

*Shakespeare Adaptations in a Canadian
Context and the Question of Canadian
Identity*

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The doctoral thesis, *Shakespeare Adaptations in a Canadian Context and the Question of Canadian Identity* examines the representation, production and interpretation of Canadian identity through Shakespeare's plays at two world renown Canadian Shakespearean Festivals: Ontario's *Stratford Festival of Canada* and British Columbia's *Bard on the Beach*. Using performance criticism and theatre studies the dissertation analyzes both festivals for their modern representation and adaptations of Shakespeare on the provincial and national Canadian stage. By studying the last ten years of both festivals, it provides a record of the Canadian identity turn on the stage, noting how specific provincial location, festival history and current events affect and alter perceived notions of Canadian identity, audience criticism and theatre production. Using archival research, cast and crew interviews, and on site observations the dissertation analyzes the point of negotiation between local and universal in four festival productions and will engage with the broader dialogue on nationality. The dissertation examines the representation of Canadian identity on the stage through a provincial lens while also providing a hitherto unrecorded history of Bard on the Beach in comparison with the Stratford Festival. The four productions analyzed include a repeat production of Miles Potter's *The Taming of the Shrew* first performed at Stratford in 2003 and later at Bard in 2007, Bard's 1950's Windsor Ontario inspired *The Merry Wives of Windsor* presented in 2012, Stratford's 2012 *Henry V* and Stratford's 2006 first all black premier of Afro-Canadian playwright Djanet Sears' *Harlem Duet*.

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“I can no other answer make but thanks,
And thanks; and ever thanks” –Sebastian, *Twelfth Night* (3.3.14-15)

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Finally, a huge thank you to my family and friends who have supported me throughout my PhD journey, and especially to my father who has been a constant source of strength. Also, to the one who gave me life and the ability to pursue what I love, thank you.

Dedication

“To me you will be unique in all the world . . .
[I]t will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be
different from all the others . . .”

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (80, 83, 87).

“She is worth far more than rubies . . .

Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all”

–Proverbs 31:10b, 29

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Nancy Germaine Shoemaker, who passed away during the completion of my degree. She always encouraged me in my academic endeavours and my love of literature. She is forever in my heart: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13).

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Chapter 1 Identity, Nationalism, and the Histories of the Stratford Festival and Bard on the Beach

"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."

Oscar Wilde

Canada is a multicultural nation, comprising individuals of various backgrounds, languages, and cultural pasts. It is a country that encourages and embraces peoples of all ages, races, nationalities and genders, and is often the chosen mecca of those who desire to start a new life secure from religious, political or physical persecution. With an ever changing cultural landscape, Canada, and what it means to be "Canadian," has become an elusive concept, easily relegated to stereotypes and vague identity assumptions. Where can one turn to determine what it means to be Canadian and is the claim of national identity viable in a multi-national, global economy? When examining the arts, specifically the realm of Canadian theatre, one encounters questions regarding Canadian identity and its purpose in the modern global marketplace: What does it mean to be a Canadian national theatre in a worldwide economy where Shakespeare belongs to all?¹ How does a regional festival negotiate individual identity in light of national identity? Has Canadian theatre moved beyond the defiant 1950s representation of Canadian Shakespeare to a hybrid or re-conceptualized identity? By looking at two different Shakespeare festivals in Canada, one can begin to search out answers to these and other questions regarding Canadian identity in the arts.

Ontario's Stratford Festival and British Columbia's Bard on the Beach provide vital insights into the developing and changing concept of Canadian identity, as they negotiate the

¹ As Billie notes in Djanet Sears' play *Harlem Duet* "the Shakespeare's mine" (52).

relationship between a national and global theatrescape. The following elements contributed to each festival's Canadian approach to theatre: chronological festival history, multiculturalism/diversity, location, and artistic choice (specifically the artistic director's vision and actors' theatrical decisions).² The purpose of this dissertation is to study both theatre companies and determine how their individual approaches towards Shakespeare reflect an altered, challenged or even re-conceived notion of Canadian national and cultural identity on the regional, national and/or global stage. My doctoral thesis, "*All the world's a stage*": *Adapting Shakespeare Within a Canadian Context and the Question of Canadian Identity*, will examine Canadian identity through the relationship between Bard's and Stratford's on-stage products, artistic goals, and audience responses with a specific focus on particular productions as case studies. The dissertation will determine how Shakespearean drama, variously adapted and reinterpreted in two disparate provincial and national contexts, reveals a continual collective negotiation between Canadian cultural identity and global awareness, presenting not a singular cultural identity but a hybrid national identity in relationship with the global theatre community. The thesis draws attention to the tension between local and global Shakespeare, revealing Canadian identity as the product of an intersecting Canadian and international theatrescape.

I will examine the creation of and response to six Shakespeare or Shakespeare-themed productions by outlining how they challenge, comment upon or re-examine the question of hybrid Canadian identity through a global approach. Chapter two provides an

² Chronological history is specific to Stratford. Stratford being an older festival with a longer history than Bard, is changed and altered by its past. Thus, Stratford's Canadian approach is affected by past productions that included Canadian identity and how nationalism has been connected with previous seasons or directors. Bard lacks this history and thus its past has less effect on productions.

experimental control in examining a duplicate production of the *Taming of the Shrew* originally presented at Stratford in 2003 and re-mounted for Bard in 2007. By comparing the two productions, the chapter analyzes how festival differences could affect a theatre's final production and raises the question of how festival identity factors into the forthcoming chapter case studies. Chapter three will analyze Canadian prop imagery and iconography against American imagery in Bard's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* while chapter four discusses the themes of Canadian nationalism as represented in Stratford's *Henry V* directed by Des McAnuff. The dissertation ends with an examination of Canadian playwright Djanet Sears' Shakespeare adaptation *Harlem Duet* as produced by the Stratford Festival. Each section discloses the current role of Stratford and Bard in expanding and re-defining Canada's evolving cultural identity.

While the case studies provide a window into the relationship between Bard's and Stratford's productions and national identity, it is important to note the limitations of this approach. My dissertation examines a total of five productions between two national festivals, providing a small glance into each company's representation of national identity on stage. The study cannot, using only five case studies, fully outline the contributions each festival makes to the critique and creation of Canadian identity.

Within these limits, I have attempted to assess each production's interpretations and claims. Any play that examines Canadian identity helps define that identity and questions the audience's perception of nationality, implicitly inviting the audience to join a conversation about national identity. In addition to describing the production, the theatre critic participates in the same conversation, and in doing so can provide a political critique of what the show is

saying or promoting. An adept critic, then, will interpret what is presented on stage, scrutinizing a festival's or a director's claims rather than accepting them outright.

By comparing director interpretations with audience responses, and Shakespeare adaptations with Shakespeare-themed productions, this thesis will define and evaluate the role of two culturally vital theatres in ongoing dialogue about Canadian identity, one on the West Coast and the other in Central Canada.

Identity and the Need for Self-Awareness in Theatre

The need to define one's identity and thereby determine the 'self' and its place within a social landscape has always been a driving force for humanity: the question of identity is central to the human story. Any child born into the world is given an identity: a name. The practice of having unnamed babies in neo-natal hospital wards identified as "Parent's last name baby" is frowned upon by medical professionals and evokes a social push to name the child. According to Stephen Levick in *Clone Beings: Exploring the Psychological and Social Dimensions*, "[f]irst names symbolize personal identity" and are considered to be "one of the most fundamental pillars of selfhood" (133). From their first breath until their dying breath, many human beings are desperate to understand "who am I?" and "what does it mean to be human?"

Identity is a question with multifaceted answers and identity conception is affected by many factors including one's name, culture, history, parental identity, country of birth, job, marital status and more. While complicated, identity is also constantly in flux, changing with an individual as he/she grows up, ages and navigates life. With humanity's obsession with self-awareness and identity it is not surprising that the stage, a reflection of human life, echoes these concerns and questions. As Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich observe in their

book, *Theatre in Crisis: Performance Manifestos for a New Century*, the origins of theatre, narrative and early oral tales are seated in the desire to know oneself and understand one's purpose: "Every kind of theatre expresses a definition of what it means to be human . . . This is what we [actors] are preserving. The storytelling . . . [t]he desire to know what it means to be human" (27). Indeed the entire essence of human awareness and identity is explored and examined through story. As Eugene Peterson notes, "We live in narrative, we live in story. Existence has a story shape to it. We have a beginning, and an end, we have a plot, we have characters" (qtd. in Curtis and Eldredge 39).

The theatre, being collective in nature, also showcases multiple human stories in an interactive environment. Productions encourage audience reflection and self awareness, but also promote a group identity through the community experience of performance. Thus, audience members play a part in the creation of Canadian identity by being present at a performance and engaging with the presentation. While Stratford's audience members are not all Canadian (according to *Shakespeare Companies and Festivals: An International Guide*, nearly forty percent of Stratford's audience is American,) the patrons, regardless of nationality, either engage personally or by association with the creation of Stratford's Canadian identity (Engle et al. xvii).³ Individuals who are not Canadian aid by contributing to the conversation about Canadian identity in relation to the other and by providing a new element to the national and global conversation regarding theatre identity. Theatre, by nature of its interactive audience and actor experience, is well suited to exploring questions of a collective national identity, as theatre creates an intimate group experience. It therefore makes sense to turn to the creator of story, the theatre, to examine the question of identity

³ The audience numbers are from 1995.

and importance of a national identity conversation.

1.1 Theatre and the Question of Identity

At the centre of any theatre performance is the innate human desire to understand the self through story. Numerous theatre productions and plays of the past attest to humanity's desire to explore the self. Delgado and Svich list the rich history of human story telling, the interpretation and questioning of identity, by drawing an imperfect and limited list of key narrators and questioners beginning with Griots and Native American storytellers, the Greeks, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, Freud, Eastern European absurdists, Brecht, Garcia Lorca, Beckett and many more (27). These individuals bring the same questions of purpose and identity to the forefront of narrative, showing that story is at the heart of understanding human identity.

Identity and identity confusion are not new to the stage as questions of self-awareness occupy the pages of playwrights throughout history. William Shakespeare's famous tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* pivots upon the plot's concern of identity by pitting the Montagues against the Capulets. Juliet herself laments Romeo's ill-fated identity crying, "[Romeo] doff thy name . . . What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other word would smell as sweet./ So Romeo would, were not he Romeo called, /Retain that dear perfection which he owes/ Without that title" (2.1. 89, 85-89). Similarly, Romeo bemoans his identity, asking the friar, "tell me./ In what vile part of this anatomy/ Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack/ The hateful mansion" (3.3.104-7). In the comedy *Twelfth Night* identity is muddled and confused when Viola disguises herself as a boy, Cesario, and Rosalind in *As You Like It* causes passionate puzzlement for Orlando in her male attire as Ganymede. Similarly,

swapped male identities cause confusion in *The Taming of the Shrew* when Bianca tries to explain to her father, Baptista, that her fiancé “Cambio is changed into Lucentio” (5.1.123). Shakespeare’s dalliances with questions of identity fall into two different categories: mis-identity for comedic effect and the questioning of true identity for dramatic effect. One sees an example of the later in Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” speech, where he doubts the purpose of his own existence, his identity as a living being, and ponders suicide (3.1.58).

While Shakespeare’s plays are filled with examples of characters questioning humanity’s purpose and presenting scenarios of identity confrontation, Shakespeare is only one of many writers who engage with the conundrum of human existence. The universal question, “Who am I?” is continually examined on the stage. The famous 1985 Broadway musical *Les Misérables*’ show stopping number, aptly titled “Who am I?” by protagonist Jean Valjean, questions the role of his past, present and future identity: “And must my name until I die be no more than an alibi? Must I lie? . . . Who am I? 24601” (Behr). Similarly, the 2008 Broadway musical *Wicked*, inspired by Gregory Maguire’s work *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, a reinvention of L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, opens with a monologue by Galinda the Good about the identity of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. The monologue focuses on identity, labels, and how one becomes an individual as Galinda ponders, “Are people born wicked, or do they have wickedness thrust upon them? After all [Elphaba] had a childhood[. S]he had a father, who just happened to be the governor of Munchkinland . . . She had a mother . . .” (“Wicked”). Canadian playwrights Yves Sioui Durand and Jean-Frédéric Messier’s work *The Malécite Hamlet/Hamlet-le-Malécite* starkly describes the aboriginal question of identity through the character of Laeste

who associates his degraded worth with the Canadian government's approach to appropriated land:

I never knew who my father was. And I don't want to know; he can't do anything for me. When I want to know who I am, I open my wallet . . . and inside there's a card that the government of Canada gave me, with my picture on it, which says that I belong to the First Nations, which confers on me the same status as telephone poles and national parks. (qtd. in Fischlin "Hamlet-le-Malécite (2004)")

The question of personal and national identity spans theatre history and genres, appearing in everything from classical Broadway musicals to modern Canadian works.

Canadian playwright Djanet Sears also examines minority identity in her play *Harlem Duet*, allowing her character to re-name herself "Billie," refuse her birth name, and by association her given cultural identity. As Levick notes, a first name is the central "pillar of selfhood" and through a rejection of her birth name, Billie is able to choose and maintain control of her personal identity while slowly losing control over her ethnic representation, her health, her relationship with Othello, and her past (133). Through these examples, one sees that the early embodiments of theatre, oral narratives, current Broadway musicals, and modern Canadian plays all focus upon the question of identity. While theatre embodies many purposes (pedagogical, reflective, ontological, cathartic), and audience responses are varied, theatre, in its interactive nature, reflects the human experience to the audience by mirroring the self.

Canadian identity itself has been a shifting element since the creation of the nation. As Elspeth Cameron observes in *Canadian Culture: An Introductory Reader*, the notion of

Canadian identity, stereotypes aside, is a bit of a conundrum involving paradoxes and questions, for “how can a strong sense of ‘Nationalism’ coexist with a strong sense of ‘Internationalism?’ And how can ‘Regionalism’ find a place next [to] either” (8). As a 2011 poll by the *Institute for Canadian Citizenship* reveals, Canadian citizens themselves offer varied responses on what it means to be Canadian: “the public thinks about citizenship in a number of ways, which in part encompasses certain civil requirements . . . obeying the law and paying taxes, but also . . . social responsibility in the form of being an active participant in one’s community, tolerating others who are different and helping others” (Environics 3). As Anthony Wilson-Smith observes, while Canadians may disagree on the kaleidoscope of definitions that are proposed under the heading “Canadian identity”, “[they] are convinced there is such a thing as a unique national identity-even if they are unable to agree on what constitutes it” (Fraser Institute; Cameron 8). For Cameron “there is no one way to be Canadian . . . [and] Canadians are comfortable [holding an] ideological limbo” (8).⁴ As both academics and the Canadian populace are unable to come to a collective consensus on the definition of Canadian identity one can accept that Canadian nationality is a hybrid identity, a global hodgepodge of many strands interwoven into the fabric of Canadian culture.

Current Canadian identity has evolved to reflect the changing ideals, population diversity, and perspectives of a multi-cultural, British Commonwealth nation. According to a *National Post* interview with Rudyard Griffiths, in the 50s, 60s and even into the early 80s Canadian identity embodied “peacekeeping, healthcare and the threat of Quebec separation”

⁴ For Cameron, one of the quintessential characteristics of Canadian identity is its multifaceted nature, which he describes in the following examples where being Canadian seems “[like] holding in suspension two or more mutually exclusive sets of values . . . [F]inding irony or wry humour in the situation is a confusing, but characteristic, Canadian stance” (8).

(Carlson). However, concepts of national identity have shifted during the past thirty-five years and Canadians are now embracing a broader definition of national identity and citizenship: “[The] government sees . . . a country that’s ready to embrace a big, new reworking of who we are as a country” (qtd. in Carlson). By promoting Canadian history and a pride in our past while trumpeting our current achievements and future goals, Canadian voices are challenging the previous concepts of Canadian identity: “[We’ve] moved into a more healthy kind of civic nationalism where Canadians are saying, ‘We’re not simply a G20 power. We’re one of the powerhouses within the G20. We’re the second-oldest federal democracy in the world’” (Carlson). In an article for *The National Post*, Joe O’Connor argues that Canadians have cast off the “modest, self-effacing, middle-of-the-road selves . . . [for a collective identity] as citizens of a steadfast nation . . . that was willing to be different, that led the world (in certain categories)” (O’Connor). Canada is no longer Eurocentric, no longer defined in a negative space (in relation to the other according to what Canada is not) but rather in a mutual conversation with the global market. Thus, national identity is not, as Daniel Fischlin argues, based upon “contradiction, discrepancy, and dissension” but rather on the resulting conversation of Canadians embodying a hybrid identity of eclectic cultures and values (“Nation” 316). The conversation of national and Canadian identity can be traced through the arts, specifically the history of the Stratford Festival of Canada.

