to the play’s archaic English, and instructs them on the "proper" way to understand the play (58). This moment illustrates the transmission of the Shakespearean heritage (complete with conservative interpretations) to another Australian generation. But how is this scene of transmission to be read? Straightforwardly, as a celebration of cultural continuity, or ironically? One’s interpretation depends, in part, on how one conceives of Miss Latrobe.

Miss Latrobe’s surname might be a reference to La Trobe University—the kind of institution one might expect to be dedicated, like Gow’s teacher, to disseminating Shakespeare and other aspects of Australia’s British heritage. Alternatively, the name may be an ironic evocation of the Miss La Trobe in Virginia Woolf’s novel *Between the Acts*. Woolf’s Miss La Trobe is not only an educator, but a frustrated artist who puts on a play for a well-to-do, but largely uncomprehending audience. At one point in the novel, an audience member compares the problems she has understanding Miss La Trobe’s play to the difficulty she has understanding Shakespeare’s (204). Hence Gow could simply be using the surname "Latrobe" to evoke the struggle to educate people’s minds through high drama. On the other hand, the actual play written by Woolf’s Miss La Trobe offers some bitingly ironic commentary on the British Empire
and the English upper classes who rule it (e.g., Between the Acts 188-94). If this commentary is read into Away, it could undermine the Australian Miss Latrobe’s conservative approach to the imperial Shakespearean legacy.

However, in the context of the rest of Away, the conservative interpretation of the King Lear classroom episode gains strength. This final scene, showing indoctrination in "proper" (i.e., traditional, educated, British) cultural attitudes, contrasts with the first scene of Away in which the materialistic Australian housewife, Gwen, complains about the school’s production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream:

"What did you have to do Shakespeare for? Why couldn’t you have done a musical? A bit of singing. All that talking! . . . But whose idea was it to do Shakespeare? Very silly choice if you ask me" (9). Gwen is the one character in Away who really neither likes nor understands the Shakespeare play; she prefers "low culture" in the form of unchallenging musicals. Tellingly, she is also the most thoroughly crass and unlikeable character in Away. She shows almost no redeeming virtues until the very end. The implication is that her negative attitude towards Shakespeare is the wrong one, while the appreciation shown him by the other families (particularly Tom’s model parents) and Miss Latrobe is to be emulated. As in Hewett’s The Man From Muckinupin, the culturally sophisticated audience (i.e., those who appreciate the British "high culture" theatrical tradition) are encouraged to laugh at the crass, uncultured colonial.

Nevertheless, despite this point of similarity, Shakespeare’s function in Away is very different from his function in The Man From Muckinupin or Blood Relations. Whereas the two latter plays refunction Shakespeare parodically, using the resulting
critical distance and highlighting of difference for a postcolonial critique, Gow's approach to Shakespeare tends to reinscribe him uncritically, emphasizing similarity, and promoting the imperial myth of the universal "Bard." However, neither the play nor its reception suggests that Gow evokes Shakespeare simply to pay homage to him; the play is manifestly about Australia and Shakespeare is an intertextual aid, useful because he is widely known and carries status. He is used to create atmosphere, as an easily recognized shorthand for certain themes, to suggest links with a theatrical and cultural heritage, and, perhaps, to give a heightened sense of importance to "ordinary" life in the former colony. It is a matter of debate whether this use of Shakespeare constitutes "cultural cringe"—i.e., the "Bard" is needed to legitimate Australian life as suitable for high art—or whether it is simply a nod to a past heritage that Australian life and theatre have mastered and even grown beyond. Whose voice dominates? The Australian’s or the imperial centre’s? What does critical reception of the play suggest?

Australian academic Penny Gay defends the play. While she notes that the "play’s Shakespearean references are integral to its structure, argument, and effect" and that Gow "has dismembered, absorbed, and appropriated Shakespeare in an act not so much of misreading as of deliberate and affectionate homage," she nevertheless argues that the play’s "strength lies equally in its rendering of the conditions and texture of modern Australian life, and . . . in providing certain types of roles for actors that were simply not a possibility for the Renaissance playwright" ("Michael Gow’s Away" 204). Noting that Gow himself was steeped in an Anglo-Saxon educational tradition that reverences Shakespeare so as to make the "Bard" an
intimidating Bloomian predecessor, she argues that in *Away* Gow "... has, in fact, won the ritual fight with his cultural father on his own, Australian, ground" ("Michael Gow’s *Away*" 204). She continues: "Gow’s considerable achievement is to use this potentially oppressive cultural memory [Shakespeare] to represent Australia to itself, to give mythical resonance to the recognizable here and now ..." (212).

From this point of view, it is necessary for the settler-invader descendant not to critique Shakespeare or to re-vision him radically, but only to use his ready signifying power and prestige to enhance the colonial subjects now taking centre stage.

This intertextuality is stylized parody in the Bakhtinian sense: two voices exist in the work (Shakespeare’s and Gow’s), but they are not in competition. In comparison with Hutcheon’s parody—the kind used by Malouf and Hewett—the difference and distance created are less critical (as in critiques of associated ideologies) than geographical and temporal (Shakespearean themes are given their modern Australian equivalents).

Susan Bennett, however, reads *Away* more negatively as an illustration of the fact that the imperial tradition of Shakespeare remains dominant in Australian culture:

Michael Gow’s 1986 play *Away* ... is framed by its school setting as yet another dissemination of privileged cultural/political signifiers. The wonderfully ridiculous schoolteacher Miss La Trobe functions at the close of his play to articulate all the colonial assumptions that the Australian education system imbues in and demands of its students.

Editor Katherine Brisbane notes that all Gow’s plays ‘are an attempt to make sense of a country burdened with an imported culture.’... La
Trobe's reading of *King Lear* is one that insists on the injunctions of imperial authority. 'Shakespeare' in Gow's play demonstrates that 'Australia' (as a colonial practice rather than a physical geography) has made no cross-cultural demands on canonical texts. *King Lear* is resolutely a masterwork... Gow's tongue-in-cheek performance of Australian schoolchildren performing Shakespeare reiterates the durability of imperial tradition... (Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia* 69-70)

Perhaps critical reaction to the last scene of the play illustrates the potential dangers of using something as iconic as Shakespeare, something accompanied by such strong interpretative traditions, without engaging in at least some of the subversive tactics used by Hewett and Malouf. The play ends ironically with Tom reading aloud Lear's act 1 speech in which the dying older generation passes on the torch to the younger generation, the ensurers of socio-cultural continuity. Critics have tended to interpret Gow's last scene as positive and life-affirming. They see Shakespeare's works functioning as symbols of continuity, a link with British Australia's past, and (through the works' re-enactment by a new generation) a link with social regeneration and the future. Ironically, Gow did not intend the scene to be read so positively (Gay, 59).

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9 One might be tempted to read this as an ironic undermining of the play's theme of regeneration and reconciliation--given the tragic outcome of Lear's plan. However, when the scene is placed in context with the tone of the rest of *Away* it reads more as gentle pathos. Only a teenager, Tom should represent the younger generation, and yet, since he will soon die of cancer, he is also a pathetic figure to read Lear's speech about shaking "all cares and business from our age,/ Conferring them on younger strengths, while we/ Unburden'd crawl toward death" (59).
personal interview). In ending the play with King Lear, he was deliberately moving away from the expectation of happiness and marriage raised by the evocation of A Midsummer Night's Dream comedy, to more tragic themes (Webby 56). The ending was meant to be about the death of the young, with the slaughter of young Australians conscripted into the Vietnam war as a subtext (Gay, personal interview). Critics who did focus on the darker tones roused by King Lear responded negatively to Gow's sudden use of tragedy. For example, Tony Mitchell thought the switch to King Lear "a pat, inappropriate borrowing which avoids taking the play's situation through to a resolution" (qtd. in Webby 64). What resolution? The traditional tying up of loose ends in harmonious marriage in comedy and romance? Webby herself adds: "And it is, perhaps, a little schematic for Gow, having begun Away with the end of a Shakespearian comedy, to now close it with the beginning of a Shakespearean tragedy, as the class read King Lear. While Gow clearly wishes to underline the fact that Tom, like the sailor in his play, can save others but not himself, one may wonder whether Away really needs its fifth act" (64). One might ask whether the presence of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, with their traditional associations—reconciliation, regeneration, happy endings—over-powered Gow's darker intent? Away seems to illustrate the dangers of deploying Shakespeare without evoking the critical distance and difference of parody. If traditional expectations are reinscribed so

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60 Tom is a good person who will die too young, as Cordelia does in King Lear.
strongly, they cannot then be easily broken at the last minute.\textsuperscript{61}

It is interesting to note that Gow's \textit{Away} is arguably the most popular of the Australian plays that rework Shakespeare. Carroll describes it as the most successful Australian play of the 1980s (\textit{Australian Contemporary Drama} 371). In addition to being "a great favourite with audiences," it received professional acclaim in the form of four major Australian awards in 1986-87 and numerous productions. In Australasia alone it received twelve major productions between 1986-88 (Carroll, \textit{Australian Contemporary Drama} 371). It even gained two of the major accolades available to a play from the former "colonies." First, it played overseas in the English-speaking theatre centres of London and New York.\textsuperscript{62} Second, \textit{Away} was given institutional approval through being made a "Higher School Certificate study text"--a part of the Australian educational curriculum, along with Shakespeare. This suggests \textit{Away} has "gained status as a classic" (Gay, "Michael Gow's \textit{Away}" 204). Although Hewett's play is also considered something of a "classic" (Gay, personal interview), neither it nor Malouf's play has come close to being as popular as \textit{Away}. In fact, Malouf's was quite poorly received (Gilbert, "The Boomerang Effect" 50).

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\textsuperscript{61} In unpublished revisions to the text for a March 1992 remount, Gow tried to redirect interpretations by changing the ending. In the revised version, Tom is already dead by the last scene and it is Meg who reads Lear's speech. This was also intended as a feminist gesture, in which Meg compensates for Coral's failures (Gay, personal interview).

\textsuperscript{62} The New York production was a revival by the Sydney Theatre Company and played during the off-season New York University Pepsico Summerfare Festival in 1988 (Carroll, \textit{Australian Contemporary Drama} 371).
Is there a connection between the relative popularity of these three plays—particularly in Australia—and their different attitudes towards Shakespeare and Australian history? Has Gow’s been more popular because it is less critical, or simply because it is a better-made play, or received better productions? Assessing reception is a difficult art, particularly with something as ephemeral as theatre where every night both the performance and the audience are different. Lacking audience surveys, often the best one can do is note the reaction of professional critics, where their opinions are recorded and preserved. And even while such critics may note that a play seems popular with audiences, their assessment of why this is so is at best a subjective interpretation. Taking the two extremes of response—Malouf’s unpopular *Blood Relations* and Gow’s highly popular *Away*—what evidence is there to answer these questions? Surveying critical response to the first (and to this date, the only) production of *Blood Relations*, Helen Gilbert found that:

... critical response ranged from respect through bemusement to boredom. Most reviewers expressed disappointment that Malouf’s considerable literary talent as novelist and poet had not been transposed adequately on stage and used words like "congested," "obscure and tedious," and "static," to describe his first play. ("The Boomerang Effect" 50)

Interpreting such responses, it sounds as if negative reaction to Malouf’s play was at least partly based on first-time playwright Malouf’s inexperience working in a dramatic, as opposed to a novelistic, genre. As for critical reaction to his postcolonial
re-visioning of The Tempest, Gilbert notes:

Less than half of the reviews noted the play’s complex allusions to Shakespeare’s The Tempest, and most of those either failed to discuss the importance of this intertextuality or found the representation of connections between the two unconvincing or merely humorous. Only Ann Nugent, writing for The Canberra Times, focuses on the legacy of imperialism that is foreshadowed in The Tempest. Hence, she sees Blood Relations as a "parable of the white settlement of the Australian continent and a powerful image of the spiritual restlessness and cultural isolation of the Australian migrant people" (all those who are not Aboriginal). . . . ("The Boomerang Effect" 50)

Did most critics not see the Tempest allusions and their significance because the playwright’s use of them was simply clumsy? Or did they not recognize them because Malouf’s tendency to fracture and mix Shakespeare’s characters took the allusions too far away from traditional expectations and readings of The Tempest? Were postcolonial issues simply not sufficiently familiar or of interest to the critics for them to be taken seriously? Was the critics’ view of the play coloured by a whitewashed version of settler-invader history, a desire to sweep settler-invader guilt under the rug? Was it a poorly conceived production? From the limited evidence available, one can only speculate.

If most critics found Malouf’s play technically weak and missed, ignored, or dismissed its postcolonial critique of Australian society, most found Gow’s play highly
and successfully theatrical, approved of his use of Shakespeare, and applauded what they interpreted as *Away*'s ultimately positive, hopeful view of the possibilities of Australian society (whether Gow himself intended such a positive reading or not).

Reviewing response to the play, Dennis Carroll quotes Mark Minchinton's article in *New Theatre: Australia Q* as a good summary of possible reasons for the play's popularity:

> *Away*'s strength lies in its compassionate representation of holiday mores, the lyricism and simplicity of its language and the ambitious attempt Gow makes to shape a heightened, almost magical picture of Australian life, framing local culture with Shakespeare's redemptive vision. ([*Australian Contemporary Drama* 371-72])

Tony Mitchell also attributes part of *Away*'s success to its use of Shakespeare, arguing that mainstream critics and audiences feel more comfortable with Gow's Shakespearean borrowings than with more experimental Australian dramas that draw, instead, on low popular culture (qtd. in Webby 55). Despite Gow's critical portrayal of "Old Australian" prejudices and excessive materialism, as well as his indictment of the costs of participation in America's imperial Vietnam war, the play is perceived largely as an aesthetically pleasing "feel good" play, where unpleasant aspects of Australian postcolonial society are neutralized through the happy endings of Shakespearean comedy and romance and the redemptive colouring of great art.

None of these answers can fully address the question of whether or not the plays' *perceived* attitudes towards Shakespeare and/or the Australian colonial legacy
were determining factors in their popularity. However, it is still a question worth pondering.

IV. David Williamson’s *Dead White Males* (1995)

If the Australian plays that redeploy Shakespeare were put on a spectrum, Malouf’s would be at one end as the most consciously postcolonial and oppositional; Hewett’s would be close to it, still oppositional but slightly more ambivalent; and Gow’s play would be across the midline, aware of some issues in postcolonial Australia, but leaning more towards the celebration of Shakespeare and cultural continuity. Williamson’s *Dead White Males* would be the play farthest away from Malouf’s *Blood Relations*. It, too, tackles the debate about Shakespeare, the canon, and their relationship to modern life and politics very directly, but from a conservative, or purportedly “internationalist,” perspective.

*Dead White Males* is a reactionary response to the kind of critiques of canonicity and the privileging of the British imperial heritage raised in contemporary literary theory and embodied in plays like *Blood Relations*. Williamson does not address postcolonial theory per se, but through the play’s “villain” (vii), a hypocritically “hip” university lecturer, Dr. Grant Swain, he does consciously

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63 Swain is less a three-dimensional character than a cartoon villain representing, in extreme and oversimplified form, Williamson’s idea of poststructuralist, feminist, and multiculturalist ideologies. His villainy is underscored by the rather heavy-handed device of making him a hypocrite who espouses a “subject position” of “non essentialist feminism and multiculturalism” (7), while attempting to seduce students in return for giving them good grades (34-41, 75, 90-91). The villains in Hewett and Malouf’s plays are more complex.
satirize the "political correctness" (ix) of related fields that, like postcolonialism, challenge the self-serving views of "reality" constructed by traditional white, Anglo-Celtic, male power elites: poststructuralism, feminism, and to some degree, multiculturalism (ix). In fact, Williamson notes in an introduction\(^4\) to the published text that the genesis of the play was a paper on deconstruction and poststructuralism that he attended at a literary conference (vii). Puzzled by what he heard there, he went on to study poststructuralist and feminist theories (vii) and ended up writing *Dead White Males* as a critical response to them.\(^6\) While not completely in disagreement with what he read, Williamson was disturbed that these theories seemed to deny the value of great works of literature as expressions of transcendent universal truths about human nature, reducing them merely to expressions of specific ideologies:

Despite the fact that I have made Doctor Swain the villain of this social satire, on a personal level I don't believe all his theory to be nonsense.

Like all ideas that have impact, post structuralism would not have flourished if it did not have some insights to offer. There is no doubt that Nietzsche, the intellectual precursor of post structuralist [thought],

\(^4\) The introduction (vii–ix) is appropriately called "Deconstructing Human Nature. . . ."

was onto something when he pointed out that humans find it very hard to be objective and rational. Most of us have been guilty of reconstructing our own history in a way that makes us the hero and the other party the villain and there have been many instances in which so-called historical, philosophical and scientific 'truths', have turned out to be heavily distorted. Power elites in every society have used the slipperiness of language to try and foist their 'constructed' version of the 'truth' on to minorities, but this doesn't mean that there is no real truth nor that literature is just another source of misinformation. While ideology can certainly be discerned in literature, it's not all that can be discerned. It is my belief, shared by the young protagonist of Dead White Males, Angela Judd, that the great writers can still speak to us across the ages because they do offer us wisdom and insight about our common human nature. (vii-viii)

The other side of the debate is Williamson's conservative defence of the value of the British canon and of what he calls the "liberal humanist" idea of art. From the liberal humanist viewpoint, Shakespeare is a timeless genius whose works reveal constant, universal truths about human nature—a claim which, as I noted in chapter one, postcolonial critics implicate in the spread of imperialism. In Dead White Males, Williamson represents the liberal humanist position through the figure of Shakespeare, who literally becomes a character in the play.

The modern Australian caught up in the middle of this dialectic between the
liberal humanist/colonial view of art and British culture and contemporary theoretical challenges to it is represented by a young university student, Angela Judd. Torn between two mentors—Shakespeare and Swain—Angela leans first towards Shakespeare, whom she admires, then towards Swain (on whom she develops a schoolgirl crush), finally ending up in a kind of middle ground, which from Williamson’s preface, seems to be the position the author takes. On the one hand, Angela rejects Swain’s contention that reality is no more than a product of ideology and that human nature and “truth” are just humanist fictions; she argues instead that, while ideology influences the way people see their reality, there are still some underlying truths of human nature, such as the compassion, courage, loyalty, and love she has seen, not only in Shakespeare’s plays, but also in her own family (96). In keeping with the play’s particular emphasis on feminism, another of the Shakespearean “truths” of human nature that Angela considers is the possibility that men and women are truly biologically different in temperament (92-96).

On the other hand, in the play Shakespeare does not win completely either. Angela argues that the differences between the sexes are not as great as Shakespeare would suggest:

But after talking to my mother I think that if there is an average biological difference in the sexes’ need for power, then it’s not nearly as great as Shakespeare would have us believe. (94)

When pressed to choose between Swain’s contention that there is no biological difference at all between the sexes and Shakespeare’s that men’s and women’s natures
are utterly different (81-82), Angela replies: "I'm saying I simply don't know" (95).

The climactic battle waged by Swain and Shakespeare for Angela's mind in the penultimate scene ends with Swain attempting to shoot Shakespeare and instead, in heavy-handed metaphor, shooting himself in the foot (97)—a lesson for all academics who try to kill the literary tradition, which the play implies should be their bread-and-butter. However, Shakespeare does not get off scot-free either:

[SWAIN limps offstage. He has shot himself in the foot.]

SHAKES  Who sayest the power of metaphor is dead!

[SHAKESPEARE turns to ANGELA triumphantly thinking he has won.]

ANGELA  William, you are a wonderful writer, but by and large your women are a bloody disgrace. One of the greatest actresses of our era, Glenda Jackson, had to leave the stage and become a politician because the only role she had to play in your repertoire was the nurse in Romeo and Juliet!

SHAKES  [claps his hand to his head] Oh MiGod! I wish me back to an era of sanity.

ANGELA  Right away. [She flicks her fingers and he is gone.] (97-98)

Despite such attempts to present a balanced view, overall the play text seems to lean in favour of conservatism and Shakespeare. Swain is portrayed as an arrogant
hypocrite, a cartoonish villain who espouses feminism while trying to use his power as a white Anglo-Celtic male to seduce his students in return for good grades. When thwarted, he becomes "unhinged," indulges in an extreme and childish tantrum, is humiliated by his students, and ends up (as we have just seen) literally shooting himself in the foot. His ideological allies in the play, Angela's feminist mother (Sarah) and aunt (Jessica), are portrayed unsympathetically as insensitive, blinkered women who hold the upper hand in the battle of the sexes while complaining that they are oppressed.66 Angela's career-oriented mother is only allowed to become more three-dimensional and sympathetic when she admits to guilt about the time her job took away from her child (60-61), declares she would quit work if she could (63), expresses a preference for a husband like "Petruchio" from The Taming of the Shrew (63), and advises her daughter to marry a rich man and "raise six kids" (64).

Meanwhile, in contrast to Swain and his allies, Shakespeare is portrayed as a likeable figure: so modest he is continually surprised at his own success (19-21, 41-42), able to argue persuasively that there are human "truths" (82), and concerned that Angela not be seduced by the "slimy sophist" Swain (44). Through Angela's grandfather, Col Judd, Williamson also recuperates the much maligned working-class Anglo-Celtic male Australian "ocker" figure—the Eek Perkins, Willy McGregor type criticized in Malouf’s and Hewett’s plays. The man whom the feminists in the play paint as a bigoted, sexist, selfish, beneficiary of a patriarchal society is revealed during the play

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66 This is best expressed in act one, scene five (7-19) in which Sarah and Jessica excoriate the family’s dying patriarch, Col Judd, during his birthday party.
to have been unselfish and noble with good reasons for his apparently domineering behaviour.

Williamson's play is strikingly different from contemporary postcolonial revisionings of Shakespeare. *Dead White Males* evokes not Shakespeare's texts, but the figure of Shakespeare himself. Williamson literally re-humanizes an icon, embodying him in an actor on stage, as well as attributing all kinds of pleasant personality characteristics to him for which there is little historical evidence. Ironically, this re-humanized Shakespeare then functions in Williamson's play to protect the "Bard's" iconic, transhistorical status. Like Hewett and Malouf, Williamson does use parody; however, what is parodied in Williamson's play is not Shakespeare's texts, but the scholarly ideologies that challenge Shakespeare's traditional status within English-speaking society. Williamson positions himself in his prefatory material to the published play as a fair judge, defending a moderate, internationalist, universal view of Shakespeare and art against special interest group fanaticism. However, this claim is undermined in two ways. First, in a larger context, there is a growing body of evidence linking universalist interpretations of Shakespeare with cultural imperialism. Second, in the play itself, characters who are associated with "radical" views that call for the re-evaluation of Shakespeare (and Australian society) are consistently represented as crude, buffoonish, unsympathetic stereotypes; in contrast, characters associated with the "universal" or "internationalist" perspective are portrayed

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67 If one accepts that this is the play's true stance, *Dead White Males* seems as if it could have been written almost anywhere—unlike *The Man From Mukiinupin*, *Blood Relations*, and *Away*, which are overtly "Australian."
as wiser, more three-dimensional, and sympathetic—even as they espouse reactionary and limited (white, male, Anglo-Celtic) points of view.64

Like Gow's Away, which also viewed Shakespeare in a positive light, Williamson's play was a big hit with mainstream theatres, critics, and audiences. It became, as reviewer Geoffrey Milne said, a "national phenomenon" (178), with productions in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra, and the Gold Coast (Milne 178). It was praised as either "a hard-hitting satire of politically correct academic theory" or "a revealing drama about personal relations" (Milne 179). Its conservative stance seemed to strike a chord.

V. Summary

Shakespeare serves a range of functions in contemporary Australian drama. Often, he is reworked to aid the re-evaluation of Australia's colonial past and postcolonial present. Some re-visionings (such as Hewett's and Malouf's) are more or less critical and oppositional in their stance towards the Australian settler-invader legacy and Shakespeare-as-imperial-icon. As in African and Caribbean postcolonial literature and criticism, The Tempest provides a useful jumping-off point for white

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64 Additional material in the published version of Dead White Males tries to weight the debate in favour of the liberal humanist argument. In addition to Williamson's own preface on "Deconstructing human nature . . . ," mentioned earlier, there is "The Value of Literature," a positive review by Keith Windschuttle of Dead White Males' attack on "sacred cows" like feminism (xii-xv). (This article originally appeared in the Higher Education Supplement of the Australian, 15 March 1995.) Even more interesting is another reprinted piece entitled "Was Shakespeare Really a Genius?" in which James Wood, a defender of the liberal humanist position, interviews cultural materialist Terence Hawkes in a decidedly hostile fashion (xvi-xx).
Australian resistance writing against the legacy of colonialism. However, unlike their black African and Caribbean colleagues, settler-invader playwrights like Hewett and Malouf identify not in positive fashion with the enslaved "native" Caliban, but negatively with the colonizing Prospero. The resistance writing they engage in is directed not at a colonizing "Other," but at themselves, their own social group. Because of Hewett’s and Malouf’s subject position as settler-invaders, their resistance writing is deeply ambivalent, unable to throw off completely the inherited traditions of the colonial past in favour of either a cultural vacuum, or a suspect appropriation of Aboriginal tradition.

The pull to maintain some connection with the British cultural legacy is even stronger and less problematized in Gow’s and Williamson’s plays. Their works are less interested in exploring and criticizing imperial Shakespeare and the colonial past than in using Shakespeare’s (imperial) status and recognizability to celebrate their visions of modern Australian postcoloniality. Gow offers some critique of Australia’s lingering colonial tendencies (Vietnam, racism), but not of Shakespeare, who is evoked in a kind of Bakhtinian stylized parody as a treasured legacy and model for both dramatist and citizen. Williamson goes a step further, not only defending a very conservative "internationalist" (and imperially sanctioned) view of Shakespeare, but using the "Bard" to criticize the kind of re-visioning movements found in Hewett’s and Malouf’s plays. Dead White Males’ conservative defence of Shakespeare’s status seems particularly ironic, given that Williamson built his own reputation as a key player in the development of Australian dramatic literature, and as a radical opponent...
of the state theatres' slavish preference for British and American classics. It seems as if, having once challenged imperial cultural dominance in order to make space for his own voice, the now well-established Williamson wishes not only to re-situate himself within that tradition, but also to preserve all its status and privileges, now that he can benefit from them. This is one way to deal with the problem of "cultural cringe" and to establish a post-colonial cultural identity—though a problematic method from a postcolonialist's point of view.

Hewett and Malouf offer a different solution. Their plays recognize settler-invader ambivalence and offer an alternative to choosing between creating in a cultural vacuum or reinscribing imperial values and their centrality. Through parody of Shakespeare, they retain some continuity and connection with the British cultural past, while gaining critical distance from it, decentralizing its importance, and foregrounding Australian difference. A pluralistic and hybrid theatrical culture, combining British, Australian, and international influences—like Australia's pluralistic and increasingly hybrid society—may offer settler-invader writers a new approach. However, it is not necessarily a solution or approach attractive to all groups or individuals within Australian society.

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As Veronica Kelly notes, Williamson himself has acquired a kind of canonical status in Australian culture, so that his productions "attract, at least in popular reception and press criticism, overt expectations comparable in national importance to a Budget Speech, being deemed relevant to 'our whole society—from the Governor-General and Prime Minister down.' His plays are proclaimed as precisely calibrated cultural barometers revealing to the Australian community its own unmediated proper image, and their class-specific address is totalised as being relevant to the 'nation.'"
Within postcolonial studies, the concept of hybridity is closely associated with Australian theorists and evokes some controversy. As was discussed in chapter one, the Australian critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin claim in *The Empire Writes Back* that hybridity is a key characteristic of the postcolonial condition, particularly its literature (15, 185). They also suggest hybridity as a cure for many of the ills created by imperialism, seeing it as "the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group 'purity', and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized" (36). However, Mishra and Hodge question *The Empire Writes Back* for what they see as an uncritical praise of hybridity and its sister concepts: syncretism, pluralism, and diglossia. First, they argue that, while the hybridity paradigm may fit the creolized West Indies, it does not apply everywhere in the postcolonial world, and they specifically give the example of Australia, claiming that it is not hybrid:

The paradigmatic postcolonial text [for the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*] is the West Indian novel which is elevated, implicitly, to the position of pre-eminence: all postcolonial literatures aspire to the condition of the West Indian, and the achievements of West Indian writers are read back into the settler traditions. But the West Indian paradigm is just not applicable to a country like Australia for instance, either historically or linguistically. Australian English is an almost exact duplication of Received Standard English and Australian colloquialisms (its most obvious anti-language) follow exactly the rules by which the
language of the British underground comes into being. That crucial fracturing of the deep structure of a language found in non-settler ‘englishes’ just does not occur in Australia, a country which, historically, has always seen itself as part of the Empire, ever ready to follow, uncritically, in the footsteps of the Mother Country. Gallipoli, the Australian colonization of the Pacific, the White Australia Policy, Prime Minister Menzies’ recitation of love-poetry for the departing Queen Elizabeth in 1953, may be explained simply in terms of a country which saw itself as an integral part of the White British Empire. (*What is Post(-)Colonialism?” 410)

Mishra and Hodge go on to argue that in uncritically privileging hybridity and implicity criticizing as “essentialist” theories of indigeneity and difference (as in Négritude or Aboriginality), *The Empire Writes Back* fails to concede “that pluralism itself might be yet another version of what Achebe called ‘colonialist criticism’” (411).