1.2 A Brief History of the Stratford Festival

Canadian identity is one of the many themes expressed and examined by both the Stratford Festival of Canada and Bard on the Beach; however, it is vital to note that unlike Bard, Stratford was founded upon Tom Patterson and Tyrone Guthrie’s idea of a national

Canadian theatre company that encouraged Canadian talent. The original focus on Canadian nationalism can be traced throughout Stratford's history as the festival developed and grew under changing leadership. By examining each artistic director's approach to the festival one can see how Stratford was and is continually engaging in the ongoing discussion of Canadian and national identity. In fact, Stratford's evolutionary Canadian identity is directly affected, and one could argue partially created, by the tensions between the festival's negotiation between local and global identity. By studying each artistic director's leadership one can pinpoint the issues raised and the changes evoked in respect to national identity and Stratford's Canadian status.

For the first artistic director Tyrone Guthrie, Stratford was the initial Canadian response to the Eurocentric idealism attached to Shakespeare and his works. Stratford was Canada's first proactive response to an ongoing conversation on Canadian artistic value, purpose and importance on a global scale. The creation of the Stratford Festival was a blatant statement of cultural worth by the previously unassuming and quiet cultural crucible of the Canadian arts. As Nora Campbell notes in her dissertation *The Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada*, Canadian identity was paramount to Stratford's design and valued by all working on the festival vision (14, 44). Guthrie was adamant about Canadian design, a local focus and Canadian talent, going so far as to threaten to leave if the festival became a money grabbing, tourist trap: "Guthrie's goal of making the Festival a Canadian enterprise was fueled by the fires of nationalism; everything must be Canadian. This accent on things Canadian . . . underl[ay] the fundamentals of Guthrie's policy" (14, 44). Guthrie was enticed by the idea of starting fresh in Canada and desired to establish a strong audience/actor

connection through stage design and performance (43). While Guthrie brought in British talent out of a desperate need for viable actors, his true goal was to foster and grow local talent.⁵ He trumpeted the “inevitable cultural gains for Canada if the Festival proved successful . . . [He] acknowledged . . . [that] the project needed to be a Canadian theatre. . . [adding] that the reservoir of Canadian talent would grow larger with each season. He . . . wanted to build a Canadian company” (44-45).⁶ Despite a British allegiance, Guthrie tapped into Stratford’s and, on a larger scale, Canada’s desire to engage in a global conversation regarding the national arts and Canada’s value in the global market. From the naissence of the Stratford festival, there has been a tension between Canada and the other, and Canadian identity as presented through the festival was Canada’s response to questions of national identity and value.

During Guthrie’s leadership Canadian nationalism and patriotism took centre stage at the festival, initiating a global conversation on Canada’s artistic value and merit. Guthrie’s pro-Canadian nationalism was publicly declared in a CBC radio broadcast used to bolster public support (51). In his appeal to the Canadian public, Guthrie argued for the global achievements that Canada could present to the world through local and national means:

⁵ Building upon British talent including actor and director Tyrone Guthrie and Sir Alec Guinness, who played the title role of Richard III, the festival responded to history’s famous Globe theatre and a modern Stratford-upon-Avon with an interpretation of its own Shakespeare. Stratford wanted to be on par or better than its European predecessors. It is important to note that the Stratford committee also desired to foster local talent.

⁶ The desire to promote and cultivate Canadian theatre culture was expressed in the first published mandate of the Stratford festival (1953-59). In the “Aims and Objects of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival,” Stratford placed emphasis on training, teaching and promoting Canadian theatre. Of the nine articles written, three outlined the desire to develop a future Canadian theatre culture: “To provide facilities for education and instruction in the arts of the theatre. To provide improved opportunities for Canadian artistic talent. To advance the development of the arts of the theatre in Canada” (“The Stratford Festival Story” 1). This early Stratford motto was the foundation for Stratford’s current programs including the Teaching Shakespeare program, the Shakespeare School for students, the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre and multiple teachers conferences, online study guides, acting, vocal and university courses (“Stratford Festival 2013 Brochure”).

What likelihood is there that there will be a more flourishing theatre in Canada? None—unless Canadians begin to feel that a serious theatre is not merely an amenity—but a necessity . . . Canada might well be the richest and, in a material sense, the most powerful community in the world, indeed that the world has ever seen. (52)

Guthrie's words were clearly a battle cry for aesthetic vision, theatrical greatness and Canadian nationalism. Despite divided reviews and skeptical responses to “foreigners” meddling in Canadian affairs, the Stratford festival became an instant success (53).⁷ The 1953 performances of *Richard III* and *All's Well that Ends Well* altered the theatrescape in Canada and gained what Robertson Davies termed an “[achievement] of historic importance not only [for] Canada but . . . [for] the world” (“The Stratford Story”). From the opening night performance of *Richard*, which Herb Whittaker described as “the most exciting night in the history of the Canadian theatre,” Stratford has continued to claim, interpret and present Shakespeare as its own using the stage as a place to negotiate Canadian identity through an intricate global conversation (qtd. in Knowles, “From Nationalist” 19).

In the article “From Nationalist to Multinational: The Stratford Festival, Free Trade, and the Discourses of Intercultural Tourism,” Richard Paul Knowles observes that Stratford has always, regardless of its choices, been a touchstone for Canadian national identity (20). Knowles argues that Stratford transitioned from a national theatre to a multinational theatre

⁷ Jack Blacklock, director of the Niagara Barn Theatre, suggested that Guthrie and any other “foreigners” should return to “England after their brief holiday in the colonies, and leave the building of Canadian theatre to those of us Canadians who know it must be done slowly and on a sound basis of business promotion” (Campbell 53).

from 1953 until the early 1990s (20).⁸ While there certainly is a shift from a national mindset to a more global mindset, I believe that the underlying awareness of a global conversation was present from the beginning of Stratford's history. Peter Parolin concurs in his article "What revels are in hand? A Change of Direction at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada," observing that the "ongoing negotiation between Stratford's international aspirations and its Canadian identity, [are] issues [that have been] at play since the Festival's inception in 1953" (213). Parolin points out that Stratford's continual negotiation between national and global reflects a tension between local and international identity:

The Festival fights an inferiority complex regarding its British cousins, but it also asserts a legitimate wish to share its works more widely and to give Canadian artists more access to international conversations (215).

The Festival's changing approaches to Canadian identity and to its purpose as a national theatre are the result of a changing global conversation about Canada's theatre. Concerns regarding Canadian identity and changes made to the national approach are the consequence of an intersection between Canadian theatrescape and global Shakespeare.

During the time of Stratford's creation, Canada, as a nation, was keenly aware of its place on the global stage and desired to promote powerful, patriotic solidarity. The desire for a stronger national presence was partially the result of Canada's role on a global playing field during WWII and the resulting international conversations. The 1951 Massey report, written a mere six years following Canada's involvement in the Second World War, cited both the military and the arts as vital to national identity: "we must strengthen those permanent institutions which give meaning to our unity and make us conscious of the best in our

⁸ Knowles' article was published in 1995 and thus only covers Stratford's history up until the early 1990s.

national life . . . Our military defenses must be made secure; but our cultural defenses equally demand national attention” (qtd. in Knowles, “From Nationalist” 23). Thus, Canada was already engaged in a conversation regarding national identity, foreign threats, and the importance of developing and safeguarding a growing cultural identity. In *First Stage: The Making of the Stratford Festival* Tom Patterson highlights the vital role Stratford played in altering not only theatre within Canada but Canada’s reputation to the world. He claims that Stratford gave the Canadian actor a renewed pride, allowing those practicing the craft to be recognized as “Canadian actors” in international circles. Actors no longer felt the need to migrate to New York or across the pond for training and rave reviews in international newspapers added to a new sense of cultural worth (205).⁹ The *New York Times* proclaimed Stratford “the greatest classical comedy company on the North America continent” (Brooke Atkinson qtd. in Patterson 206). International interest was reflected in press from England, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Brazil and the United States, with a focus on Canadian culture (Patterson 208).¹⁰ While other countries were eagerly reporting the facts of Stratford’s triumph, the festival reaped many positive effects within the national borders.

With the Stratford Festival, Canadian citizens received a national treasure and a source of cultural pride. Canadians could “hold up [their] heads among visitors as [part of] an adult nation” (Patterson 211-212). For Patterson, Stratford lent cultural and artistic maturity to Canada along with a new sophistication in the international world of theatre (212-213). The festival kept local artists within our borders while providing a final product, completely

⁹ Martha Henry echoes Patterson’s sentiment observing that Stratford “fed and nurtured Canadian talent” (Parolin 216).

¹⁰ As Patterson notes, the international coverage that Stratford gained was more rampant than the global interest over Canada’s discovery of iron ore or uranium (208).

manufactured in Canada, which could become a potential export (211-212).¹¹ The first few years under Guthrie's leadership displayed great strides in the development and growth of Stratford's company and its professionalism. Following Guthrie's leadership and vision, future artistic directors maintained a Canadian focus with changes based upon current events, festival needs, audience response and global representation.

Throughout Michael Langham's leadership of 1956-62 and 1963-67,¹² Stratford experienced the beginnings of what would be a continual tension between Canadian theatre and the global theatrescape manifest through the presentation of Canadian identity. Langham found himself negotiating between both the local and international needs of the festival; he desired to promote strong local connections yet also fostered a desire for future global growth. During his tenure, Langham promoted Canadian actors and nationalism but not at the expense of necessary talent. As Campbell observes, "while nationalism was an issue in which [Langham] truly believed, he was not prepared to give up high quality simply to satisfy the demands that a quota of Canadians be hired" (182). Langham valued quality theatre above all, and in his desire to grow and strengthen the Stratford festival his concerns for investing in the future were justified. While Langham would not permit the "nationalism issues to become an unsolvable obstacle in the path of artistic integrity," he relentlessly promoted Canadian talent through actor education, improving the thrust stage, and taking risks with Canadian directors, designers and actors:

¹¹ When Don Harron heard of the festival, still in its creative infancy, he cancelled passage to England and returned to his roots. Similarly, the festival lured back Douglas Rain, Jonathan White, Jo Hutchins from England, and Lloyd Bochner and Norman Roland from New York (Patterson 208).

¹² Langham was forced to step down from his artistic duties due to illness in 1961 (Ganong 1).

[Langham] addressed the issue of Canadian nationalism by drawing heavily upon Canadian actors and writers, Canadian technicians and designers; his decision to use Christopher Plummer after the actor had been rejected by Guthrie was brave since it was a large risk . . . His desire for Canadianism at Stratford was sincere and he supported the idea of appointing Jean Gascon, the first Canadian artist to become artistic director at Stratford. (180-181)

Langham encouraged the growth of the festival by investing in theatre education in the local community and school systems (the 1960 student matinees sold 18,000 student tickets), overseeing a 1974 tour to England, and producing the first televised production of *Henry V* (177-179). While Langham was a strong advocate for Canadian nationalism and the local town of Stratford, he had a broader vision for Stratford, an international vision that would be furthered by future artistic directors.

Jean Gascon, the first French-Canadian executive artistic director at Stratford, entered the festival with the desire to continue to push Stratford into the international limelight.¹³ However, his global focus resulted in increased tension between Canadian and international perspectives, while his limited English understanding exacerbated the Stratford tension by reflecting the English/French divide already present in the nation.¹⁴ Stratford artists expected local support and a national drive for Canadian identity from Gascon. When the festival expanded to include international artists and forums, instead of feeling welcomed by a larger

¹³ Gascon entered the festival under a shared leadership position with associate director Jon Hirsch. The partnership was tenuous and lasted only two years (1968-1969). Gascon was then appointed artistic director from 1969-74.

¹⁴ The cultural and language barriers that existed with Gascon also provided serious problems when he mounted Shakespeare's works. As Campbell writes, "For the first two months that he was directing *Othello* he kept the French translation with him because he could not understand the nuances of English . . . he was virtually unable to penetrate the depths of the text . . . his success with comedy was also limited" (197-8).

theatrescape, local actors felt betrayed, threatened and disregarded. The hiring of international and American actors added to the discontent regarding Canadian nationalism as many members of the festival had expected Gascon to champion a larger Canadian cast. When American actor Christopher Walken was hired for the role of Romeo festival members were outraged (Campbell 207). Similarly, British actress Karin Fernald was snubbed when cast in *Measure for Measure* because many assumed she was hired solely for her connections (207).¹⁵ The theme of hiring foreign actors continued into the 1970 season evoking similar negative responses from the company: “They felt betrayed and abandoned by a fellow Canadian who could have given them more opportunities to develop” (208).

Despite internal tensions, Gascon pushed the festival further into the international limelight with residencies at the Nation Arts Centre in Ottawa (1968) and tours to Holland, Denmark, Poland, the Soviet Union and Australia during 1973 and 1974 (“Artistic Directors”; Pettigrew and Portman 9, 33, 38). While a desire for international growth may seem a positive choice for the festival, Campbell claims that it “came close to endangering the well-being of Canada’s major theatre company” (Campbell 190). Gascon’s desire to broaden the festival’s repertoire to avoid “stagnation” while promoting Canadian playwrights, starting a fall residence at the NAC, and recording productions for posterity, overstretched the company and the budget (193-194, 230; Pettigrew and Portman 41). Focusing on experimental works at the Avon theatre in the 1970 season, the festival experienced a drastic drop in attendance and the company morale declined. Gascon’s avoidance of Shakespeare’s works and his inability to communicate with the festival left the

¹⁵ As Campbell notes in her dissertation “[Karin Fernald’s] father was John Fernald, principal of The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art” (207)

company feeling leaderless and unappreciated (Campbell 211). The Canadian cast desired national support and opportunities to grow as Canadian artists; both desires highlighted a tension between Stratford's local and international identity. When Gascon left the festival to incoming British director Robin Phillips, he bequeathed him a nationally charged mess.

Phillips desired to develop the Stratford festival by promoting Canadian artists, presenting unique content, and challenging Stratford's traditional norms. His vision for the festival balanced ideally between national identity and international awareness as he pushed for a modern meaning in the classical works, and argued for Stratford as a part of a greater whole in Canadian theatre.¹⁶ Phillips disregarded the title of "national theatre" instead claiming all theatre houses were a part of Canada's theatre identity:

[W]e can create a national theatre, not in any one location or serving any one city or province but stretching from one end of the country to the other and making a statement that is truly Canadian—transcending differences of geography and economics to find the underlying pulse of this country and give it a voice. (qtd. in Pettigrew and Portman 53)

Despite grand visions and a desire to grow the festival, Phillips started his tenure amid opposition and doubt regarding his leadership.¹⁷ As actress Marti Maraden recalled, "he was not welcomed with open arms . . . There was . . . revulsion in the press towards another

¹⁶ Phillips encouraged modern dress in his Shakespeare productions placing the 1975 season's *Measure for Measure* in Vienna pre-WWI and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1920's Italian Riviera (Pettigrew and Portman 63, 68-69).

¹⁷ The Stratford board rejected 29 candidates, before selecting Phillips for his credentials, experience in all aspects of theatre, and vast knowledge of the classics (Campbell 242-3).

British director coming over to head a Canadian theatre” (CBC Television).¹⁸ Despite censure and protest, Phillips endured and tenaciously re-built the festival while assuaging fears of Canadian cultural decline. He re-invented the festival approach, pushing for continual development, promoting current theatre, advocating for actor training, and encouraging a radical re-envisioning of Shakespeare in modern settings (Campbell 253; Pettigrew and Portman 63).¹⁹

As artistic director, Phillips mediated between Canadian artistic developments and pushed Stratford towards an international level, all within a country of strongly divided Canadian nationalism.²⁰ At the time of Phillips’ leadership, the world of Canadian theatre was separated between supporters of a united, global approach to Shakespeare, the “imperialist impulse to unite the country under one flag, one proper accent, and one world-class standard of classical theatres,” and those who opposed a high culture mode in favour of alternative experimental theatre (Knowles “From Nationalist” 31). Phillips wished to challenge the engrained approaches of the festival actors and instruct them in character creation instead of role repetition (Pettigrew and Portman 66). For Phillips, Stratford couldn’t continue down the same, well-worn path of artistic complacency: “[A] competence which isn’t challenged and pushed and cajoled towards higher . . . achievement becomes a

¹⁸ Following his appointment, Phillips received a flurry of letters, newspaper published critiques, and even a challenge to a duel, all claiming that his British background made him ill suited to lead a Canadian theatre company (Campbell 243-44).