Now, it is probably fair to say that linguistic and cultural hybridity of the degree and kind found in West Indian literature is not seen in Australia. And there is danger in dismissing all claims for difference and indigeneity as essentialist in a negative sense. Yet, I disagree with Mishra and Hodge’s claim that hybridity as a

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70 Mishra and Hodge rightly quote Hutcheon’s warning as to why the postmodern deconstruction of the subject may be politically inappropriate for postcolonial writers: The current post-structuralist/postmodern challenges to the coherent, autonomous subject have to be put on hold in feminist and post-colonial discourses, for both must work first to assert and affirm a denied or alienated
concept cannot usefully be applied to Australia. I think it is applicable, and in keeping with Mishra and Hodge’s call for a greater understanding of the differences between "white" settler-invader colonies and "non-white" ones, I shall also point out how it is different from the hybridity found in the West Indies. Perhaps Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths’ definition of the concept need not be thrown out, but re-tooled to reflect the specificities of the region.

First, Mishra and Hodge’s argument against Australia’s hybridity is based on a rather simplistic view of Australia’s historical relationship with Britain. As was outlined earlier in chapter two, the white Australian relationship with Britain has been ambivalent from the very beginning of colonization up to the present. And since World War Two, Britain’s prominent place in the national consciousness has been replaced by a mixed re-orientation focusing more on the United States, Asia, and a greater cultural nationalism. As Rickard notes in his cultural history of Australia, the post-war resurgence of affection for British symbols like the Queen—which Mishra and Hodge cite as examples of Australia’s monolithic Britishness ("What is Post(-)Colonialism?" 410)—were more symptoms of the waning of practical ties with Britain and Empire than of their continued power (Australia 207-10). In fact, the 1990s has seen a strong Republican movement building.⁷¹ Mishra and Hodge choose subjectivity: those radical postmodern challenges are in many ways the luxury of the dominant order which can afford to challenge that which it securely possesses. (qtd. in "What is Post(-)Colonialism?" 405)

⁷¹ One major indicator of this trend was the foundation in 1991 of the Australian Republican Movement, which was supported by a number of prominent Australian
to ignore this Republican movement in Australia, which has its roots in the nineteenth century and has seen a recent resurgence. Second, they also seem to underestimate the psychological impact on national self-definition of changes in Australian demographics and geographic orientation since World War Two. For one thing, Australia increasingly can no longer define itself as "white," or look at Britain as the loved/hated "Mother Country," since massive non-British, non-English-speaking, and also non-white immigration has radically altered demographics and created an increasingly multicultural, hybrid society, whether Standard English is taught in schools or not. Australia's shift in orientation away from Europe towards Asia is also significant. As a result of these changes, Australia is producing truly hybrid literature in the works of Aboriginal writers—such as Jack Davis, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert, Robert Merritt, and Mudrooroo Narogin—as well as those of non-British-descended writers—such as Rosa Cappiello, Andras Dezsery, George Papaellinas, Lolo Houbein, Antigone Kefala, and Peter Kohn. Their works are often concerned with racism and exhibit the interaction of first and second languages. But what about white, British-descended writers? Might Mishra and Hodge's claim that Australia is not truly hybrid in the West Indian mode apply better to them? At times, yes. Certainly one would not claim the novels of Patrick White to be as culturally hybrid as those of Guyanese writer Wilson Harris; and the plays of David Williamson appear to be more Australian offshoots or descendants of British culture than radical mixings of British culture with other cultures. However, I suggest that many of the settler-invader

writers (Rickard, *Australia*, 2nd ed. 274).
playwrights in this study represent a slow shift towards the recognition of, exploration of, and coming to terms with, a more multicultural and increasingly hybrid definition of "Australia" and their place in it. Their self-definition has been affected by the changes in Australia mentioned above. The old Anglo-Celtic culture represented in the plays of the early 1970s is critiqued by late '70s and 1980s writers like Hewett, Malouf, and Gow, who begin to undermine old notions of cultural and racial purity and point towards a more pluralistic present, as well as an increasingly hybrid future. A special feature of this Australian hybridity is that it not only includes the increased mixing of cultures (as in the West Indies), but from the beginning has contained the mixing of roles (colonizer, colonized, neo-colonial, and postcolonial).
Chapter Four

A Dutiful Daughter at the Nexus of Empires: Imperial Identity

and the Development of Canadian Theatre

As in the case of Australian drama, a discussion of how certain Canadian playwrights re-vision Shakespeare from a postcolonial perspective requires extensive contextualization. First, I shall discuss those aspects of Canada's geographical and historical situation that--according to evidence in the works I am treating--bear most directly on the country's relationship to empire and on Canadians' problematic postcolonial identity. Second, I shall outline some of the major developments in the history of anglophone Canadian theatre and dramatic literature, with a special focus on how they relate to questions of empire and national identity. As was the case in my discussion of Australia, such an overview must at times present stereotypes or simplified perceptions of Canada, but since it is often precisely these popular generalizations that the plays examined in the next chapter respond to, these national mythologies are still highly relevant.

I. Canada: Geography, History, Settler-invader Identity

Canada, like Australia, is a Second World former settler-invader colony, distinguished from the neighbouring United States by the fact that it achieved independence from Britain not by sudden armed rebellion, but by slow increments and
peaceful negotiation. As in Australia, the dominant settler-invader population rests historically in the liminal position of being both colonizers (of indigenous peoples) and, later, colonized (by imperial powers of Great Britain and increasingly the United States). However, there are some important geographical and historical differences in Canada and Australia's development as nations and these differences are reflected in the countries' national identity mythologies and in their relationships with Britain and her cultural legacy.

If Australian identities and cultures have been affected by the fact that their country is in essence an isolated island with unique flora and fauna, and much closer to Asia than to Britain, Europe or the rest of the "West," Canadian identities and culture have also been influenced by the country's geographical position and topography. One effect of these accidents is that Canada is not only liminal in the sense of being ambivalent or dual in nature (both colonized and colonizing), but also liminal in the sense that Canadian identity has been shaped by a strong awareness of the presence and history of its borders. These borders include not only Canada's exterior border with the United States, but also its interior ones—regional, political and cultural/linguistic—between the provinces, between East and West, North and South, and English and French Canada. Cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan called Canada "a land of multiple borderlines, psychic, social, and geographic" (McLuhan 244). The

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1 The gradualness of the process is indicated by the fact that, while in 1867 Canada became a unified nation-state with basic control over its domestic policy, it did not obtain legal recognition of its right to an independent foreign policy until the Statute of Westminster in 1931. It did not repatriate its Constitution from Britain until 1982 (see Finlay and Sprague 366, 457).
name of Canada's longest external border, the 49th parallel, is often used
metonymically in literature as a synonym for the country itself (R. Brown 16). And
Clark Blaise claims Canadians have a unique "border mentality" (Blaise 4). (As shall
be seen in chapter five, borders can have serious effects on the production and
reception of plays like Gurik's Hamlet, prince du Québec.)

Why might borders be so important in creating, as opposed to just recognizing,
a special Canadian identity? External/national borders between countries in Europe are
often marked by natural physical barriers (e.g., mountains, rivers) and very obvious
linguistic or religious differences; Australia's—like the U.K.'s—national border is
delimited by the ocean. However, most of Canada's external border with its main
neighbour, the United States, is not so marked. In fact, our official border cuts across
natural borders, separating the western mountain ranges, the prairies, and the Great
Lakes from their counterparts in the United States. What our border is, besides a line
on a map, is a deliberate mental construct. Says Clark Blaise: "To be Canadian [as
opposed to American] is to state a preference, and to maintain that preference every
day in a series of symbolic acts. By their borders shall ye know them . . ." (5-6).
This has certain results: "Because the Canadian identity is consciously maintained, the
border is as much a psychological as a physical one. Each Canadian emigrant must
come to America [cross the border to the United States] prepared to die a subtle,
psychic death" (Blaise 4). Thus, the fact that Canadians have drawn borders becomes
a symbol not of a mountain range or the start of different cooking practices, but of a
deliberate mindset, of a nationalistic belief in and desire for historical separateness,
and perhaps implicitly, of a fear of total assimilation. Given the lack of actual physical borders, the fear of assimilation—by the United States for English Canadians and by English Canada for French Canadians—assumes great psychic importance in Canadian history.

This nagging insecurity and the need constantly and consciously to maintain our psychological as well as physical borders are partly a result of Canada's historically liminal geography. Situated in North America, what is now called Canada has been a meeting place of three empires with shifting boundaries: the French, the British, and the American.² Canada has a long history as a geographical nexus, a cultural cross-roads of competing colonizing powers and cultures.³

This history has created added complications for Canadian postcoloniality not found to the same degree in Australia. To use a reductive, but nevertheless influential model, Australian postcolonial identity has been shaped by two main relationships or power vectors: settler-invaders were subservient colonials in relation to Great Britain but were the colonizers in relation to the Aboriginal peoples. In Canada, these vectors co-existed with still others. English Canadians were doubly colonizers in that they colonized not only indigenous peoples, but also French-speaking Canadians. French-speaking Canadians were colonized by both the British imperial centre and by their

² There would be four empires, if you count the Russian incursions in the northwest. However, they have not influenced Canadian history nearly as much as the other three empires.

³ The fallout of this competitive colonial history is still influential today, as the recent Québec sovereignty referendum demonstrates.
anglophone Canadian neighbours; at the same time, they were—and had earlier been—colonizers of the indigenous peoples. And from the late eighteenth century onwards, all British North Americans were under pressure from the vigorously expanding new Empire of the United States. In fact, Canada’s history as a nation has been inextricably tied up not only with its gradual emergence from colonial subservience to the British Empire, but with its continuous and not entirely successful struggle to escape “Manifest Destiny” and absorption into the American Empire.  

While anti-American sentiment has been predominantly associated since World War Two with Canadian nationalism, in the past it was just as often associated with pro-British-Empire sentiment. Many United Empire Loyalists, who had fled the United States after the American Revolution, eventually came to Upper Canada, attracted by offers of free land for Loyalists. This reinforced imperial loyalties, scepticism about American pretensions to offer a better, freer version of England, and a desire to avoid absorption by the United States (Finlay and Sprague 81; Careless 20, 21). A large part of what drove Canada’s founders to expand the nation westward was competitive imperialism. After the American Revolution, creating and maintaining a strong Canada-United States border became an important British imperial enterprise. Canada’s "National Dream" of colonizing *a mari usque ad mare* ("from sea to sea") was driven not only by a desire for nation-building, but also by a desire to preserve

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4 As I mentioned earlier, Australia has also felt the pressure of United States economic, cultural, and diplomatic imperialism, but the pressure has been going on for much longer and has been stronger in Canada due to Canada’s geographic proximity to the U.S.
the Northwest for the British Empire, to keep it out of the hands of the emerging American Empire to the south.

Assimilationist threats in the nineteenth century, such as the American invasion of Upper Canada during the War of 1812 and the expansionist doctrine of "Manifest Destiny," as well as more recent twentieth-century examples of American economic, political and cultural pressure, may help, in part, to explain why English Canada developed a reputation for being the more "dutiful daughter of empire" (Brydon, "Re-writing The Tempest" 77), with less tendency towards republicanism than its Australian cousin.° The most immediate threat to the Australian settler-invader culture's autonomy came from Britain. In Canada, the most immediate threat lay in annexation by the United States. Therefore, in Canada ties to Britain provided an important counterbalance to American pressure and influence. Even today, the monarchy holds some appeal for many Canadians—not always because of great nostalgia for Britain—but because it helps to distinguish them from Americans. As I shall show shortly, this particular view of British influence affected the development of theatre and theatrical nationalism in Canada.

Another key factor in Canada's complex "border" mentality is the nature of its

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³ Such pressure is still evident today in the United States Congress's attempt to penalize Canadian businessmen who do not observe United States embargoes on trade with Cuba, and in the recent fight over Canada's right to protect its cultural industries, such as magazine publishing.

⁶ Adding to this admittedly reductive reputation was the fact that the Canadian colonies were originally settled by free British settler-invaders, not transported convicts as in Australia.
internal geography or landscape. The landscape is omnipresent as a theme in early Canadian art and literature: the snow, the mountains, the forests, and the prairies. Canada is represented in terms of various great isolated expanses with small human settlements huddled at the rim, next to the United States. As Cole Harris has pointed out, the size and topography of Canada have led to greater internal isolation than in the United States. Whereas American settlement moved westward in a continuous flow, a frequently inhospitable topography has resulted in Canadian settlement being confined to isolated pockets of habitable terrain. Thus Canada, notes Harris, is a kind of archipelago, with isolated islands of settlement separated from each other by great distances. The geographical diversity of these "islands" has encouraged the development of differing regional cultures and interests amongst the west coast, the prairies, central Canada, Québec, the Maritimes and the North. Blaise sees "intense regionalism as [ironically] a national trait of Canadians" (8). In recent years, this regionalism has resulted in a focus on provincial boundaries, although as Robert Wallace has pointed out, the fracturing of the Canadian public into particular groups is perhaps just as evident today along non-geographic lines of class, ethnicity, ideology, sexual orientation, and so on (11-12, 22-23). Indeed, while national political cultures have traditionally had assimilation and unification of the populace as key goals or underlying assumptions, the Canadian government in the post-World War Two period gradually adopted an official policy of what there too came to be called

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7 For more detail on this topic and its implications for Canada's regional character see Harris 532-59.
"Multiculturalism," seeing the nation as a "Mosaic," rather than adopting the American "Melting Pot" model.⁹

A key result of the archipelago-like constitution of the country is the oft-noted lack of a sense of a single, cohesive national identity or myth. As William Westfall notes in an essay on regionalism in Canada, published in the aptly-named collection **Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies** (1987): "In Canada there is a political sense of nationalism but no national identity . . . . Canada is balanced on a tension between a political feeling of unity and a host of regional identities" (qtd. in R. Wallace 22).

This means Canadian theatre has not really been able to draw on a cohesive body of national identity myths in creating its own dramatic literature. As in the country at large the impulse towards nationalism in theatre is often expressed, paradoxically, through regionalism and other forms of communal particularism:

Canada is composed of people and traditions whose diversity can be defined in a variety of ways; theatre that expresses this diversity is inevitably particularist. Ironically, the project of distinguishing Canadian theatre from that produced in France, England, and the United States has led many Canadian nationalists to assert regional, even local, particularities. Their reliance on the specifics of time and

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⁸ "Multiculturalism" became an official term in 1971.

⁹ Of course, in actual practice, the degree of difference between the Canadian and American models can be questioned (R. Wallace 22).
place indicates the difficulty—if not impossibility—of creating theatre that is amorphously "national." A Canadian audience always exists in a specific context. Theatre that hopes to reach a "national" constituency must first engage its "home crowd," which invariably necessitates that it connect to regional concerns (R. Wallace 11-12).

As shall be shown in chapter five, the diversity, fracturedness, and particularity of Canadian identity are strongly manifested in the way certain playwrights re-vision Shakespeare, be it in Ken Mitchell’s or Robert Gurik’s regional rewrites of Shakespeare’s Othello and Hamlet, or in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s feminist refunctioning of Othello and Romeo and Juliet.

II. Anglophone Canadian Theatre History

Before I begin this discussion, I should explain that I focus more heavily on anglophone Canadian theatre history than on francophone, not because francophone theatre is any less significant (it is not), but because the particularly anxious, ambivalent relationship of settler-invader to Shakespeare-as-icon is much more often at play in anglophone theatre than it is in francophone. The dynamics of the relationship to the "Bard" are very different in French Canada, where theatre artists and critics tend to approach Shakespeare from a less complicated internationalist perspective, seeing him as one of the world’s great playwrights, along with Strindberg or Brecht. French Canadian theatre artists tend not to approach Shakespeare with Bloomian or postcolonial anxiety and desire to "prove" their cultural worthiness, as many
One obvious reason for this difference in attitude is that francophone Canada’s colonial parent-child relationship is with French culture, not British. (Similarly, it seems anglophone playwrights rarely worry too much about living up to Molière or Racine.) Another reason was suggested during discussion at La Société québécoise d’études théâtrales’ "séminaire Shakespeare" at McGill University in November 1996. The general consensus amongst the Québécois scholars, critics, playwrights, and designers at the seminar was that francophones are less intimidated than anglophones by the Shakespearean legacy because they work with him indirectly, through translation.

Why might translation matter? One of the most intimidating aspects of Shakespeare for an anglophone is his language. However, for francophones, there is no direct competition, no direct comparison of the modern playwright’s prose or the actor’s delivery with the British Shakespearean tradition. In addition, the very act of translation renders Shakespeare something mutable, less sacrosanct. Nevertheless, on occasion postcolonial issues and Shakespeare have collided in francophone theatre. One example of this—Robert Gurik’s *Hamlet, prince du Québec*—will be discussed in a separate section at the end of the next chapter.

**Military Beginnings: Garrison Theatre**

Despite geographical differences between the two nations, one striking fact about the history of theatre in Canada is the number of similarities it bears to the
history of theatre in Australia, the other large Second World settler-invader colony. As in Australia, the first European-style theatre produced in the colonies was "garrison" theatre put on by French, and later (after the fall of New France in 1760), British military personnel stationed in outposts such as Halifax, Quebec City, and Kingston.\(^{10}\) Garrison theatre entertained the men during frequent lulls in military activity, and later was used to foster good relations with the local community. Increasingly, local civilians participated in the military-sponsored productions, and this trend encouraged the development of civilian amateur theatre.\(^{11}\) The military was also responsible for building many of the first, albeit modest, theatre buildings, and equipping and staffing them.\(^{12}\) As the military spread westward with imperial expansion, they brought garrison theatre with them. Although this kind of theatre died out, for the most part, with Confederation, it helped lay the foundations of amateur theatrical activity and developed audiences and theatrical infrastructure for the commercial theatre that developed rapidly in the nineteenth century.

While early theatre was rooted in local communities as far as casting and production went, as in Australia, most of the entertainments chosen for performance

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\(^{10}\) French military theatricals were intermittent and became scarcer still after 1694, when Bishop Saint-Vallier opposed a planned production of Molière's *Tartuffe* because the play was allegedly blasphemous. The Roman Catholic Church had a strongly negative impact on French garrison theatricals. It was not until after the British conquest of New France in 1763 that theatrical activity increased.

\(^{11}\) Garrison and civilian amateur theatre tended to be restricted in participation and audience to the middle and upper classes. When the professional theatre came in, it was available to almost every class.

\(^{12}\) Previously, performances were usually given in makeshift spaces in inns and assembly rooms.
were not. The garrisons put on farces, burlettas, and comedies that had recently been popular in London. Melodramas and some classics, such as Shakespeare, of course, and the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan, were occasionally seen. Presentation styles were also imported from England. Occasionally, plays reflecting the life of the community in the colonies were written to celebrate a particular local event, such as the visit of a dignitary. For example, the first play written and performed in North America was Marc Lescarbot's masque, Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France, performed on 14 November 1606 to celebrate the return of Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt and Samuel de Champlain to Port Royal (Annapolis Royal today) after their explorations down the coast. This play, like many such occasional plays, was intended to celebrate imperial power (in this case, French) in the New World. A handful of colonial military men attempted to write their own plays (often verse dramas) with Canadian subjects; few of these have survived and few seem to have actually been performed in Canada. However, the general orientation of the early theatre toward European dramas and imperial sentiment is not surprising given that it

13 In French Canada a nod was occasionally made to the area's francophone milieu by translations of Molière or Marivaux (Rewa 224).

14 For example, George Cockings wrote The Conquest of Canada (1766) and Robert Rogers wrote Ponteach (1766). Both were obscure verse dramas that were never performed in Canada. Benson and Conolly describe them as "dull" (English-Canadian Theatre 4). They also suggest that the very first English Canadian play may have been Acadius; or, Love in a Calm, advertised in the Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle on the 1st February 1774. It appears to have been a three-act comedy about an affair between a merchant's daughter and a naval officer. Local colour may have been added by two additional characters, two Londoners recently arrived in Nova Scotia.
was put on by imperial garrisons and by persons born in, and often returning to, the imperial centres of France and Britain.  

Professional Theatre in the Nineteenth Century: Resident Foreign Companies

Professional theatre came to Canada in the late eighteenth century and flourished in the nineteenth as settler-invader communities became large enough to support and demand larger-scale productions and build theatrical facilities to accommodate them. Unlike the garrison and amateur theatre, the professional shows were available to almost every class of Canadian society and could truly be called "popular" theatre. However, this was not really "Canadian" professional theatre in either its dramatic literature or its casting. As in Australia, British and American theatrical interests dominated and they were devoted to making money, not developing plays about Canada or by Canadians or building a base of Canadian actors. In early days, when transportation was still difficult, resident professional companies who came and stayed in a community for a season were common. They would come to locally-owned theatres in cities such as Halifax, Montreal, or York (Toronto) in the spring and leave in the fall before water transportation routes froze up. Usually the stock company was American and variety was provided by visiting British acting.

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15 A full account of this historical material can be found in Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 2-4, 21; O'Dell; Rewa; and Wagner, "Canada" 158-60.
The first resident professional acting troupe in English Canada was Mr. Mills and Henry Giffard's American Company of Comedians, which spent several months in Halifax in 1768. As this, like those that followed, was a temporarily resident company, and thus had more interaction with community, it could have provided the basis for the development of local dramatic literature or style. In practice such companies did not. While they were able to provide more variety than garrison and amateur theatre, the system of visiting stars meant their playbills consisted of Shakespeare and standard London dramas (eighteenth-century comedy and tragedy, and the latest London successes)—plays both the stars and company were familiar with, and thus could mount quickly. The development of local dramatic literature may also have been stultified somewhat by community debate as to whether theatre was an immoral influence.\(^{17}\)

Nevertheless, some dramatic literature was written in Canada during this period. I shall rely particularly, in my discussion of it, on Benson and Conolly's important work on the topic in *English-Canadian Theatre*. Two streams, poetic closet drama and journalistic satires aimed at local politics and society, were often published, but almost never performed.\(^{18}\) The poetic dramas addressed various subjects:

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\(^{16}\) Some of the most famous stars of the British stage came to Canada, including Edmund Kean (in 1826), Charles and Fanny Kemble (in 1833), and William Macready (in 1844). Later, Henry Irving toured in *The Bells*.

\(^{17}\) See the descriptions of this period in Canadian theatrical history in Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 6-7, 21; M. Brown 134; and Wagner, "Canada" 159.

\(^{18}\) The closet drama was not written for performance. The satires were often published in local newspapers.
biblical\textsuperscript{19} or European history,\textsuperscript{20} and sometimes (as in the cases of playwrights Charles Mair and Sarah Anne Curzon) Canadian subjects. This last category is obviously of more interest to this chapter. The Canadian-born Mair was a member of the "Canada First" movement and wrote in the preface to his poetic drama about the War of 1812, \textit{Tecumseh} (1886), that he wanted to create "an original and distinctive literature" for Canada (qtd. in Benson and Conolly, \textit{English-Canadian Theatre} 12-13). The play was published in 1901 and widely acclaimed at the time, despite being "virtually unactable" (\textit{English-Canadian Theatre} 13); it remains mostly a footnote in national theatre history, rather than marking the beginning of a Canadian dramatic canon.\textsuperscript{21} Curzon also attempted to create a Canadian national mythology with her verse play, \textit{Laura Secord, the Heroine of 1812} (1887). Interestingly, both plays attempt to define a national mythology by setting Canada in opposition to its imperialistic United States neighbour, not by directly challenging the authority of "Mother England." This tactic for defining "Canadianess" still continues to this day, in contrast with other former British colonies whose first independence movements

\textsuperscript{19} For example, Charles Heavysege, an English immigrant, wrote \textit{Saul}, which was never produced, but was published in 1857 and subsequently went through three editions. It was widely acclaimed at the time, though current critics are more inclined to call it "turgid and long-winded" (Benson and Conolly, \textit{English-Canadian Theatre} 12).

\textsuperscript{20} See, for example, the plays of Wilfred Campbell, a Canadian-born playwright with an interest in European-themed historical verse dramas and little concern for Canadian subjects.

\textsuperscript{21} Benson and Conolly’s claim that \textit{Tecumseh} is "virtually unactable" comes from attempts by both the Toronto Truck Theatre and the Factory Theatre to stage the play in the early 1970s.
were anti-British in nature and only anti-American much more recently. In any case, while these plays may have indicated a future trend, Benson and Conolly claim that, in general, they and their biblical and European-historical counterparts "left no mark on the mainstream of amateur or professional theatre of their time" (English-Canadian Theatre 14).

The satires--of which Measure by Measure; or, the Coalition in Secret Session²² and The Female Consistory of Brockville (1856) are examples--were truly "Canadian" in their engagement with the life of their communities, but unlike the poetic dramas of Mair and Curzon, which aspired to create lasting national myths, these plays were topical. As such, they were not intended for the stage (Wagner, "Canada" 159), but were essentially occasional pieces (journalism in a different form), and tended to be local and event-specific in focus.

Some plays written by Canadians and with Canadian subject matter or context did make it onto the nineteenth-century stage. As in Australia, this occurred not in "serious" drama, but in popular forms such as satires, farces, comic operas, and melodramas. Some farces and satires achieved temporary popularity by taking on local or national issues of the time. For example, Dolorsolatio (1865), H.M.S. Parliament (1880), and Ptarmigan (1895) had successful runs at major theatres in Montreal and Hamilton. The pro-Confederation satire Dolorsolatio does touch on identity, but only in the form of very crude and regional (not national) allegorical figures representing

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²² This was an anonymous farce "in pseudo-Shakespearean mock-heroic blank verse" that criticized the actions of the New Brunswick Legislature over a bill in 1871 to fund non-sectarian schools (Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 5).
limited and stereotypical francophone and anglophone cultural differences and
rivalries: "Master East" ("a gentleman of French education"), and "Master West"
("younger son of Canada, an overgrown boy") (Benson and Conolly, English-
Canadian Theatre 17). Ptarmigan, a comic opera by Jean Newton McIlwraith, is also
concerned with the issue of Canadian identity, but like many plays of the period, it
does not really promote an independent and uniquely Canadian identity so much as
express an anti-American-annexation sentiment complemented with a colonial
identification with the British imperial heritage.23

American-born William A. Tremayne achieved some success in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada with his hackneyed melodramatic
vehicles for touring American stars. Occasionally, he provided a Canadian setting, as
in The Black Feather (performed in Toronto in 1916) (M. Edwards, "Tremayne" 567-
68). English immigrant Frederick Augustus Dixon was less commercial, producing
comic fantasy pieces that were often played at Government House, Ottawa, under
vice-regal patronage. His plays contained contemporary satirical allusions and, as in
the case of his masque Canada's Welcome (1879), contained allegorical
representations of Canadian provinces (Noonan, "Dixon" 142). Again, the regional
quality of Canada is represented, rather than unified national identity. Given that

23 The play is about a Canadian who becomes an American citizen. His decision
can only be defended on the grounds of temporary insanity and the happy ending
comes when he tears up his American naturalization papers. The play's herald asks:
"Is it possible to conceive of anyone, man or woman, in full possession of his or her
senses, deliberately renouncing his or her British birthright and electing to become
amalgamated with the mobocracy upon our southern boundary?" (qtd. in Benson and
Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 19).
Dixon's patrons were British aristocrats, it is not surprising that pieces such as Canada's Welcome really celebrated the power of imperial Britain (Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 15).

The Touring Era: 1880s-1945

Later, as transportation improved (via canals and railroads), audiences grew, and theatre facilities improved, regular touring became feasible. The old practice of having resident foreign companies and visiting stars was rapidly replaced by touring companies. It has been described as the "golden age of popular theatre" in Canada, when theatre provided mass entertainment in the way that film and television do today. Although a few Canadians participated in the professional theatre, this system was North American rather than Canadian in focus, and was dominated by New York companies, productions, and booking monopolies like the Shubert Organization and the Theatrical Syndicate. Such success the few Canadians had was either limited to serving markets the large foreign companies ignored, or measured by whatever foreign—not Canadian—approval they might win. The colonial assumption that standards in Canadian cities were not as high as those in the major American centres (e.g., New York) went unchallenged in the nineteenth century; as a result, it would

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24 See accounts of this "golden age" in Wagner, "Canada" 160; Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 38; and M. Brown.

25 Some Canadian stars included Ida Van Courtland, Margaret Anglin, Walter Huston, and Beatrice Lillie. Some essentially Canadian companies, such as the Marks Brothers or the Tavernier Dramatic Company, toured successfully on both Canadian and nearby American booking circuits.
not be until after the Stratford Festival was established in 1953 that a significant pool of professional actors was based in Canada.

The commercial touring system was also not conducive to the development of national or even regional dramatic literature. As Wagner notes: "The Canadian market was simply too small and undercapitalized for Canadian theatre producers to create special products for it that could be distributed Canada-wide, for the theatre had become a major industry dedicated to the production of mass entertainment" ("Canada" 160). As in Australia in this period, Canadians were more than ever consumers of foreign products that did not reflect their national or regional identities and concerns. However, while this state of affairs was cause for lament by some nationalists at the time, it was not yet a popular concern: "'There were too many Canadians who were physically loyal to the new land,' Robertson Davies has explained, 'but who remained exiles in matters of the spirit. You might as well have asked for an indigenous form of government, or an indigenous religion, as ask for Canadian art'" (qtd. in Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre" 75).

The Early Twentieth-Century Struggle for Truly "Canadian" Drama:

English Models, the Little Theatre Movement, the Dominion Drama Festival, the CBC

Although professional theatre in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century was still dominated by the American market, a variety of changing circumstances during this period paved the way for the greater Canadian participation
in professional theatre that occurred after World War Two. As in Australia, Canadian military achievements in World War One helped to generate a greater sense of Canadian nationalism and national self-awareness. Nationalist movements in other areas, such as the work of the Group of Seven painters (formed in 1920), offered examples of art that reflected Canadian life and landscape, and "more and more voices were raised against foreign domination of Canadian theatre, and ideas began to proliferate about a national theatrical identity—what it meant for Canada, and how it could be achieved" (Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre: 40).

However, as Denis Salter has noted in "The Idea of a National Theatre," the dominant model for the Canadian national theatre that was to replace the "formulaic road shows coming out of the United States" (80) was based on a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English model of national theatre proposed by English notables such as Matthew Arnold, William Poel, and Harley Granville Barker (76-77). "As dutiful members of the Empire, Canadians did in fact listen: whenever they turned their thoughts to the founding of their own national drama and their own national theatre, they repeatedly looked to the British example" (78). In theatre, as in other areas of Canadian life, the British were looked to in order to counter American influences.

The example Granville Barker and others offered was an elitist model that emphasized the need for government subsidy and defined theatre in terms of "high," not "popular" culture (77). While the English national theatre "would not merely be a museum of masterpieces," but commission and produce "new plays dealing with
contemporary life," its repertoire would "emphasize Shakespeare," along with "less well known but nevertheless important English drama, from all periods, together with the translated classics of European dramatic literature" (77). In fact, Shakespeare was considered so key to the English national theatre and its mission to disseminate high culture, that John Martin-Harvey (who toured Shakespeare around Canada) proposed Shakespeare "be presented at least once a week, and clearly he thought that Canada ought to do likewise" (79).

The English national theatre's mission to spread high culture was not restricted to England, but, in conjunction with other forms of British imperialism, it "was also meant to spread cultural enlightenment throughout the colonies" (77-78). It was a sufficiently political issue that it was debated in the British parliament, where one speaker declared that the national theatre should be "... a House that will speak to Canada, South Africa, and the Antipodes" (qtd. in Salter 78).

Salter sees the strong influence of the British theatrical model on the attempt to create a national theatre in Canada as problematic:

This bias towards English culture, combined with a faith in Shakespeare as a canonical writer, proved detrimental to the development of an indigenous Canadian theatre, no matter how broadly defined. Since no Canadian could ever emulate, let alone match, Shakespeare's achievement, generation after generation has had difficulty overcoming.

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26 For more on the intersections of imperialism and Canadian theatre, see Alan Filewod's recent article, "Erect Sons and Dutiful Daughters: Imperialism, Empires and Canadian Theatre."
the 'anxiety of influence,' a condition which was only made worse by the establishment, in 1953, of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. (80)

The plays I examine in chapter five all attempt to deal, in various ways, with this problematic legacy.

Salter also points out that even when Canadian cultural nationalists were not looking to Shakespeare as the example to emulate, they were looking at another foreign model, the European avant-garde (80). "[B]y deciding to annex themselves to so-called world culture, Canadians would in fact be ignoring the cultivation of their own repertoire, an act of self-effacement at odds with the professed ideals of cultural nationalism" (80-81).

The English model did not lead to the immediate establishment of an official Canadian national theatre; nor did it completely stifle interest in the creation of a more distinctively Canadian drama, even as it influenced ideas of what that could be. However, the model's emphasis on Europe was manifested in a key early twentieth-century Canadian attempt to bring more than American touring shows to Canadian audiences: the development of local versions of the European "Little Theatre" or theatre-as-art-not-business movement that had begun in Europe in the 1880s.27 The art theatre movement drew on the inspiration of companies like the Irish nationalist Abbey Theatre of Dublin, without quite duplicating its success. Theatres were small

27 For information concerning the early influence of the Little Theatre movement in Canada, see Gardner 303-04 and Wagner, "Canada" 161.
and were not part of international touring circuits, but closely linked to their community. Journalist Roy Mitchell was one major figure in the Canadian version of this movement. He turned Toronto’s Arts and Letters Club into a centre for theatrical experiment between 1908-14, although the plays they produced in this period were experimental European dramas, not Canadian.

Why did the art theatre movement not immediately produce Canadian dramatic literature, as the Abbey Theatre had produced Irish? Perhaps because many critics of American domination in the theatre still sought a very nineteenth-century colonial solution: stronger links to British touring companies and plays. There was a tendency in the early decades of the new century to link the Canadian national identity with "the fostering of imperial ideas" (Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 43-44).

However, less colonial and more overtly nationalistic aspirations began to come into play in the art and Little Theatre movement in the 1920s (Wagner, "Canada" 161). For example, the University of Toronto’s Hart House Theatre, a Little Theatre founded in 1919, became a key centre not only for Little Theatre, but for an indigenous playwriting movement, giving encouragement to the careers of Canadian playwrights interested in writing about Canada or through a Canadian perspective. In the 1920s Merrill Denison, whose career was encouraged by Hart

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28 Roy Mitchell was its first director (Usmiani, "Mitchell" 343).

29 Hart House also published Canada’s first theatre magazine, Curtain Call (Gardner 308).
House and the Arts and Letters Club, became one of the first serious and successful Canadian playwrights to portray Canadian settings and issues.\textsuperscript{30}

In the 1930s—the same decade that the Statute of Westminster granted Canada political autonomy from Britain—indigenous drama and Little Theatre really begin to flourish, as it was also doing in Australia at the same time. A combination of factors, such as the Great Depression and the competition of new entertainments such as vaudeville, cinema, and radio, made touring financially riskier for American and British professional companies and led to the virtual death of the old touring system; thus, those calling for closer ties to British theatre were bound to have their hopes partly frustrated. While there was some return to resident professional stock companies, for the most part professional theatre was dead outside the major urban centres. This created a vacuum, which was filled by amateur theatre in communities. In addition to providing opportunities for the training of serious amateur Canadian actors and technicians, amateur theatre also provided a receptive environment for the development of Canadian playwrights. Additional impetus, prestige, and focus for the Little Theatre movement was provided by the formation in 1932 of an annual theatre competition, the Dominion Drama Festival, which judged productions from around the country. By providing a forum, publicity, and encouragement, it helped start the careers of many Canadian playwrights.\textsuperscript{31} Writers coming out of this period included

\textsuperscript{30} See his anthology of plays, \textit{The Unheroic North} (1923).

\textsuperscript{31} However, the festival has been accused of killing the Little Theatre movement as an art movement, and promoting the shift back to less experimental community theatre (Gardner 308).
Herman Voaden, Gwen Pharis Ringwood, John Coulter, and Robertson Davies.32

Another important impetus to the development of Canadian professional theatre was the growth of Canadian radio and television broadcasting—particularly the creation in 1936 of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Beginning as early as the 1920s,33 radio became a forum for broadcasting original Canadian plays.34 The CBC became a major producer of such drama, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s under Andrew Allan. It provided the first major opportunity for Canadian actors and playwrights to work professionally, even if not on the stage, and thus created a professional talent pool that fuelled the postwar boom in homegrown professional theatre in Canada (Wagner, "Canada" 162). Taken together, the Little Theatre movement and the CBC provided the basis for the post-war emergence of "more substantially Canadian" professional theatre.

**Homegrown Professional Theatre Takes Off in the Late 1940s, 1950s, 1960s**

It is a reductive, but nevertheless powerful truism that Canada's participation in World War Two helped to consolidate, in many quarters, an even greater sense of

32 For in-depth discussion of the history of amateur and Little Theatre in Canada, see Wagner, "Canada" 161; M. Brown 133; and, especially, Gardner.

33 The precursor of the CBC, the trans-Canada CNRA radio network, broadcast Canadian plays as early as 1925, and in 1931 produced a series of historical plays by Merrill Denison called "The Romance of Canada" (Wagner, "Canada" 161-62).

34 As was noted in chapter two, radio broadcasting had a similar effect in Australia during this period.
national pride and maturity—as the same war did for Australia. The post-war years saw a related boom in theatrical activity—including professional activity—with a stronger interest in developing Canadian drama. New, often professional (if not always profitable) Canadian theatre companies sprang up across the country. Toronto groups such as Dora Mavor Moore’s New Play Society, and the Crest and Jupiter Theatres, Sydney Risk’s Vancouver-based Everyman Theatre, Ottawa’s Canadian Repertory Theatre, and Montreal’s Repertory Theatre began successfully producing not only international classics, but Canadian plays as well (Wagner, “Canada” 162; Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 68-69). For example, John Coulter’s epic drama, Riel (1950), about that legendary figure in Canadian history, was a success for the New Play Society. Robertson Davies’ plays, such as Fortune, My Foe (1949) and At My Heart’s Core (1950)—both of which examined the obstacles to creating cultural life in Canada—were widely produced and published (Wagner, “Canada” 162).  

There is a certain irony in the fact that these Coulter and Davies plays are considered milestones in the development of a “national” Canadian dramatic literature. Louis Riel, the “hero” or protagonist of Coulter’s attempted “national” play, is not the kind of figure one finds in the founding-myth literatures of other modern nation states: he does not represent the kind of glorious, unified, and nationalistic culture idealized in the nineteenth-century-style models of the nation state that have until very recently dominated western political thought. Besides Riel’s sometimes questionable sanity, his identification with the cause of a particular region (the prairies) and a religious/ethnic group (Roman Catholic, Métis) makes him somewhat problematic as a focus of identification for all Canadians. In addition, the struggle in which he was involved, and which Coulter represents on stage, served to intensify regional, religious and ethnic divisions within Canada, not to build a fundamentally unified nation on the accepted nineteenth-century model. Riel fought against Canada’s own brand of imperialism and Coulter’s play does not shy away from showing some of the ugly realities behind the Canadian dream of settling/invading “from sea to sea.” Davies’
A number of factors in the post-war period spurred the Canadian federal government, like the Australian, to create for the first time a comprehensive national cultural policy: a movement in anglophone Canadian self-perception away from close identification with Britain to one of greater national and regional pride; fears of increased American cultural dominance in the age of the *pax americana*; and the boom in indigenous cultural activity. One of the government's first steps was to create, in 1949, a Royal Commission headed by Vincent Massey to examine the role of the arts in Canada. As Wagner describes it, the resulting Massey Report (1951) "was a major document in the evolution of Canadian culture" (Wagner, "Canada" 162). For the first time, a Canadian government recognized the arts as important for the state of the nation—as important as railways, trade agreements, and other usual government business. The key side-effect of this recognition was that the government heeded the report's call to provide subsidies to develop the arts in Canada. A main vehicle for the distribution of these subsidies was the result of another report recommendation, the Canada Council, which was created in 1957 and made large sums of public money available to support building projects, companies, dramatists, special theatrical projects, and so on. Later, various provincial arts organizations emerged as well. It has been argued that the Canada Council radically changed the face of theatre in plays lament Canada's cultural backwardness: *Fortune, My Foe* represents the Canadian national character as one of middle-class philistinism (see Stone-Blackburn, "Davies" 130); *At My Heart's Core* depicts the degree to which the pursuits of science and culture were inhibited in Canada by the struggle for brute survival. However, if one stops measuring these plays' "nationalism" against patriotic foreign models, one recognizes that they are rather accurate in their portrayal of the actual Canadian nation: a divided, confused, and complicated society.
Canada (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 71-72), giving it the financial support necessary to develop real professional and Canadian-oriented theatre created by Canadians for Canadians. It should be noted, too, that the opportunities for national exposure and payment offered to Canadian theatre workers by CBC Radio and Television were also very important in this period. Though its mandate in the other arts was broader, the Canada Council was very similar in purpose to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (1954), and its effect on the national theatre scene was remarkably similar.

As in Australia, one of the subsidies' effects was the establishment of major professional regional theatres with well-equipped facilities: the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1958, the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1962, the Neptune Theatre (Halifax) and the Vancouver Playhouse in 1963, the Charlottetown Festival, P.E.I. in 1964, Edmonton’s Citadel in 1965, Regina’s Globe Theatre in 1966, Montreal’s Saidye Bronfman Centre and the St. John’s, Newfoundland, Arts and Culture Centre in 1967, Theatre Calgary and Theatre New Brunswick in 1968, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in 1969, and Toronto’s St. Lawrence Centre in 1970. Also, as in Australia, centres for training actors and other theatre professionals were established, such as the bilingual National Theatre School in Montreal in 1960, as well as university-based training programs. These centres reduced the need for local talent to travel overseas to Britain to receive training at professional standards. “

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*36 The impact of government subsidy on the development of professional, regional theatre in Canada is described in both Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 71-73, and Wagner, "Canada" 162.*
But despite the new regional theatres’ connection to local communities and the new funds available for the development of new Canadian plays, as in the big Australian state theatres, the production of indigenous plays tended to remain the exception, not the norm. Even with government help, the regional theatres were large and expensive to run, making season planners more conservative than one might have hoped. The occasional, more-financially risky Canadian play was usually balanced off against seasons full of recent commercially-proven successes from the United States and Britain, along with classics, like Shakespeare (Wagner, "Canada" 163). While this period established the facilities and provided the necessary opportunities for professional work for Canadian actors, directors, technicians and designers, Shakespeare and other representatives of the imperial centres still outplayed the local writers—thus setting the stage for postcolonial reactions later on. It was not really until the 1967 Canadian Centennial and (again like Australia) the subsequent rise of the more risk-taking "alternate theatres" in the 1970s that there was a strong commitment in professional Canadian theatre to supporting Canadian playwrights.

However, at this point I wish to move back a bit in time to pick up another landmark in the development of professional, post-war Canadian theatre: the founding of the Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ontario, in 1953. Frequently regarded as "Canada’s foremost theatre company" (Stuart 503), the festival has attracted a huge (often greater than your average Canadian theatre’s) share of publicity, money, audiences, and prestige. Although at times it has resurrected the old practice of
bringing in British and American stars to attract audiences, its casts have largely been Canadian and it has been instrumental in developing the careers of many of Canada's finest actors. It set new, higher standards of production across the continent (Wagner, "Canada" 162). Its innovative semi-Elizabethan thrust stage has been widely copied in the United States and England (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 71).

Perhaps the most high profile theatre in Canada, it has even styled itself at times as Canada's "National" theatre (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 78). Theatre commentators, particularly in its early years, saw it as the apogee towards which Canada's theatre culture had slowly been developing. For example, in celebration of the opening of the festival's permanent theatre building in 1957, pre-eminent anglophone Canadian theatre critic, Herbert Whittaker wrote:

Tyrone Guthrie and Tom Patterson, that oddly-matched pair of innovators, did not invent theatre for this country. The fuse had been lighted long ago and had been fizzling and popping intermittently. But on July 13, 1953, Canadian theatre threw its first major fireworks into

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37 For example, for his first season, festival director Tyrone Guthrie recruited British stage and film star Alec Guinness. Guthrie's successor, Michael Langham (another non-Canadian), brought in Jason Robards Jr., Julie Harris, Paul Scofield, and Alan Bates (Stuart 504-05). Robin Phillips imported Maggie Smith and Peter Ustinov (Stuart 507).

38 Even a selected list of distinguished Canadian actors who have gone through Stratford is lengthy: William Hutt, Douglas Rain, Frances Hyland, Kate Reid, Lorne Greene, Christopher Plummer, Bruno Gerussi, Richard Monette, Kenneth Welsh (Stuart 506; Wagner, "Canada" 162) and, more recently, Brent Carver and Colm Feore.
the national sky, brightening all hopes, justifying the long years of work in the darkness. (ix)

Referring to the opening of the permanent theatre building, Whittaker also wrote: "Stratford had found a proper home and Canada had found a National Theatre" (xxix).

The presence of the Governor General, Vincent Massey, at this same opening also marked the festival as a national institution interwoven with Canadian identity and pride, and yet Massey's speech contains an element of colonial "cultural cringe" mentality:

This is an occasion which must be profoundly moving to all of us here. It is an event unique in our history. We are marking a great moment in the story of an enterprise which began as a local effort with unbelievable ambitions. We now see it as a national achievement winning incredible success. . . . From the beginning of this movement, there was no compromise on quality. It was not to be a theatre good by Stratford standards, or by Canadian, or North American standards. It was to be good by any standards—and it is. It has added lustre to the name of Canada abroad. Much more important, it has given to many Canadians a new and just sense of pride in themselves and their land.41

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39 The implication of this remark is that local standards, the standards of the former settler-invader colonies, are not good enough.

40 The implication here is that the approbation of local taste is insufficient: the final judges remain abroad, presumably in the Old World centres of empire.

41 Ironically, such pride is based on the fact that they can now produce another nation's national poet.
It seems a little ironic, then, that this landmark in the development of Canadian theatre specializes not in plays by or about Canadians, but in re-mounting Shakespeare--albeit sometimes Shakespeare with a Canadian "twist."\(^2\) A classic example of such a "twist" is Michael Langham's 1956 production of *Henry V*, which used Anglophone Canadian actors in the English parts and Québécois actors in the French ones (Stuart 505). The production thus commented on English and French Canadian relations. However, such productions have been the exception, rather than the rule.\(^3\) And out of the eight artistic directors the theatre has had, only three have been Canadians: Jean Gascon, John Hirsch, and Richard Monette. In addition, while the festival has occasionally provided a forum for new Canadian plays--for example, James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* (1969), the all-Canadian repertoire at Stratford's Third Stage in 1972, and plays by writers such as Michael Ondaatje, Sharon Pollock, and Tom Cone--overall it has not done that much to support Canadian plays, despite its high profile in Canadian theatre and its tendency to style itself as Canada's national theatre. Interestingly, it was not a Canadian, but an English director, Robin Phillips--whose appointment as the festival's artistic director in 1974 was loudly opposed by nationalists wanting a Canadian in the position--who gave Canadian plays a higher

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\(^2\) According to Ross Stuart, Stratford has had an "unstated mandate of interpreting the classical repertoire within a uniquely Canadian context" (503).

\(^3\) Stuart suggests Stratford has not succeeded in fulfilling its unstated mandate of putting a Canadian spin on productions because it has not succeed in training directors to do so (503).
One way to interpret the Stratford phenomenon is that Canadian theatre reached "adulthood" in Stratford, that Canada proved it was "ready for the challenge of a world-class theatre" (Wagner, "Canada" 162) by showing Canadians could do the classic works of the "universal genius" well. In this formula, maturity equals an internationalist outlook. Another way to interpret the Stratford phenomenon, as Denis Salter seems to do, is as a vestigial symptom of colonial "cultural cringe," of the old tendency of English Canadians to define themselves in relationship to Britain and against British standards. It is Granville Barker and company’s elitist and imperialistic model of the ideal English national theatre made manifest in Canada, some fifty years later. It is also possible for both options to be operative simultaneously, however.

As a final note on this topic, it is interesting to contrast the creation of Stratford with the Australian situation around that period. A key player in the design and creation of the Stratford Festival was its first artistic director, Irish director Tyrone Guthrie--the same person whom the Australian government had asked in 1947 to advise them on the feasibility of creating an Australian national theatre. In Canada, Guthrie helped to create a powerful Canadian institution dedicated to Shakespeare, that universal genius/British national poet; in contrast, in Australia Guthrie’s negative assessment of the development of Australia theatre led to a reactive surge of nationalist feeling that in turn led to the creation of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre

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" See Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 77-78. For additional information on the history of the Stratford Festival, see also John Pettigrew and Jamie Portman's two volume work, Stratford: The First Thirty Years.
Trust and the development of Australian theatrical institutions and the first really successful serious plays by Australians about Australians.

If Canadian theatrical maturity was measured in the 1950s by the ability to do "world-class" productions of Shakespeare, by the late 1960s Britain's Empire had largely crumbled, and other, more locally-focused, criteria became increasingly important. Canada's centennial celebrations in 1967 provided an impetus not only for more theatrical building projects, but also for the writing of plays by and about Canadians. Regional theatres made more effort to find and produce original Canadian plays and the Dominion Drama Festival restricted their 1967 competition to Canadian scripts. Some of the results of this effort in 1967 were much-talked-about plays such as George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* at the Vancouver Playhouse, James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* at Stratford, and Ann Henry's *Lulu Street* at the Manitoba Theatre Centre (Wagner, "Canada" 163). A year later, Québec playwright Michel Tremblay put *joual*, a form of Québécois slang, on the stage in *Les Belles-Sœurs*--a landmark moment in the development of francophone theatre in Canada. A play I examine in chapter five, Gurik's *Hamlet, prince du Québec*, also appeared in 1968; as its title suggests, it too focused on representing Québécois concerns on stage.

**1970s Alternative Theatre Movement and Canadian Dramatic Literature**

In the aftermath of the Centennial, a new movement began in Canadian

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4 Although, as I pointed out in chapter two, this trust was not without its own colonial ironies, not the least of which was its naming as "Elizabethan."
theatre, called variously the "underground," the "alternative," or the "alternate" theatre movement (Johnston, *Up the Mainstream* 4). As we shall see, it was in part a new nationalist reaction against the perceived colonial "cultural cringe" mentality of the Stratford Festival and the big regional theatres, who defined anglophone Canadian drama in very conservative and traditional English terms and did little to support local playwriting. The dependence on British experience, which early anglophone Canadian nationalists (like Vincent Massey) had welcomed, was now "a site of renewed post-colonial anxiety," whereas fifty years before it was American popular drama that was blamed for retarding the development of Canadian plays (Filewod, "Erect Sons" 64).46

The movement's forerunner was George Luscombe's Toronto Workshop Productions, founded in 1959. This alternative theatre had a left-wing political focus, emphasized collective creation, and privileged the more purely theatrical (as opposed to the textual) aspects of drama. However, Luscombe's venture, with its international focus, was never as influential as the alternative theatre movement of the 1970s, which tapped into a period of high Canadian nationalism (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 86). It was this latter movement, which was centred in Toronto and spread out from there, that not only introduced new, more experimental playing styles into Canadian theatre, but also supported the greatest explosion in the

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46 It seems a little ironic that this shift in perception occurred just as Britain's time as a world superpower was ending and American power and influence were stronger than ever. It seems as if the British Empire really had to be on its last legs before "dutiful daughter" colonies like Canada could start questioning the "Mother Country's" status as a role model.
creation of Canadian dramatic literature.

The movement was fuelled not only by nationalism, but between 1971 and 1974 by special new federal government job-creation initiatives: the Local Initiatives Program (LIP) and Opportunities for Youth (OFY) (Wagner, "Canada" 163; Johnston, Up the Mainstream 7). The movement was led by four Toronto companies: Theatre Passe Muraille (founded by Jim Garrard in 1968), Factory Theatre Lab (founded by Ken Gass in 1970), Tarragon Theatre (founded by Bill Glassco in 1971), and the Toronto Free Theatre (founded by Tom Hendry, Martin Kinch, and John Palmer in 1972) (Johnston, Up the Mainstream 4). The movement's peak period ran from 1968 to 1975, although its influence on the Canadian theatrical scene has continued to today and some of the major theatres created during it (Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Theatre, Tarragon, Tamahnous) are still in operation, now "mainstream" in their own right.

According to the premier historian of this topic, Denis Johnston, the movement can be roughly divided into three stages. In the first or "radical" stage (1968-70), new Canadian theatre groups were influenced by the plays and performance styles of

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47 Of course, these were by no means the only "alternative" theatres; such small companies proliferated during the seventies. However, they were extremely influential models for the others and are often called the "major" alternative theatres (Johnston, Up the Mainstream 4). See Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 85 for a longer list.

48 I shall only summarize Johnston's stages here. For more details, see Johnston, Up the Mainstream.
the American alternative theatre. This time, American drama was not seen as a threat to serious Canadian theatre, perhaps because the American alternative theatre was opposed to safe commercialism and dedicated to more radical theatrical experimentation. Passe Muraille under Garrard fit this model. The leaders of the Canadian movement were heavily influenced by the anti-establishment, liberal-radical counter-culture coming out of the United States, which was being felt in many places around the world (including the Australian theatre scene). Johnston compares this stage to Canadian theatre in colonial times where plays and styles were imported from elsewhere, only this time the aesthetic was "imported from the coffee-houses of New York rather than the patent theatres of London" (Up the Mainstream 6). Traditional fears of American domination were not an issue, perhaps because what was being imported was itself radical.

Although the Canadian movement’s mandate was not necessarily pro-Canadian in the beginning, it quickly became so in what Johnston calls the "nationalist" stage, which he sees as peaking between 1970 and 1972, but which nevertheless continued on after that. The key element of this stage was the desire of the alternative theatres to produce new, Canadian plays—that is plays by and about Canadians—rather than importing experimental product from elsewhere. The Factory Theatre Lab, for example, was created with the mandate of producing only Canadian plays (Johnston, "Factory Theatre" 200) and Theatre Passe Muraille, which had been founded to bring

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9 The movement’s beginnings in Canada are often traced to the Festival of Underground Theatre that took place in Toronto in 1970 (Wagner, "Canada" 163).
American off-off Broadway theatre to Canada, took up a similar mandate in 1970 under its new managing director, Paul Thompson. Globe and Mail theatre critic Herbert Whittaker described the new direction in theatre as an "upsurge of conscience concerning the country's drama as part of the seasonal search for Canadian identity" (qtd. in Stone-Blackburn, "Punch" 183). Indeed, this interest in Canadian content in the theatre was part of a larger groundswell of attention in Canadian society to Canadian culture and history (Benson and Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre 85), part of a post-Centennial "urge for the expression of the national identity through the arts" (Stone-Blackburn, "Punch" 183). This stage was also a reaction against Stratford and the big regional theatres, who for the most part preferred to produce more American and British works than financially riskier new Canadian plays (Wagner, "Canada" 163). Stratford became a popular target of criticism by the alternative theatres' leaders because it spent large sums of public money "to glorify a foreign playwright" (Johnston, Up the Mainstream 11). In 1971, a group of Canadian playwrights put out the Gaspé Manifesto, which demanded fifty percent Canadian content in all publicly subsidized theatres (Wagner, "Canada" 163). At this time, the alternative theatres were the recipients of enormous amounts of attention and encouragement in the

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50 For example, the most successful Canadian play of 1967, John Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes, was dropped by Stratford after it was workshoped there. Deemed too disturbing for Stratford to take a chance on, it was an American theatre company, the off-Broadway Actor's Playhouse in New York, that dared to give this now classic Canadian play its first full-scale production (Wagner, "Canada" 163). The play, which proved extremely successful there, was heralded as a sign that Canadian playwrights were capable not only of making it to the international stage, but achieving acclaim there (Johnston, Up the Mainstream 77).
Toronto media--particularly from nationalist critics like Whittaker and Kareda--which helped to publicize the theatres. Combined with the popular nationalism of the time, this media attention helped to make Canadian plays "fashionable."