¹⁹ Both Martha Henry and Barry MacGregor noted that Phillips was an inspired director and an effective instructor. He used the “rehearsal periods to teach you about acting” (CBC Television). For Henry, Phillips’ instruction was vital for the festival as “[t]here hadn’t been any real teaching in recent years . . . and I believe we all need to be taught and to continue learning” (Pettigrew and Portman 59)

²⁰ Phillips engaged in a public political debate over arts funding by chastising the Secretary of State and verbally supporting smaller Canadian theatres that desperately needed money (Pettigrew and Portman 128-129). Despite his dedication to the Canadian arts, Phillips’ loyalty was often questioned especially following unsuccessful productions or amid rumours of his resignation.

competence without the life to sustain it” (qtd. in Campbell 253). Phillips pushed Stratford artists into new and challenging territories, and did so by luring in great British actors and mentors such as Brian Bedford and Dame Maggie Smith. As Phillips reminisced in a 2002 interview, he desired to create theatre that was real, vital and relevant to a Canadian audience:

I believe that we do [theatre] for reasons other than just to entertain and that if we do it well we can make a huge difference to people’s lives. . . I wanted to startle [the audience] into realizing that Stratford was more than this slightly old fashioned vickery pokery velvet costumes twirling around . . . I was looking for things that would make them sit up and take notice. (CBC Television)

By the end of Phillips’ six seasons as artistic director significant changes were visible: the Avon produced Shakespeare, a young company was established, a third stage was used for experimental productions, and an international perspective was promoted through actor choice and production decisions (“Artistic Directors”; Campbell 255).²¹ However, Phillips’ all controlling dictatorship, coupled with pushing the festival budget to its limits, resulted in a recovery that failed to promote a sense of productive longevity among festival members or the board (303).²²

When Phillips resigned in 1980 the board went through a number of possible candidates, first assigning a two-tiered system of directors and Stratford actors conditional to

²¹ The third stage would later become the Tom Patterson Theatre.

²² Ironically, despite a collective feeling of uncertainty, Phillips left the festival in relative stability condition.

Phillips staying on as advisor.²³ After Phillips' departure, the board hired English director John Dexter and fired the directorate without warning.²⁴ The act was seen as an attack against Canadian nationalism (hiring another English director) and an insult to the previously selected directorate. The result was turmoil, threats of boycott, government disapproval (Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, denied Dexter permission to work in Canada) and the festival nearly came to a grinding halt (315-16). In a panic, the board appointed a new leader for the search committee, lawyer Julian Porter, and eventually hired previous associate artistic director John Hirsch.

Under Hirsch's leadership the Stratford festival was able to recover from the "Dexter Crisis" and continue towards an expanding global identity (318). Hirsch managed to balance the festival's Canadian identity with growing international scope, thereby negotiating the sticky national identity issues of previous years. Unlike Phillips, Hirsch was not about to run the festival as a one-man show; his Hungarian-Canadian heritage, past history with the festival, and work with the CBC all helped to appease public concerns over issues of Canadian nationality.²⁵ The Dexter crisis left the festival and the town of Stratford divided. Gina Mallet of the *Toronto Star* claimed Hirsch lambasted his critic as "un-Canadian," yet,

²³ The two tier system included Stratford actors, Brian Bedford, Len Cariou, and Martha Henry, dramaturge Urjo Kareda, actor William Hutt, and directors Pam Brighton, Peter Moss and Peter Roberts (Campbell 312).

²⁴ Phillips withdrew from the directorate August 27, 1980 citing his previous resignation for the end of 1980 season as still standing (Pettigrew and Portman 197).

²⁵ Hirsch was aware that Stratford had grown beyond the successful handling of one leader, and suggested the idea of an assistant artistic director; however, his proposal never came to fruition during his leadership (Campbell 319).

rhetoric aside, Hirsch's main focus was to rescue the current season and Stratford's future (220).²⁶

During his five years as director Hirsch poured his energies into the festival's future and international status by promoting films, a North American tour, and reassigning the Young Company at the Third Stage as "a training program for young professional actors" ("Artistic Directors"; Pettigrew and Portman 249). He encouraged the CBC film recording of *Pinafore* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, which were both aired on Canadian television and his final season saw the festival engage in a tour of *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* across North America (Pettigrew and Portman 249-250, 200). Unlike the transition period between Phillips and the Dexter crisis, which saw the planning and then cancelling of an international tour to England, Hirsch succeeded in providing successful tour exports from Stratford (Pettigrew and Portman 200-203). By exporting instead of importing talent, avoiding a British tour or the wooing of British artists, Hirsch's choices were of an unapologetic Canadian focus, presenting the Stratford festival as a Canadian company with intrinsic international value. For Hirsch, Stratford no longer needed to defend its work to British associates.²⁷ He saw Stratford as embodying an ideal to North America and ultimately the world claiming, "Stratford has a continental mandate. Everybody in the United States looks at it as the premier theatre on this continent. It is a continental resource . . . This festival

²⁶ According to Gina Mallet of *The Toronto Star*, "Hirsch has proclaimed himself saviour of the Canadian theatre . . . implying that all those who do not give him 100 per cent support are not only against him, but even un-Canadian" (Knelman 222).

²⁷ Timothy Bond, a member of Equity during the Dexter crisis, dictated a letter in support of a boycott claiming, "Canada still runs its theatres as though it were a British colony. We continually reach to the outside for expertise, and the result is that our theatres look like poor copies of theatres elsewhere. What makes a theatre international is the exportability of its thought, not its willingness to import experts to direct all its operations" (Knelman 167).

provides a service to this nation, to this continent, which is still valuable” (Pettigrew and Portman 233).

After Hirsch’s leadership, Stratford returned to British roots via John Neville who, unlike British directors of past seasons, had an established history in Canada.²⁸ By the time he accepted a position with Stratford in 1986, Neville was in tune with Canadian theatre culture, having worked in Canada for twelve years, and was aware of the unique demands associated with a festival of Stratford’s calibre (Gaines 15). According to board member Ronald Byden in *John Neville Takes Command*, Stratford was due for an re-infusion of traditional Shakespeare which Neville could provide while also reinventing Stratford’s Canadian identity: “each artistic director, regardless of the culture in which he received his training, has tried to find new ways of making the Festival ‘more Canadian’. But the Festival still needs at regular intervals to draw nourishment from the tradition which begat it” (17). Contrary to Byden’s claim, instead of turning to British tradition Neville expanded the festival through modern practices; he presented Shakespeare themed musicals, companion plays, and encouraged Canadian playwrights. Stratford embraced both modern and classical playwrights, introducing Shakespeare’s lesser-known romances *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*, and Stratford’s first Broadway musical *The Boys from Syracuse*. During his tenure Neville fulfilled the role of both artistic director and actor.²⁹ With an eye for long-term development Neville introduced production pairings at the Avon theatre (*Hamlet* with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*) and reduced the deficit (“Artistic Directors”). By

²⁸ Neville came to Canada in 1972 and stayed in the country, playing roles at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and at Stratford (1983-84), and contributed to the country’s cultural fabric as the artistic director at Edmonton’s Citadel Theatre and the Neptune theatre in Halifax (“Artistic Directors”).

²⁹ Neville appeared as Henry Higgins in Stratford’s 1988 production of *My Fair Lady* (“Artistic Directors”).

expanding Stratford's offerings, Neville continued the Festival transformation towards a wider, global perspective by providing musicals, classical works and modern texts. The expansion in Stratford's offerings paved the way for future changes that would encourage Canadian identity analysis within the global festival mindset.³⁰

By the time of David William (1990-1993), the festival had moved beyond overt Canadian identity concerns and was focused on Shakespeare and other classical playwrights. Presenting Canadian works was a part of Stratford's mandate. However, the festival focused upon providing the best of Canadian theatre and embracing an international identity as opposed to obsessing over Canadian nationality and identity. Gone were the days of protests over bringing in a British director or American actors. William introduced a "critically acclaimed international repertoire at the Tom Patterson Theatre," by showcasing works such as Racine's *Phaedra*, Michel Tremblay's *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Euripides's *Bacchae*. He also promoted Canadian drama, staging Tremblay's plays *Les Belles-soeurs* and *Bonjour, là, Bonjour*. An additional milestone occurred in 1991 when the festival produced Elliot Hays's *Homeward Bound*, its first world premiere of a Canadian play in twelve years ("Artistic Directors"). Unlike previous attempts to promote Canadian works, which failed due to lack of audience interest and obscure selections, William's choices fared well and proved there was a demand for national works. His last season promoted the new Canadian play, Sharon Pollock's *Fair Liberty's Call* and saw the first production of Pierre Corneille's *The Illusion*.

³⁰ Changes that encouraged Canadian identity analysis while expanding the Festival's perspective to a global mentality included using the Studio Theatre for experimental work, more Canadian plays and guest playwrights, and eventually, gender blind casting.

Taking over from William, Richard Monette inherited a festival that was on the verge of international development and potential growth yet deeply in debt. Serving for fourteen seasons (1994-2007), Monette transformed Stratford into an eclectic theatre festival that showcased Shakespeare, classics and Broadway musicals while erasing the debt, establishing an endowment fund, and starting the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Training (“Artistic Directors”; Parolin 197).³¹ While some critics claimed the musicals were too “popularistic,” and that the new family experience package watered down the cultural encounter, Monette’s use of popular productions placed the festival in strong financial standing for future years and brought in new audiences (Ouzounian “Final Bow”). Monette provided much needed security and stability, steering the festival towards international expansion while balancing concerns for Canadian nationality along with Stratford’s other mandates. Starting in 2004, Monette spearheaded a focus on diversity and inclusions, requesting a research study of patron accessibility and Stratford’s inclusivity, and pushing for colour blind casting, ethnic interpretations of Shakespeare, and culturally diverse settings (Grange). The changes to Stratford’s cast diversity and cultural productions reflected an international approach to theatre, while also reflecting the new ethnically diverse, multi-cultural reality of Canada’s national identity.³² In an Ivey Business School article, Hamlin

³¹ The Birmingham Conservatory was created to help train promising actors for the demands of classical theatre. It is now a well-known program with highly competitive positions for eight to fourteen students and guarantees each successful student a position in the upcoming Stratford season. Artistic Director Cimolino noted that the conservatory fulfills the Festival’s mandate by training Canadian artists: “Providing opportunities for young Canadian artists is part of our mission at the Festival, and we hope you will find it as satisfying as we do to watch their growth as they share the stage with some of the finest actors in the world.” (“Birmingham Conservatory For Classical Theatre”).

³² As Sears notes in an interview with Knowles “Before Harlem Duet, Canadian Stage had never produced a work by an author of . . . African descent. And the problem with Canadian Stage is that it’s called Canadian Stage, and it represents Canada, and I’m thinking, ‘I’m Canadian, so it must represent me’” (Knowles “Othello” 30).

Grange outlines how Monette's implemented changes resulted in increased diversity and inclusivity among Stratford's patrons and productions (Grange). Stratford, aware that its audience was often thought to be mostly "high cultured . . . 'white, male . . . middle-aged corporate' patrons," sought to challenge a white, elitist identity by actively pursuing audience members who were immigrant, "Caribbean-born, South Asian or Asian residents of the Greater Toronto Area, and black theatre goers from Detroit" (Knowles "From Nationalist" 39, 41; Grange). The study also revealed that while Stratford was seeking out and hiring actors and playwrights from minority groups "the results weren't showing up on the stages in sufficient numbers" (Grange). Similarly, many of Stratford's designers lacked the skills to adequately provide hair and makeup for actors of African or Asian descent (Grange). As a result of the conducted study, Stratford held an overnight retreat with management, artists, staff and board members to create a new vision and inclusive mandate for the festival (Grange). Taking the new mandate to mind, Monette opened the 2006 season with a strong focus on diversity both onstage and off (Grange).³³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was "set in India [with a] somewhat multicultural [cast]" and *Harlem Duet* played to sold out houses of both white and non-white patrons (Grange). The change to race diversity and casting continued throughout Monette's leadership with productions such as *Odyssey: A Stage Version* (2003) and *As You Like It* (2005) presenting several black actors who have since become Stratford regulars (Parolin 2006).³⁴ The festival, it seemed, had finally established itself as a viable Canadian national and multicultural landmark, a success that rendered the

³³ The new mandate stated that "there should be 'no limits on talent or imagination' at the Stratford Festival" (Grange).

³⁴ In 2005 Dion Johnstone was the first black actor to play a Shakespearean romantic lead at Stratford. Karen Robinson and Walter Borden both acted in the *Odyssey* plays.

need to prove or pay a national debt obsolete, while also embracing an expanding global identity.³⁵

Following Monette's retirement, questions of Canadian nationality and loyalty reappeared when Stratford appointed a three part system of co-directors. A directorial team of three Canadians, Marti Maraden, Don Shipley, and Des McAnuff, was selected by Antoni Cimolino for the 2008 season, but by March Maraden and Shipley resigned citing "artistic differences," leaving McAnuff as sole director (Ouzounian "Stage Whispers").³⁶ McAnuff's three-year tenure turned Stratford's focus towards a bright Broadway style which critics often described as more distraction than substance (Nestruck). Lynn Slotkin, a radio theatre critic, strongly opposed McAnuff's changes. She argued that his "deviation from the festival's emphasis on 'text and talent' for what she call[ed] 'techodazzle,' [sic] and an importation of American actors whose mastery of classical acting was occasionally dubious" destroyed the festival's production quality and lowered audience draw (Nestruck "Now Showing"). While McAnuff's connections did place Stratford in the international spotlight by exporting *Superstar* to Broadway, responses were divided. The 2011 production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which toured first at the Jolla Playhouse in San Diego and then moved to Broadway, received two Tony nominations for best revival of a musical and best performance by a featured actor in a musical for Josh Young ("Stratford's Superstar"; "Stratford . . . Nab Two Tony"). While the announcer flubbed the name of the festival and the production failed to bring home an award in either category, the online comments on the CBC website indicate burgeoning Canadian pride associated with the cross border export and

³⁵ As Gary Taylor notes in "Theatrical Proximities The Stratford Festival 1998," the festival balances two identities "Shakespeare company and national theater"[sic] (346).

³⁶ McAnuff has dual citizenship in Canada and the United States.

a strong desire to support Canadian theatre.³⁷ Unfortunately in Stratford, as on Broadway, McAnuff's over the top approach didn't translate into increased revenue or ticket sales:

“[D]espite sending *Jesus Christ Superstar* to Broadway, [Stratford] saw attendance slip well below the half-million mark for the first time this century” (Nestruk “Now Showing”)³⁸.

McAnuff, who had dual citizenship and was working in the States, brought in an American team and many American designers for his Stratford productions. Stratford locals and festival members frowned upon McAnuff's choice. Many designers and artisans felt that their work was undervalued as they were left to finish up the designs in Stratford after the American designers had flown in, dictated, and left (“Potter Interview”).

By importing American talent, McAnuff inadvertently evoked, among Canadian cast members, a strong national response reminiscent of the Gascon era. Thus, while trying to expand the festival on an international stage, McAnuff triggered a sensitivity to and defense of Canadian identity showing once again that Canadian identity is affected by global negotiations. Stratford director Miles Potter observed that when McAnuff arrived with his team there was a clear disconnect between their awareness of theatre and of the Stratford Festival:

³⁷ One individual named SAHMWriter expresses his/her national pride, writing: “So proud of them! I have seen the show both in Stratford and in NYC and it is spectacular. Go Canada!” (“Stratford's Jesus Christ”). A second commentator (ConsultantDude) stated that current dialogue about Stratford indicates a building excitement and appreciation for the exported show: “This news reinforces everything I heard last year as to how fantastic the Stratford's Superstar] was.” An individual called oncon@calgary listed his/her wish that theatre and the arts would receive more funding (“Stratford . . . Nabs Two Tonys”).

³⁸ During McAnuff's tenure Stratford productions were seen on Broadway (*Jesus Christ Superstar*) and in global cinemas: “*Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*, both of which also starred Plummer, were filmed for screenings at Cineplex Entertainment theatres across Canada and were broadcast multiple times on Bravo! and CTV, and as far away as Australia. *The Tempest* was released across the U.S. in the spring of 2012” (“Artistic Directors”). The Broadway production of *Superstar* which opened March 22nd closed on July 1st after only 116 performances (Hetrick).

I was asked to meet with Robert, [McAnuff's] dramaturge . . . and I tried to talk . . . about what this place means to Canadians. I don't think they got it. I tried to explain to him, because he had never been here. He was coming in to be Des's right hand guy [and] he had never seen a show here. ("Potter Interview")

The team's complete lack of knowledge of Stratford, North America's leading repertoire Shakespeare company, reflects upon the American self-focused theatre mentality. As Potter observed, there was an awareness gap between the arriving American perspective towards Stratford and the Canadian value of this theatre:

I tried to explain to him that this is not just a regional theatre to Canadian actors. That they were coming to a place that was very special to us . . . I'm not sure he got that because it's never reflected in their way of treating the theatre, the stage, the people. I'm not complaining . . . [but] I kind of wished they had actually listened. ("Potter Interview")³⁹

As Potter and many Stratford employees quickly observed, McAnuff's American representative had a lack of respect for the history and value of the Stratford Festival caused by national biases and ignorance.

When McAnuff left in 2012, Antoni Cimolino accepted the role of artistic director, returning the festival to a text based, classically focused company. He concentrated on promoting pre-McAnuff era Canadian stars, restoring the Festival stage to its original design, and presenting popular festival productions (Shakespeare and other classics) (Nestruck "Now

³⁹ It has been noted that McAnuff and his team wanted to completely change the Festival thrust stage but the Stratford board overruled the decision (Potter). However, this has yet to be proven true and is currently rumour.

Showing”). While Canadian plays were limited on the playbill, Cimolino promoted Canadian topics and lectures through *The Forum* and, in 2014, announced that the festival would film the complete Shakespeare canon for global distribution: “We’re forging new territory here in Canada with the filming of a series of our productions and expanding the Festival’s digital footprint” (“Media Release”). The film project will create a Canadian collection of all Shakespeare’s works, promote education through student digital access, and encourage future tourism (“Media Release”). The films will also allow Stratford’s productions to be viewed globally, further expanding the festival’s international reach. Cimolino also spearheaded collaborations within Canada and across the boarder with Montreal’s Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Ottawa’s National Arts Centre, New York’s Lincoln Center and City Center, and the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre (“Artistic Director”).⁴⁰ Under Cimolino’s directorship, Stratford continues to become an international, multi-cultural festival poised to lead global discussions on Shakespeare and cultural identity. The concerns regarding Canadian identity that formed the festival’s foundation and plagued many past artistic directors are still reflected in Stratford’s current awareness but Canadian identity has transitioned and grown as the questions and conversations regarding culture have evolved over time. Canadian identity has moved beyond needy assurance or defiance, to a multicultural interrogation of meaning and purpose, with new questions for the theatre to pursue. Under Cimolino’s leadership, Stratford acknowledges its Canadian roots and history while firmly striving towards a future of multicultural identity and global interconnectedness. Stratford is clearly attempting to have

⁴⁰ “The Festival’s 2006 production of Molière’s *Don Juan*, a co-production with Théâtre du Nouveau Monde . . . was presented in both French and English during its Stratford season and later transferred to Montreal, and 2004’s *King Lear* . . . later transferred to New York, where it garnered two Tony nominations” (“Artistic Director”).

the best of both worlds. The question that remains: how does a newly reformed festival engage with Canadian identity on the international scale?

1.3 Academic Responses on Canadian Identity and the Appropriation of Shakespeare

Despite an expanding global approach, Stratford is still the main touchstone for Canada's artistic voice in professional theatre. As such, it cannot divorce itself from Canadian identity or the concerns of Canadian artists. Current academics are divided over the role of Canadian nationalism in the shadow of British authority, ethnic diversity, and multiculturalism, while festival artists observe that Canadian culture is often restricted despite Stratford's promise to promote and encourage local artists.

For academics, the question of Canadian culture in the 21st century is either irrevocably connected to British colonialism, a connection that they are continually trying to sever, or it is the adapted result of a re-created national awareness.⁴¹ Canadians sometimes attempt to break from colonial ties or to adapt Shakespeare creatively to re-write their own national identity. In Canada the works of Shakespeare, and even the term Shakespeare, are strongly associated with a colonial authority and have even been adapted pre-confederation. Currently, the earliest recorded Shakespeare adaptation with Canadian themes is an anonymous text titled *Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland* (1848) (Fischlin "Online Anthology"). According to Linda Hutcheon, Canadians remain tied to British identity regardless of national freedom; during Canada's legal independence from British law in 1931, the country simply transferred "a political and historical . . . colonial situation" for an "economic and cultural one" (qtd. in Fischlin "Nation" 314). Thus, on the

⁴¹ By the phrase "re-created national awareness" I am implying that Canadian identity often involves the re-working of British identity, Shakespeare's works, into a new national identity that one will then claim as "Canadian".

quest for cultural autonomy, Canada is still struggling to shed previously held concepts of British identity and negotiate adaptations of national identity. Fischlin expands upon this thought by noting that Canadian cultural autonomy is still uncertain, especially when viewed in light of the overbearing canonical authority of Shakespeare. However, while Shakespeare and his works are “representative of a form of colonial relation [Fischlin believes they can be used] to fracture or . . . reconfigure that relation” (314). Djanet Sears’ *Harlem Duet* offers an excellent example of an adaptation in which Shakespeare’s authority is commandeered by the playwright for her own purposes. In *Duet*, Sears examines questions of identity, nationality and black culture by borrowing from Shakespeare’s *Othello* and using his authority as her own. Adaptation is one way that Canadians can use British authority (Shakespeare) to negotiate, engage, and re-interpret Canadian identity and cultural values.

In questioning the purpose of Shakespeare in Canada, one is inevitably left with the query that Fischlin poses, “why adapt Shakespeare in Canada,” which leads to a second query: how do Shakespeare productions affect concepts and perceptions of the term “Canadian” and its meaning? By negotiating with language and locations Canadians are able to appropriate Shakespeare for Canadian meaning. For academics such as Fischlin and Susan Knutson, Shakespeare adaptations provide cultural authority to Canadian playwrights by proffering a universal text that can be re-interpreted, altered, cut, changed or as William Hutt famously stated, “bastardized” for Canadian identity (Fischlin “Giving” 10). Fischlin believes that due to its increased popularity among Canadian playwrights, adaptation, as a genre, reflects “the aesthetic of Canadian self-representation” (Fischlin “Nation” 315).⁴² Knutson echoes

⁴² In *Nation and/as Adaptations: Shakespeare, Canada and Authenticity*, Fischlin states, “Adaptations is a genre, if one takes the significant increase in adaptations produced in Canada over the last thirty years as any

Fischlin's belief in her preface to *Canadian Shakespeare*, arguing that Canadian adaptations claim authority from Shakespeare by using his artistic influence to mould a Canadian self-actualizing identity and an autonomous voice (xi). For her, Shakespeare is melted in a crucible of meaning, permitting those performing him to claim the identity they wish from his text. Identity is taken from the text, sculpted from the raw, reformed metal of Shakespeare's words (Knutson vii). Thus, meaning comes from appropriating Shakespeare as one's own: "Canadian Shakespeare is intercultural: the Bard is from another place and time . . . [yet], Canadians bridge the gap, finding themselves in Shakespeare as they make the language their own, talking back to 'his' authority, or claiming it for other intentions" (Knutson xi). Canadians can also appropriate control over the text by presenting Shakespeare in "local environments, on Vancouver's beaches, a[t] Halifax's Point Pleasant Park . . . [and in] underground mineshaft[s] of Newfoundland . . . [Location] authenticates the experience for the audience as Shakespeare [is] happen[ing] in their world" (xi). Location and textual re-interpretation/adaptation are two unique ways that Shakespeare becomes Canadian via appropriation.

1.4 Contemporary Criticism of Canadian Identity

Current contemporary criticism and academic writing regarding Canadian identity has sought to define and critique multiculturalism and diversity within Canada's borders. Canadian identity is approached and studied in a variety of ways from many different perspectives. Some academics quantify new Canadians' experiences by conducting studies on specific ethnic or cultural groups. Others, such as Dr. Irene Bloemraad, study data

indication, that suits the aesthetics of Canadian self-representation" (315). Fischlin continues by listing the multiple adaptations included in the Canadian Shakespeare Adaptation Project as proof.

markers of multiculturalism within Canadian populations or, like Vahan Kololian, chairman of the Mosaic Institute, compare Canada's diversity with anti-multiculturalism in other countries. There are also voices, such as Neil Bissoondath and Himani Bannerji, that question Canada's idealization and implementation of multiculturalism from a political and global perspective. It is clear from the ongoing dialogue regarding national identity that multiculturalism is a topic of disagreement and critical scrutiny among modern Canadians.

For Bannerji, multiculturalism poses many problems by becoming part of an "economic and cultural imperialism" that she associates with globalism (3). Bannerji complains that Canada's multiculturalism policy presents "cultural identities –religion or not—and their projections as political agencies" as innately natural (6). She sees diversity identification as simple cultural categories "for ruling or administering" (6). While her book *The Dark Side of the Nation* raises important issues about multiculturalism, for example class divisions and over simplifications of cultures by ethnic monikers, Bannerji refuses to permit that self-ascribed cultural identities can be an individual's own chosen identity. Instead, she argues that Canada's implementation of multiculturalism is a government-created approach to otherness that controls immigrants and those of non-white ethnicities. She also fails to address the fact that multiculturalism, as a fairly new concept to Canada (it was introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on October 8th, 1971 with subsequent changes to policy for the Multiculturalism Act July 21st, 1988), will and should go through a number of changes, alterations and improvements as the country grows and Canadian representation changes.

While identifying individuals by culture, race, or even religion does creating visible divisions, it can also be a simple way to identify the self and the other. Racial judgement and

class segregation often occur after one has been identified, but are not, therefore, the direct result of the identifying monikers. There is nothing wrong with religious or cultural identities. What is wrong is the exclusion and segregation of a people into the category of “other” or “lesser than,” or the misuse of identifiers to oppress and discriminate. Identity and monikers should serve to preserve self-identity, self-awareness and respect for personhood. Canada’s model of diversity and multiculturalism has limitations, yet its underlying purpose is to promote the individual and preserve the ethnic identity of those who desire it.

In his early article “Multiculturalism” and subsequent book *Selling Illusions*, Neil Bissoondath argues that multiculturalism dilutes Canadian unity and identity by fracturing national identity into hybrid cultures (Indo-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian) instead of unifying the country under one national identity (“Multiculturalism,” para. 27-28, 32). For Bissoondath, by focusing so strongly on diversity and protecting the individual national divisions, Canada has weakened its national unity. As a Canadian immigrant, he points out two problems with Canada’s multiculturalism. One, that it “assume[s] that ‘culture’ in the broad sense can be transplanted” (para.6). And secondly, it assumes those who came to Canada wish to keep their cultural identity (para.6). For Bissoondath, culture is complex and multiculturalism distils it into a simplified pantomime (para.7). Many Canadians want to leave their past behind and embrace a new country, Canada, without the burden of their previous cultural identity. According to Bissoondath, multiculturalism causes problems for new immigrants by creating division instead of unity.

In addition to the voices questioning multiculturalism, there are also those who support and approve of Canada’s multiculturalism practices, holding up Canada as an

example to other countries. In 2010, Vahan Kololian wrote an editorial piece for *The Toronto Star* entitled “Canadian Multiculturalism vs. German “multikulti”: Germany Could Learn From Canada’s Success” detailing how multiculturalism had succeeded in Canada when compared with other countries. Kololian values Canada’s approach to diversity, noting in an interview that “Canada doesn’t require newcomers to shed their first identity. That gives them a sense of cultural freedom. It allows them to develop a positive notion of diversity” (Goar para. 15). As Rattansi notes in *Multiculturalism: A Very Short Introduction* “multiculturalism has never been about encouraging separation and segregation” but about encouraging “cultural diversity and equal opportunity” (8). For Anthony Moran the “newness and future orientation” of diversity within Canada has “allowed . . . Canada to embrace multiculturalism as a project of national identity renewal” and, similar to Australia, Canada has made multiculturalism a tool for “building an inclusive national identity whilst embracing diversity” (qtd. In Murdock 255).

In July 2016, journalist, historian and author Erna Paris argued for the importance of multiculturalism to counter fear-mongering in the article “Canadians Must Never Take Multiculturalism for Granted”. Likewise, University of California associate professor of sociology Dr. *Irene Bloemraad*, who has published on Canadian citizenship and immigration, argues for the benefits of multiculturalism. She notes that her research reveals “multiculturalism as a key factor driving Canada's success at citizenship integration. It legitimates diversity, provides a sense of inclusion and, through the multitude of (oft-maligned) government grants . . . it provides the support structures to help newcomers join the country as full citizens” (“Multiculturalism” para. 10). In *Becoming a Citizen*:

Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees into the United States and Canada, Bloemraad observed that most immigrants who were interviewed felt that “multiculturalism . . . the explicit endorsement, by government, of one’s right to be different and still be equal . . . to assert one’s background openly and proudly[,] reduce[d] the sense of second-class citizenship rather than reinforce[d] it” (242).

Bloemraad rejects recent claims that Canadians should retire the term “multiculturalism” because it is “[detrimental to] building unity in increasingly diverse societies” (para.1). In contrast to this assumption, her research connects multiculturalism with increased immigrant national involvement: “Quite simply, immigrants in countries that adopt multicultural policies are more likely to be citizens and more likely to be part of the political system” and thus, Canada as a whole (“Multiculturalism and Citizenship” para. 7). Her immigration studies place Canada and Australia in the highest categories for multiculturalism and new citizenships: “Consider how many immigrants become citizens . . . an overwhelming majority of immigrants proudly take up citizenship in Canada and Australia, the two countries that went furthest in the multicultural experiment” (“Multiculturalism” para. 7, “Becoming A Citizen” 38). For Bloemraad, a willingness to become a Canadian citizen and the high success rate of immigrants integrating into Canadian society provide proof that Canada’s multiculturalism policy is helping those it was written for and is promoting diversity acceptance.

Multiculturalism, a popular topic in the news and academia, elicits strong reactions as it is an issue that touches all Canadians. Regardless of whether you approve of multiculturalism, disapprove of the policy, or desire Canada to exchange multiculturalism for

a blanketed citizenship term, it is important to be aware of the opinions expressed on both sides before trying to define or understand Canadian identity.

1.5 Where To Now: Current Challenges in Canadian Theatre and at Stratford

A multifaceted, global Canadian identity may be the positive direction Stratford is pursuing; however, change whether eclectic or not comes with growing pains. Concerns regarding Canadian identity in a new global Stratford were voiced during Des McAnuff's run as artistic director and are still echoed by members of the Stratford festival today. In personal interviews with festival members (actress Seana McKenna, director Miles Potter, and director Leslie Wade) each artist highlighted problems specific to Canadian theatre and Stratford's attempts to grow in a global market.⁴³ These concerns include the temporary quality of the Canadian theatre scene and its precarious survival, a too familial theatre family, and modern Canadian playwright concerns, including restrictions imposed by granting bodies, limited cast sizes and a lack of support.

McKenna commented on the uncertain nature of Canadian theatre and the value of Stratford in maintaining a stronghold for Canadian culture. For McKenna, theatre is a precarious business: "we lose so many theatres so quickly and we don't expect to lose them. The Vancouver Playhouse. The Toronto Free Theatre. Even when the names change the theatre's gone and [Stratford] is one place that has continuity" ("McKenna Interview"). For McKenna, as for many actors before her, the Stratford festival is a touchstone of stability in the uncertainty of the Canadian theatre society. McKenna notes that the Stratford Festival,

⁴³ Director Miles Potter and Actress Seana McKenna were interviewed back-to-back on the same day. While the audio recording saved their interviews as one file, I chose to write up the transcripts as two different interviews and cite them separately.

regardless of stage alterations, has remained faithful to the roots of great theatre and Canadian nationality:

It is the festival stage, and whether it's the old boards or the new boards, you are in the space upon which greatness has stood. . . I think there is something . . . It's like Delphi. It is the temple. Especially this space . . . not only a part of our theatrical history but part of our national identity. It is a Canadian theatre and so many talented and extraordinary people have worked here.

As both Potter and McKenna observed, the world of the theatre is a realm of constant change: "It's a precarious business and it's always shifting" ("Potter Interview"; "McKenna Interview").⁴⁴

Potter compared the Canadian theatre scene to an island, observing that Stratford sits at the centre of the island and from its placement appears secure: "When you're in a place like Stratford or Bard . . . you feel that you're in a fairly stable place doing well but you're basically . . . standing in the centre" ("Potter Interview"). Having a central island perspective presents a false security of the theatre economy. He argued that while Canada is vast, its arts community is small: "We're a big country geographically, but we're very small and therefore very vulnerable in terms of our artistic life" ("Potter Interview"). An awareness of the temporary nature of theatre led Potter to observe that Canadian theatre while vibrant is often fragile: "I have learned to accept the ephemeral quality of theatre and the fact that your productions disappear and you disappear along with them eventually" ("Potter Interview").