Johnston's third stage comprised a movement towards the mainstream as the nationalist stages sought broader, popular audiences. The Tarragon Theatre (1971) and the Toronto Free Theatre (1971) in particular were associated with this movement. The founding of Canadian Theatre Review (1974) also aided "mainstreaming" by providing a permanent forum for supporting alternative forms of theatre. The Canada Council got on the bandwagon and began favouring the production of works by Canadian playwrights, thus pressuring the regional theatres to pick up successful works developed in the alternative theatres. Playwrights who previously had no venue for their works were now in demand and were even being published after production as a market for their work grew in educational circles interested in teaching more Canadian literature.

During the heyday of the alternative theatres, not only were a large number of plays written by Canadians produced, but also plays that reflected local life, history, and politics. And even though English-language theatre was largely centred in

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51 Although the Tarragon has been criticized for being more aesthetically conservative than Factory Theatre or Passe Muraille, it has remained one of the most successful of the alternate theatres, serving as a key breeding ground for new Canadian scripts and succeeding in bringing playwrights such as James Reaney, David French, David Freeman, Michel Tremblay and others to wide audiences. See Johnston, Up the Mainstream 139-41.
Toronto, regionally-oriented playwriting developed and regional differences were important in many of the plays developed in this period (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 96). For example, David French's successful plays at Tarragon, *Leaving Home* (1972) and *Of the Fields, Lately* (1973), examined the effects of "culture shock" on the lives of a Newfoundland family transplanted to Toronto (Johnson, "Mercer Plays" 336-38). Rick Salutin's *Fanshen* (1972) drew analogies between the effects of the Chinese Revolution on a small village and the effects of the October Crisis on people in Québec, while his *Les Canadiens* (1977) used the national sport, hockey, to examine political and cultural issues (Garebian 486). A play I shall examine in chapter five, Ken Mitchell's *Cruel Tears*, examined working-class life and ethnic conflict in Saskatchewan. There were local history plays, such as James Reaney's Donnelly trilogy and the Rick Salutin/Theatre Passe Muraille piece *1837: The Farmers' Revolt* (1973), both set in nineteenth-century southern Ontario. Western playwright Carol Bolt explored the tragedy of unemployed

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52 For example, David Fennario wrote about working-class Montreal, Michael Cook about Newfoundland, and Ken Mitchell, John Murrell, and Sharon Pollock about western Canada. This regional strain was very strong in the 1970s, but as Benson and Conolly note, it has a long, if less strident, tradition in Canadian drama in local nineteenth-century satires, and the pre-war plays of Merrill Denison, Herman Voaden, and Gwen Pharis Ringwood (English-Canadian Theatre 96).

53 *Leaving Home* is often "credited with consolidating the reputation of Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, raising the credibility of Canadian drama in the opinion of the general public, and encouraging the development of a Canadian neo-realistic 'school'" (Johnson, "Mercer Plays" 336).

54 Salutin's *Fanshen* was adapted from a novel by William Hinton. In August 1975, the London-England-based Joint Stock company produced another dramatic adaptation of Hinton's novel—this one by playwright David Hare (Wilson, Personal interview). Hare's play was also called *Fanshen*.
Canadians during the Great Depression in *Buffalo Jump* (1972), and in *Gabe* (1973), the plight of the spiritual heirs of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont in contemporary Batoche (Noonan, "Bolt" 56-57). The archetypal community-based play was Theatre Passe Muraille's collective work *The Farm Show* (1972), which was created after the actors spent the summer of 1972 researching southern Ontario farm life around Clinton, Ontario (Johnston, *Up the Mainstream* 119-21). There are other examples too numerous to mention. Many of Canada's most significant modern playwrights have come, and continue to come, out of the alternative theatres. To name just a few: David French, David Freeman, Joanna Glass, Margaret Hollingsworth, Sharon Pollock, James Reaney, Erika Ritter, Allan Stratton, Judith Thompson, Tom Walmsley, George F. Walker, Michael Hollingsworth, Rick Salutin, Carol Bolt, and Linda Griffiths.

The similarities between the Canadian alternative theatre movement and the Australian are worth noting once again. Arising at about the same time, they were the reaction of a younger generation against the more conservative, state-funded, foreign-playwright-favouring regional theatres. The leaders were influenced by both nationalist idealism and United States counter-culture and experimental theatre. Fuelled by new government grants, they created a proliferation of small theatres, some of which became new mainstream institutions. They also stimulated the proliferation of new local plays and playwrights who really represented postcolonial conditions on stage in a serious way for the first time. Despite formal experiments, neo-realist style proved popular as local subjects were explored. These movements, with their challenge to the
traditional and their identification with the local, opened the door for the re-visionings of Shakespeare that I shall examine in chapter five.

**The Late 1970s-1990s: Financial Concerns, Growing Conservatism**

The heyday of the nationalist alternative theatre experiment could not last forever. By 1979 Ken Gass claimed that the term "alternate" was archaic (R. Wallace 67) and David French was writing *Jitters* (1979), which complained about the place of theatre in Canada (Johnson, "French" 217). As Benson and Conolly note, by the end of the decade, it was becoming harder to distinguish between the so-called alternate and the big civic theatres as both broadened their mandates (*English-Canadian Theatre* 103-04). The civic theatres were putting on some Canadian plays and the alternatives were becoming institutionalized in their own right—still committed to producing new Canadian plays, but not so exclusively, as they were also putting on international classics and contemporary hits from other countries (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 103-04). And while Canadian plays are still finding their way onto the boards, the general mood in the country of optimistic, idealistic nationalism and regional self-expression of the earlier period has been replaced in the 1980s and 1990s with over a decade of fractious, divisive constitutional squabbles that have bitterly divided Canada's regions and provinces.

The dampened mood and growing conservatism in Canadian theatre may also have their roots in increasing financial difficulties from the late 1970s onward. The generous, multi-purpose grant programs like LIP and OFY that had fuelled the early
movement were cancelled. There have been reductions in funding from arts agencies and other bodies, too, and the shortages continue, making experiment risky and fuelling the move of the once alternative theatres to become more "establishment" (R. Wallace 66) partly in order just to survive. Fiscal difficulties have led to the proliferation of cheap-to-mount one-person shows (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 110). Even the Stratford Festival has had to resort, more and more, to producing popular musicals to sustain revenue.

Diversifying the National Identity in the 1980s, 1990s

However, there has been another wave of alternative, albeit often struggling, theatres. As in Australia, some new, even more "alternative" avant garde theatres—such as the feminist Nightwood Theatre, the Gay-oriented Buddies in Bad Times, and multicultural theatres—emerged through the late 1970s and 1980s to fill the gap left by the earlier alternatives. Financially risky experimental theatre that the larger theatres will no longer mount is also finding a place in the Fringe Festivals. In Toronto alone, there is the Fringe Festival, the Under the Umbrella Festival, and the Summerworks Festival. Edmonton’s Fringe Festival (founded in 1982) is also popular, as is Montreal’s Theatre Festival of the Americas (Benson and Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* 110). In addition, like Jack Davis and others in Australia, Canadian First Nations artists (particularly playwright Tomson Highway) have increased the public profile of indigenous people’s theatre.

It is important to note that this new alternative theatre is not simply a poorly-
funded tag end to the "glory days" of Canadian drama in the late 1960s and 1970s. In many ways, the current alternative theatres resemble their counterparts in Australia in that they react against a tendency in the regional and earlier alternative theatres towards a homogenizing kind of nationalism that "limited the range and type of representational forms by which Canadian society could in fact seek the public re-enactment of its own identity on stage" (Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre" 75). This homogenizing tendency may not have been as obvious in Canada's regionally diversified drama as it was in Australia's "ocker" drama, but the rise of "special interest" theatres like Buddies, Nightwood, or the Native Performing Arts Centre, serves as a reminder that not all of Canada was well represented on stage in the 1970s.

If both the alternative and the regional anglophone theatres have been struggling for survival in recent years in the face of financial difficulties, one segment of the Canadian theatre community has been prospering. The other major trend in anglophone Canadian theatre since the late 1980s has been the return of big commercial theatre in the nineteenth-century tradition of the imported popular spectacle. This time the draws are London and Broadway-style musicals (Cats, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Les Misérables, Miss Saigon, Phantom of the Opera, Showboat, Sunset Boulevard, and so on), along with a few touring British Shakespeare companies in the old actor-manager mode, such as the English Stage or Renaissance companies. As in the past, these lavish spectacles are not written by Canadians, nor do they particularly reflect Canadian life, culture or concerns. The
scripts, the sets, and often (but not always) the stars, are from the United States and Britain—although the shows do provide long runs of well-paid work for Canadian casts and technical crews that more overtly "Canadian" productions simply have not been able to provide. However, in an interesting new twist on the old colonial situation, the companies mounting these productions and taking them on tour to Broadway and elsewhere after Toronto premieres are often Canadian-owned: the Mirvishes and Garth Drabinsky's Live Entertainment theatrical producing companies have proved reverse colonizers in a small way. One particularly interesting example of this occurred when "colonial" Ed Mirvish bought, refurbished, and re-opened the British theatrical landmark, the Old Vic theatre in London, England in 1983. While Benson and Conolly trumpet this as "a grand symbolic act of independence—the colonized had become the colonizers" (English-Canadian Theatre 113), I believe this interpretation should be tempered with the realization that this has resulted not in much serious commercial production of Canadian scripts, but in the re-mounting of American, British, and European hits. The Mirvishes might in fact be colonial mimic men, imitating the British.

In contrast, productions of plays by Québec francophone playwrights and companies producing original material have been booming: Michel Tremblay, René-Daniel Dubois, Gilles Maheu, Marie Laberge, Robert Lepage, Carbone 14, Le Carrousel Théâtre Repère, and Omnibus, to name a few. Using very different

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55 I can think of a few examples, such as the mounting at the Mirvishes' Royal Alexandra theatre in Toronto of Tomson Highway's Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing in 1991.
development processes than anglophone Canadian theatres (collective creation, long rehearsals, and extended runs), a more visual, scenographic style, and emphasizing international touring as part of their mandates, they have developed international profiles and have had considerable success (R. Wallace 15, 177-211).

In conventional histories, the story of anglophone Canadian settler-invader theatre (like its Australian counterpart) is read as a narrative of progress paralleling the development of Canada's post-colonial national identity: anglophone Canadian theatre moved from a colonial stage of identification with Britain and domination by British and American commercial theatre, through an upsurge of local amateur productions, to regional professional theatre based on foreign models (including Shakespeare), to a nationalistic "heyday" that privileged local writers and the largely realistic treatment of local topics, to the current "denouement" phase characterized by financial restraint, and the re-polarization of anglophone Canadian theatre into internationalist spectacles and low budget explorations of an ever more diversified national identity. However, because of Canada's very different historical situation at a nexus of competing empires, this narrative of anglophone cultural nationalism has tended to be focused less on opposition to Britain and the Empire than its Australian counterpart has been. For a long time, identification with Britain and things British has been perceived in English Canada as an aid to asserting Canadian cultural independence in the face of threats of American assimilation. It may also have offered

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*6 Although in today's critical climate we are likely to question simplistic notions of historical "progress," this model has been highly influential.*
a common bond linking diverse and isolated regions with differing interests. Hence, while several modern dramatists in Australia have re-visioned Shakespeare in overtly postcolonial and oppositional terms, the Canadian dramatists I shall examine in chapter five take a more varied, ambivalent, and less obviously postcolonial approach.
Chapter Five
Miranda and the Margins: Feminization and Regionalization in Canadian
Re-visionings of Shakespeare

In the previous chapter I outlined some major trends in the anglophone Canadian settler-invader struggle for a national identity and culture. One is the "dutiful daughter" syndrome: a close linking of Canadian identity with Britain, inspired in part by a desire to avoid assimilation with the United States (and consequently not found to the same extent in Australia). In Canadian cultural history this has been reflected in attempts to make Shakespeare the heart of a Canadian national theatre. A second trend is one that has found strongest expression since the late 1960s: the desire to move beyond—not break violently with—mimicry of Britain to define more independent and uniquely "Canadian" visions of identity. This has led to a boom in the creation of original plays, in attempts to find our own Shakespeares. Finally, the desire to define Canada’s uniqueness has often been expressed in a third trend: an intense regionalism, reflected in the theatre by plays replete with local colour and concerns.

These attitudes towards national identity and Shakespeare are reflected in the various ways Canadian authors and playwrights have imaginatively re-visioned and refashioned Shakespeare in their own works. While there are exceptions, three approaches appear very common. In keeping with the "dutiful daughter's" reverence for things British, some anglophone Canadian writers pay homage to the idea of
Shakespeare as a well known "universal" model, not questioning his status, but trying to capitalize on it through allusion and imitation. The tone of these conservative approaches ranges from colonial cringe to self-confident claims to an internationalist outlook. Other writers manifest the desire to grow beyond the "dutiful daughter" role to express a unique and "grown-up" Canadian character by, first, identifying with one of Shakespeare's young female figures, and second, giving that character a greater, more independent voice. Canadians' regional identities are expressed in works that transcontextualize Shakespeare to a strongly delineated local setting and use him to celebrate, or address issues of concern to, the people of that area. While I shall touch on works using the more conservative approach to the "Bard," I shall focus in this chapter on pieces that "feminize" or "regionalize" him, since they offer interesting evidence about kinds of resistance writing that may be possible for Canadian settler-invader writers. Sometimes, elements of more than one approach can be found in the same work--a reflection of Canada's ambivalent and complicated history.

1. Feminizing Shakespeare and the Canadian Struggle for a Voice

To understand why so many Canadian writers have used Shakespeare's female characters to explore their own voice, it is useful to start with an analysis of Canada's place in that now conventional colonial paradigm, The Tempest. Just as Australian and Caribbean writers have found in The Tempest a useful paradigm for creating "decolonizing fictions," so Canada's postcolonial condition can be imaginatively expressed in a Tempest metaphor. The fact that French and British settler-invaders
displaced First Nations people from their land links them with Prospero—and, of
course, with Australian and American settlement history. For English Canada,¹ the
Prospero/colonizer link is doubled by the British invasion and conquest of New France
and its French-speaking inhabitants. On the other hand, Canada has been in the
economic, political, and cultural shadow of more powerful English-speaking powers:
first Britain, then the United States. Consequently, Canada (really English Canada) has
been compared to Miranda: the dutiful daughter of Prospero (Great Britain) who will
obey her powerful parent until joined to her new husband, Ferdinand (the United
States). The position of French Canada,² when discussed as separate from the rest of
Canada, has been compared to that of Caliban.³

¹ And by "English" I mean "of British descent" as opposed to just anglophone
(English-speaking). The terms are not synonymous in today's multicultural Canada. Given
many Québécois' fears that allophone immigrants to Québec may prefer English to
French as their second language, non-British immigrants may also be seen as potential
new Prosperos.

² "French Canada" of course can be broken down into separate French-speaking
groups: the Québécois (concentrated in Québec and the most politically active), the
Acadiens (concentrated in the Maritimes) and other, smaller French-speaking populations
spread out in other provinces (especially Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia). More
recently, these groups have been supplemented by immigrants from other former French
colonies; these immigrants are not ethnically French, but are francophone.

³ See, for example, Max Dorsinville's Caliban Without Prospero (1974), which
equates the Québécois with Caliban while using The Tempest as a metaphor for
examining similarities between the work of Québécois and African American writers. In
fact, French Canada is even more like Caliban than Dorsinville and others have realized.
I am indebted to Alexander Leggatt for pointing out that, while the French Canadians
have been in the New World longer than the British Prosperos, they, like Caliban, are
not the true first inhabitants. Although Caliban was born on the island, his mother was
Sycorax, a foreigner who arrived pregnant on the isle and colonized it and its native spirit
inhabitants. In Canada, the aboriginal peoples, the First Nations, are the metaphoric
equivalent of The Tempest's native spirits.
However, one may not need to equate English Canada with Prospero to find a metaphor for its imperialistic role. Miranda herself is an ambivalent figure, just as settler-invader countries are ambivalent. Although she is oppressed as a woman, she resembles Prospero in her attitude towards Caliban. Many modern editors now follow the Folio and attribute to Miranda the "Abhorred slave" speech\(^1\) (1.2.353-64) in which she criticizes Caliban for, among other things, not being grateful that she taught him her language (English).\(^5\)

As Diana Brydon and Chantal Zabus have pointed out, the suggestiveness of this Miranda paradigm for English Canada is witnessed by the plethora of anglophone Canadian novelists who have refunctioned aspects of *The Tempest* in their own work, and in particular, have focused on Miranda figures.\(^4\) Certain common characteristics of these Canadian *Tempests* are worth noting. The Mirandas have ambivalent feelings regarding their father-figures (Brydon, "Re-writing" 83). Caliban (the indigenous and racially different "Other") gets much less attention than Miranda and is typically


\(^5\) Whose only profit from it, Caliban retorts, is that he now knows "how to curse" (1.2.365-66). Certainly this little exchange could resonate with French Canadian fears of English language domination.

\(^6\) Charles G.D. Roberts’ *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900), Margaret Laurence’s *The Diviners* (1974), and Audrey Thomas’ *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* (1971) are all re-visionings of *The Tempest* that focus on Miranda (Zabus 43). As the title of Phyllis Gotlieb’s *O Master Caliban!* (1976) suggests, this science fiction version is an exception to this group in its attention to Caliban. Miranda is an important figure (represented by two characters) in Robertson Davies’ *Tempest-Tost* (1951), but Brydon suggests that the British-educated, white, English-Canadian author identifies more with Prospero (Brydon, "Re-Writing" 77).
relegated to the wings, while the Miranda/Prospero and Miranda/Ferdinand relationships are explored more fully (Zabus 42). In some cases, Caliban becomes an aspect of Miranda's personality, a side that is in opposition to, or rebels against, her father/husband figures. Zabus sees this as a reflection of English/anglophone Canadian writers' frequent failure to recognize the relevance of the Prospero/Caliban situation in Canada—unlike francophone Canadians, who have identified themselves more with Caliban (46). Or, to put it another way, English/anglophone Canadians have been reluctant to recognize imperialism vis-à-vis indigenous, francophone, and other groups in Canada and, thus, their own implication, as settler-invaders, in the colonization of these people.

Like many Black artists refunctioning The Tempest, Davies and Laurence are particularly concerned in their re-visionings with compatriot characters struggling to express themselves, to find their "voice" as artists. However, Canadian novelists tend to place such characters in less overtly colonial settings than their Caribbean and African counterparts do (Zabus 45). According to Zabus, "Miranda represents the culturally dependent colony in English-Canadian letters" and, compared to writers in other former British colonies, the English Canadian writer "lacks liberationist

7 I am thinking here of Morag’s rebellion in The Diviners against her paternalistic, English-literature-teaching husband, Skelton, and her union and increasing identification with the half-Native Métis Jules Tonnerre, whom Zabus identifies respectively as Prospero and Caliban figures (45). This rebellion is necessary to Morag’s development as a mature, independent individual and as a writer. Also, in Roberts’ The Heart of the Ancient Wood, Miranda has a close relationship with Kroofof the bear (Caliban) and shares the bear’s special insight into the natural world; in a move that is opposite to Laurence’s later, more feminist heroine, Roberts’ 1900 Miranda rejects Caliban and her Calibanesque nature to marry Dave, a trapper/logger Ferdinand (Zabus 43).
engagement, for, in his view, Canada is still "Prospero's Child" (48-49). However, as Zabus notes, this colonial cultural mentality is not necessarily permanent, since "Prospero's literary progeny has the potential to raise a tempest of revolt and nationalistic assertion" (45). She continues: "Davies and Laurence intimate that Canada qua Miranda needs to mature and stop 'attend[ing]' Britain 'most heedfully' (1.ii.78), and that English-Canadian literature is an outgrowth rather than an offspring of the British-literary tradition" (49).

Interestingly, neither Brydon nor Zabus factor American cultural pressures into the equation. As I noted in chapter four, Canadian nationalists have often used British culture as a bulwark against American cultural imperialism. Also, Zabus claims that Miranda is an ironic national symbol because as Prospero's progeny she may never rebel (42-43). This statement is unfounded. Offspring rebel against their parents all the time. Even Shakespeare's Miranda shows hints of rebelliousness, questioning her father over his decision to cause the shipwreck (1.2.1-13), and showing a good deal more interest in Ferdinand than Prospero has officially allowed her to. One might say that a rebellious child is less likely than a slave to engage in violent rebellion or permanently to break off all ties with a Prospero figure. This statement fits Canada's history more accurately.

Much less attention has been paid to anglophone plays that re-vision

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1 Zabus considers Audrey Thomas's reworking of The Tempest an example of such an unliberated approach to the English-language literary tradition, since it uses the play in a "casual and pointless" way (45). Shakespeare's play becomes an occasion to display one's knowledge of a canonized text, to prove one is "cultured" in conventional terms.
Shakespeare, even though there are many. What is striking about the plays, in contrast with the novels using this tactic, is the replacement of *The Tempest* with other Shakespearean plays and, thus, less direct engagement with obvious postcolonial issues. As will be shown later in this chapter, for playwrights, Canada's multi-vector, regionalistic postcoloniality seems to demand a different paradigm. But what remains is a strong interest in giving greater voice to refunctioned versions of Shakespeare's female figures. This is true even of plays written by male playwrights (who outnumber the female playwrights).

Why might anglophone Canadian playwrights re-visioning Shakespeare put such emphasis on recuperating the female voice? Is it simply a reflection of a strong feminist streak amongst them? Perhaps it is partly that. As we shall see, for example, Ann-Marie MacDonald's play *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* has largely been interpreted as a feminist comedy. However, not all of these plays are as overtly feminist in approach as MacDonald's and many of their authors are male (Ken Gass, Peter Eliot Weiss, Andrew Batten). One could hypothesize that another factor may have a part to play: that the complex, ambivalent position of the white anglophone female under patriarchy and colonialism makes a suggestive metaphor for

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9 These range from early plays such as the girls' school pageants of Sister Mary Agnes (e.g., *A Shakespeare Pageant* 1915) and William Tremayne's *A Question of Clothes* (1933), to Stewart Boston's *Cressida* (1970), Peter Eliot Weiss's *The Haunted House* *Hamlet* (1986), *Mr and Mrs Macbeth* (1988), Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet* (1989), and Andrew Batten's *Romeo and Rosaline* at the Tarragon in Toronto (1994).

10 This is not to imply that male playwrights could not adopt a feminist perspective or that female playwrights automatically should.
the complex, ambivalent position of the white anglophone settler-invader in Canada's postcolonial condition. And this metaphor can, therefore, be extended beyond Miranda to other female figures.

As Laura Donaldson notes, feminist scholarship has frequently used the position of the colonized country under colonialism as a metaphor for the situation of the oppressed woman under patriarchy (5). In this rather simplistic formulation, man equals colonizer and woman equals colonized. Both colonized country and woman are subject to economic dependence, cultural take-over, the identification of dignity with resemblance to the oppressor, the assumption that the colonized/woman's interests are the same as their oppressors, and "Othering" (Donaldson 5). These situations happen to resemble Canada's historical economic dependence on Britain, the cultural domination of (anglophone) Canada by British culture, the identification of "success" with the proper emulation of British models, and the assertion by Britain that Canadian interests were identical with theirs. (This pattern has since been repeated

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12 For example, as was suggested in chapter four, the Stratford Festival was considered a success because it in many ways replicated British theatrical practice, even to the point of recreating a close approximation of Shakespeare's stage. Canadian actors, films, and stage productions are frequently judged truly "successful" when they find acceptance in London, England, or in the homogenizing entertainment industries of Hollywood and Broadway. Similar emulation occurs in the political and business fields: in the 1980s, for example, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney adopted the economic policies of Thatcherism and Reagonomics.
with Canada and the United States.) Particularly relevant to this chapter's discussion of Canadian playwrights seeking to express their own voice is Marilyn French’s comparison between the way colonization denies the colonized a voice in their own culture and the way women in many cultures have been denied a cultural voice (qtd. in Donaldson 5). Hence, a women’s fight to be heard over the voices of her father and husband can become a metaphor for a Second World Canadian writer working to be heard over the powerful cultural voices of Great Britain and the United States.

However, this model requires some qualification and complication. Several postcolonial critics have pointed out that the simple equation of colonized with woman and colonizer with man is too reductive (Donaldson 5-6). It exemplifies white, western, middle-class feminism’s tendency to elide the experience of diverse groups of women, and privilege a solipsistic white, western, middle-class viewpoint as "universal" (Donaldson 9). Thus, while there is some validity in the simple metaphor, it overlooks facts of colonial history that point to greater complexities, such as the "contradictory social positioning of white, middle-class women as both colonized patriarchal objects and colonizing race-privileged subjects" (Donaldson 6). Or, to put it another way, under colonialism the white woman of British descent has higher status than non-white, non-British women (or men), but is marginalized, silenced, and controlled relative to white men, even those whom she may be closely related to and

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13 Consider, for example, the British government’s expectation that Canada would participate in their war efforts in World Wars One and Two. Or, consider once again American attempts to make Canadian business toe the line with America’s boycott policy regarding Cuba.
protected by. This situation also recalls the ambivalent colonized/colonizing position of the white, anglophone, settler-invader Canadian discussed in chapter one. Hence, one can see why many writers from this group might be drawn to Shakespeare’s female characters when they re-work aspects of his plays.

MacDonald’s Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)

This "Miranda complex" appears in what is perhaps the best known and most successful anglophone Canadian dramatic re-visionsing of Shakespeare: Toronto playwright Ann-Marie MacDonald’s comedy Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet). Produced by Toronto’s feminist-oriented alternative theatre group, Nightwood, it was first performed March 31, 1988, at the Annex Theatre, Toronto. The script of this production was revised in 1990. It was so popular in its first run that it was remounted for a successful national tour in 1990, visiting Ottawa, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto. Since then it has been produced by other professional theatre companies in various Canadian cities, as well as some theatres in the United States, such as the Classic Stage Company in Manhattan. It also won several Canadian arts awards: a Dora best play award, the 1988 Chalmers Award, and the 1990 Governor-General’s Award for Drama.¹⁴ It has also gained a certain canonical status in Canada, being included on university curricula.

The play centres around Constance Ledbelly, a “mousy” and much put-upon

¹⁴ Fortier 51, Porter 363, 376, and Hengen 99, 107 discuss all these production history details.
young assistant professor of English at Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario.

Constance is slavishly in love with an arrogant British academic named Claude Night, who exploits her affection by having her ghost-write his articles. When not working for Claude, Constance works on her ridiculed and still unfinished thesis: a heretical hypothesis that two of Shakespeare’s famous tragedies, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, are not inevitably or inherently tragic. She argues, rather, that they are distorted adaptations of another, mysterious author’s comedies, in which a “wise fool” character saves the day at key turning points in each play. Constance believes that the coded "Gustav Manuscript" is the main clue to the identity of the mysterious "author" of Shakespeare’s unacknowledged source texts.

The audience is introduced to Constance at a vital turning point in her personal, psychic development—a point at which her life could turn either into a "tragedy" or a comically "happy" script. Talking to Claude in her office, Constance’s hopes for love and professional success are dashed when he announces he is marrying a feisty young co-ed, Ramona, and that he is taking a post at Oxford that Constance had hoped to obtain. Despairing, Constance considers giving up on love, writing, and life in general; in a comically childish way, she imagines her "tragic" end as a mad, unwashed "cat lady" who is evicted for poor hygiene and dies while selling pencils on the street.

Constance’s turning point is tied in with the key turning points in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*—and all three may lead to tragic plot outcomes. MacDonald first links these scenes by beginning *Goodnight Desdemona* with simultaneous dumbshow
versions of each one: the handkerchief scene in *Othello*, the Mercutio-Tybalt fight in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the scene I described above, where Constance despairs both of love and of her attempts to be a scholar and writer.\(^\text{15}\) After the dumbshow, fuller versions of the scenes are performed: as Constance works on her thesis, the turning points she is writing about are enacted behind her.

Indeed, throughout Goodnight Desdemona Shakespeare plays are woven into MacDonald’s piece just as they are woven into Constance’s psyche, becoming vehicles for her personal development and growth. At the end of the office scene, Constance is magically “warped” into her wastebasket and falls through it into the world of Shakespeare’s two tragedies. There her task is to find both her own identity and that of the mysterious wise fool or author of the tragedies’ comic source plots.