⁴⁴ One may argue that it is the constant state of flux which gives theatre the right to address the likewise, always changing concept of Canadian identity.

While the world of Canadian theatre is interconnected on many levels, intense connectivity within a small artistic realm can pose problems including artistic limitations and skewed feedback. In a private interview, Leslie Wade, the associate director of *Henry V*, noted that the Canadian theatre society often hinders artists' choices, opinions and freedoms. The small, familial nature of theatre ensures that eventually everyone within Canadian theatre knows everyone else. Thus, actors who have worked at Bard on the Beach have also worked with Vancouver's Theatre Under the Stars, the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, and Manitoba Theatre Centre. While the geographical regions of Canada are vast, there is nowhere to hide within the tightly networked world of Canadian theatre. For Wade, this closeness poses problems by tainting feedback and reviews. She observed that Canada's small theatre society prevents Canadian playwrights and actors from expressing artistic opinions on the stage: "I always say in Canada you can't really afford to have an opinion because it is very difficult to have an opinion in this country without it affecting whether you get work" ("Wade Interview"). According to Wade, the Canadian theatre discourages criticism. Having returned to Canada from musical workshops in the States, Wade noted a stark contrast in American and Canadian approaches to workshopping scripts, and highlighted the importance of critical feedback:

In general, I find that Canadian artists are polite to each other and don't often criticize each other constructively the way artists do in the States.

[American's] don't take [criticism too] personally. But it's nearly impossible in this country to not take things personally. I find it impossible because I know everyone and I think everyone else has a hard time with it but

unfortunately it's not helping us to become better at what we do. ("Wade Interview")

For Wade, the Canadian mentality of being too nice, polite, and accommodating is hindering the artistic development of a new generation of playwrights.

Along with the problems of finding true, constructive criticism, Wade observes that modern Canadian playwrights face a number of restrictions including limitations when using government funding and small cast sizes. Canadian granting bodies by selectively supporting works that promote the Canadian story are in fact limiting the freedom of Canadian playwrights. Pushing for Canadian musicals and plays with clear Canadian themes prevents other local works of equal merit from being workshopped and produced:

W: I'd like to see some variety. And not musicals about Canada . . . just musicals.

S: Musical by Canadians?

W: Exactly. That's what makes it Canadian.

S: And having that be of worth in and of itself.

W: [A] great story told by a Canadian . . . *The Drowsy Chaperone* . . . is a perfect example. ("Wade Interview")

If a playwright desires government grants, he/she must be willing to write according to the governing body requisitions. In conjunction with the limitations of theme caused by funding bodies, cast size also constricts the vision of Canadian playwrights. As both McKenna and Wade observe, short, modern Canadian plays with small casts are being produced at both Stratford and smaller, regional theatres: "We're getting really good at writing tiny shows . . . We write more small scale musicals and one and two hander shows because economics

dictate theatres can afford them more . . . most theatres” (“Wade Interview”). McKenna echoes this concern for Canadian works noting, “[playwrights] know they have to write small cast plays because the chances of a large cast play with twelve or twenty people being produced are very slim” (“McKenna Interview”).⁴⁵ Potter expressed a similar concern, observing that the insecurity or anxiety surrounding pegging down Canadian identity is reflected in the fact that our country has failed to establish strong Canadian playwrights who draw an audience and can be exported globally. As Potter worded it, “we’ve failed . . . to develop a really strong strain of popular or consistent Canadian playwrighting that can stand up on a main stage here. It’s always consigned to the ghettos” (“Potter Interview”). The limitations imposed by granting bodies and theatre companies continue to prevent Canadian growth and as a result an expanded awareness of Canadian identity within the arts.

While Stratford provides a much needed platform for Canadian playwrights, producing works such a *Harlem Duet*, *Good Mother*, *Fanny Kemble*, *Palmer Park*, and *Wanderlust*, the productions are small and never the best draw of the season. Canadian plays are not produced on the main Festival stage and unlike American playwrights such as Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Lorraine Hansberry or August Wilson, Canadian playwrights are still fighting for recognition within Canada. Until there is a demand and support for Canadian playwrights, Canada will always be lagging behind in play development and theatre companies will continue to borrow the best works from other nations. What does this mean for Canadian identity in Stratford’s 63rd season? As Stratford expands into the global theatre market the question of Canadian identity will become wrapped up in one main issue:

⁴⁵ According to McKenna “[t]he four-handers and six-handers usually get produced in the more intimate spaces: the Patterson and The Studio” (“McKenna Interview”).

how to find and promote excellent Canadian playwrights as Canadian plays compete for valuable festival stage space.

1.6 What Makes the Stratford Festival Canadian? The Revitalized Role of Canadian Identity in the 21st Century

Stratford's Canadian identity, the result of negotiations between a national and global theatrespace, is reflected in the festival's artists, the theatre's protection of the Canadian accent, and most recently through the festival's response and celebration during the 60th anniversary. When asked what makes the Stratford Festival Canadian in nature, director Miles Potter expressed a difficulty in pin pointing Canadian identity: "There is no simple answer to that question because this place has been a synthesis from the beginning. It was started by Brits, instigated by a Canadian . . . Canadian talent support[ed] this . . . [with] the imported experts" ("Potter Interview"). Ironically, Potter's response reflects the multifaceted, multi-cultural identity of Canada. Commenting on Stratford's Canadian identity, Potter eventually turned to the people, the approach, and the voice tone for his answer. For Potter, any Canadian essence expressed on the Stratford stage "comes from the people who work on it [and] what they bring to it" ("Potter Interview"). He believes that the "Canadian artist's sensibility . . . changes [Shakespeare] and influences it" ("Potter Interview"). He also noted that the linguistic tone at Stratford is decidedly Canadian, having changed over the years from a strong British accent, to mid Atlantic, to the current, modern Canadian accent: "People come to the stage with their own voices" ("Potter Interview").

Potter's comment on cultural shifts in Stratford's vocal training and on stage tone was echoed by Seana McKenna, who recalled one incident where her Canadian accent was not wanted:

[W]hen I first came [to Stratford] . . . half of the actors here were British and had British accents. . . . I was in . . . an American adaptation of a French play done on a Canadian stage but I was asked to have a British accent . . . I objected because I thought there was no need . . . [Stratford] has changed since I was here in the early eighties. There are many more Canadian voices that are not apologizing for being Canadian. (“McKenna Interview”)⁴⁶

According to McKenna, Stratford voice instructors promoted a shift in Canadian voices by encouraging Stratford actors to use their own accents and not adhere to the more popular British pronunciation. As McKenna recalls, “[Certain voice instructors] loved Canadian actors because . . . they had a passionate, emotional accessibility, [with] the technique and appreciation for lyricism that the British actors didn’t” (“McKenna Interview”).⁴⁷ It is of interest to note that the Canadian voice was both respected and encouraged by British theatre instructors who were trained in the traditional forms from the Old Vic and The Globe. The respect for Canadian diction and accent implies that there is something unique and viable about the Canadian voice. The Stratford festival has both encouraged and fostered Canadian speech and talent by providing a unified voice for the Canadian story through actors, directors, artisans and playwrights.

While encouraging Canadian talent both on and off the stage reflects a sense of pride in Canadian theatre, it was the 60th anniversary of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival that focused the lens on Canadian individual identity, national identity, and the hazards of

⁴⁶ McKenna notes that there was objection to her Canadian accent: “I was . . . focused on having . . . my Canadian ‘R’ ” (“McKenna Interview”).

⁴⁷ McKenna also observed that vocal coaches Pasty Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater enjoyed instructing Canadians.

negotiating a global theatrescape. Celebrating sixty years of quality, world-renowned Canadian theatre was a huge milestone for a once tented festival born in a small railway town. According to a 2011 census by Statistics Canada, the Stratford population hovers at ~30,886 but swells to over 600,000 visitors during the Festival's April to October run ("Focus"; "Stratford Ontario Tourism"). For the 60th season in 2012, Stratford provided many extra festival activities to commemorate the momentous occasion. The souvenir program sported a "celebrate 60 seasons" logo while inside in large, capital letters was printed the following motto: "Paying homage to the past, striding forward to the future" ("Stratford 60th Program" 1). In an address to patrons general director Antoni Cimolino highlighted Stratford's past as a guiding light to its burgeoning future, claiming, "the glorious heritage of our past provides us with a clear signpost to the way ahead. Our pioneering artists and those who supported them sought to create in Stratford nothing less than the finest classical theatre in the world" (1). Tapping into the explorative and visionary spirit of Patterson, Cimolino proclaimed that Stratford would "give birth to the classics of the future, breaking new ground both on stage and in the other media by which we reach out to audiences around the globe" (1). Likewise, 2012 artistic director Des McAnuff referenced Stratford's role in shaping the future of Canadian theatre by declaring that the Festival promotes "some of the finest playwrights working in Canada" (2).

The festival focused on Canadian identity by showcasing Canadian talent on both the stage and the page. Stratford presented Canadian actor Christopher Plummer in a one-man tribute "A special 60th Season Event: Christopher Plummer in A Word or Two". The season also included *Wanderlust*, a Canadian work premièred and commissioned by the Stratford

festival. The musical was based upon the poems of English born, “sometimes-Canadian” poet Robert Service, fondly termed the Bard of the Yukon, and Canadian playwright, actor and director Morris Panych penned the book (Nestruck “Stratford’s Wanderlust”). The festival continued its Canadian playwright focus by premièring Nova Scotia’s Daniel McIvor’s *The Best Brothers* and Alon Nashman and Paul Thompson’s *Hirsch* written about the complicated but enigmatic 1981 Stratford Festival director, John Hirsch. According to *The Toronto Star*, Hirsch was “one of the towering figures of Canadian theatre” and Stratford has provided a “dignified way of paying tribute to a complex, troubled man who lived . . . with generosity and passion” (Crew). The final push for Canadian national identity came with the production *The War of 1812* by visiting Toronto theatre company VideoCabaret in the new Theatre Annex. With the 200th year anniversary of this conflict between Canada and the United States celebrated in government paid television advertisements throughout the year, it is understandable that Stratford would wish to commemorate an event which shaped Canada’s national identity. The production was small, had a short run, but received many positive reviews. None of the cast members from the VideoCabaret is listed in the Stratford Festival cast biographies; however, the theatre company is given a small write up.

The 60th season focused strongly upon Stratford’s history and Canadian identity via production selections. As McAnuff observed, “fully 50 per cent of the 2012 season was Canadian, further proof that the Festival is as dedicated to new plays as to the classics” (“Playwrights”). While this focus on Canadian playwrights, Canadian tradition, and national history pushed a national theme, some playgoers felt that Stratford crossed the line from celebration into forced awareness and even comic buffoonery. Certain reviewers claimed that

the 60th season reminded the audience of Canadian identity ad nauseam with a spattering of unrelated, staccato Canadian flag waving moments that conjured audience embarrassment or awkward narcissism.

In *Henry V* the cast entered the stage wearing Canadian themed clothing with easily recognized Canadian logos, as though Stratford was branding their actors with a national identity stamp. As reviewer Kelly Nestruck from *The Globe and Mail*, observed,

[o]ne actor is in a Team Canada jersey, while another is in a hipster T-shirt emblazoned with the classic CBC logo. With these nods to two different styles of Canadian nationalism, McAnuff implicates any audience member who thinks himself above such patriotic cries such as, “God for Harry, England, and Saint George!” (“Stratford’s Henry”)

The production refused to let the audience leave the theatre without a reminder of Stratford’s Canadian identity. In the last scene, after displaying the French and British flags from the top of the stage backdrop, the production eclipsed both nationalities by dropping an enormous Canadian flag. This usurpation of the British tale and Shakespeare’s English identity reminded the audience that they were in Stratford, Ontario, Canada, not the courts of defeated France or the halls of victorious England. The climactic drop of such an overwhelmingly large symbol of Canadian identity took the audience out of the play’s narrative and forced them into an impromptu Canadian celebration.⁴⁸ The Canadian flag eclipsed the actors and even the stage itself, becoming the sole focus of the production during the curtain call. As the *Globe and Mail* review observes, the flag introduced moments of

⁴⁸ During my personal experience of the production the flag was greeted with audible gasps of surprise and many cheers or clapping by audience members. The production I attended was presented on the opening day of the Olympics in England, and as such played into an already fully saturated environment of Canadian pride

uncertainty for “[a]t the end of the play, [McAnuff] nudges us back to today, replacing the giant English and French flags that have been the backdrop for so many scenes with a Canadian one – another delicious moment of uneasy ambiguity (Nestruck “Stratford’s Henry”).⁴⁹ The blatant projection of Canadian imagery and national colours seemed, at times, a bit much.

While Olympic fueled Canadian pride and flag waving are not moments that generally evoke embarrassment, the odd self promotion in the 2012 season’s *The Pirates of Penzance* did result in audience laughter, sometimes ridicule, and clear annoyance according to theatre reviews. Stratford reinvented the “Modern Major General” song for a self-serving, comedic purpose. The additional verse mentioned past Stratford directors, famous productions, and Tanya Moiseiwitsch’s thrust stage all in a lecture type attitude complete with chalkboard and pointer. Was Stratford pretentious in assuming patrons wanted to view a Gilbert and Sullivan musical transformed into a narcissistic history lesson? Robert Cushman of the *The National Post* believed so as he soundly roasted Stratford for its additional lyrics to “A Modern Major General,” noting “[i]nsult gets added to injury in an interpolated reprise commemorating Stratford’s 60th year; this kind of self-celebration is faintly embarrassing anyway, and the notion that ‘gang of four’ rhymes with ‘Bangalore’ amounts . . . to a diabolical liberty” (Cushman). Freelance writer/blogger Robyn Godfrey also had issues with Stratford’s history lesson. She observed that the additional lyrics evoked a “guffaw . . . but one gets the sense something is going terribly awry. For instance, does anyone outside the

⁴⁹ Nestruck observes the potential moral in McAnuff’s Canadianized *Henry V*, connecting Henry’s rule with McAnuff’s non-conformist tenure and Stratford’s Canadian identity: “Only when the Beatles’ *Revolution* blasts as we exit the theatre does McAnuff ever tip his hand as to a possible moral to this story” (Nestruck “Stratford’s Henry”).

immediate orbit of the Festival care about its artistic directors?” (Godfrey). Robert Reid of *The Guelph Mercury* raised a second issue, observing that during the season’s celebration Stratford forgot its own identity as a Shakespearean company: “the festival’s 60th anniversary, barely reflects its namesake.” In a season of 14 productions at a “premier, classical, repertory theatre” Stratford only offered three Shakespearean plays: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V* and *Cymbeline* (Reid). During a momentous milestone celebration, the lack of Shakespeare at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival causes one to be, at a minimum, confused if not disappointed. These strange Canadian stage moments and the lack of Shakespeare’s plays raise the question of purpose. What is Stratford’s purpose in the 60th season? Moving beyond childlike theatre pranks of lyric invention and history lessons there is a subtle awareness of Canadian identity in Stratford’s productions that is manifest in future plays.

Following the celebratory 60th season, the 2013 and 2014 seasons offered a basic focus on Canadian playwrights (Michel Marc Bouchard’s *Christina*, *The Girl King* (2014), John Murrell’s *Talking Shakespeare* (2013) and commissioned work Judith Thompson’s *The Thrill* (2013)) combined with new areas of study into Canadian identity through *The Forum*. In the 2013 season, one scheduled talk entitled “This is That: A Conversation with the Nation” featured Pat Kelly and Peter Oldring from CBC discussing “politics, culture, justice, religion [anything that is] relevant to Canadians” (“Stratford Festival 2013 Brochure” 32). The information segment of the program stated “Subject matter: totally Canadian” (32). In the “Active Explorations” segment of the talks, patrons were invited to join a discussion on race and culture in “The Foreign Exchange, with Donna Michelle St. Bernard” (36).

Screenings of films at the Theatre Annex included “The Stratford Adventure,” an Oscar nominated biography about the creation of the Stratford Festival (41). The crowning jewel of Stratford’s 2013 debates concerning Canadian identity was the LaFontaine-Baldwin Symposium, a collection of talks under the joint leadership of former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, author John Ralston Saul, and the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. The symposium included a lecture by Clarkson and Saul entitled “‘Adopting’ One’s Culture,” a discussion titled “Shaw A-in-clut Atleo: First Nations and the Future of Canadian Citizenship” and a round table dinner. In the last three seasons Stratford has made a strong turn towards eclectic, multiracial and multicultural productions and lectures. It is a choice that is the direct result of Canadian identity in a global theatrescape.

Is Stratford’s current shift toward national self-awareness and self-scrutiny the inevitable result of the 2012 season celebration? Quite possibly. Following the 60th season Stratford possessed a renewed and heightened awareness of its national history and development, from a tented single stage festival to a multi-million dollar world-renowned theatre company. The festival’s subsequent seasons have continued to reflect on Canadian identity and the Canadian story. The changes implemented as a result of Cimolino’s role as sole artistic director were immediately visible in the festival offerings: more Shakespeare, more Canadian plays, and *The Forum*, a “festival within the festival” featuring special guests who lecture on current issues. It seems that following the 60th anniversary Stratford is dedicated to creating, introducing, questioning and probing the essence of Canadian identity both on and off the stage. While Stratford is often placed into the centre of national debates and questions of identity, it is how the festival perceives and presents Canadian identity on

stage that is of most value to this dissertation. An in depth analysis of three Stratford productions with Canadian themes or duplicate cross country productions (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry V*, and *Harlem Duet*) will permit me to examine modern Canadian identity at Stratford and compare or contrast it with Bard's West Coast conception of Canadian and national identity.⁵⁰

1.7 Bard on the Beach: A West Coast Approach to Shakespeare

Founded in the summer of 1990, Bard on the Beach is the brainchild of English born actor and director Christopher Gaze. Unlike Stratford, which has a strong national history steeped in over five decades of changing Canadian identity issues, Bard began as a small, locally minded festival with West Coast community ties and has remained regionally focused. While Stratford's negotiations with Canadian identity are visible through the festival's history, actor choices, Canadian productions, and a recent push to be multi-culturally inclusive, Bard engages with Canadian identity through West Coast pride, location value, inclusive casting, and artistic choices. An analysis of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in chapter three provides an excellent example of Canadian identity on the Bard stage through actor and director design choices. As Bard doesn't have an overarching national history or a mandate to produce Canadian works, its engagement with Canadian identity is unique to the vision of the director and the choice of the actor. Thus, moments of negotiating Canadian

⁵⁰ *Shrew* was selected as it provided a duplicate comparison with Stratford and Bard but it was also produced during Monette's tenure before the introduction of the multiracial, multicultural changes at Stratford. *Henry V* was selected for its relation to McAnuff's tenure and the clear Canadian symbolism in the production. *Harlem Duet* was produced after the implementation of Monette's multiracial, multicultural changes in Stratford. Thus, the staging of *Harlem Duet* is the direct result of Stratford's choice to adopt a multiracial, Canadian voice into the global theatresphere.

identity on the Bard stage occur organically through an artistic vision for the purpose of the production and not to meet mandate requirements or patron expectations.

A Brief History of Bard

Artistic Director Christopher Gaze, who received his theatre training from the Old Vic Theatre School and worked at the National Theatre in England, was inspired to move to Canada by his mentor, Shakespearean actor Douglas Campbell.⁵¹ As Gaze recollects, “Campbell saw that opportunistic burning desire in me to do something in a leadership way in the theatre . . . [H]e said go to Canada. You'll find it's a glorious country for people who have big ideas” (St. Denis). Gaze made the transition in 1975 and spent three seasons at the Shaw Festival before moving to Vancouver in 1983 where he came up with the concept for Bard on the Beach.

Gaze first saw the potential for a Shakespearean summer, tented venue while working at the Northern Lights Shakespeare festival in Edmonton from 1980 to 1981; unfortunately, the festival didn't survive past the second year (St. Denis). As Gaze recalled, “[patrons] sat on that hillside underneath the tent that sort of covered people and if it rained, water came down underneath you . . . they did it in '80 . . . and it failed in '81. It got through the season but they lost a pile of money” (“Gaze Interview”). Later, in 1983 Gaze watched as the Vancouver Shakespeare Festival, built on the same location as the current Bard on the Beach site, also died within two years: “The festival [was produced in Vanier park] and it failed again in '84 except in '84 they only made it to the beginning of August. They ran out of

⁵¹ Bard's creation occurred as a result of Gaze's willingness to immigrate to Canada and see Canada as a land of potential. Therefore, Bard is directly connected with Canadian identity and nationality through Gaze's adoption of Canada as his home nation, and adherence to the immigrant ideal of Canada as a Mecca for new beginnings (artistic, religious, political etc.)

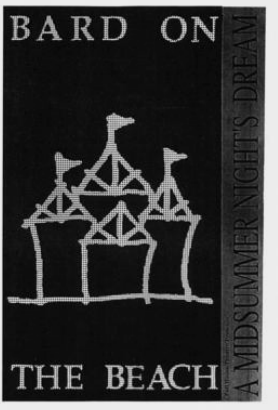
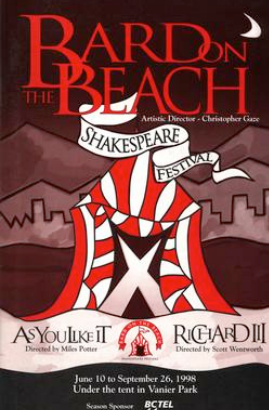
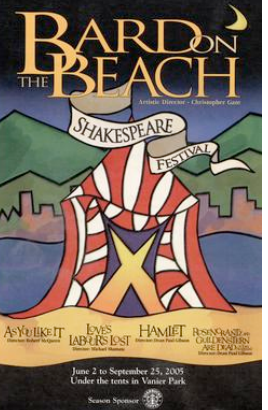

money” (“Gaze Interview”). Individuals did try to revive the Vancouver festival including film star and director Charlie Martin Smith; however, the project could not be recovered (“Gaze Interview”). Gaze would eventually take the lessons gleaned from both tented festivals and applied them to the creation and sustainment of Bard on the Beach.

After viewing a mediocre production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at The Vancouver Playhouse in 1987 Gaze was convinced that Shakespeare should be held to a higher standard and was challenged to place his mark on British Columbia’s theatre culture: “[P]erhaps now is my time to stand up and say I have an idea, may not be new but it is my time to get working on it and see if it can happen” (“Gaze Interview”). Having already seen two Shakespeare companies die in their second seasons, Gaze took a bold risk and decided to build Bard upon the remnants of the failed Vancouver Shakespeare Festival. Undaunted by the possibility of failure, Gaze felt that he had gained valuable insight acting in tented venues and observing each festival’s business choices: “I had identified . . . the demise of [other] festivals was the speed at which they expanded . . . [it was a] fairly fundamental . . . [flaw] in their vision” (“Gaze Interview”).⁵² Taking previous lessons to heart, Gaze proposed his idea for *Bard* to fellow actors in the recently formed Full House Theatre Company and the artists supported him by offering time, manpower, and talent to fuel the first season’s production: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.⁵³

⁵² When asked how Bard managed to succeed where other Shakespeare festivals failed, Gaze observed that Bard grew slowly yet consistently. It didn’t rush ahead or push for a large theatre size until the numbers indicated a need: “[At] Bard we expanded organically . . . We . . . listened to what was happening and watched what was happening instead of forcing it and . . . [in that] way we were fortunate. Our audience grew with us” (“Gaze Interview”).

⁵³ In the first season of Bard, Gaze directed *Dream*.

With a mandate to provide “affordable, accessible Shakespearean productions of the finest quality,” Bard on the Beach succeeded due to strong local investment and community support. The festival started as an equity co-op funded by a Canada Council Explorations grant and was housed in a rented tent on the grounds of Vancouver’s Vanier Park (“About the Festival”). The production was presented by the Full House Theatre company (founded in 1988), of which Gaze was a member, as the Bard on the Beach Theatre Society was not officially created until December 20, 1990 (“About the Festival”; Bard “Mandate and History”). The first season started with 6,000 patrons, a budget of only \$35,000 and one production (“About the Festival”). The program cover displayed a hand drawn image of four tent peaks and the title of the offered play.

			
<p>Figure 1.1 1990 Bard Program © Bard on the Beach</p>	<p>Figure 1.2 1998 Bard Program</p>	<p>Figure 1.3 2005 Bard Program</p>	<p>Figure 1.4 2014 Bard Program</p>

The simple design, which would later be altered into a crisp, one tent image, (1991-2013) alluded to the basic, fledgling nature of the theatre. However, the 1990 director’s notes indicate that Bard already desired to become a permanent part of Vancouver’s theatre culture,

and thus Canada's theatrescape: "Come and see us again next year! . . . With your support Bard on the Beach will become an important ingredient of Vancouver's summer" (Bard "1990 . . . Program"). The program advertisements from local businesses and other theatre companies carried taglines that celebrated Bard's "first year" ("Best Wishes for a successful first year" and "Congratulations and good luck in your first year"), implying that the festival was already a celebrated and desirable arts entity (Bard "1990 . . . Program").

Bard's Canadian identity and national awareness is interconnected with its location and West Coast identity as reflected in the praise, advertisement images, and taglines highlighting the festival's ocean location. The strong connection between Bard's creation and a local Vancouver identity is displayed in both the 1990 season's funding and the mayor's greeting. A \$15,000 plus grant from the community arts council of Vancouver, a \$5000 plus grant from the Canada Council Explorations Program, and an assisting sponsorship from the city of Vancouver provided the foundational funding for Bard's first season (Bard "1990 . . . Program"). Gordon Cambell, the then mayor of Vancouver, expressed a sense of local pride at both Bard's creation and its chosen location (Bard). In his program address Cambell observed that "so appropriate will be the setting, the more alert of the audience may hear the sea-maid's music," referring to both the sound of the Pacific Ocean and Oberon's recollection of a mermaid's song (Bard "1990 . . . Program"). Cambell stated that the location would "complement the antics of Puck, Bottom, Titania and Oberon" (Bard "1990 . . . Program"). This praise and the connection of Bard with a West Coast identity and Vancouver theatre culture has endured over Bard's 26 seasons. In a recent interview with *Gaze in Montecristo Magazine*, interviewer Katie Nanton highlighted Bard's long running

role in Vancouver and Canada's theatre culture by observing that Bard is "[f]requently singled out as one of North America's most successful not-for-profit arts organizations" (Nanton). Nanton added that "Bard on the Beach has been Western Canada's annual ode to Shakespeare ever since . . . [Bard] popped up tents in Vanier Park with just one play in the summer of 1990".

Bard has become a West Coast tradition for many locals in Vancouver as the statistics of Bard's patron attendance prove, with roughly 85% in attendance from the lower mainland and the rest of British Columbia ("Kennedy Interview"). Gaze himself, the artistic director for Bard since its infancy, believes that Bard is part of a larger Canadian theatre response to Shakespeare. He notes that Bard, while still a young festival is an offshoot from the Stratford story: "We are a seed of Stratford . . . They didn't plant us, but we are part of their blood. And the same idea in Stratford in '53 was a tent" (Nanton). In a personal interview with Mr. Gaze in August of 2013, Gaze reiterated this concept, noting, "I think the DNA would expose . . . [that] our blood lines come from [Stratford]. We are a seed of Stratford there is no question" (Gaze). In fact, Campbell, Gaze's mentor, had strong ties with the Stratford Festival, first working there in 1953 under the invitation of his own mentor Tyrone Guthrie. Campbell later lent his experience and talent to Bard on the Beach for their 1992 and 1993 seasons, helping to forge the festival in its infancy. As Gaze recalls,

I phoned him in 1990 and said 'I've got this thing going here' \$35,000 and a rented tent in Vanier Park. [Campbell] said call me when you need me . . . I called him eighteen months later and he . . . put on *Twelfth Night* for us . . .

and came back in 1993 and put on both shows. So, our relationship grew with Douglas. (“Gaze Interview”)

According to Gaze, Campbell was disillusioned with the Stratford Festival under the leadership of John Neville and was concerned that they were turning away from Guthrie’s original mandate. It is possible that Campbell’s involvement with Bard was a response to his disenchantment at Stratford and that Campbell saw a fresh start in shaping the future of a new, tented Shakespeare festival.

Bard’s connection with Stratford has become reciprocal over the past few years, as Bard has shaped, trained and supported many actors who work with Stratford later in their careers. As Gaze notes, Bard is a Shakespeare training ground, focused on developing, finding, and encouraging new talent: “I look for the neat ideas. I love developing new people. We’ve been very successful with that . . . talent spotting [is] like looking for a blue diamond” (“Gaze Interview”). Gaze added that many of Bard’s actors work across Canada, often getting their start on the Bard stage: “Canada is enriched by all these actors. [G]o down [the] resumes at the Stratford Festival . . . Dion Johnstone is opening up as *Othello* . . . we gave him a break in 1998 and got him going here in Shakespeare . . . [a lot of] our young actors . . . go through the [Stratford] Birmingham Conservatory” (“Gaze Interview”). Thus, Bard contributes to Canadian theatre by developing, challenging, and growing new talent for the Canadian stage. As Gaze observes, “[W]e are a major force in Canadian theatre particularly on the West Coast” (“Gaze Interview”).

1.8 Bard: A Deviation from the Stratford Model

While Bard is building upon Canada's interest in Shakespeare as a result of Stratford's development and international reputation, the West Coast festival is also making unique decisions, often in direct contrast to Stratford's vision. While Stratford has created a permanent location and expanded its theatre season into the fall, Bard has remained a transient, tent site since its creation. Bard's location, transient nature, and permanent placement of an artistic director all contribute to its West Coast product. Robert Barr, managing director for Bard until 2012, also observes that Bard is expanding at an encouraging rate for its location, size and funding:

It's not that we don't have a national reach it's just that through sheer size, through age, through reputation we aren't at that point and we may never be but they [Stratford] have had 50 extra years and a few extra million dollars to build up that kind of reputation. [W]e certainly have a much broader reputation than we did 20 years ago. ("Barr Interview")

The festival currently offers two tented locations: the BMO Main stage, which houses 733 patrons, and the more intimate Douglas Campbell Studio Stage at 240 seats ("About the Festival"). The tented location is both a unique attraction, providing an interactive, West Coast theatre experience, and a carnivalesque draw, welcoming patrons from many different walks of life. As *Hamlet* actor Jonathon Young observed in an interview on *Shaw TV's The Rush*, Bard's unassuming, summer festival appearance encourages patrons who would normally avoid Shakespeare out of a fear of elitist theatre, confusing language or negative experiences with high school Shakespeare (Young). He agreed with interviewer Terry Mulligan that "[m]any people coming to Bard on the Beach would not go into a theatre but

they feel very comfortable in a tent. It's summer time. It's approachable. It's a new production. You have a chance to convert people to Shakespeare and *Hamlet*" (Young). The tents and the Bard village embody the opposite of a permanent, closed theatre structure, inviting unhindered exploration and curiosity. The village is designed in an open concept; the BMO Mainstage tent flaps are always pulled back to reveal a breathtaking view, as the wooden boardwalk evokes summer nonchalance and ease. The beach is steps away from the Bard site, and patrons are often seen picnicking in the park before a matinee production. As Young observes, Bard is accessible linguistically and physically as its relaxed environment translates into the stage productions: "It's like camping when you go down to Bard on the Beach. It's theatre camp. That's part of the joy of working there. The location is so stunning. . . . [P]eople who come to see [the show say] that it's very accessible and it's very understandable" (Young).⁵⁴ The transient nature of Bard and its outdoor architectural designs encourage and welcome new, unschooled theatre patrons.

In an interview, Robert Barr, noted that Bard's time-limited presence in Vanier park and its transient nature is part of the festival's charm and uniqueness: "It makes an event of the whole thing. I think if we were here all the time something special would be lost. Do I wish we were here year round? Not particularly . . . There is something special to us coming, doing it, and going away" ("Barr Interview"). Barr noted that Stratford is "intentionally a destination theatre company much along the lines of . . . Ashland or Utah," while Bard

⁵⁴ According to Knowles, Stratford is associated with an elitist theatre mentality (Knowles "From Nationalist" 39,41). While Stratford has made changes to embrace patrons of all cultures and economic status it is still an expensive theatre located outside the Toronto area and thus, difficult to reach. Stratford tickets for the 2015 season range from \$172.80 (\$183.60 for musicals) to \$15 (student tickets with obstructed views). Bard's location is easily accessible by local transit or walking from Vancouver's downtown core. Bard A tickets are \$55, B tickets are \$43 and C level or youth tickets are \$26-\$29 depending on the production.

focuses upon its identity as a tented festival, a single attraction as opposed to a destination (“Barr Interview”). The festival’s appearance and disappearance almost overnight adds a carnivalesque feel to Bard on the Beach, shrouding the already magical quality of theatre in the delightful element of a limited existence. Robert Carey, the director of development at Bard also views this transitory aspect as unique to the festival experience comparing Bard to a circus: “[I]t comes in the spring . . . and [at] the end of the season we pack it all up and it disappears” (“Carey Interview”). While other physical, permanent theatres do present productions of a temporary nature, their physical buildings still remain. Bard in contrast vanishes, as Prospero notes in *The Tempest*, into “thin air” (Shakespeare 4.1.150).