First, Constance falls into the action of *Othello* on Cyprus, just in time to foil Iago’s handkerchief plot and, thus, avert the tragic action. Constance is initially dismayed to discover that she has "turned Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’ to a farce" (30), where Iago is punished by being made a dung-carrier, and Othello is just a long-winded bragging bore who tells improbable stories in pseudo-Shakespearean language. More importantly, Constance meets and becomes friends with Desdemona, whom MacDonald portrays not as the passive, tragic victim of Shakespeare’s play, but as a blood-thirsty, Amazonian warrior. Both Othello and Desdemona misidentify Constance

\(^{15}\) In the dumbshow this is represented by her symbolic actions of throwing both her quill pen and the Gustav manuscript into the wastebasket. However, since MacDonald wishes to avert tragic outcomes in her play, when the scene is then repeated in full, fleshed-out form, Constance begins to throw the items out, then stops.
as a virginal seer of special wisdom—valuing her for the very characteristics that made her ridiculed back at Queen's. However, the pressures of the Shakespearean canon and genre re-assert themselves as—in a wonderfully comic and parodic reassignment and pastiche of Shakespeare's lines—Iago tries to turn the plot back onto its traditional tragic trajectory by convincing Desdemona that Constance is having an affair with Othello. Just as the action could become tragic—when Desdemona violently confronts Constance—MacDonald's heroine is magically "warped" into the world of *Romeo and Juliet* in Verona.

Again, Constance lands in the middle of a key turning-point scene (the Tybalt-Mercutio duel) and averts the tragic action (this time by revealing that Romeo has married Juliet, thus uniting the families). Again, she is misidentified: as a Greek pedant boy, "Constantine." This time the transformation of Shakespeare's plot and characters into comic ones is even more pronounced. With no further obstacles to their love, Romeo and Juliet tire of each other after one night of passion and go seeking new conquests. Particular focus is given to Juliet, who is portrayed as in love with the kind of tragic, impossible love that ends in death.

At this point, MacDonald makes a series of comic and subversive uses of traditional Renaissance dramatic cross-dressing, in which boy actors not only played all the women's roles, but (in comedies like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*) often played women who disguised themselves as boys in order to woo the men they loved. Both Romeo and Juliet mistake Constance for a boy and, in a parody of Shakespeare's lovers, fall in love with her at first sight. Romeo's homoerotic love for Constance
breaks traditional drama's heterosexual conventions, while ironically commenting on the homoerotic subtext of Renaissance dramatic practice in which men on stage did in fact "love" boys. Believing "Constantine" is reluctant to love him because "he" is heterosexual and prefers women, Romeo then cross-dresses as a woman and becomes a parody of Juliet. In a comic repetition of this act, Juliet cross-dresses as a boy in order to pursue "Constantine" in Romeo-like fashion, believing "him" to be homosexual. Several clever and literally "gay" parodies of heterosexual literature's famous balcony scene ensue.\textsuperscript{16}

While the lovers pursue Constance, she keeps searching for both her own and the mysterious author's identities, ignoring various clues provided by the Gustav manuscript and a ghost-like chorus figure. A homophobic Tybalt attempts to fight with "deviant" Constance—trying, like Iago, to return the plot to its tragic trajectory. However, Constance escapes and, Romeo-like, seeks Juliet at her bedroom, hoping for clues to the mystery. This scene introduces a new twist: when Constance reveals to Juliet that she is in fact a woman, not a boy, Juliet's passion is increased, rather than diminished.\textsuperscript{17} Constance's awakening sexuality begins to respond to Juliet's bedroom advances when the plots of the two Shakespeare plays converge: Desdemona magically appears and tries to smother Constance, à la Othello, with a pillow. Although

\textsuperscript{16} In addition to the overt lesbianism and homosexuality, another thing that makes MacDonald's treatment of cross-dressing subversive is the fact that cross-dressing was traditionally used in comedies, not in tragic plays like \textit{Romeo and Juliet}.

\textsuperscript{17} Why? Because lesbian love is more forbidden, it is therefore more attractive to tragedy-obsessed Juliet.
Constance corrects Desdemona's mistaken beliefs, Tybalt arrives to kill her, so Constance plays dead and allows him to drag her off to the crypt. Believing Constance to be dead, Juliet, true to form, runs off to the crypt to kill herself—reversing her role in the traditional crypt scene. However, true to the play's comic form, Constance prevents Juliet's crypt-side suicide by revealing she is still alive.

In this final crypt scene, the play's mysteries of identity are solved. Desdemona and Juliet fight over who loves Constance more: Desdemona with her honour-obsessed warrior friendship or Juliet with her passionate sexual love. Constance, who is no longer the timid mouse she once was, confidently demands an end to their (and perhaps Shakespeare's) "tragic tunnel vision" and tendency to oversimplify. Life, she insists, is much more complex than the traditional tragic characters suggest:

Life is . . .

a harmony of polar opposites,

with gorgeous mixed-up places in between. . . . (85)

It becomes clear that the two female Shakespearean characters represent different aspects of Constance's own identity—Jungian archetypes representing the warrior and the lover—that she now unites within herself.18 In addition, in a kind of rebirth, Constance finally realizes that she is both the "wise fool" that turns tragic plots into comic ones and the source comedies' mysterious author—the precursor to Shakespeare.

18 MacDonald hints right in the prologue that the play will present Jungian archetypes by referring to "the mind's opposing archetypes" (13) and the "merging of unconscious selves" (14).
Upon this realization, she is "warped" back to her office, where she discovers her green quill pen has turned to gold.

Although Constance’s identity is revealed, the full "closure" of the traditional, male comic genre is avoided: Constance’s career is no further along than it was at the beginning of the play, and she remains unmarried. Instead of solutions and certainties, Constance and her female counterparts embrace "questions" and "confusion" (85), with their open-ended possibilities for growth and change.

Given this plot, it is not surprising that Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet) has been read mostly as a feminist play. In particular, it has been read as a lesbian feminist, gender- and genre-bending comedy that parodies a canonized male author to achieve two goals: one, to question the way gender, sexuality, and identity are constructed in a patriarchal, homophobic society; and two, to break open the marginalizing and restrictive gender roles women are relegated to, both in traditional dramatic genres (like tragedy) and in patriarchal society more generally (see the articles by Hengen, Fortier, Porter, and Wilson). MacDonald makes passive female characters into active heroines and makes them more central to her story than the traditional male heroes (whom she trivializes); she emphasizes sisterhood; she uses Shakespeare’s own comic conventions to subvert traditional tragic plot lines that reduce women to passivity and victimhood; she puts lesbian and homosexual love on a par with heterosexual romance; her female heroine grows in strength and self-confidence to embrace her own, independent identity; and MacDonald not only reverses generic expectations, but forces them open, avoiding the cathartic, and
potentially politically conservative closure of traditional male dramatic comedy.

MacDonald's subversive parody of Shakespearean genres is a common feminist strategy. Feminist critic Regina Barreca notes that the narrative strategies used by women often do not conform to traditional views of comedy (7). For example, the male-authored New Comedy-style plays of Shakespeare and others typically end with all the loose ends tied up in a kind of closure: there is a cathartic recognition scene, the gaining (or regaining) of an inheritance, and the marriage of the hero to his beloved—all leading to the rebirth of society and the restoration of harmony and normal order. In contrast, women's comedy frequently lacks such closure or resolution (Barreca 14). Often there is no happy ending or joyous celebration (Barreca 8) but, when there is a nominally happy ending, it may contain elements usually seen as tragic (Barreca 10). Why such a difference? Barreca argues that women's comedy is used not as a social safety valve to purge negative emotions and send people home feeling good, but as an inflammatory device to transform audience desire and frustration into action. Consequently, process is emphasized in women's comedy and recognition replaces resolution (Barreca 17). Although tragedy is averted in Goodnight Desdemona and Constance does recognize her own identity, at the end of the play none of the three women is happily paired up with a lover, the "villain" Claude is unpunished, Constance's career is no further along than it was at the beginning, and the patriarchal academic society has not been reborn (see also Hengen 100-01, 102).¹⁹

¹⁹ According to Hengen, MacDonald claimed in a personal interview that there is a sort of marriage at the end of the play: "It's a marriage of Constance's selves. She marries herself" (qtd. in Hengen 102). If so, this parodies the male romance model in yet
Goodnight Desdemona is also a play in which women seize a cultural voice and assert their right to be authors and express their identity through authorship. Constance claims that, not only was her thesis about the tragedies correct, but she is the author whom Shakespeare borrowed from—a claim that makes no logical, but much symbolic, sense. She is, in effect, undermining the popular myths around Shakespeare by reminding us that no author is completely original and independent (Fortier 48). More importantly, Constance is asserting her equal right and ability to be an author and an influential voice. Likewise, through the play, MacDonald challenges patriarchal orthodoxy, daring not only to fiddle with Shakespeare’s lines and plots, but also to put her own words right up beside his on an equal, perhaps even superior, footing. The use of parody encourages us to regard the "Bard" with more critical distance, and puts emphasis on what is different: MacDonald’s own voice and perspective. In doing so, MacDonald makes room beside (if not in) the male dramatic canon for her female authorial voice. Fittingly, Goodnight Desdemona was first produced by the feminist theatre group Nightwood. As was noted in chapter four, Nightwood was founded to provide a forum for the voices of marginalized women—another way.

20 In doing so, Constance asserts her voice in the sphere of academic authorship against the mythologized figure of Shakespeare and the male academics (like Claude) and institutions (like Stratford and the universities) that support it.

21 Of course, that Shakespeare drew on already popular stories when writing his plays was well known to his contemporaries and is a commonplace of modern Shakespeare scholarship. However, this fact is not common knowledge outside educational circles and is not emphasized in pop culture lionizations of Shakespeare.
voices largely shut out by more male-centred theatrical institutions like Stratford.  

However, while *Goodnight Desdemona* certainly can be read from a feminist perspective, this is not the only reading it allows. After interviewing MacDonald about the play, Mark Fortier noted a larger agenda:

MacDonald is uncomfortable thinking of *Goodnight Desdemona* as a feminist work; she prefers to think of it as humanism through a woman's point of view, or through feminist language. Although MacDonald considers herself a feminist, the strongest impulses in her theatre are popular and populist, and she seems to feel that labelling her work as feminist or lesbian would jeopardize the pluralist audience that she is seeking. (50)

This populist streak and the desire to appeal to a wider audience are expressed not

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22 In fact, MacDonald researched *Goodnight Desdemona* by attending the 1987 Stratford productions of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Fortier 49). The latter production, which had homosexual themes and plenty of male bonding, is parodied in MacDonald's play when Constance confronts the macho, juvenile behaviour of the men in Verona (Fortier 49). Says Constance:

Those guys remind me of the Stratford shows I've seen, where each production has a Roman bath:
the scene might be a conference of state, but steam will rise and billow from the wings, while full-grown men in Velcro loin-cloths speak, while snapping towels at each other.
Why is it Juliet's scenes with her Nurse are never in a sauna. Or 'King Lear':
imagine Goneril and Regan, steaming as they plot the downfall of their Dad, while tearing hot wax from each other's legs;
Ophelia, drowning in a whirlpool full of naked women. Portia pumping iron-- (55)
only in Canadian references and in-jokes, but also in Goodnight Desdemona’s exploration of a very anglophone Canadian settler-invader condition. Given the "Miranda" phenomenon I discussed earlier, it is not surprising to find that this particular Canadian condition coincides in the play with a woman’s condition, allowing not only a feminist, but also a postcolonial reading of the work.

What is particularly "Canadian" and postcolonial about the play? First, and most obviously, it is set in Canada, specifically at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. As the names "Queen’s" and "Kingston" suggest, this is a Canadian community with a history of strong ties to Britain; Kingston was a United Empire Loyalist settlement and is home to both the Royal Military College and Fort Henry. Second, Constance is not only English Canadian, but stereotypically, comically English Canadian. MacDonald begins characterizing her heroine in the first scene by specifying symbolic props and costuming, such as a bright red Canadian toque that gives Constance the look of a female MacKenzie brother (14). Typical American influences on Canadian popular taste are indicated through Constance’s consumption of Velveeta cheese, Coors beer (14, 17), and Player’s Extra Light cigarettes (20). Next, Constance’s marginal position and stereotypically Canadian personality are revealed. She is too polite, too accommodating, too self-effacing, and insecure. She allows a student, Jill, to claim an unwarranted extension on a paper (16). When another student, Ramona, refers to her as "Professor," Constance stammers: "I’m not

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23 The allusion to the 1987 Stratford production of Romeo and Juliet being one such in-joke.
actually—I'm, I'm just an Assistant Professor" (19). Later in the play she constantly
plays the part of peacemaker—a role that, since Lester Pearson, has been seen as
typically Canadian. More tellingly, Constance is slavishly devoted to Claude Night
and willingly allows herself to be exploited by him, ghost-writing the papers that get
him a full professorship and the job at Oxford that she had hoped for herself. Drawing
on Margaret Atwood's suggestion in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian
Literature* that "Canada as a nation is a collective victim," Ann Wilson argues that the
willing aspect of this victimization "may not simply be an aspect of [Constance's]
individual character but may be an aspect of her Canadian-ness" ("Critical Revisions"
7, 11). It is all in keeping with the English Canadian tendency (noted in chapter four)
to aid, imitate, seek the approval of, and identify with, Britain. Constance is very
much a Canadian Miranda, the "dutiful daughter of empire."

If Constance is an anglophone settler-invader, the remnant of empire she is
most dutiful to is represented by Claude Night, a kind of imperialistic British Prospero
(with touches of Ferdinand).24 He is the empowered English man, "perfectly
groomed and brogued, speak[ing] with an Oxford accent, and ooz[ing] confidence"
(22). He exploits Constance who, like a good colonial, slaves away writing his papers
for him; and, in imperial fashion, it is Claude, the British boss, not Constance, who
enjoys the fruits of her unacknowledged labours. Constance's authorship of anything
other than her "indefensible" thesis is hidden, denied.

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24 In production, the actor playing Claude also played Othello and Tybalt, extremely
macho male characters (MacDonald 10, 11).
Claude is associated not only with England, but through his accent and the academic post he takes up, with Oxford. Oxford in the play represents the "superior" civilization of the "Mother Country" and is an object of colonial envy, insecurity, and desire; it is a post at Oxford that Constance dreams of. Ramona is rewarded for her efforts at a Canadian university by receiving a Rhodes scholarship to leave Canada and study in Oxford (19). The alternatives--Canadian universities in Kingston and Regina--are colonial and, therefore, less desirable. Constance is aghast at the idea of being sent to Regina (26). Oxford University, and to a lesser extent Queen's, are presented in the play as old, conservative, male-dominated institutions that perpetuate and preserve the imperial orthodoxy of Shakespeare's status as a unique, universal genius (and British "Bard") who must be defended against "heresy" (i.e., challenges to his authorship) (23). As Constance later explains to Desdemona, Claude, Oxford, Queen's and other parts of British-modelled academe are "sacred cow[s]" (41) that brook no contradiction in the writings of people like herself (a woman, a colonial)--particularly when such people dare to challenge their interpretation of the originality, status, and authorship of another sacred cow, Shakespeare. Indeed, like a father correcting a wayward child, Claude patronizingly dismisses Constance's revolutionary thesis about Shakespeare's sources as "heresy" (23), a "figment" like the Holy Grail, a "joke," that

\[\text{25 Some typically Canadian inter-regional snobbery (or a parody of it) is evident here. Constance, working in southern Ontario, prefers Kingston to the "flat," less developed prairie region of Regina, Saskatchewan (26). Regina (named to honour a British Queen) is farther from the imperial centre in London, England than Kingston is, and is not even close to Canada's industrial and financial centres. Therefore, it is a less desirable place to be (in the colonial mindset, at least).}\]
makes her a "laughingstock" and will not gain her her doctorate (the official sign of approval and acceptance by the academy) (22). Furthermore, Claude relegates Constance herself to the margins of academe, not only by sending her to Regina, but also by denying that she has the ability to be a major scholarly voice or to make an original contribution: "The best tenured minds in the world have sought to translate [the Gustav manuscript] for the past three hundred years. What gives you the notion you’re special?" (23).

Thus, Constance at the beginning of the play is a Canadian Miranda figure. On the one hand, she experiences relative privilege as a white, English Canadian with access to a middle-class environment; she is highly educated and has a position of some authority as an assistant professor at a prestigious Canadian university. On the other hand, as a Canadian and a woman, Constance experiences and even colludes in her double marginalization in comparison with her male, British, academically orthodox counterpart, Claude. Thus, at the beginning of the play, Constance is still Prospero’s child: immature, culturally dependent, lacking in liberation, and unsure even of her own identity, which she is assigned in the play to seek (28). (And, of course, uncertainty about our identity has become a Canadian cliche.) Commensurate with her childish status, she holds on to childish mementoes: her pickled appendix,

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26 Claude patronizes Constance as much as he patronizes her work. For example, he calls her a "titmouse" (22), and writes off her theories about the Gustav manuscript with "[amused] Oh Connie. You have such an interesting little mind" (24).

27 I should note that Constance’s privileged status is most apparent when we consider her in a larger, social context; within the play itself, it is her marginalized position that is emphasized.
Brownie wings, and a green feather pen made from a long dead pet (27).28

Over the course of the rest of the play Constance grows, like a colony, in maturity. She liberates herself from slavish devotion to Claude and the conservative, British imperial legacy he represents, discovering her own, independent identity, and proving her right to both an authoritative and authorial voice. She makes room for her Canadian voice to express itself, but whether on the margins or on the same playing field as the dominant orthodoxy shall be discussed later. A key part of this room-making involves her appropriation, recontextualization, hybridization, and refunctioning of two of Shakespeare's tragedies.29

MacDonald uses a variety of parodic techniques to squeeze out a little room for a Canadian voice beside the dominant voice and tradition of Shakespeare. She appropriates and repeats elements of Shakespeare's tragedies, such as plot lines, major characters, and famous scenes; she even quotes verbatim large numbers of his lines, which are distinguished from her own lines in Goodnight Desdemona's published text by italics. MacDonald then recontextualizes these elements to modern Canada, refunctoning their meanings for her own purposes and emphasizing what is different—that is, what is twentieth-century and Canadian. The most significant recontextualization occurs in the fact that all the Shakespearean elements we see

28 Ann Wilson ("Critical Revisions" 3-4, 11) and Joanne Tompkins ("Re-Citing Shakespeare" 21) make brief mention of the importance of Constance's Canadian-ness in her marginalization and identity confusion. Most critics have ignored the postcolonial implications in the play.

29 In fact, there are three tragedies conjured in the play: Othello, Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet, but the latter drama plays a less important part.
portrayed in the play are supposed to be occurring not on stage or "real life" or in a book, but in Constance's unconscious mind--her female, Canadian unconscious mind. Thus we see Shakespeare on stage through Canadian eyes: Constance's, MacDonald's, and (if the production is in a Canadian city) the audience's.

As a consequence, Shakespeare's texts do not have to be portrayed as their hegemonic wholes; MacDonald literally breaks them up, pulling out and using bits of scenes and lines in a highly comic pastiche to suit her purposes at any given moment. These bits of Shakespeare are recontextualized again through hybridization. Elements from the Constance plot, Othello, Hamlet, and Romeo and Juliet are mixed together, not only to create comedy (stemming from frustrated audience expectations about Shakespeare's plots), but also to draw on old meanings to create new ones. For example, when Constance's appearance in the Tybalt-Mercutio fight (52-53) interrupts Shakespeare's tragic plot trajectory and turns it into a comedy, the Romeo and Juliet play of forbidden heterosexual love becomes an exploration of the disillusionment that follows marriage, and more importantly, an exploration of gender roles and the forbidden love of homosexuality and lesbianism. Similarly, when the Othello plot joins both the Constance and Romeo and Juliet plots in act three, scene seven (79), the tragic tales of love become a tale about identity: Constance's struggle to decide which female archetype to follow, Juliet the Lover or Desdemona the Warrior. By breaking up and hybridizing Shakespeare's texts, MacDonald creates fissures in them, allowing for new influences to seep in. Like Malouf in Blood Relations, she contaminates the canonical text in order to question it.
Another important form of recontextualization occurs when MacDonald takes lines associated with particular Shakespearean roles and reassigns them to different characters. Particularly interesting is the way in which she has Desdemona and Juliet appropriate the voices and roles of Othello and Romeo respectively. Picking up on hints in Shakespeare that Desdemona is interested in a warrior lifestyle, MacDonald portrays her as a battle-hungry warrior like Othello, dreaming of joining an Amazonian army (35), actively entering the fray against the Turks (36-37), and returning from battle proudly carrying a severed head (39). In addition, Iago begins to work his gulling tricks on Desdemona, not Othello, making her jealously suspect Constance of an affair with her husband and encouraging her to plan the Canadian’s violent death (39, 43-52); in these scenes, Iago keeps his Shakespearean lines and Desdemona responds with Othello’s, changed slightly or fleshed out when necessary by MacDonald with her own pseudo-Shakespearean verse. This parodic "repetition with difference" challenges the traditional representation of Desdemona as the submissive wife and victim of Othello. It allows her more speaking time and an active, aggressive persona. Offering a new role model or archetype, Desdemona encourages the meek Canadian Constance to see her slavish devotion to the Englishman Claude with critical distance and to reject further self-abasement. For

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30 Constance notes that Shakespeare’s Desdemona is actually very much like Othello in her "fascination with violence," "her love of horror stories," and the fact that she was independent-minded and active enough to have "deceived her father to elope" (16-17). Of course, in Shakespeare’s play Desdemona’s early assertive behaviour crumbles into submissiveness in the face of Othello’s unjust rage. Both she and, initially, Constance accept the abuse of their beloveds with little complaint.
example, having witnessed yet another example of Desdemona's Othello-like fury,

Constance begins to reflect on her own situation:

Boy, Shakespeare really watered her [Desdemona] down, eh? . . .

I wish I were more like Desdemona.

Next to her I'm just a little wimp. . . .

people've always made a fool of me

without my even knowing. Gullible.


O, what would Desdemona do to Claude,

had she the motive and the cue for passion

that I have? She would drown all Queen's with blood,

and cleave Claude Night's two typing fingers from

his guilty hands. . . .

She'd kill him in cold blood and in blank verse,

then smear the ivied walls in scarlet letters spelling

'thief'!

To think, I helped him use me: a gull, a stooge, . . .

O Vengeance! (49-50)

Constance's "dutiful daughter" attitude begins to crack.

The treatment of the Romeo and Juliet roles is more complicated. As Juliet and

Romeo engage in their forbidden pursuit of love with Constance, they sometimes

retain their old gender/genre roles and lines. However, when these traditional attempts
at wooing appear to fail, they literally switch roles—not only by cross-dressing, but by
taking on each other's lines. For example, Juliet dresses as a boy (66) and actively
pursues Constance with masculine aggressiveness, taking on the part of Romeo
wooing Juliet (now represented by Constance) in a parody of the balcony scene (67-
72):

    Juliet: *below* But soft! What light through yonder
    window breaks?
    *It is the East, and Constantine the sun!*
    Constance: Uh oh.
    Juliet: He speaks.
    Constance: Romeo? Is that you?
    Juliet: *I know not how to tell thee who I am.*
    My sex, dear boy, *is hateful to myself,
    because it is belov'ed not by thee;
    therefore I wear tonight, this boyish hose.* (68)

Sometimes roles are merged, breaking all rules. For example, at the end of act three,
scene five, in a cleverly comic and parodic moment, Romeo arrives to repeat the just
parodied balcony scene between Constance and the Romeo-ized Juliet; he takes his
traditional position under the balcony and spouts something close to his regular lines:
"Constantine . . . it is I, Romiet . . . " (72). However, as his feminized name hints,
he is dressed in Juliet's costume of "rose-hued silk" (66, 81).

All the role switching and role contamination create an environment in which
Constance, too, can try on new roles as she pursues her new, mysterious identity. In act three, scene five, she takes on Juliet's position on the balcony (67-68); in act three, scene three she becomes Romeo hassling the Capulet servant with the banquet invitations (60) and in the banquet scene itself she is again a Romeo figure, crashing the party, and angering Tybalt by attracting both his cousin Juliet and his cousin-by-marriage, Romeo (63-64, 66).

This kind of recontextualization, with its parodic role reversals, creates comedy. However, as several critics have noted, its effect is also subversively political. This useful feminist technique does not simply reverse, but breaks open the limiting conventions—both generic and gendered—associated with Shakespeare. Female characters are freed from their traditional silence, passivity, and victimization; they become more vocal, assertive, and active. However, the potentially liberating effects of the parody are not limited to gender roles and to women's voices. Once restrictions on gender roles are broken open and greater voice is given to female characters, the door is opened for the breaking of other restrictions and the speaking of other voices, including Canadian ones. Watching Juliet and Desdemona become more vocal, assertive, and active, Constance becomes so, too, gradually shedding not only her feminine insecurity, but her stereotypically colonial Canadian insecurity as well. Like other Canadian Miranda figures, she undergoes a maturing process that includes finding her voice as an author.

This process is gradual—just as Canada's own progress towards independence from Britain was gradual. The seeds of Constance's rebellion against the dominant
voices of Shakespeare and his Prospero-like academic defenders are evident in her dogged pursuit of a "heretical" thesis. However, when she commits her first radically subversive act in act two, scene one by derailing the traditional tragic action of Othello and, in effect, *re-writting* it, her first response is one of "cultural cringe": apologizing madly in typical Canadian fashion, she attempts to restore Shakespeare’s text to its original, canonized state:

CONSTANCE: Omigod, what have I done?

*She grabs the handkerchief from OTHELLO and tries unsuccessfully to stuff it back into IAGO’S pocket*

Look, just forget you ever saw me here, okay?!

*She grabs the pillow and offers it to OTHELLO*

Here.

*OTHELLO ignores the pillow and proceeds to bind and threaten IAGO*

*aside* I’ve wrecked a masterpiece. I’ve ruined the play,

I’ve turned Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’ to a farce. (30)

She is too insecure simply to accept compliments when Desdemona and Othello praise her for qualities (scholarliness, chastity) that made her marginal in her world (33), and her still peacemaker-type nature is demonstrated in battle, which nauseates and terrifies her (39).

Nevertheless, under their praise and with a warrior Desdemona to act as role model and encourager, Constance begins (like Morag in *The Diviners*) to find her
internal Caliban and rebel against her academic Prospero/Ferdinand. That is, she begins to recognize that she has been exploited by the British academic, that Claude has taken something that was hers (authorship and its accompanying rewards), and she begins to rebel against him, academe, and the traditional views that justified her marginalization. For example, when Constance first describes how she helped Claude’s career only to be abandoned by him, she still defends her exploitive master: “But never did he mean to hurt me” (40). She even admits to her own complicity in her exploitation (41). However, Desdemona teaches her how to re-interpret her submission as oppression:

DESDEMONA: Ten years of ghostly writing for a thief? Thy mind hath proved a cornucopia
To slake the glutton, sloth, and he hath cooked
his stolen feast on thy Promethean heat.

CONSTANCE: You really think so?
DESDEMONA: Ay! Thou wast in thrall;
ten years an inky slave in paper chains!

CONSTANCE: Yeah.

DESDEMONA: He wears the laurel wreath that should be thine. (40) Desdemona even counsels a Calibanesque coup: "Gird thou thy trembling loins,/ and slay Professor Night!" (41). Encouraged by Desdemona, Constance reinterprets her position under British-dominated academic imperialism and begins, like Caliban, to curse:
I've slaved for years to get my doctorate, but in a field like mine that's so well trod, you run the risk of contradicting men who've risen to the rank of sacred cow, and dying on the horns of those who rule the pasture with an iron cud. Not that I'm some kind of feminist. I shave my legs and I get nervous in a crowd-- it's just that . . . I was labelled as a crackpot, by the sacred herd of Academe; and after years spent as a laughingstock, I finally came to think that it was true.32 But, Desdemona, now that I've met you, I want to stand out in that field and cry, 'Bullshit!' (41)

The effects of this consciousness-raising session are evident when Constance "warps" into Romeo and Juliet and again alters, rewrites Shakespeare's text. This time she is unapologetic about tampering with a "masterpiece." She is also beginning to be more purposefully active and in control of her identity. Whereas on Cyprus her

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31 This is the second time in this section that slavery images occur, linking Constance at least metaphorically with those oppressed under an imperial, rather than a strictly patriarchal, system.

32 The emphasis is mine. The internalization of the colonizer's marginalizing view of the colonized is one of the most insidious side-effects of colonization.
identity as "seer to the Queens of academe" is largely assigned to her by Shakespeare's characters, in Verona she is less passive. When Romeo mistakenly assumes from her clothing that she is a boy, she takes the opportunity to rechristen herself "Constantine," a "roving pedant lad" from "Cyprus" (53). She is no longer just an object to be defined by the European colonizer (as "crackpot" or "seer"): she is beginning to be a subject, someone who defines herself.

She also becomes less passive in other ways. She starts actively pursuing the mystery of the fool and the Gustav manuscript's author. She also begins to explore her thwarted sexuality, first through kissing Romeo, then (more potently) through her growing lesbian attraction to Juliet. On one level Constance's venture into lesbianism is an exploration of her sexual identity. On another more symbolic level, it is a kind of female rebellion against oppressive gender norms. Moreover, sexuality has implications in colonialism.

Patriarchal imperialism frequently attempts to control, suppress, and even demonize as "deviant" the sexuality of women and of the colonized. Both white women and non-white colonized male and female "Others" were believed to be essentially promiscuous; hence, they had to be controlled to prevent miscegenation and to preserve white male power.33 To return to the Tempest metaphor for a moment, Prospero jealously guards Miranda's sexuality from both Caliban and Ferdinand and,

33 From an imperialist point of view, miscegenation was to be avoided at all costs partly because it broke down the barrier between "us" and "them," and made it more difficult, therefore, to justify the colonization of the "Other" on the basis that he/she was inherently, racially inferior.
in a sense, from Miranda herself. He only allows its expression under certain conditions: in marriage with a socially and racially appropriate partner. Both Shakespeare and Prospero deny and demonize Caliban's sexuality as something dangerous and deviant: as figured through rape. In *The Tempest* and in some postcolonial rewritings of the play, Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda is not just an expression of violent sexuality, but an attack on Prospero's power. Thus, Constance's lesbianism could be read as Miranda rebelling against the controlling, colonizing, father figure in her life, Claude. Her feelings for Juliet violate both sexual "norms" and—in the subverting of the relentless (if ambiguously staged) heterosexuality of Shakespeare's romances—generic ones.

Despite her growing maturity, Constance exhibits the chronic Canadian slowness (almost inability) to recognize ourselves, both in terms of identity and in praising ourselves for our artistic accomplishments. She misinterprets all the hints dropped throughout the play by the Hamletian chorus and the Gustav manuscript that she is both the wise fool and the author of Shakespeare's comic source plays. In act three, scene six, for example, the chorus confronts Constance in the graveyard with increasingly blatant clues as to her identity. Unfortunately, Constance is hampered by too great a familiarity with and reliance on the original Shakespearean text (British culture); hence, she misinterprets the chorus's clues, and fails to see that she, a mere Canadian woman, is the wise fool and author being spoken about:

**CONSTANCE:** A ghostly fool? A jester from the grave? Are you—?

You couldn't be. What play is this? Could you be . . . Yorick?!
GHOST: Na-a-ay. You’re it.

CONSTANCE: You’re it?

GHOST: Alas poor fool, you know me well.

CONSTANCE: I do? Don’t speak in riddles, tell me what you mean.

GHOST: I mean you script a woman, and a fool
it’s not a man you seek, the Manuscript . . .

CONSTANCE: Do you know something of the Manuscript?!
Do you know who the author is?

GHOST: A lass.

CONSTANCE: I know, ‘alas, alas poor Yorick’, so?! Who wrote this thing?

GHOST: A beardless bard.

CONSTANCE: A boy?

GHOST: A lass!

CONSTANCE: Oh here we go again, ‘alas’! Who is the author?

GHOST: A Fool, a Fool.

CONSTANCE: The Fool and the Author are one in the same?

GHOST: Ha, ha, ha, ha.

CONSTANCE: What’s his name?! (73-74)

However, while Constance is slow to recognize herself, she does so by the end of the play. Interestingly, this moment does not come until Constance has grown from unassertive victim led around by others, to self-confident woman able to command and
lead too. Her attainment of this adult stage in development is illustrated by the way she commands Shakespeare's characters, Juliet and Desdemona, not only to stop fighting, but to stop "all the tragic tunnel vision around here." The "tunnel vision" she refers to is the restrictive way of thinking about identity, genre, and roles associated with the old patriarchal imperial tradition (85). Then Constance asserts the legitimacy of the view that life is complex, hybrid, "a big mess," "a harmony of polar opposites,/ with gorgeous mixed-up places in between,/ where inspiration steams up from a rich/ Sargasso stew that's odd and flawed and full/ of gems and worn-out boots and sunken ships--" (85). She is also, in essence, describing and asserting the legitimacy of her own identity—one that is not a one-dimensional role (female or male, gay or straight, colonizer or colonized, tragic or comic) assigned to her by an imperial or patriarchal master. Instead, it is a hybrid, multiple, and ambivalent identity that she embraces, and one that is not only postmodern, but very Canadian. Only once she has accepted this kind of identity as legitimate is Constance able to recognize herself as the wise Fool and Author (86). This moment of self-knowledge and self-affirmation is crowned on stage by the symbolic transformation of her green (and hence "immature") quill pen into gold (87).

Elements of traditional comedy are parodied in these closing moments of the play as the discovery of Constance's identity mimics the typical recognition scene in which the hero's true identity is revealed and he/she is rewarded with an inheritance and a place in society. However, while this formula is repeated, it is repeated with differences in order to subvert the very conservative values (order, static roles,
heterosexuality) romantic comedies were traditionally used to uphold.

MacDonald's strange assertion that Constance is the author of Shakespeare's source texts is particularly relevant to this discussion and deserves a little further "unpacking." At first it seems a travesty of a happy ending: Constance recognizes who she is, but it is impossible for her actually to be that person, since Shakespeare lived hundreds of years before she was born. How could she have written his source texts? The key is not to take the claim as literally true but, in a play concerned with Jungian archetypes, to take it as psychologically symbolic. MacDonald's play, like other Canadian works re-visioning Miranda figures, is very interested in the idea of a Canadian character overcoming an imposed or internalized sense of gender and colonial inferiority (relative to the parental figure of Prospero/Britain/Shakespeare) to find her own authorial voice. When Constance claims to have influenced Shakespeare, to have been his literary "father," MacDonald is symbolically freeing herself and other writers from a paralysing version of Bloom's "anxiety of influence." Shakespeare is no longer "the" artistic influence and source of art. He is no longer the intimidating father of anglophone literature in whose shadow Canadian writers remain eternally children—pale imitations controlled by his genetic inheritance, slavishly mimicking his model, and unable to be original authors themselves. In a liberated spirit,

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34 A less well-known anglophone dramatic re-visioning of Shakespeare uses a similar tactic to tackle the Canadian colonial "anxiety of influence." There is nothing overtly "Canadian" about Christopher Dafoe's comedy The Frog Galliard (1977), but it does demythologize the "Bard of Avon" by making Shakespeare a character and portraying him as an irritating, obscenely opportunistic youngster competing with one of his own literary predecessors, Robert Greene. In fact, Dafoe makes Shakespeare a plagiarist; hence, like MacDonald, he challenges Shakespeare's image as an original genius. By
MacDonald describes her play not as an "adaptation" of Shakespeare, but as a "spin-off" (Fortier 50). In an adaptation, Shakespeare would remain dominant; however, in a spin-off, the Shakespeare that is spun-off from becomes marginal, a means to another end. MacDonald's spin-off starts with an inherited tradition (Shakespeare), but goes beyond it (through parody) to create something new that has its own life and can stand on its own. MacDonald suggests the possibility that a female and Canadian writer can be an author, and an authoritative one too—an originator. It may seem paradoxical that she uses Shakespeare in order to assert this literary independence, but it is in keeping with the ambivalence of settler-invader culture.

This does not mean MacDonald hates Shakespeare or wants to root him out of Canadian art altogether. Not at all. Typically settler-invader Canadian, her attitude is ambivalent. In an interview with Rita Much, MacDonald notes:

[pl]oking fun at institutions is iconoclastic and girls are not supposed to be rebels35. . . . I take something people identify with or revere, like Shakespeare, and say, "Excuse me, while I turn this upside down." I would never lampoon something that I hated. (MacDonald, Interview 136; qtd. in Hengen 103)

She does not completely reject or destroy tradition. In reworking Shakespeare, as Mark Fortier notes, MacDonald paradoxically "retrieves a rapport with Shakespeare demythologizing Shakespeare, Dafoe makes it seem possible for others to write too.

35 Neither, as we recall, are Canadians—the "dutiful daughters of empire" so unlike their rebellious cousins in the United States.
which was lost for her in tragedy" (50); even her re-visioning of him is achieved paradoxically through Shakespearean language and comic devices (Fortier 50).

*Goodnight Desdemona* becomes a way of working through a female, Canadian, theatre performer's ambivalence about the "Bard." And it is a way to shake up Shakespeare and the canon's hegemony, to de-lionize him a little through subversive parody, to refunction his work to make room for other voices. As in many of the Australian plays in chapter three, some connection with the inherited colonial tradition is kept, but its problematic aspects are challenged.

There is one final comment to be made about *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* from a postcolonial point of view: as Mark Fortier notes (51), the play ignores the issue of race, even though this has been a key issue in other adaptations of *Othello*, such as Murray Carlin's *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, or Charles Marowitz's 1972 *An Othello*. This is in keeping with the tendency of Canadian Miranda figures (and white, anglophone settler-invaders in Canada generally) to ignore Caliban, the possible racial "Other" who is also oppressed under imperialism. In conversation with Fortier, MacDonald indeed acknowledged that another writer might choose to approach the issue through a black Desdemona (51). In fact, some other writers have approached racial issues through a black Desdemona figure: British Jewish dramatist Arnold Wesker in *Lady Othello* (1987) and, more recently, African-Canadian playwright Djanet Sears in *Harlem Duet* (1997).

* Fortier also points out that MacDonald's play elides issues of class and wonders "if gay men would not find its treatment of their concerns a bit too cavalier" (51).
As I noted earlier in this chapter, MacDonald is not the only Canadian playwright to rewrite a Shakespearean text to give emphasis to the voice of his female characters, although it is by far the most overtly postcolonial in spirit. Andrew Batten’s *Romeo and Rosaline* (1994), for example, gives voice to the unseen, unheard “Rosaline” whom Romeo loves before meeting Juliet. From a textual cipher, Rosaline becomes the heroine: a witty, intelligent, active, feminist figure, who not only fights duels with Mercutio and wins, but rejects the victimizing and restrictive conventions of Juliet and Romeo’s tragic love in favour of a possible union of equals with a mature, intelligent Benvolio. However, aside from the way this fits in with a Canadian tendency to focus on and give voice to Shakespeare’s female figures, there is nothing particularly postcolonial or recognizably Canadian about the play, either as script or production. It may be significant that Batten wrote the entire play in a Shakespeare-style blank verse that, unlike MacDonald’s forays into pseudo-Shakespearean language, is not intentionally parodic. This might be interpreted as a bit of “cultural cringe,” in which an apprentice playwright (this was his first produced play) attempts to prove his worthiness by showing what a good imitator he can be of the supreme master’s voice.

Another Canadian rewriting of Shakespeare that gives greater voice to women, without being overtly “postcolonial,” is *The Haunted House Hamlet* (1986) produced

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37 Unlike MacDonald, who introduced colloquial Canadian speech into her play even in its Shakespearean scenes, Batten deliberately imitates (rather well) Shakespearean verse throughout. In its first production at the Alumnae Theatre in Toronto, there was little in terms of setting (a restriction of the New Ideas Festival), but the costumes were decidedly Renaissance in style.
by Vancouver’s experimental Tamahnous Theatre during Kate Weiss’s tenure as Artistic Director. The play was "adapted" by her husband, Peter Eliot Weiss, and staged in environmental fashion (K. Weiss 24). The play was successful enough that it was re-mounted three times: during Kate Weiss’s first season in 1986-87 in a fifty-seat venue in Vancouver; during her second season, when a rewritten version was sent to the Montreal Festival of the Americas; and, due to public demand in Vancouver, during her third season in Vancouver once again, but in a bigger venue (K. Weiss 24). Although I do not have the space to go into details of the script or production, I do want to note that, again, the idea of giving stronger voice to the female characters and their concerns was central to the adaptation. In an interview with Peggy Thompson, Kate Weiss explained:

With *The Haunted House Hamlet*, my approach was very practical. I wasn’t interested in doing a play with eight men and two weak women, so I said to Peter [Eliot Weiss], "I want to cast four women in this show, so you come up with some kind of artistic base out of which this comes, so it’s not arbitrary, casting male parts as women." And so we took it back to issues of the family and issues of marriage; it became a play about many different marriages. (K. Weiss 26)

The result, notes Thompson, is that the "women in *Hamlet* become as strong and therefore as tragic as the men" (K. Weiss 26). This emphasis on the marginalized female voice was in keeping with the new mandate element Kate Weiss brought to Tamahnous during her tenure: a "commitment to empower audiences and especially
women" (K. Weiss 24). The empowerment of the local Canadian audiences came through the environmental staging of the adaptation, in which audience members chose which actors they followed through the building and which scenes they witnessed (K. Weiss 25). Unlike a conventional production of Hamlet, in which the audience would sit passively in the dark absorbing the sanctified canonical text, this kind of staging allowed the audience to take a hand in reconstructing the text and have a greater say in the creation of the theatrical experience.

During the second season of Weiss’s tenure (1987-88), an "adaptation" for two actors called Mr and Mrs Macbeth was produced. Like Canadian Chris Philpott’s film, Scenes From Macbeth (1989), it portrayed the Macbeths as modern-day corporate climbers (K. Weiss 25). The female voice was given emphasis here through the fact that the female actor, Patti Allan, played not only Lady Macbeth and the witches, but all the male parts other than Macbeth (who was played by Stephen Aberle) (K. Weiss 25). Weiss comments that the response of both audiences and critics to this production was mixed. Many people did not like the female actor playing the male roles. She interpreted this reaction as a discomfort with empowered women: "When I look at the body of work I have done at Tamahous, the more feminist or female empowering the show was, the less well it was received. And I can’t help feeling that there’s still enormous resistance to these ideas" (K. Weiss 25-26). Of course, it could also have been the particular actresses’ performances or a dislike of cross-gender casting in general that produced the negative response to Mr and Mrs Macbeth.
Finally, Ken Gass's 1993 play, *Claudius*, appropriates *Hamlet*. Despite its title, the play takes a female character, Gertrude, as its focus. I think Gass's play is a particularly interesting touchstone for this "non"-postcolonial, female-figure-oriented rewriting. Given Gass's past history as the founder of the Factory Theatre Lab in 1970, the first professional (if alternate) theatre in Canada to have as its nationalist mandate the production of only Canadian plays, one wonders why he chose to rework so canonized a British play as *Hamlet*. Had the radical champion of Canadian dramatic literature gone conservative in middle age, or does one find, upon reading/viewing *Claudius*, a nationalist re-visioning in a vein similar to MacDonald's? In fact, it seems one finds neither. In the foreword to the published script, Gass explains his purpose:

> Why the Hamlet story? Why not? It wasn't original with Shakespeare and, anyway, this has nothing (almost) to do with Shakespeare. But, like many great legends, it rests firmly in our consciousness and allows me, the writer, to tinker around, to do my mischief with a minimum of explanation. (Gass, Foreword 7)

One gets no sense from this of an "anxiety of influence" problem, or a colonial "cultural cringe" in which Shakespeare is borrowed in an attempt to bask in reflected glory--although it is possible that this could be an unconscious desire on the author's part, or an unintended effect on the audience in performance. Nor does Gass's foreword suggest a postcolonial desire to challenge Shakespeare's canonized position. On the surface at least, it seems simply a matter-of-fact recognition of Shakespeare's universality defined not as "superiority" but as "widely known"-ness--a quality that
makes his plots and characters a useful shorthand for exploring certain themes.\footnote{This is reminiscent of the way Australian playwright Michael Gow alludes to Shakespeare in \textit{Away}.} Perhaps in 1993, 23 years after the founding of Factory Theatre Lab, Gass (and maybe Weiss and Batten) has grown beyond both the "cringe" and the need for radical nationalist or postcolonialist strategies? Yet there is a postcolonial issue at stake here. \textbf{Claudius} was produced in Toronto—a major centre for the production of new anglophone Canadian plays—by the \textit{Canadian Rep} Theatre at the Factory Theatre (Gass, \textit{Claudius} 8). Yet, even here, 23 years after the founding of Factory Lab, the familiar, useful shorthand that Gass (or Batten or Weiss) can count on a Canadian audience knowing is still \textit{British} drama. Despite the efforts of Gass and his contemporaries, has any Canadian play become so familiar that it can be appropriated, adapted, and alluded to with such confidence? That which is local is unknown even in the locality that spawned it.

What \textit{Claudius} does share with \textit{Goodnight Desdemona} is the way in which a relatively marginal female character, Gertrude, takes centre stage, becoming more vocal, more active, and resisting tragic victimization. She is a bit like Constance at the end of MacDonald’s play: psychologically self-aware, more confident in exploring her sexuality, active, and able to take command of a situation. I do not have room to summarize the whole play, but one example of Gertrude’s behaviour may suffice: the ante-penultimate scene, which is a version of the fatal duel scene in \textit{Hamlet}. In Shakespeare’s version, it is Hamlet who takes active revenge against Claudius, while
Gertrude is an unwitting victim, poisoned by the drugged chalice. In Gass’s play, this scenario is repeated with differences: Hamlet is already dead by his own hand in this scene and it is Gertrude who takes revenge on Claudius by suborning Laertes into killing him in a "practice" duel. Gertrude then takes over the throne herself, confident that she will rule the kingdom more wisely than the men.

II. Canadian Regionalism and Shakespeare

Mitchell’s Cruel Tears

There are other ways in which Canadian playwrights have rewritten Shakespeare that are more interesting from a postcolonial point of view. As was discussed in chapter four, regionalism is a key part of Canada’s "national" character. Ken Mitchell’s Cruel Tears (1975) takes Othello as an intertext for a work whose ultimate purpose seems to be to represent on stage a particular regional culture (Saskatchewan working-class) that would not traditionally have been seen as suitable material for "high" tragedy.39

The western regionalism of Cruel Tears is in keeping with the fact that it was commissioned by a regional theatre, the Persephone Theatre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. It was first performed there on March 15, 1975,40 towards the end of

39 In this way, Cruel Tears is reminiscent of Lillo’s eighteenth-century domestic tragedy, The London Merchant (1731), which took the then unusual step of using not aristocratic life, but middle-class, mercantile life as the setting for tragedy.

40 The production was directed by Brian Richmond.
the first big boom period of nationalistic, deliberately "Canadian" play writing. The work reflects the paradoxical tendency of "nationalist" drama at that time to express itself in celebrations of *regional* history and culture. It was sufficiently popular that it was revived by the Persephone on May 28, 1976 and then opened on June 8, 1976 at another western theatre, the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, as part of Festival Habitat. The production then went east to the Centaur Theatre in Montréal, Québec to open on July 5, 1976 as a cultural component of the XXI Olympics being held in that city (Mitchell 10).

MacDonald's re-visioning of *Othello* is much more overtly Shakespearean than Mitchell's: it quotes large chunks of the play, keeps not only characters but their names, and replays scenes in detail. And, as comic parody, it depends upon audience recognition and knowledge of the Shakespearean text for its effects. In contrast, Mitchell's play can stand alone as a tragedy, making perfect sense whether the audience recognizes elements of *Othello* in the play or not. In *Cruel Tears* that which is local is paramount. *Othello* is very much an intertext in the literal sense that one has to read between the lines to see it, since Shakespeare's own lines are not said on stage. *Othello* is alluded to in the basic outlines of the plot and in the character relationships. The tragic hero, Johnny Roychuck, is a long-time bachelor with a macho occupation (a truck driver, one of the "True Knights of the Road" [26]) and more bravery and talent than his compatriots. He has an Iago figure in Jack Deal, who is outwardly his best friend, but secretly resents the fact that Johnny is more popular and successful. As in *Othello*, this resentment seems to be particularly strong because
Johnny belongs to an ethnic group (Ukrainian) that Jack thinks is beneath his own.\textsuperscript{41}

After resisting romantic attachments for years, Johnny falls deeply in love with Kathy Jensen, his own Desdemona: a younger, very innocent woman who, as his boss's daughter, has higher social status in the community than he does. As in \textit{Othello}, there is family opposition to the match, because of his background:

\begin{quote}
JOHNNY: . . . 'Cause I grew up somewhere on the wrong side of town.
And your family won't want to
Admit I'm the one to
Put their baby in a wedding gown. (30)
\end{quote}

Jack/Iago has a bickering-filled marriage\textsuperscript{42} with Flora, an Emilia figure who befriends Kathy/Desdemona and gets from her a scarf that was a wedding gift from Johnny's mother. As in \textit{Othello}, Jack tries to ruin Johnny, first by telling Earl Jensen--the truckers' boss and Kathy's father--about Kathy and Johnny's secret relationship.\textsuperscript{43} When the initially irate father becomes reconciled to the match and even promotes Johnny (as Othello becomes governor of Cyprus), Jack craftily gulls Johnny into thinking Kathy is cheating on him with one of his colleagues, a younger,

\textsuperscript{41} Tension between British settler-invaders and Ukrainian settler-invaders is a part of local western Canadian history.

\textsuperscript{42} See, for example, 35-37. Although the language is different, the tone of their relationship is remarkably similar to that of Iago and Emilia. Like Iago, Jack even half suspects Johnny of sleeping with his wife (38).

\textsuperscript{43} When Jack tells Kathy's father about the elopement, he uses riddling language and evokes animal sexual imagery (41-45), just as Iago does with Desdemona's father, Brabantio, in act one, scene one of \textit{Othello}. 
more fashionable man named Ricky. This Ricky is a hippy version of Cassio. As a key piece of "evidence" of Kathy's infidelity, Jack uses the embroidered scarf, which he takes from Flora and gives to Ricky. Driven to jealous rage, particularly when he sees Ricky with the scarf, Johnny strangles Kathy in their bed. " Flora arrives and reveals to Johnny's horror that he was tricked by Jack; in revenge, Johnny stabs his faithless friend.

Although the structure of Othello is obviously there, what is paramount in Mitchell's play is careful delineation of local life and language. Playwright Ken Mitchell was very familiar with regional culture, having been born in Moosejaw, Saskatchewan in 1940, and his interest in examining regional life is in keeping with theatrical trends at the time the play was written. His stage directions at the beginning of the play evoke a typical prairie environment:

*The houselights are off; the stage is black. The VOCAL CHORUS begins to make the sound of the prairie wind moaning. . . . As the "Overture" is played, the lights come up slowly, suggesting the rise of a bright prairie sun in early May. The sound of a meadowlark trilling is heard. As the "Overture" reaches full tempo, the light becomes hot. A mime suggests a prairie environment.* (13)

Within this prairie landscape Mitchell represents different facets of working-class Saskatchewan life in the 1970s: plaid-shirted truckers boozing it up in local beer

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4 " The one occasion Cruel Tears uses Shakespearean language occurs just before the strangling, when Kathy sings a version of Desdemona's "Willow Song" (133).
parlours; the daily grind of the trailer-park housewife; a Ukrainian-Canadian-style wedding; the prejudice of some English Canadians towards local "ethnic" groups and Native peoples (see 42, 50).\textsuperscript{45} The language of the characters is also working-class Canadian. Of particular importance is the Country and Western music, which sets the local mood and helps to tell the story. The Country and Western song tradition--of truckers, romantic heartbreak, betrayal by best friends and lovers, and tragic violence--is conflated with a high British tragedy (Othello) that also contains romantic heartbreak, betrayal by best friends and lovers, and tragic violence. At first the conflation seems absurd, since Country and Western music has often been looked down upon as a "low," melodramatic art form at the opposite end of the cultural spectrum from "high" culture artifacts like Shakespeare. However, the juxtaposition of the music and Shakespeare's plot reveals that the high-art British scenario is not so different from its country cousin.

One could interpret the transcontextualization of Othello to Saskatchewan in two ways. The plot and characters of Cruel Tears repeat Shakespeare's tragedy with local differences to suggest to an aware audience that the situation of ordinary Western Canadians--a Saskatchewan truck driver and his wife--is not marginal, but just as suitable for tragedy as the lives of European nobles were in the past. As such, one could read this as a version of "cultural cringe" in which Shakespeare's status is borrowed to bolster the legitimacy of the marginal, regional tragedy. On the other hand, one could read the play as a confident regional challenge to the old idea of what

\textsuperscript{45} The prejudices here are similar to those portrayed in Blood Relations and Away.
is a suitable context or subject for tragedy, in which the allusions to Othello invite the audience to compare the two plays and see their regional work placed on the same level. It is also possible for both attitudes to be operative at once and the intentions of the playwright may not be the same as those of the director and cast of a particular production, or those of a particular audience. In either case, parody’s tendency to emphasize what is different about the "new" work puts regional life in high relief.

While the anglophone Canadian plays I have examined in this chapter exhibit a range of approaches to re-visioning Shakespeare, some interesting tendencies appear. The strong and critical anti-British/anti-

Tempest strain found in Third World and some Australian plays seems to be attenuated in anglophone Canada. Why? Perhaps because, for English Canadians at least, Britain has often seemed less of an obstacle to the creation of an independent Canadian identity and culture than an aid, a bulwark against the threat of absorption by the United States. Also largely absent is the soul-searching self-criticism of the settler-invader’s role in oppressing others—a theme which is so prominent in many Australian settler-invader plays. Attention is most often given not to the brutal oppression of indigenous "Others," but to the almost genteel marginalization of ambivalent settler-invaders. (Again, it may be that the always imminent threat of American assimilation allows anglophone Canadians to distract themselves with other issues.) Resistance to marginalization appears in the representation of female characters seeking their own (often artistic) voice, and in the serious depiction of oft-ignored local cultures. As I have tried to suggest, I believe these phenomena can be linked to the dynamics of English Canada’s ambivalent
relationships with Britain, the United States, and French Canada. Now I wish to explore the complex effects of this nexus a little further by looking at one francophone "regional" re-visioning of Shakespeare. This piece is deeply affected by borders, and particularly the political, cultural, and linguistic ones left over from the clash of empires.

Robert Gurik's *Hamlet, prince du Québec*

Contrary to what a postcolonialist might expect, England's national poet is popular in francophone Québec. In fact, Shakespeare is popular amongst Québécois sovereignist artists—those seeking recognition of Québec's unique cultural and linguistic space through political independence from the rest of Canada. One of Québec's foremost directors, sovereignist Robert Lepage, made his name internationally directing Shakespeare.⁴ Closer to home, his francophone/anglophone co-production with Gordon McCall of *Romeo and Juliet* (1989), and his productions of Michel Garneau's French-language "tradaptations"—part translation, part adaptation—of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (*Macbeth de William Shakespeare* 1978), *The

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⁴ The particular production that vaulted Lepage into the international spotlight was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the National Theatre in London, England in 1992. His high profile production could be read as an ironic reverse conquest of the heart of English culture by the "defeated" French Canada, or as sign of the success of English cultural imperialism, or as evidence of the "internationalization" of Canadian theatre—or some simultaneous combination of these things. For an interesting discussion of the post-imperial and postcolonial anxieties that the production aroused in British reviewers, see Barbara Hodgdon's article "Splish Splash and the Other: Lepage's Intercultural Dream Machine."
Tempest (La Tempête 1989), and Coriolanus (Coriolan 1989) are also well known.47 In addition, prominent Québécois playwrights have appropriated Shakespeare for their own plays: see, for example, Jean-Claude Germain’s Rodéo et Juliette (1970), Jean-Pierre Ronfard’s Vie et mort du Roi Boiteux (1981), and Normand Chaurette’s Les Reines (1991).

For several decades now, the language question has been perhaps the cultural/political issue in Québec: what must be done to preserve the French language from disappearing under the pressure of Québec’s existence on a largely English-speaking continent, surrounded on all sides but one by English-speaking provinces and states? In his book on Québec theatre history, Jonathan Weiss claims many Québécois artists believe that "the act of artistic creation in French in Quebec is of itself an assertion of independence from English Canada" (2). Even with their own distinct language and culture, a separate identity for the Québécois, a symbolic demarcating border, must be constantly, consciously maintained.