While Barr claims that the temporary nature of Bard is a unique facet to the festival, it is the patrons and guests who prove his statement by expressing a fascination with the tented venue. When Bard decided to expand and rebuild the main stage tent for 2011, the most common concern from patrons and visitors was that Bard would remain a tented facility and not move to a permanent structure (“Barr Interview”).⁵⁵ Thus, the patrons of Bard strongly associate Shakespeare with a transient tented venue. The motto “Under the tents in Vanier park” has been used as an advertisement phrase while the unique location and venue have created a permanent concept linking ocean, mountains, sky and Shakespeare in the mind of Bard patrons (“Kennedy Interview”; “About the Festival”). Director of development Robert Carey observed in our interview that it is the location of Bard and how the scenery is interwoven into Bard’s live productions that makes the festival uniquely Canadian. Carey eloquently phrased it as follows:

⁵⁵ Bard’s choice to remain a tented facility is in direct opposition to Stratford’s decision to retire their tent and build a permanent facility in 1957 (“The Stratford Story”).

I've always said this festival, with the outdoor nature . . . the tent structure, and the setting that it is in [that] people come to Bard for two reasons. They come for the quality of the production and they come for the festival experience that Bard offers which I think is very unique in the setting . . . in down town Vancouver, on the water, overlooking the English Bay and North Shore Mountains and the view that you get out the back of the main stage tent. There is nothing else that compares with that. And that is the unique experience. And that is what makes Bard unique. ("Carey Interview")

Dennis Garnhum, current artistic director at Theatre Alberta, guest directed Bard's 2013 production of *Twelfth Night*. He noted in a 2013 video interview with *The Vancouver Sun* that Bard presents unique challenges and opportunities as an open tented venue (Garnhum). Set designers have to work around the open back tent and create an artistic impression while still showcasing the mountains, ocean and sky. Still, Bard is, for Garnhum, an ideal in live theatre for it is interactive with its environment. The weather, birds, temperature, and natural light all present challenges: "Everything happening outside is constantly changing your view. We live for live theatre and everything you are doing here is live" (Garnhum). As Garnhum notes, the performances at Bard have an element of surprise to them, and while outdoor Shakespeare festivals are common, Bard's ocean and mountain view is unique. The element of realism and performing to the moment is a part of the Bard philosophy: "Anything could [happen] a plane could go by, a boat could go by, a bird could fly into the tent or it could rain" (Garnhum). The uncertainty can provide challenges but often times it presents magical moments. One such moment occurred in the 2005 production of

Hamlet where a sparrow flew in and around the studio tent right before Bob Frazer's line "There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (Shakespeare 5.2.157-158). Frazer paused in his speech to observe the bird and then spoke the line to the great delight of the audience. These moments are unique to an outdoor location and add to the magic of Bard's theatre. As director Dennis Graham noted, "It has been on my bucket list to work at the Bard festival because I think what they do here is so magical and special and of course it's Shakespeare".

Another unique reality that sets Bard apart from Stratford is the permanent role of artistic director. Unlike Stratford, which had four different directors in their first twenty-five seasons, Bard has operated under the guidance of one artistic director, Christopher Gaze, since its infancy. The consistency of leadership has led to a unity of vision, a loyal acting company, and devoted volunteers.⁵⁶ As Claire Sakaki, Bard's current managing director, notes, "the volunteer corps is over two hundred strong, and many have been volunteering for over a decade, some even for the full twenty-five years" ("New Managing").

Gaze, who reprises many roles including director, actor, fundraiser and spokesperson for the festival, has guided the company based upon his original vision of affordable Shakespeare for Vancouver residents. Having learned from past festival failures, Gaze prefers to expand Bard at a rate parallel to its patron growth, and has therefore avoided burnout or overextending the festival's financial means. Gaze's successful approach to management is reflected in the festival's financial health and box office ticket sales. The festival is practically self-supporting, obtaining seventy-five percent of its annual income

⁵⁶ Some members of the company, such as Scott Bellis, George Ryan and Gerry Mackey (1990,1992, 1999, 2000, 2004-2007) have been with Bard since 1990.

from ticket, merchandise and alcohol sales (St. Denis). Aside from an initial government grant in 1990, Bard is relatively unsupported by the Canadian government. Its youth education programs provide two percent of the annual income while government support only equals 1.5 percent of their total revenue (St. Denis). As Claire Sakaki, Bard's current managing director, observes, "The audiences are often at eighty percent [capacity] and above, often at ninety or ninety-five percent, and that's . . . not the normal [for Canadian theatre]" (St. Denis). Gaze is keenly aware of the many inner workings of the festival, generating loyalty from actors, volunteers and patrons alike due to his devotion to the festival: "He leads the artistic mandate of this company, but he absolutely has an in-depth understanding of the business side of things . . . He knows our budget inside and out" (St. Denis).

Starting from a one tented venue in 1990 Bard on the Beach has built a well recognized West Coast signature theatre company following in the footsteps of Stratford while also challenging and branching out from the national theatre company's shadow. Bard itself fills a vital role in the Vancouver theatre niche as Vancouver's "only professional repertory theatre and the third largest in terms of budget and total audience" (Bard "Mandate and History"). The festival's commitment to high quality, classical work has not gone unnoticed, as Bard has received over forty-five Jessie Richardson Theatre Award nominations in the last four years alone. On a larger scale, Bard productions often receive national attention and therefore, are viewed as part of the broader Canadian theatre culture (Bard "Mandate and History"). A British journal, *The Spectator*, praised the work of Bard, stating that the Royal Shakespeare Company could learn from Vancouver, and in 2006 the

Shakespeare Theatre Association held their annual meeting in Vancouver which Gaze noted as a honour for Bard (“Gaze Interview”; “STA Past Conferences”). Thus, through methods specific to Bard, its location, and its architectural design, the Vancouver festival is successfully creating a unique West Coast and Canadian identity on the Shakespeare Stage.⁵⁷ Yet, is Bard so regionally minded that it has limited or neglected its larger Canadian identity? Projecting a strong community mindset and lacking a mandate to promote Canadian nationality, Bard’s philosophy raises one quandary for the researcher: how does one approach the question of Canadian identity at Bard? According to Carey and Barr, location is key.

Bard’s Canadian Identity and Location

In three separate interviews with members of Bard’s management team opposing answers were given to the question: What is it that makes Bard Canadian? Answers were varied and inconclusive regarding qualities that make a production “Canadian” and what it means to be Canadian. While all three interviewees agreed that Bard’s location by the water gave it a West Coast, and by association a Canadian identity, their expanded answers varied. Situated on the waterfront in Vancouver's Vanier Park and housed in an open back, main tent to reveal the breathtaking Pacific Ocean, Bard is branded with a West Coast identity. The festival name itself is synonymous with ocean, mountain, sea and sky. Robert Barr observed that Bard’s Canadian identity is strongly tied to its physical location:

[E]verything comes back to our venue to a great degree, the fact that we

⁵⁷ Recognition from outside North America proves that Bard engages in global identity negotiation, however, with a strong emphasis on its local community Bard has placed priority on regional, and Canadian identity creation ahead of a global identity. Any global awareness or praise, is the indirect result of Bard’s Canadian identity on the stage (artistic decisions, multicultural and multiracial casting, artist choices) and not a marketing or mandate decision.

produce in a tented venue in a park . . . roll in the view, and that is what makes us quintessentially West Coast. It is a view that you are not going to get many other places in the world and that includes sound design, light design, costume design, set design. [W]e build ourselves . . . more [around the] . . . festival itself than to focus too much on any given show. [W]e are Bard on the Beach first and . . . people then pick their shows second. (“Barr Interview”)

In an interview with *The Rush* on Shaw TV, Gaze observed that Bard’s outdoor setting is “Vancouver’s [version] of what Shakespeare had at the Globe Theatre. Th[e] indoor, outdoor setting” essentially assimilates the original Elizabethan practices of Shakespeare productions into a modern outdoor Canadian equivalent (Gaze “The Rush”).

Director of Development Robert Carey noted that Bard is Canadian but he was unable to explain why beyond Bard’s location. He cited Gaze’s decision to create a festival in Canada instead of England, but Carey felt he was unable to list specific characteristics that made Bard “Canadian”:

[W]e still have a founding director in place after twenty-three years who is English but he made the choice to come to Canada and pursue his career in Canada with an English playwright as the base . . . he had a vision to create a festival in Canada that is based in Shakespeare but is uniquely Canadian. Now what those characteristics are I can’t really say except about [location].

(“Carey Interview”)

Carey did mention that the majority of Bard’s actors and all of their designers are Canadian and often local. In comparison, Heather Kennedy, director of marketing, claimed that the

only Canadian aspect of Bard was the location, noting that the “venue defines part of our story, specifically Canadian or West Coast”. However, she felt that Bard’s productions were the same as “what you see at Stratford or . . . [in] the States” (“Kennedy Interview”). Aside from hiring ninety-five percent locally and promoting local businesses, she saw little evidence of a Canadian identity at Bard (“Kennedy Interview”). Kennedy even commented that a visitor from Iowa could “see our production staged arguably at any Shakespeare festival in North America” (“Kennedy Interview”).⁵⁸ In contrast to Kennedy’s comments, managing director Robert Barr argued that all theatre done within Canada reflects aspects of the Canadian story and Canadian identity. For Barr, “if a play is done by a Canadian theatre [company] it is inherently a Canadian play, regardless of who wrote it. It is going to be filtered through our eyes” (“Barr Interview”). Barr continued by noting that while Canadian playwrights have an important part in Canadian theatre, productions do not need to be set in Canada to reflect aspects and truths that resonate with the Canadian national story:⁵⁹

We still need plays written by Canadians about our Canadian past but I don’t think that is the only way of discovering Canadian identity. You don’t need a play set in Montreal you just need a play set in the city and you don’t need it set in a particular prairie town in Canada it could just be set in a farming community. It could be anywhere but if the story you are telling and how we

⁵⁸ Ms. Kennedy later noted through an e-mail correspondence that while Bard productions could in theory be performed anywhere the “unique physical setting and our Mainstage tent’s open back means our productions WILL be staged differently than others” (Kennedy “Re: Shoemaker”).

⁵⁹ Director Leslie Wade at the Stratford Festival voiced a similar idea in her interview, desiring to see productions that were identified as Canadian due to the playwright and cast members and not blatant prairie locations, national themes or Canadian stereotypes.

approach interactions [reflects a truth] . . . sometimes identity is defined by the person from the outside watching. (“Barr Interview”)

All the interviewees agreed that Bard’s location by the ocean in Vanier Park was distinctly West Coast and Canadian; however, aside from location there was no collective agreement on what made Bard a Canadian symbol.

It may be possible that Bard’s strong local West Coast focus masks other national elements of Canadian identity on the stage or that the local regional elements of Bard are only one part of its larger Canadian, and thereby global identity. Elements of Canadian identity, such as multiculturalism, are reflected in multilingual theatre reviews of Bard’s productions. Theatre reviews in Japanese also indicate that the Asian communities surrounding Vancouver have embraced Bard.



Figure 1.5 Vancouver Japanese Newspaper Review of *As You Like It*. Bard Archives



Figure 1.6 Vancouver Japanese Newspaper Review of *Richard III*. Bard Archives.

Likewise, praise from international publications such as British Journal *The Spectator* and hosting honours for the Shakespeare Theatre Association attest that Bard has a viable global presence (“Gaze Interview”; “STA Past Conferences”). Unlike Stratford, which desires to engage with the global theatrescape and actively promote Canadian identity

through set mandates and productions, Bard's global and even national presence appear as an afterthought to the festival's pursuit of accessible, affordable, high quality Shakespeare.

Bard's Canadian identity is the result of actor and director choices, location, and West Coast identity.

This dissertation analyzes specific Canadian themes in Bard productions in order to answer the question: What makes Bard's work Canadian? And yet, if theatre is as Richard Hornby states a "kind of identity laboratory," reflections of the cast's true nationality and identity should be present in character interpretations or be reflected on stage (71). As Hornby argues: "Theatre, in which actors take on changing roles, has among its many functions the examination of identity. For the individual, theatre is a kind of identity laboratory in which social roles can be examined vicariously" (71). Thus, it is possible that Bard's productions, regardless of the lack of a Canadian themed mandate, intrinsically reflect elements of Canadian identity, as Barr argued, by the very nature of being created, interpreted and presented by local artists in Vancouver, BC. If Canadian elements are innate in any Canadian production, one must then question how to examine those unique Bard productions with clear Canadian tropes, themes and imagery. Through production analysis, theatre reviews, and interviews with Bard artists one can probe the representation of Canadian identity on the Bard stage and question the current value of Canadian identity within a global theatre economy.

1.9 Bard on the Beach's Mandate and Goals

Regardless of a charismatic leader, a successful theatre requires a strong vision and feasible business plan. Bard's mandate clearly outlines the values and goals that have

contributed to the festival's Shakespeare success. Despite refurbishing and updating the mandate in 2012, Bard's focus remains firmly planted in the pursuit of quality Shakespeare productions for a local Vancouver, and often broader visiting audience.⁶⁰ Bard's purpose as outlined in the festival's original published mandate focused upon accessible, affordable Shakespeare with an aim to theatre education and outreach programs for the local community (Bard "Mandate and History"). The mandate had four cornerstones (Shakespeare, Venue, Affordability, and Accessibility) and stated that Bard desired to produce high quality productions of Shakespeare that "allowed [the plays'] timeless themes to prevail" (Bard "Mandate and History"). Productions were conducted in two tented, outdoor theatres while tickets remained affordable for all individuals. The accessible atmosphere encouraged the patronage of a wide theatre audience, especially youth. In fact, Bard specifically focused upon the future generation of patrons, noting the next generation was vital to the festival's future growth.

The new mandate, written in 2012 and published in a two page full colour spread in the 2013 Bard program, builds upon the original goals of the festival. The mandate is part of a triadic purpose, including a company vision and value statement. The new Bard mandate is "[t]o perform, explore and celebrate the genius of William Shakespeare" (2013 Program). Added to this is the Bard vision, "[t]o create an enduring contribution to the cultural fabric of the community as an inspiring centre of Shakespeare performance, education and understanding" (2013 Program). All activities that occur at or in connection with Bard are to be filtered through, influenced by and presented in conjunction with the company vision,

⁶⁰ Unlike Stratford, there is no mention in Bard's mandate to promote, encourage or commission Canadian works for the Shakespeare stage. Bard has chosen to focus on Shakespeare, thereby encouraging Canadian artistic support organically through casting, director vision and actor choice.

which is based upon a passion for Shakespeare, and includes seven aims: transparency, quality, innovation, accessibility sustainability, affordability, and engagement.

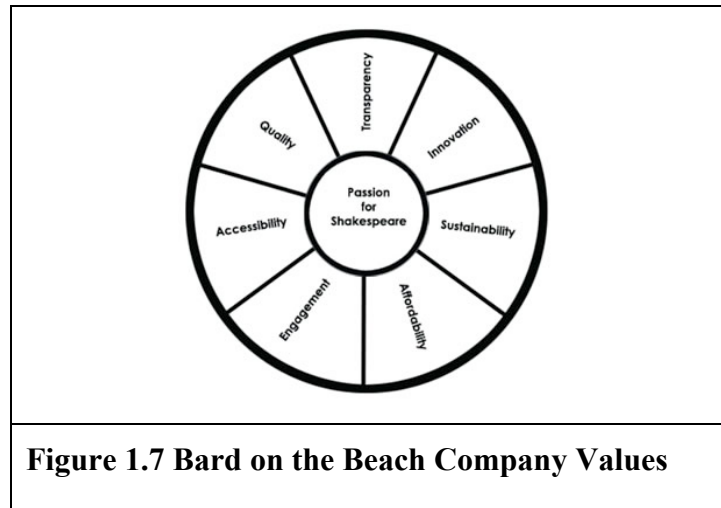


Figure 1.7 Bard on the Beach Company Values

While updated and expanded, the Bard mandate has not altered greatly from Gaze’s original concept. The festival is still presenting high quality, affordable Shakespeare. In a *Montecristo* magazine interview with Christopher Gaze, it is clear that Bard has remained true to its original vision. Gaze, even after twenty-five years, is focused upon a quality end product, a goal that takes patience and planning: “I have so many aspirations and dreams for this company, but you have to be careful not to spread yourself too thin . . . To run something exquisitely well, you must strive to keep the quality . . .and strive to make it better” (Nanton). Gaze’s tenacious focus upon quality is one reason Bard is “one of the most successful not-for-profit arts organizations in North America, with attendance exceeding 100,000” (“About the Festival”).