Now, if one is concerned about the displacement of French in Québec by English, why use Shakespeare, the so-called premiere representative of the English language and anglo-cultural imperialism? As I suggested in chapter four, Shakespeare does not seem to evoke the same kind and degree of colonial anxiety in francophones as he does in anglophones, for reasons having to do with translation, the fact that Britain is not French Canada’s cultural "Mother Country," and the fact that today it is

47 Recently Lepage has experimented with a high-tech solo version of Hamlet, renamed Elseneur (Elsinor) (1995).
English Canada, not Great Britain, that is seen as threatening Québec's cultural survival. Hence, many francophone theatre practitioners take a more internationalist view of Shakespeare: he is worth doing because he is a great writer whose plays work well on stage and speak to diverse modern audiences, despite his origins in a specifically English, seventeenth-century place. ¹⁴

Nevertheless, the internationalist and the postcolonialist perspectives on Shakespeare are not always mutually exclusive. In the particular case I shall be looking at, re-visioning Shakespeare does provide the author (Gurik) with an opportunity to "write back" against the threat of anglophone cultural hegemony. Shakespeare is appropriated and turned into a kind of ironic decolonizing fiction in order to explore and critique anglophone/francophone relations. However, as we shall see, Gurik's course is fraught with complexities. Any Québécois or French Canadian appropriation of Shakespeare involves not only the travelling of the English text to a new place, but translation, the crossing of linguistic borders. And borders, notes Russell Brown, can be dangerous places to cross, both psychically and physically (29). ¹⁵ Gurik's 1968 separatist hit, Hamlet, prince du Québec, combines a linguistic limen crossing with a physical one.

Recall that 1968 was an important year in Québec for both separatist politics

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¹⁴ For example, see Denis Salter's "Between Wor(l)d: Lepage's Shakespeare Cycle" (63) for a discussion of Michel Garneau's tradaptations of Macbeth, Coriolanus, and The Tempest. Garneau went from being intimidated by the "Bard" to seeing him as a colleague with whom he could collaborate while expressing his Québécois identity.

¹⁵ This is particularly true for those of us who must constantly, consciously construct our sense of identity.
and Québécois drama. It came just after the celebration, in 1967, of Canada’s centenary as a federation and the visiting French President Charles de Gaulle’s controversial public statement of support for an independent Québec: "Vive le Québec libre!" And 1968 was also the year the Québec separatist political party, the Parti Québécois, was founded. Michel Tremblay’s Les Belles-soeurs also had its debut that year, presenting Québécois slang (joual) on the stage for the first time. The separatist political and cultural journal Parti Pris was being published and it was instrumental in using French theorists of decolonization (e.g., Frantz Fanon) to form a discourse of decolonization for Québec (see Major). Since cultural survival was a major political issue of the day, the arts were seen as being deeply tied to politics.

Not surprisingly then, Hamlet, Prince du Québec can be read as a Québec nationalist (sovereignist) play. Gurik follows Shakespeare’s original script very closely, but makes his characters into the federalist and separatist political players of 1968. Hamlet becomes Québec and Claudius, English Canada. Hamlet’s followers are equated with pro-Québec politicians, while the King’s party is identified with the federal, anglo-dominated government. Hamlet’s friend Horatio, for example, becomes the separatist Parti Québécois founder, René Lévesque; Gertrude becomes the Roman Catholic Church, who is sleeping with the English enemy; and the proponents of the

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50 This fact is slightly ironic, given that Gurik, for all his identification with the Québec separatist cause, was born in France, not Québec, and of Hungarian parents. He has lived in Montréal since about the age of 18 (Mailhot, "Gurik" 250).

51 In the original productions, caricature masks in the style of political cartoons were used to identify the Hamletian characters with their Canadian equivalents.
Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission become the treacherous, two-faced Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Thus, *Hamlet, Prince du Québec* (like *Cruel Tears*) is a very regional play, depending on its audience’s local knowledge of Canadian politics, and on Québec nationalist sympathies.

The result is a play with a paradoxically dual relationship to Shakespeare, one that is both antagonistic and laudatory. It is antagonistic in using Shakespeare to undermine the anglophone political and cultural hegemony with which he can, historically, be identified. However, it is also ironically laudatory in that Gurik sees Shakespeare’s English/anglophone play as having the potential to speak for Québec concerns; specifically, he draws on the play’s paradigms of alienation, usurpation, and corruption at the top as reflecting Québec’s problems. Gurik is also, in a sense, acknowledging English cultural power by parodying *Hamlet*, since for the parody to work, the audience must be familiar with the original (and the more familiar they are, the better). Thus, in using Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Gurik is recognizing the English playwright’s popularity with Québécois audiences.\(^{32}\) Again, the postcolonial paradox—in which a work of resistance literature simultaneously undermines and upholds a canonical colonizing text—is at play. (Although, as I have tried to show in my other examples, the paradox is not always problematic.)

Appropriating *Hamlet* also raises questions of language and linguistic border crossing. Writing for a Québécois audience, Gurik naturally prefers to use French, not

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\(^{32}\) As Laurent Mailhot notes, Shakespeare’s character Hamlet is extremely popular with Québécois writers ("Hamlet" 9-10). The play is alluded to constantly, especially as it relates to themes of alienation.
English. This necessitates some form of linguistic translation. Translating Shakespeare into French is, in some ways, a subversive reversal of the much-feared assimilation of the francophone culture by the anglophone. How ironic that English culture's "greatest" poet should be used to undermine what is perceived as English-language cultural hegemony. However, the question remains: what kind of French should the play be translated into? "International" French?--that is modern, standard Parisian French? This French could raise the ire of some Québec nationalists, since it has often been privileged, in a neo-colonialist way, over Québécois dialects. Perhaps one of the varieties of Québécois dialect should be used instead? Or standard Québec school French? Or could some variety of seventeenth-century French or Québécois be used, since Shakespeare's play is not in twentieth-century Canadian English?

What Gurik actually does is a very close translation of Shakespeare into modern Québécois French (but standard school Québécois, not joual). But, however close it may still be to Shakespeare's language in some ways--representing his meanings and often imitating his cadences--it is not his language. Although translation tries to recreate the same "words," they are never really the same--in look, sound, or even exact denotation or connotation. Translation is a form of mimicry: "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, Location of Culture 86). More importantly, mimicry

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53 In addition to the inevitable translation from page to stage that occurs in any production.

54 Even the strictest word-by-word translations can produce verbal jokes simply because words are being put into a changed context. In his play, Gurik frequently uses context-change to make loaded political puns.
focuses our attention on the "not quite," on the difference. Through translation, Shakespeare's English—written for entirely different purposes originally—can be made to speak remarkably well for Québécois concerns. It does so not only because Hamlet's themes resonate with the Québec situation, but because the existence of French as a linguistic alternative to English is highlighted.

The language issue and the importance of regionalism in Canadian Shakespeare are brought home even more when one looks at what happened to Gurik's play when it was transported across a political, cultural, and linguistic border into the English-speaking province of Ontario. The original Montreal production of Hamlet, prince du Québec 35 in January 1968 proved so popular that the London Little Theatre, situated in the southwestern Ontario city of London, decided to mount the play in November of the same year. The production sported the same director (Roland Laroche) and the same costume and mask designers (Renée Noisieux-Gurik and Guy Monarque), but a new, anglophone cast and different set designers (Ed Kotanen and Jack King).

However, such border crossings are dangerous and the situation raised multiple ironies. London is not only named in homage to the heart of the British Empire, the source of standard English, it also has the reputation of being a highly "wasp" conservative town in the heartland of anglo Ontario. And since London audiences are, generally speaking, not francophone audiences, the play had to be translated into

35 First performed at L'Escale, directed by Roland Laroche, and starring Benoit Girard as Hamlet and Pierre Dufresne as the King.
English in order to be commercially successful—or back into English, one might say, depending on how one looks at it. In addition, doubly ironically, this separatist play’s translation into "enemy" English was partially funded by the Cultural Exchange Program of the Ontario department of education—a program supposedly dedicated to better cultural relations and understanding. Perhaps the ultimate irony is that this kind of bilingual, bicultural exchange—which was proposed by federal politicians as a solution to French Canadians’ sense of alienation—is parodied and criticized as insincere flattery in Gurik’s play. The play, we must recall, turns the leaders of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission into the treacherous Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Thus, an anglophone Canadian attempt to be sympathetic to Quebeckers’ desire for decolonization became instead a kind of re-colonization. Instead of a truly constructive cross-cultural hybridity, the London production produced a sort of linguistic arm-wrestling over Shakespeare’s language: how it should speak, for whom should it speak, and what it should mean.

However, once the decision to translate (back) into English was made, still new complexities arose. What kind of English should the play be translated into? Should it follow as closely as possible the French, giving Gurik pre-eminence? Could the translator resist the temptation to retranslate the play straight back into Shakespeare’s original seventeenth-century language, since his phrases are imbedded in our cultural memory and privileged as the best usage of English ever? Or, since

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56 By Marc F. Gélinas.

57 Other funds came from the Dominion Drama Festival.
this was now a manifestly Canadian play about Canadian politics, should a modern Canadian English idiom be used—one easier for the London audience to understand?

The actual translation, while modern in parts, shows Shakespeare's language creeping back in, complete with "thy"s and "nay"s and "thou know' st"s. It also changes some of the minor character identifications: one of the characters, Yvette Brind'Amour, is replaced by a figure better known in English Canada, Judy LaMarsh. The translation also cuts some key words, most damningly in Hamlet's (the voice of Québec's!) dying speech. The French original reads:

Je meurs . . . qui viendra nous conduire vers la lumière, car il ne suffit pas de tuer le serpent mais il faut aussi détruire son nid pour que sur cette terre pousse librement ce qui doit s'épanouir. Vous sentirez-vous assez fort pour le faire, assez courageux pour le vouloir? Il est tellement plus facile de pourrir dans l'habitude. Manger . . . dormir . . . mourir . . . et ne jamais rêver . . . ne jamais rire. Qui . . . 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 ma mort serve aux autres. Il faut . . . que vive . . . un . . . Qué . . . bec . . . libre. (Gurik 95)

The English "translation" reads:

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34 This is one of the few speeches where Gurik departs completely from the gist of Shakespeare's text.

35 My emphasis.
I am dead, Horatio. Who will come and lead us to the light? One can kill the snake but its nest must also be put afire for this earth to grow freely what should bloom on’t. Will thou be strong and courageous enough to will this? It is so much easier to rot in the repetitious habits of these gloomy days. To eat . . . sleep . . . die . . . and never a day to dream . . . and never one⁶⁰ to laugh. Who . . . who . . . will pluck us from this muddy dirt of compromises, who will break these chains which we ourselves hypocritically have forged. My death must serve those who follow on. For it must . . . must live . . . "Vive le Québec Libre".⁶¹ (Gélinas 53)

The loaded word "esclavage," meaning "slavery," is cut out. Why? By accident? Or perhaps because it would be considered too strong an image for the anglophone London audience to take? Would it create too much ill-will, even for a sympathetic liberal audience that was out for a night to support biculturalism by seeing a separatist play?

A taming down, or refusal to see the full message, of the play is reflected perhaps in this review by Helen Wallace in The London Free Press (2 November, 1968):

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⁶⁰ The English translation does read "one," but this is likely a typographical error. A more likely translation from the French is "once."

⁶¹ Note that the translator, Gélinas, keeps the last sentence of this speech partly in French, probably so the audience will recognize this as quoting de Gaulle’s famous remark.
You don't have to understand French, or even be particularly sympathetic to the French cause, to enjoy this Hamlet. Far from being a propagandistic piece of French subtlety fired through with separatist sentiment, it offers, instead, a good insight into French-Canadian needs. And it's doubtful anything has been lost in the English translation, by Marc Gélinas, since the play adheres so closely to the original Shakespearean text. The fact that it does makes the comedy ironic, if not at times, wildly funny.⁶²

One wonders how the reviewer failed to get the point, how she could, in effect, mistranslate the play. The play is avowedly separatist and propagandistic—that is why it was originally written. It is not a polite request that anglophone Canada start meeting the needs of its Québec spouse, or an expression of the need for a marriage counsellor; it is a demand for divorce, for a new and independent life in which anglophone Canada will be irrelevant.

What was lost in the translation of the play, in the dangerous crossing of political, cultural, and linguistic borders? Could the fault lie in the translation into a different language? In the translation of the work into a different, anglophone locale and audience? Was the misreading caused simply by the anglophone reviewer's own desire to neutralize the production's separatist threat into a cosy experience of

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⁶² This review is reprinted in "Échos de la critique" in the 1977 Leméac edition of Hamlet, prince du Québec (142).
biculturalism, of successful hybridity? Or did it occur because there is such a long tradition in English of Shakespearean burlesque that the reviewer saw what she expected to see: an apolitical popular entertainment? Or did the mistranslation occur in the translation from page to stage performance--another form of translation in which meaning, interpretation and emphasis can be changed? Was it a combination of factors? In any case, Shakespeare was reassimilated into English/anglophone culture, undermining Gurik’s subversive rewriting in ways that went beyond the usual paradox of "authorized transgression" or reinscription that typically accompanies postcolonial appropriations of canonical texts.

In the end, both francophone and anglophone theatre workers used Shakespeare as their own--so they were in some sense united across borders by a shared cultural heritage. However, the hybridity produced led to mistranslation and only bridged the gaps between each Canadian sub-culture and seventeenth-century Shakespeare, not the gaps between the "two solitudes." For Gurik, government-sponsored biculturalism and bilingualism, like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, proved a treacherous friend.

Such attempts at cross-border, cross-cultural goodwill are still greeted with suspicion in Québec. For example, political commentators have suggested that the "We [anglophones] love you, Québec" demonstrations organized by the federal government during the 1995 Québec sovereignty referendum campaign were viewed with cynicism by many Québécois and may actually have hurt the unity cause more

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63 It would be interesting to know the precise reaction of the production’s London audiences. We do know the play was critically successful.
than they helped it. This leaves us with the question: what would be a truly
"successful" hybrid Shakespeare in Canada, in Québec? Would it be one that goes
beyond anglophone and francophone Canadian borders, such as the much more
internationalist tradaptations of Robert Lepage--works that, as Denis Salter has pointed
out ("Between Wor(I)ds" 61-70), deal in their own ways with questions of borders,
liminal spaces and cultural survival? Or would it take another form? Or, is Canada
destined to remain two solitudes, a country defined more by the borders that divide it
than by the forces that attempt to unify it?
Chapter Six
Prospero Back Home in Milan: Bond's Lear
as Paradigm for Post-Imperial Britain

As I have shown in previous chapters, since World War Two many Commonwealth writers have re-evaluated their postcolonial experiences by refunctioning Shakespeare's plays, particularly The Tempest. But what about British, and especially English writers? Have they re-examined their post-imperial experiences by writing new versions of Shakespeare? Have they even engaged in some form of resistance writing or, to put it another way, self-critique? And if so, which Shakespeare plays might suit the purposes of their de-imperializing dramas? These are not questions postcolonialists have usually shown much interest in. However, if dramatists from privileged white settler-invader colonies can produce a range of responses to the imperial legacy, why not the English? Why assume that modern English drama is as relentlessly pro-imperial as The Tempest is taken to be?

In Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past (1996), Susan Bennett notes the recent proliferation of productions of King Lear, particularly in Britain. She argues that the play and its accompanying traditions are mired in the nostalgic role of evoking a better past for modern audiences disenchanted with the present. This intriguing hypothesis may partly explain the King Lear phenomenon. However, I suggest that there may be other reasons King Lear resonates

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1 See chapter two (39-78).
with contemporary British audiences, and that the play can be used to explore the past (particularly England's imperial one) in ways that are anything but nostalgic. By way of illustration, I shall examine Edward Bond's 1971 play, Lear, and argue that, as The Tempest was to postcolonialists, King Lear can be to a British post-imperialist.²

I shall begin by examining the historical and theatrical context of Bond's Lear, then turn to the play itself. Bond politicized Shakespeare's family tragedy to show that post-imperial Britain's problems lay not in character flaws, but in the political system, and that what was needed was not the relief of traditional tragic catharsis, but insights that would lead to active responsibility and change.

I. Historical and Theatrical Context

In the first three decades after World War Two, Britain's Empire crumbled as former colonies seized, or were granted, independence. For the colonized, the metamorphosis to post-colonialism necessitated not only political independence but a critique of the lingering discourse of empire, which had portrayed them as marginal and inferior. As I noted earlier, many postcolonial writers appropriated and rewrote Shakespeare to this end. However, during this same period, Britain was also undergoing a metamorphosis: from an imperial nation to a post-imperial one. Not only was she losing her colonies, but her status as a political, economic, cultural, and military superpower was being usurped by the United States. The Labour Party and

² I shall use King Lear to designate Shakespeare's play and Lear to designate Bond's. Similarly, "King Lear" will refer to Shakespeare's character and "Lear" to Bond's.
the development of the welfare state had challenged, though not completely dismantled, the old class structure that had underpinned the imperial administration. Increased immigration from former colonies was making Britain’s population less homogeneous. "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland between "native" Catholics and "settler" Protestants required a re-examination of Britain’s continued colonial role there. These and a host of other factors were changing British society, just as surely as decolonization was changing countries abroad.

During this time, a new generation of British playwrights--many associated with the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in London--was examining and critiquing the emerging post-Empire state. Some, such as John Osborne, "were aghast at England’s declining role in world affairs, the failed promises of the new socialist government and the continued oppressiveness of the British class system" (King 118-19). Osborne’s socialist contemporaries, John Arden, Arnold Wesker, and Edward Bond, explored similar concerns from a decidedly more left-wing, less nostalgic orientation, as did the playwrights of the late 1960s fringe circuit who followed them: David Edgar, David Hare and Howard Brenton. Plays like Bond’s Saved (1965) or Brenton’s Measure for Measure (1972) suggested a shrunken, claustrophobic, twilight Britain, turned in on itself and mired in internal confusion and decay after the collapse of most of its Empire.

Interestingly, like their postcolonial contemporaries, these political dramatists sometimes rewrote the English national poet’s texts while making their social critiques. For example: John Osborne followed Coriolanus in A Place Calling Itself
Rome (1973); Howard Brenton adapted Measure for Measure in his own play of the same title (1972); and David Hare appears to have drawn on Love's Labour's Lost in Slag (1970) (Cohn 53-54). David Edgar’s version of Romeo and Juliet, Death Story (1972), looked at Britain’s lingering colonial conflict in Northern Ireland (Cohn 54-55). However, the most famous politicized Shakespeare rewrite of this period was Edward Bond’s Lear (1971) (Bennett 48), the focus of this chapter.

Like many left-wing playwrights at the Royal Court Theatre in the 1950s, '60s and early '70s, Bond was an overtly political writer. In a letter to Max Stafford-Clark, former artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre, he wrote: “For me art and politics are not divisible and their connection cannot be reduced to one’s own conscience” (Letters 147). Furthermore, simply creating politically aware theatre was not enough: for Bond, theatre should impel the audience to act in the real world to bring about change. Bond expressed this view clearly in his discussion of tragedy in "The Author’s Note for Programmes" for The Sea (1975):

> We even need a sense of tragedy. No democracy can exist without that. But tragedy as something to use in our lives, that gives us sympathy and understanding of other people. Only a moron wants to grin all the time, and even he weeps with rage in the night. Tragedy in this sense is necessary for moral maturity, it doesn’t lead to despair, and it certainly

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3 In Thirteenth Night (1981), Brenton would use Shakespeare in a similar way to explore Britain in the early 1980s. Despite the play’s title, it is a reworking of Macbeth.

4 Tom Stoppard’s Hamlet-based play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is probably better known than Bond’s Lear, but it is not overtly political.
has nothing to do with a catharsis that makes us accept abominations to which there should be political solutions. It leads to knowledge and action. (*The Sea* 68)

Putting theory into practice, the two plays Bond wrote immediately before *Lear*—*Black Mass* and *Passion*—were didactic political pieces written specifically for activist events. The first was created for an anti-apartheid campaign and the second for a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament festival.⁵ Although *Lear* was not written for such events, the poems Bond wrote to accompany the play show the same activist spirit informed it. "On Leaving the Theatre," for example, addresses the audience directly and ends with the lines:

You cannot live on our wax fruit
Leave the theatre hungry
For change. (*Theatre Poems and Songs* 5)

Several of the poems—including "On Leaving the Theatre," "Lear," "To the Audience," and "Titles"—were written to be included in theatre programs and read by *Lear*’s audiences (*Theatre Poems and Songs* 3-6).

Certainly Bond’s earlier plays had already sparked extra-theatrical action,

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⁵ Bond's *Lear* was first performed on the 29th of September, 1971, at the Royal Court Theatre (Hirst 167).

⁶ *Black Mass* was written for the Sharpeville Massacre Tenth Anniversary Commemoration Evening held by the Anti-Apartheid Movement. It was performed on 22 March 1970 at the Lyceum Theatre, London. *Passion*, a savage caricature of a pro-nuclear-policy British government, was performed as part of the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) Festival of Life on the 11th of April 1971, at the Alexandra Park Racecourse.
though not always of the sort he may have intended. The Lord Chamberlain’s office banned his disturbingly violent plays *Saved* (1965) and *Early Morning* (1968), creating a controversy that eventually led Parliament to rescind the Lord Chamberlain’s powers of theatrical censorship in September 1968 (Scharine 20).

Critics have often described Bond’s view of political theatre (and his theatrical style) as Brechtian—though how direct Bertolt Brecht’s influence was has been a matter of debate. However, Bond’s career and his linking of drama with political action also suggest parallels, if not claims of direct influence, with major postcolonial dramatists of the period, particularly Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka. Interestingly, Soyinka, like Bond, had been involved with the Royal Court Theatre and William Gaskill’s writers group in London in the late 1950s (Scharine 30) and his plays sometimes resembled Brechtian political drama (Gibbs 32, 34, 36). Both knew what it was like to be on the margins of power: Bond as a member of the working class, and Soyinka as an African "colonial" in Britain. Like Bond, Soyinka would rewrite canonical plays in order to explore contemporary situations, creating *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) and *Opera Wonyosil* (1977) (which reworked both Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*). Like Bond, Soyinka was deeply committed to political activism and political theatre and had experienced forms of censorship. For example, Soyinka wrote anti-government satires for his Orisun Company in Nigeria. The plays

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7 See Scharine (166) for an argument in favour of Brecht’s influence. David Hirst has argued that Bond’s access to Brecht’s work at the time he was writing *Lear* was limited and that Bond did not directly imitate Brecht so much as share a similar outlook, which inevitably resulted in the deployment of similar theatrical strategies (125-30).
had to be performed with actors guarding the stage doors against interruption by hired thugs (Katrak 7). More seriously, during the Nigerian Civil War, Soyinka was imprisoned for his political outspokenness (Katrak 8). I do not wish to suggest here that Bond and Soyinka's situations or work were exactly the same; they came from very different backgrounds and the stakes of political activism were higher for Soyinka. However, I think Bond's work is illuminated from a new angle when one looks at the areas of similarity between two supposed binary opposites: a white/English writer of the old imperial centre and a black/Nigerian writer of the colonies. Postcolonial artists were not the only marginalized groups challenging the British power structure in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Bond's politics included an awareness of postcolonial and/or post-imperial issues. He was active in the anti-apartheid movement and promoted an artistic boycott of South Africa (Hay and Roberts, Edward Bond 18-19, 21, 22). Two plays he wrote just before Lear--Narrow Road to the Deep North (1968) and Black Mass (1970)--contained anti-colonial themes. Black Mass, as was mentioned earlier, was an anti-apartheid play; Narrow Road contained a scathing portrayal of British imperialism, as represented by the Commodore (the military) and Georgina (the missionary societies). Most interestingly for this discussion, Bond made an explicit connection between the societal ills that he examined in Lear and the after-effects of imperialism. In his program notes for Lear, he discussed modern institutionalized violence and moral hypocrisy, comparing it to the behaviour of the British in the imperialistic nineteenth-century opium wars with China. Then Bond noted: "Perhaps imperialism ravages its
homelands more virulently, and for longer, than it does foreign colonies" (Hay and Roberts, Edward Bond 53).

II. King Lear, Bond’s Lear and Post-imperial Britain

One can imagine that a writer wishing to examine his own country might take on the mythic tales of his national poet, in this case Shakespeare. But why might King Lear in particular be an attractive paradigm for critiquing post-imperial Britain? First, just as The Tempest’s exotic island locale provided a natural identification for Caribbean writers like Césaire and Lamming, so King Lear’s mythical, almost emblematically English setting, with its (imagined) white cliffs of Dover and heath, provides a natural setting for a play analysing British society. Second, King Lear’s plot structure offers parallels to decolonization, and a modern writer could ignore the earlier date of the play and read it as taking up where the “colonial” Tempest leaves off. The tragedy begins with the crown relinquishing centralized power and breaking up the unified empire into new, independent states. The play is also full of images of divestment, which are suggestive images for decolonization. They occur most

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At the end of The Tempest, Prospero divests himself of his overseas possessions and plans to return to Milan to a life of semi-retirement where “Every third thought shall be [his] grave” (Tempest 5.1.311). Power over the city state will be passed on to the next generation: his daughter, Miranda, and son-in-law, Ferdinand. King Lear starts with an old ruler echoing Prospero’s talk of impending death as he too abdicates power: “To shake all cares and business from our age,/ Conferring them on younger strengths, while we/ Unburthen’d crawl toward death” (King Lear 1.1.39-41). However, King Lear suggests that such transitions do not always go smoothly: Miranda may become not only doomed Cordelia, but the vicious Regan and Goneril as well, while the obedient son-in-law, Ferdinand, may be a cruel Cornwall.
famously in act three, where King Lear shows his madness by running about "bare-headed" (3.2.60) in the storm. Third, despite his abdication, King Lear is caught up in the political consequences of his past actions as the various factions he helped create (France, Cornwall, Albany\(^9\)), near and within the British Isles, wage war against each other. Similarly, despite abdication of its imperial role overseas, post-war Britain could not escape the consequences of its imperial past within the British Isles. From the late 1960s onward, the British government found itself unwillingly policing "The Troubles" between its own sort of in-laws-by-political-marriage in the sectarian violence between Catholic and Protestant extremists in the kingdom of Northern Ireland.

Bond himself saw in *King Lear* a model for exploring the problems of his own society. As James Bulman notes, for Bond, Shakespeare's *King Lear* contained critical insights, since the king learns "to penetrate the myths of the civilization he had made--belief that tyranny can be just, that despotism can be benevolent, that violence can preserve peace" ("Bond" 61). This could almost be describing the kind of myths that underlay European imperialism. However, Bond believed the play's insights led to the wrong conclusion:

> But the social moral of Shakespeare's *Lear* is this: endure till in time the world will be made right. That's a dangerous moral for us. . . . We have to have a culture that isn't an escape from the sordidness of

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\(^9\) According to Holinshed, the kingdom of Albany stretched "from the river Humber to the point of Caithness" (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1.1.note 2), meaning it comprised northern England and Scotland.
society, the 'natural' sinfulness or violence of human nature, that isn't a way of learning how to endure our problems—but a way of solving them.¹⁰ (Qtd. in Hay and Roberts, Edward Bond 53)

For Bond, King Lear's depoliticized focus on the personal realm, rather than a politicized focus on societal suffering, failed to encourage the audience to seek large-scale reforms (Bulman, "Bond" 61); instead, it provided a cathartic, paralysing escape from societal ills. Even its central character, King Lear, was a poor role model: despite his eventual insights, he modelled only endurance, not action.

Just as postcolonial writers like Césaire, Hewett and Malouf rewrote The Tempest to challenge the old Anglo view of colonialism and promote a new view of their societies, so Bond linked his own politics and theatre, rewriting King Lear to promote change in his society:

... as a society we use the play in a wrong way. And it's for that reason I would like to rewrite it so that we now have to use the play for ourselves, for our society, for our time, for our problems. ... (qtd. in Hay and Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays 105-06)

But how did Bond use King Lear for his time and problems? First, he politicized it, hoping to push the audience beyond a potentially paralyzing cathartic experience to action. Second, he made King Lear go beyond insight and endurance to action.

¹⁰ This statement originally appeared in Bond's program notes for the Liverpool Everyman Theatre's production of Lear in October 1975.
Abdication and Aftermath

In decrying artistic escapism by politicizing *King Lear*, Bond emphasized a particular theme: the abdication (forced or free) of power and its aftermath. This theme had particular resonance when Bond was writing his *Lear*. As I noted earlier, at that time Britain was at the end of her imperial era and was divesting herself (or, in some cases, being divested) of her former colonies. Between 1968-71 alone, Mauritius, Rhodesia, Anguilla, and Gambia became independent (Grun 560-70). Britain was being stripped back down to an island, to the Little England of Shakespeare’s day. A paradigm for this theme exists in Shakespeare’s play. *King Lear* depicts a ruler at the end of his life and dynasty, who turns away from the outside world and divests himself of titles, land, and the more tedious aspects of political responsibility. Paradoxically, he still tries to retain certain powers—as Britain did in Suez for example—but his children soon take these away. Civil war follows.

Bond’s play attempts to explain the disastrous aftermath of this abdication or loss of power. It challenges an explanation commonly read into Shakespeare’s drama: that character flaws cause the tragedy, not the aristocratic system itself. King Lear’s mistake is abdicating power to the “wrong” people, the false flatterers Regan and Goneril, rather than to his one honest daughter, Cordelia. From the beginning, Kent tries to warn King Lear against this abdication (1.1.139-85). The audience can believe that if good Cordelia had survived her evil sisters and gone on to rule, all would be
well in Britain—at least while she reigned."

Bond's Lear rejects the idea that good government depends upon power being held by certain people who are "naturally" fitted to rule. In the post-Empire era, the idea of the "white man's burden" and Britain's "divine right" to rule "inferior" colonial cultures was being debunked, and so there is no God-given divine right to rule, no "natural" rulers in Lear. Thus, when Bodice and Fontanelle—Bond's equivalents to Goneril and Regan—oust the king from power in scene one, it can actually appear to be a good thing at first. The opening scene at the defensive wall (which a paranoid Lear is building around his country) establishes Lear's reign as one of absurd tyranny, slave labour, and cruel oppression, which his birthright cannot justify. Bodice protests Lear's paranoia and his cruel, arbitrary justice and promises a new, better future for the country under her leadership (18-21). Why, then, does she become even more cruel than her father?

In his preface to Lear (3-10), Bond disagrees with the idea that people are naturally violent and argues that his sick society, in which professed values and actual behaviour are in conflict, makes people that way. Thus, in Lear, the individual people leading the regime change, but the problems do not, since "[o]nce the social structure exists it tends to be perpetuated" ("Author's Preface" 5) and "... imperialism ravages

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11 This idea is suggested more strongly in one of King Lear's probable source texts, King Leir (1605), in which Cordella's forces win and she and her father reign happily. Alexander Leggatt points out that this version stops short of the chronicle histories (on which Shakespeare also probably based his play), which show Cordelia overthrown by her evil nephews after the old king's death. Still, while she does rule, all is well. Nahum Tate's 1681 adaptation of King Lear, The History of King Lear, emphasizes Cordelia's win as the natural triumph of virtue and promises a beneficent reign (Leggatt 4, 6-7).
its homelands more virulently, and for longer, than it does foreign colonies" (Hay and Roberts, Edward Bond 53). Wise enough to oust Lear, his daughters Fontanelle and Bodice soon replicate the behaviour they criticized him for: killing innocent men (43-44) and keeping the wall (62). Even the working-class government that ousts them is no better: Cordelia also executes people without trial and continues building the wall. ¹² Unable to convince Cordelia to tear the barrier down, Lear remarks: "Then nothing's changed! A revolution must at least reform!" (98). The mere transfer of power from one set of individuals to another without radically re-tooling the system is not a solution in Lear.

The Futile Retreat from Worldly Responsibility

If the mere transfer of power from one set of individuals to another is not enough to solve the tragedy of King Lear and post-imperial Britain, what is? Bond's second major theme with post-imperial resonances provides an answer: Lear, and Bond's contemporaries, must accept active responsibility for the violent world they have inherited and helped to perpetuate. To emphasize this point, Lear begins by showing the opposite behaviour—the retreat from responsibility—and its negative consequences.

Again, there is a potential paradigm in Shakespeare's version that is carried on in Bond's. After abdicating power, both kings begin to turn inward, to avoid

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¹² In fact, by the end of the play the once radical reformer can even say: "But if you listened to everything your conscience told you you'd go mad. You'd never get anything done . . . ." (97-98).
responsibility for (or even interaction with) the modern world of politics, war, and diplomacy. In the older text, once the reality of his loss of power sinks in, King Lear's response is to turn inward mentally and retreat from harsh realities into madness. The retreat is represented physically when King Lear leaves the courts and castles of society for the stormy, uncivilized heath. Then when the negative aspects of society catch up with him--as he and Cordelia are captured by their enemies--King Lear again retreats mentally into a deluded fantasy about the idyllic, isolated life he and Cordelia will lead in prison (5.3.8-19). When this fantasy is shattered by Cordelia's murder, King Lear dies: the ultimate retreat. 13 Although many critics have argued that there is some hope at the end of the play, since King Lear has gained insight into love and human nature before dying (Leggatt 69-70), from a Bondian viewpoint insight without action is a "cop-out."

Lear treats the retreat theme differently, reflecting the concerns of a different age. Where imperial Britain was outward-looking, expansive and (coercively) inclusive, post-imperial Britain seen through Bond's eyes had shrunk in defensively upon itself, become myopically inward-looking, and nostalgic for a simpler past when it was an island fortress. For example, around the time Bond was writing Lear, there was a racist reaction in some corners of British society against one phenomenon of the post-Empire era: the growing influx of non-white immigrants and refugees--former

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13 Leggatt notes (91-92) that the Quarto and Folio versions of King Lear each portray the king's death somewhat differently. The Quarto suggests he wills his own death, while the Folio suggests he is unaware that the pain of losing Cordelia is killing him. Either way, King Lear cannot face reality.
colonials--into Britain. In 1968, the British government moved to restrict immigration from India, Pakistan and the West Indies. In 1969, Conservative MP Enoch Powell proposed that the government finance the repatriation of all Black and Asian residents of Britain (Grun 562, 564). Bond was aware of and concerned about this defensive, backward-looking atmosphere. In 1969, he contributed to "The Enoch Show," which criticized Powell's politics and was interrupted in performance by members of the racist National Front (Hay and Roberts, Edward Bond 17). At the same time he was writing Lear, Bond was also working on an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's Measure for Measure-based play, Roundheads and Peakheads, which reset the play in Enoch Powell's England (Scharine 165-67).

Lear reflects this atmosphere.¹⁴ Unlike King Lear, there is no interaction with foreign powers outside the island, such as continental Burgundy or France. Even the kingdoms within the isle of Great Britain--Cornwall and North--that Shakespeare's king sought as allies through marriage, are now regarded by the paranoid Lear as enemies to build a wall against. This wall, as Leggatt has suggested (5), is perhaps the central image in Lear. It, like the sea that protected England from many past invasions, is supposed to keep everyone different, everyone foreign, out. Subsequent

¹⁴ Other English plays of this period do so too. For example, David Edgar's play about the aftermath of Empire, Destiny, depicts the intense dislike some white Britains felt towards non-white, ex-colonial immigrants. Howard Brenton's Measure for Measure (1972) also reflects the racial tensions of the time. His play is set in modern London, England. As in Shakespeare's version, Angelo persecutes Claudio and Isabella. However, this time Claudio and Isabella are black--the only black characters in the play. In the first production, directed by William Gaskill for the Northcott Theatre in Exeter, Angelo was modelled on Enoch Powell and the Duke on Conservative politician Harold Macmillan (Cohn 57-58).
regimes in the play—Bodice's and Cordelia's—repeat the defensive, inward movement despite their original intentions not to. Bodice, for example, starts to pull down the wall, then stops because of the civil war (62). Like the British in Ireland, Bodice is unwillingly enmeshed in perpetuating the old violence and paranoia she had hoped to end. This is highly ironic, highlighting the fact that, for all Lear's concern with outside enemies, the real dangers come from within, from the system he created.

After he loses power, Bond's Lear attempts to retreat even further—not onto a stormy, inhospitable heath as in Shakespeare—but into the pleasant pastoral world of the gravedigger's boy (30-42). On the surface, this world resembles Shakespeare's Arden from As You Like It: an idyllic forest retreat from the harsh realities and responsibilities of politics and diplomacy. It also suggests a highly idealized, fantasy image of the Little England of the pre-imperial past: geographically compact and self-contained, pastoral, and populated by a simple, wholesome peasantry. Lear hides here from the events he has set in motion, and the gravedigger's boy encourages this retreat. However, as the more practical wife (named "Cordelia") realizes, escape is impossible. The consequences of Lear's past follow him and destroy the pastoral fantasy: like an imperial advance guard, the soldiers kill the boy, rape the wife, poison the water, and slaughter the livestock (42-45).

Even so, the desire for the fantasy Olde Englande persists. The gravedigger's boy's cottage becomes a haven for more and more refugees dreaming of a better life

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15 The gravedigger's boy's offer of an idyllic retreat to Lear has been compared to the one Cordelia offers King Lear in Shakespeare's play (Bulman, "Bond" 63).
(82-96). This creates anxiety amongst those already living there: will the newcomers bring their troubles with them as Lear did? The cockney-accented "small man"—even his name is significant—seems to speak for the Enoch Powell supporters having trouble adjusting to the post-imperial reality. When yet another refugee arrives, he objects to Lear allowing him to stay: "Thass all very well. But yer never seen 'is sort on the wall. We can't let everyone in. We 'ave t'act fly" (88).

Insight, Responsibility and Action

However, turning inward can have a positive side: it can lead to critical self-analysis, to insight. Shakespeare’s tragedy is filled with images of sight and blindness, as well as images of divestment that reveal "unaccommodated man," the "poor, bare, forked animal" (3.4.109-10). These images could be applied to a stripped-down, post-imperial Britain that was once blinded by the discourses and trappings of empire, but is now able (potentially) to see herself clearly, since she is divested of her "borrowed" lands and exposed in her unaccommodated state. Bond’s whole play is in itself an attempt to see and understand post-war society clearly—particularly, Bond notes in his "Author’s Preface," its moralized violence (3-12).

In Bond’s play, the insight theme is repeated at the character level through Lear. The first scene shows a Lear who is wilfully unable to see, and thus to take responsibility for, the damage his actions have caused, whether it be the devastation brought about by his mad wall-building project, the way he has raised his daughters to become inured to violence, or the misery he brings by running away and bringing
trouble with him to the gravedigger's boy. However, Lear does learn to see in act two, scene six, where Bond conflates two scenes of seeing and not seeing from Shakespeare's *King Lear*. At first, scene six, in which Lear is imprisoned with his youngest daughter, Fontanelle, invokes the captivity of King Lear and Cordelia in the last scene of Shakespeare's play (5.3). There King Lear imagines that prison with Cordelia will be a kind of paradisiacal retreat--behind a wall--from the harsh responsibilities and realities of a political world:

Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon 's the mystery of things,
As if we were Gods' spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th' moon. (5.3.8-19)

This is a moment of retreat and self-delusion in *King Lear*; the subsequent murder of Cordelia and death of Lear shatter the fantasy.

The prison dream above represents the kind of retreat from reality into
paralysing escapist fantasy that Bond disliked about Shakespeare's play, so he conflated this image with the traditional blinding of Gloucester scene (3.7)—a scene in which insight into reality is gained. This time it is Lear, not Gloucester, whose inability to see reality is cured in the same scene in which he is physically blinded; nevertheless, the symbolic link between physical and mental sight is the same ("Author's Preface" 11). However, the real catalyst for insight in Lear is the autopsy of Fontanelle who, like Cordelia, is executed in front of her father. Lear's insight comes from literally looking into his daughter's body, which becomes symbolic of the world he has made, of all he is responsible for corrupting and destroying. He realizes that he must live life differently from now on:

Did I make this—and destroy it? . . . I destroyed her! I knew nothing, saw nothing, learned nothing! Fool! Fool! Worse than I knew! (He puts his hands into FONTANELLE and brings them out covered with dark blood and smeared with viscera. The soldiers react awkwardly and ineffectually.) Look at my dead daughter. . . . Look! I killed her! Her blood is on my hands! Destroyer! Murderer! And now I must begin again. I must walk through my life, step after step, I must walk in weariness and bitterness, I must become a child, hungry and stripped and shivering in blood, I must open my eyes and see! (73-74)

This scene is important because what Bond's Lear sees eventually leads him beyond the more personal, apolitical realizations King Lear and Gloucester come to concerning their children. First, Bond's Lear extends his insight to focus on his
mistakes in the social and political realm and, second, he does not collapse and die like King Lear when faced with one harsh reality too many. Lear realizes he must live life anew and eventually act to repair the damage he has caused. As he says in prison to the gravedigger’s boy’s ghost, who constantly tries to persuade him to run back to the pastoral woods and not look at ugly realities: "No. I ran away so often, but my life was ruined just the same. Now I’ll stay" (72).

This acceptance of active responsibility for the state of the world is key to Bond’s post-imperial vision. For if Bond suggests that the removal of Lear’s paranoid, imperial-type power at the beginning of the play is good, his resultant abdication of responsibility for the fate of his society and retreat into pastoral fantasy is not. As Bulman notes, "Cordelia and the Gravedigger’s Boy represent the Scylla and Charybdis . . . of political defensiveness and private retreat between which Lear must sail if he is to become a genuinely moral man" ("Bond" 63). And, I would add, if he is to change the system.

Thus in act three, scene three, Lear finally allows the gravedigger’s boy’s ghost—who represents the desire to hide from responsibility in a fantasy of the past—to die (100). Lear returns to the wall where he atones for his past mistakes by attempting to dig it up (101-02). Even though he is killed after dislodging only a few shovelfuls of earth, Lear’s death contains an optimism not found in King Lear. According to Leggatt:

He has hardly begun to work when he is shot dead, but his action is not futile. As the firing party leaves the stage, one of them looks back.
Lear's example is to be held in mind by those, on the stage and in the audience, whose task it is to build a better world. (5)

Indeed, in his "Preface" to Lear, Bond expressed his hope that Lear's example would influence the next generation: "Lear is old by then, but most of the play's audiences will be younger. It might seem to them that the truth is always ground for pessimism when it is discovered, but one soon comes to see it as an opportunity" (11).

Contrast this with the ending of Shakespeare's play, where the kingdom "... lies in ruin, and no one feels like picking through the rubble. Albany wants no part of worldly power; Kent wants no part of life. Edgar ... does not know what to say" (Leggatt 94).

III. Conclusion

As I noted in chapter one, for many Third World postcolonial artists, rewriting the works of Britain's national poet offered a resistance writing technique both powerful and problematic: it could challenge British imperial ideology and its associated cultural discourse, but it could also reinforce their centrality, power, and importance at the expense of indigenous Third World ideology and culture. After the initial boom in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the popularity of rewriting The Tempest waned amongst postcolonial writers. Some, such as Ngũgi wa Thiong'o, opted to avoid the reinforcement problem by ignoring the British literary canon and the English language altogether, writing instead in their own language and literary or oral traditions. But could a British writer opposed to an imperialistic British ideology do
the same? Could he/she ignore their own heritage? If the continued attraction of re-writing Shakespeare for settler-invaders in Australia and Canada suggests the difficulty of abandoning inherited British culture completely, Bond’s Lear suggests that for England this is truly neither possible nor desirable. Just as his character Lear learns to take responsibility for his violent past and attempts to correct it, so Bond’s play, by rewriting Shakespeare, takes responsibility for his country’s heritage and attempts to correct it. Indeed, later Lear-themed plays—Bond’s Bingo (1973),16 Howard Brenton and David Edgar’s A Fart for Europe (1973),17 Howard Barker’s Seven Lear’s (1989) and even Bond’s revisions of Lear for the 1982 Royal Shakespeare Company production (Bennett 48)—suggest that, for British writers, this is an ongoing process.18

16 Bingo portrays the last days of Shakespeare’s retirement in Stratford-upon-Avon. It draws parallels between Shakespeare at the end of his career and King Lear at the end of his. One could, in examining Bingo, observe some interesting parallels between Bond’s play and the work of postcolonial critics like Edward Said and Gauri Viswanathan. As I noted in earlier chapters, in Orientalism, Said exposed the time-and-place specific biases underlying the supposedly "objective" work of the European Orientalist scholars. In Masks of Conquest, Viswanathan analysed how the teaching of English literature (including Shakespeare) was employed by imperial authorities in British India to further their political ends. Bond embarks on a strangely similar project in Bingo, challenging Shakespeare’s supposedly objective status as an apolitical, universal poet and role model by re-situating him and his work in the ideologies and self-interested politics of the seventeenth century.

17 A Fart for Europe was written in 1973 for performance by the fringe group General Will and is not in print. Ruby Cohn describes the play as "twisting King Lear to oppose Britain’s membership in the European Economic Community" (55)—an interesting theme in a post-imperial context.

18 Striking, non-theatre-related evidence of this on-going process has appeared recently in the re-establishment of a separate Scottish parliament and in the surge of national self-examination surrounding the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. More than ever, the legacy of the rigid, class-bound, imperialistic model of England and Britain is being
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

To return to some key questions posed in chapter one: can settler-invader writers of British descent seeking to "imagine" their community, and reject the negative aspects of colonialism, do so without rejecting the one established cultural heritage to which they have some historical claim and connection? Or, to put it another way, can something of those roots be retained and adapted as a "useable past" for Second World identity and produce more than just complicit postcolonialism? Can that past even be used to create resistance literature? What forms might that resistance literature take? Are the dangers of reinscribing that past the same for a British-descended settler-invader writer in, say, Canada as they are for an Indian writer in India or a black African writer in Africa?

If literary canons are one way we define or "imagine" ourselves (Felperin xiii; qtd. in Bennett 13), then it is not surprising that Shakespeare, the most canonical author in the anglophone world, has become a popular object for representing the communal past—a past which is often evoked to critique our society's present. As my study has shown, in the last few decades the Second World has produced a wide range of plays that use Shakespeare. What answers to the questions posed above might these plays provide?

On the one hand, theatre can be a conservative, tradition-oriented medium and

rejected within the United Kingdom itself.

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devotion to Shakespeare can certainly be a symptom of this (Bennett 12). As I mentioned earlier, Susan Bennett notes a tendency in late twentieth-century productions and adaptations of Shakespeare to re-present the past in a nostalgic way, and to *idealize* it in order to express dissatisfaction with the present. Shakespeare has enormous "normative value" (Bennett 37) and can function as the last line of defence in the protection of an established cultural ideal (Erickson 4; qtd. in Bennett 14). Hence, it is not surprising to find that some of the settler-invader re-visionings of Shakespeare—even if they are recontextualized to Canada or Australia—could be characterized as examples of complicit, rather than oppositional, postcolonialism. David Williamson's *Dead White Males* is the most extreme example of this tendency, sitting at the conservative end of the spectrum. Shakespeare as "universal genius" and norm-setter is evoked by Williamson in an attempt to defend the masculine, British-dominated curriculum and theatrical tradition established in Australia in colonial times. Current postcolonial, multicultural, and feminist challenges to British-based ideas of culture and identity are largely ridiculed. Ken Gass's work, *Claudius*, certainly does not evoke the reactionary politics of Williamson's play, but arguably it, too, accepts Shakespeare as normative, using *Hamlet* allusively to create a new play by expanding on its minor characters. In earlier decades the simple act of making Gertrude the play's chief figure might have caused the play to be read as a powerful, ironic, feminist inversion; however, when *Claudius* is considered in the context of the "post-feminist" 1990s and compared with Ann-Marie MacDonald's more extensive and radical reworking of Shakespearean conventions, it seems less a politicized re-vision
of Shakespeare than an entertaining modernization.

Gow and Mitchell’s plays fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Although they still use Shakespeare’s works uncritically as accepted signifiers of reconciliation, romance, tragedy, and so forth, they also critique some of the lingering after-effects of colonialism in their communities. Local life dominates in these two plays, with Shakespeare functioning more as a colourful intertext.

On the other hand, there are playwrights whose work falls near the radical end of the spectrum, such as Hewett, Malouf, MacDonald, and (in his own post-imperial context) Bond. These dramatists not only use Shakespeare as a representative of the past that can be helpful for examining national identity issues, but they refunction his work in ways that are decidedly anti-colonial. Shakespeare is evoked as a representative of the patriarchal, colonial past, then ironically forced (through parodic inversion and repetition) to criticize that same heritage and its lingering effects in the present. However, even these strongly anti-colonial resistance plays do not really "throw out the baby with the bath water." Some elements of Shakespeare are used with less critical intent, perhaps reflecting settler-invader ambivalence, as well as a natural human desire to have roots in some kind of ancient, communal heritage. Hence, some of Shakespeare’s poetic language may be retained for its exquisite effects, or his reconciliation themes may be evoked for their potent emotion. A kind of positive and intentional reinscription occurs along with contestation.

Is this reinscription problematic? Does it disqualify these plays as true resistance literature? In a non-settler postcolonial community, such overt reinscription
of the canonical texts associated with a foreign oppressor might be unnecessary, and even unacceptable, at this later stage of decolonization. However, for a British-descended settler-invader such texts do not represent the works of foreign oppressor to the same degree, for they are not completely foreign—nor is the settler-invader always oppressed. Moreover, I would argue that, while reinscription can lead in some instances to complicit postcolonialism, in ambivalent settler-invader cultures it can also be a necessary and useful part of resistance literature, if it occurs in the form of parody. Furthermore, Bond’s Lear suggests that for those implicated in the British imperial heritage, the dangers of reinscription are less than the dangers associated with not confronting the communal past.

I would argue that parody is a highly appropriate form for both British and anglophone settler-invader resistance writing. Parody reconciles the desire for a sense of cultural continuity with the need to create a distinctive identity, and the need to gain the critical distance necessary to re-examine the colonial past and initiate change. Parody represents the old cultural heritage through the text being parodied, preserving a piece of tradition and not necessarily subjecting all of it to ridicule. At the same time, through the changes and ironic inversions contained in its repetitions, parody emphasizes difference; hence, every time Mitchell’s Cruel Tears diverges with irony from the model of Shakespeare’s text, the reader or viewer’s attention is drawn to the distinctive aspects of western Canadian culture being foregrounded. This emphasis on difference can prevent a re-writing from falling into cringing mimicry. Bhabha has argued that the subtle reminders of difference present within even the most accurate
mimicry were used by imperialists in a negative way: to keep the anglicized native from the privileges of being English. However, when mimicry becomes parody, the settler-invaders can actively assert and celebrate their difference from the imperial centre as a positive value. Furthermore, ironic inversion—such as Hewett's making Prospero into a rapist and Caliban into a victim—creates distance from the imperial paradigm of colonization, defamiliarizes it, and challenges its rhetoric. Parody allows the dramatist to negotiate between the different discourses and roles adopted by the settler-invader.

Interestingly, in a settler-invader milieu even the apparently reactionary complicity involved in the positive reinscription of elements of the colonial past can do more than reflect Second World ambivalence: it can aid the resistance project. Encouraged to identify with the colonial heritage rather than to distance themselves from it, the settler-invader audience is then confronted with colonialism's negative aspects and—through the reinforcement of identification—with their own complicity. Hence, when Hewett encourages her Western Australian audience to identify nostalgically with their settler-invader ancestors, it also makes her critique of those ancestors reflect directly on the audience. They are not allowed a simple "that was then, this is now" escape.

Parody in the theatre offers particularly interesting possibilities because—just as parody offers a multi-voiced discourse and the re-visioning of established paradigms—theatre allows for the (re)presentation of multiple, even simultaneous roles or character stereotypes (Tompkins, "Rehearsal" 143). The two can work in tandem.
Tompkins describes how certain non-Shakespearean plays by oppressed minority groups within the Second World rehearse, repeat, and recombine old stereotypes of identity, exposing them as constructs, and showing the complex accretion of identities in the hybrid, postcolonial world. Her description could also apply to the re-visionary theatrical and parodic repetition occurring in some of the anti-colonial settler-invader plays I have examined, especially those of Malouf, Hewett, and MacDonald. Imperial and Shakespearean stereotypes are repeated, recombined, and refunctioned to become new signifiers.

The importance of resistance literature by settler-invaders in the project of decolonization must not be overlooked. While successful decolonization in a non-settler colony might depend primarily on the oppositional tactics of oppressed indigenous groups, its success in Second World nations—where the settler-invaders are demographically dominant and unlikely to leave—depends not only on the oppositional tactics of oppressed minority groups, but also upon settler-invader self-examination and self-critique.

Also critical to decolonization in the Second World is the recognition that Second World society is no longer comprised only of the original native peoples and the descendants of the British (or French) colonizers, but increasingly of people from all over the world who inhabit different places in the postcolonial scheme and have different attitudes towards the colonial legacy. Earlier generations of Canadian and Australian nationalists tended to model their sense of identity and what could
constitute a national theatre culture on a British heritage, including Shakespeare.¹ In the post-colonial 1960s and '70s, nationalists seeking a new, more independent sense of identity and culture ostensibly rejected any overt identification with Britain (and the privileged production of Shakespeare) in favour of celebrating the local and contemporary. However, the "local and contemporary" portrayed on stage was largely defined as white and European—particularly male, heterosexual, Anglo-Celtic white European. Interestingly, the more recent mini-boom in anglophone settler-invader re-visions of Shakespeare comes as the once predominantly Anglo-Celtic cultures of Canada and Australia are recognizing their increasingly multicultural identity. Many of the plays reflect this change in perception. Malouf, Gow, and Mitchell all address the uneasy place of non-British immigrants in predominantly Anglo-Celtic cultures, and the ironic resentment of British settler-invaders when "their" land is invaded by people from a different culture. One can speculate that these approaches to Shakespeare are again reflecting Canadian and Australian attempts to negotiate identity in their evolving societies. However, facing a society that is less and less "British," settler-invader writers seem to have returned to the Shakespearean tradition. This may be partly the result of increased cultural confidence: they no longer feel a need to reject all things British in order to be distinct. It may reflect a wish to celebrate "Britishness" as just one more Canadian or Australian ethnicity among many, or a desire to cling to the past in order to allay cultural insecurity in the face of a changing

¹ See Denis Salter's "The Idea of a National Theatre."
society where "Britishness" is less and less the unquestioned "norm." It could also reflect the broadening perspective that comes from exposure to new influences; writers have been inspired to re-evaluate the old legacy in a new light. In any case, all the recent plays seem to be attempting, in one way or another, to reconcile the colonial past with the postcolonial present.

To conclude, I point to a possible subject for further study: a postcolonial reading of the uses made of Shakespeare in the United States could also be valuable for postcolonial studies, offering another basis for comparison. Now a neo-imperial power, the United States was a British colony, and the first one to declare independence. Ashcroft et al. propose that it could be a model for later postcolonial countries—a theory worth testing. In addition, as Michael Bristol points out in *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*, the United States has institutionalized Shakespeare on a grand scale, in the curriculum, in institutions like the Huntington and Folger libraries, and in innumerable Shakespeare festivals held nation-wide. One could argue that the U.S. has surpassed Britain as the defender, preserver, and promoter of the "Bard." Bristol explains the wholesale adoption of Shakespeare in the United States by suggesting that the playwright's works are read as affirming a primary theme of American culture: the celebration of individuality and the value of expressive autonomy. I find Bristol's argument suggestive, and it may help to explain why I did not find the same plethora of "oppositional" uses of Shakespeare in American drama that I did in other, more obviously postcolonial, countries. A

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2 I suspect Williamson's *Dead White Males* falls into this category.
hypothesis I would like to include alongside Bristol's as another piece of the puzzle is the idea that the appropriation of Shakespeare in America is related, first, to its status as the neo-imperial power that replaced Britain after World War Two, and second, to a lingering colonial cultural insecurity in Shakespeare production. It is an historical cliché that the Romans adopted and mimicked the culture of the Grecian Empire that preceded them; they attempted to borrow its legitimacy and allay a lingering sense that, for all their practical achievements, they were culturally inferior. In turn, during the peak period of the British Empire, British imperial discourse often tried to equate England with ancient Rome. Can a similar phenomenon be seen in the American Empire, with its pseudo-Greco-Roman capital? What about the tendency of its well-funded museums to buy up the best literary artifacts from Britain, monopolizing the market to the point where a Shakespeare scholar is as likely to go to the United States to study Shakespeare as he or she is to go to England? What about the lingering fear amongst American actors that, for all their achievements in modern drama, they cannot do Shakespeare as well as the British? The U.S. does not need to assert its independence from Britain, but it might want to borrow its mantel as it has taken its place on the world stage.
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