Gaze believes Bard flourished through a combination of national hybridity, endurance, and a willingness to change. By embracing local and visiting actors from across Canada, along with visiting guest directors, Bard reflects voices and races from Canada’s

multiple cultures.⁶¹ Bard is also willing to assign characters a specific culture or ethnicity, thereby reflecting a local identity to the Bard audience e.g. South Asian Sir Hugh in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Gaze brings a British identity and theatre background to Bard which, coupled with other cast members' Canadian theatre training and diverse backgrounds, has given Bard's cast and crew a unique edge ("Gaze Interview"). Gaze has also allowed his expectations for Bard to grow and evolve over the years, avoiding what he terms "Shakespeare fatigue".⁶² In the early development years of Bard, Gaze was known for claiming there would never be televisions, cell phones, or modern props on the stage. Now, he has changed his tune, noting in an interview that he went from being "an innovative traditionalist or a creative traditionalist to [being] . . . contemporary and . . . an open vessel to how we might put a Shakespeare play on. As long as the idea can nestle in a context that makes sense I'm fine. I'm excited about it" (Gaze). Bard is willing to produce Shakespeare themed works outside the official canon and even commission future new plays:

[W]e are looking at new works and creating works by people who are inspired by Shakespeare or by his works. It could be any aspect. It could be a character. It could be a line of Shakespeare that is spun into a different story. And we would like to develop that in the writers. ("Gaze Interview")

⁶¹African-American actor Michael Blake (National Theatre School) played the title role in *Othello* in 2009, has since worked at Stratford, and recently returned to Bard for the role of Edmund in *King Lear* (2015). African-American actress Sereana Malani has played multiple title roles at Bard: Adriana in *Comedy of Errors* (2015), Katherine in *Loves Labour Lost* (2015), Isabella in *Measure for Measure* (2013), Helena in *Dream* (2014), and Lady Stanley in *Elizabeth Rex* (2013). Chirag Naik (who could have South Asian heritage) played Lysander in *Dream* and Anousha Alamian (Middle Eastern/Persian) has appeared in numerous Bard productions in supporting roles. Bard encourages both multi-racial and colour-blind casting.

⁶²For Gaze, Shakespeare fatigue involves the over exposure by patrons to the same repetitive productions resulting in lack of interest and apathy.

When asked about his requirements for directors at Bard, Gaze's response displayed Bard's new perspective and desire to grow beyond the expected norm. Gaze wants revolutionaries at Bard, directors who will stir things up, and take Shakespeare to new and unique places ("Gaze Interview"). The directorial example he gave was Kim Collier, founding member and co-artistic director of the Electric Theatre Company and the director of Bard's *Hamlet* (2013). Her *Hamlet* was a modern vision that used interfaced theatre with "new technologies and . . . media" (Collier). Polonius checked his ipad, audience member viewed a security feed of the ghost, and the play within the play was a video production. Described as "electrifying" by *The Vancouver Sun* and "breathtakingly fresh" by *The Georgia Strait*, the production merged Bard's desire for revolutionary work with an aspiration to "[push] the boundaries of what we understand theatre to be . . . with an emphasis on physical and visual imagery" (Leiren-Young; Thomas; Collier).

Gaze wants to avoid repetition from season to season and encourages new and unique ideas for the stage: "I think it's good to have revolutionaries around . . . [we want] to change things up . . . refresh, get people excited about coming down [to Bard]" ("Gaze Interview"). While Bard stretches its boundaries and settles into a new mandate, Gaze remains optimistic and firm in the foundation of Shakespeare: "[Modern works] shouldn't dominate. That's one play a season. Could it go to two? Maybe . . . but I think we have a great model that is doing marvelously well. Don't muck about with it too much" ("Gaze Interview"). By reflecting Canada's multiculturalism on stage, encouraging guest directors, growing new talent, embracing Shakespeare themed works, and adjusting to modern changes in theatre Bard has not only survived but thrived on the West Coast.

1.10 Bard Education and Community Development

Bard is dedicated to its performers and patrons, developing actors, directors, designers and new talent, while instructing local youth and educators in the works of Shakespeare. Current developments at Bard on the Beach have allowed Bard to expand its educational offers to both the local arts community and patrons with a renewed concentration on youth education. The strong community connection and local Vancouver focus of Bard, its patrons, and sponsors are reflected in ads found in the 2013 Bard program. Starbucks, a sponsor from 1993, extolled the reciprocal support of community and businesses with the tagline “our roots are strong here” (2013 Program). The Starbucks advertisement promoted sponsor loyalty noting, “[Y]our support has allowed us to support you . . . [and] Bard on the Beach, now in our 10th season together. It’s all part of our desire to support events and neighbourhood programs important to you and contribute to the vitality of our communities” (2013 Program). Likewise, Thornley Creative Communications boasts, “Since 1998 we have shared Bard’s artistic journey through branding, graphics, web development, and the unshakable belief in the arts” (2013 Program). Similarly, a BMO advertisement tagline declares, “investing in the next generation of performing artists” and “[e]ngaging the youth in our communities” (2013 Program). Like Bard, the program sponsors promote the values of local backing, regional loyalty, and community involvement.

A focus upon community change and youth education is not misplaced in the Bard program, as the festival has recently expanded its education programs. Like Stratford, which desires to train its actors, teach school students, and enable teachers, Bard is expanding its educational reach and programs. Bard education was recently provided with a new mandate to “inspire our community through dynamic, engaging experiences with the language,

characters, and plays of William Shakespeare” (2013 Program). With programs such as Bard in the Classroom, Bard Unbound, Young Shakespeareans (ages eight to eighteen), and the new Riotous Youth Program (ages nineteen to twenty-four) Bard offers unique educational opportunities to the local community. Bard podcasts and pre-performance talks provide general information to patrons who wish to be casually informed about Shakespeare’s plays. In comparison, Bard Unbound is a three day intensive workshop offered to assist educators as they bring Shakespeare to life in the classroom (“Special Events”). Bard also offers vocal coaching and textual analysis workshops for its actors and directors (“Carey Interview”). Conducted by Bard director of education and training Mary Hartman and vocal coach Alison Matthews, the workshop instructs cast members in close textual analysis, experimental approaches, and voice strengthening exercises (“Studio Stage”).⁶³ As Hartman explains in a Bard blog interview, the program prepares cast members for the challenge of rehearsals by providing the necessary tools and training to make Shakespeare’s text their own:

The participants are offered techniques and strategies to find vocal ease, support, range and resonance and to explore all of the myriad details in their text. We explore, [sic] sound, rhythm, metre, meaning, syntax, rhetoric and idiolect, all in the spirit of play and discovery. It’s a wonderful opportunity for the actors to warm up and hit the ground running for rehearsals the following week. (“Studio Stage”)

As Carey noted in a private interview, the actor workshops provide vital training that cast members would normally be unable to access. Many working actors are unable to afford

⁶³ The actor’s intensive workshop is offered to all Bard cast members free of charge, a fact Robert Carey notes is vital to the growth and health of Vancouver’s acting community (Carey).

extra training due to income fluctuations. As Carey explains, “when they can afford it they’re working and as soon as they’re not working they can’t afford it. There’s very few that can” (“Carey Interview”). Bard is offering workshops with pay, investing in actor training and ensuring a strong future for Bard: “[W]e . . . do a three day intensive . . . [and] the actors are paid an honorarium equivalent to a half weeks pay under their contract . . . We are paying them to take the workshop” (“Carey Interview”).

In conjunction with actor training Bard also provides financial support through patron-artist sponsorship. The 2013 program dedicates a full page to informing patrons of Bard’s desire to support theatre professionals through voice and text workshops highlighting the recently created directing and design apprenticeship program: “Bard on the Beach is committed to growing and sustaining the skills and knowledge of theatre professionals at all levels of experience, from acting to design to production. Bard offers opportunities to emerging and establish theatre professionals to learn on the job” (2013 Program). For the 2013 season there were four directorial apprentices at the Main stage and one with the Douglas Campbell stage. Through education programs and patron sponsorship Bard is interconnected to its local community and dedicated to growing West Coast theatre: “we are . . . locally based and Canadian talent is locally based. I don’t see that changing while the current artistic director is here” (“Carey Interview”).

In addition to education programs, Bard supports the Vancouver community by joining with local artistic groups and showcasing regional products, such as BC wines. Bard’s special events are co-creative presentations with local artists or artisans who have joined with Bard for a Shakespeare or classical production. Bard frequently works with Choir

Leoni, UBC opera ensemble, the Vancouver Opera orchestra, and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Bard also offers special food events including “Bard BBQ and Lights” during the Vancouver fireworks Celebration of Lights and Wine Tasting Wednesdays with local winemakers and the executive director of the Vancouver International Wine Festival, Harry Hertscheg (“Special Events”). The special events not only strengthen the local community, but also reiterate Bard’s commitment to invest in Vancouver’s arts and culture, and indirectly an overarching Canadian identity.

Conclusion:

Ontario’s Stratford Festival of Canada and British Columbia’s Bard on the Beach provide unique insights into the continually developing concept of Canadian identity by negotiating identity meaning between national and global theatrescapes. Three main elements contribute to each festival’s Canadian approach to theatre: chronological history, inclusiveness/diversity, and artistic choice (specifically the artistic director’s vision and actors’ theatrical decisions) are specific to Stratford while location, artistic choice and local culture reflection are specific to Bard. By providing a close study of specific productions one can examine how Stratford and Bard reflect an altered, challenged or even re-conceived notion of Canadian national and cultural identity on the regional, national and/or global stage. Stratford’s evolutionary Canadian identity is directly affected, and one could argue partially created, by the tensions between the festival’s negotiation between local and global identity. In comparison, Bard focuses on regional and national identity negotiations through community involvement and supporting local artists. Moments of global negotiations are limited to Bard reviews and international support of the festival. While presenting a version

of Canadian identity on the stage does provide a statement to the global theatre community, Bard prioritizes its local identity and national awareness over global expansion.

The Stratford festival, styled after Stratford-upon-Avon in England, reflects a European artistic ideal and was created with a strong Canadian nationalist purpose in mind. The festival building, the architectural design, Tanya Moiseiwitsch's thrust stage, and the current eclectic physical and aesthetic festival experience all express a Canadian adaptation of a British ideal.⁶⁴ The Festival is frequently associated with corporate sponsorship, offers individual membership up to the \$100,000 + level, and provides a red carpet gala at the beginning of each festival season.⁶⁵ Stratford has developed far beyond its fledgling beginnings in 1953 with Canadian identity negotiation as a product of its local and global negotiations. Stratford has grown into an international theatre company with multifaceted production goals. It no longer produces just Shakespeare and has expanded to include musicals, local playwrights, and rarely performed classics. While Stratford is financially able to promote and encourage Canadian playwrights and directors, it is not solely focused upon growing Canadian talent and promoting Canadian identity at the expense of the festival expansion. Thus, elements of Canadian identity, while evident in some productions, and less in others, are the result of Stratford's Canadian mandate, their new inclusive motto, individual directorial decisions and/or the festival's desire to showcase a Canadian play. Canadian identity, the theoretical foundation of the festival, has continually been a part of the Stratford expansion and role in the global theatrescape. Knowing the role of Canadian

⁶⁴ The Festival building was designed to resemble a tent in reference to the first season's production under canvas.

⁶⁵ In 2010 the Lazaridis family pledged 5 million to the Festival in increments based upon a matching gift challenge (CBC News).

identity at Stratford, one can now examine Stratford's plays to determine, for example, how multicultural casting and the inclusion mandate are reflected in a production like *Harlem Duet*, or how director decisions will result in opposing audience responses to a western *Shrew*.

In contrast to Stratford, Bard on the Beach is firmly rooted in a local, West Coast community, approaching Shakespeare through a relaxed, summer tented perspective and connecting the famous playwright with local directors, local events (Canada Day fireworks) and local groups (Choir Leoni, Academy Duello). Bard is focused on growing its patronship and presenting high quality Shakespeare. The festival has branched out into Shakespeare themed productions (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Equivocation*) but refrains from expanding beyond. Of the multiple aspects of Bard's tented venue, the location holds the strongest region and national connection followed by multicultural casting; however, the productions themselves offer little in terms of blatant national promotion. Elements of Canadian identity occur through director choices (multi-cultural casting, production design) or are the indirect result of the festival's location, local cast, and artistic talent.

With regard to the two festivals' histories, Stratford has shifted to a stronger global perspective, while Bard has remained locally focused; however, both festivals encounter the crossroads of the national and international theatrescapes, an encounter which results in additional developments in the ongoing definition of Canadian identity. The Stratford Festival provides spaces for the interrogation of Canadian identity by promoting Canadian playwrights; however, Canadian content is limited to small stage productions and clearly not the main focus. While Stratford juggles multiple foci (Shakespeare, modern playwrights,

musicals, and classics), Bard is consistently simple in its approach: four Shakespeare plays, or more recently, three Shakespeare plays and one Shakespeare related work. Without a direct mandate to promote Canadian playwrights or national advocacy, moments of Canadian identity are unique at Bard. Throughout this dissertation, I will examine how both Stratford and Bard present Canadian identity through case studies of specific production. Examining the similarities and differences between both festivals, and how each festival's artistic approach affects audience reception, raises the question of how festival identity may factor in each chapter's case study. My research will answer these questions: "what is the role of national identity in a now international, interconnected theatre landscape" and "how does the perpetual question of a global theatre relationship and Canadian identity continue to transform two, related but disparate theatre companies.

Chapter 2 Gender Identity and Production Comparisons in Stratford's and Bard's *Taming of the Shrew*

The 2003 Stratford production of *The Taming of the Shrew* was designed by Miles Potter as a Spaghetti Western set in the 1880's. It was later transferred and re-cast by Potter at Vancouver's *Bard on the Beach* for the summer of 2007. With the same director, artistic vision, and western style, it was surprising that the Stratford and Bard productions received divergent reviews with Stratford's *Shrew* garnering harsh criticism and the Bard's generating positive reviews. For this dissertation, the original and re-staged *Shrew* productions act as a type of theatre laboratory control, providing an ideal situation to track any changes between each production. Both shows appear similar in designs (props, sound/music cues, costumes and sets); however, changes in acting (vocal tones and accents, body language, and character choices) and the 'bi-polar' theatre reviews appear to prove that Stratford's and Bard's *Shrew* are not identical. The variance in reviews supports one of two possible readings. If the productions are the same, then opposing reviews indicate differing expectations by the audience. The reviews suggest different conceptions of the two theatres with Stratford depicted as an elevated cultural festival while Bard embraces a more audacious and risk-taking artistic method. If the productions are dissimilar, then the reviews reflect true changes visible on the stage.

Before examining each production, this dissertation will first examine the style of the Spaghetti Western genre to explain the multiple North American stereotypes and motifs that Stratford and Bard utilized and inverted in their productions. One cannot understand actor interpretation and creative choice in a Western *Shrew* if one doesn't have a working knowledge of the Spaghetti Western motifs. By analyzing the roles of settings, props,

characters, and Western stereotypes, one can determine how the Western framework was used by both Stratford and Bard to highlight Shakespeare's complex gender roles while providing a humorous parody of the Spaghetti Western for comedic effect and audience enjoyment. In a private interview, Potter explained that he selected the contemporary Spaghetti Western genre as it provided an ideal setting to present *Shrew* and its difficult sexual politics to a modern audience. Potter knew the play offered a challenge, as *Shrew* is associated with chauvinism, antifeminism and misogyny. However, Potter felt that by using a Western parody genre, he could express the love story without being trapped by the sexual politics in the play. The Spaghetti Western style permitted him the freedom to examine sexual politics in a comedic way without offending a modern audience. As Potter explained, "[The] Western period, 1880's, [presented a time] where the sexism was acceptable, in a sense, understandable and [it] allowed the love story . . . to play out, using the events that [happen] in the play, without being offensive" ("Potter Interview"). Potter utilized a popular North American genre to comment on the sexual politics of both Shakespeare's era and modern times. By using the Spaghetti Western style, a parody of the traditional nationalistic genre of the American Western, Potter was able to undermine the claims of the American Western by allowing ironic distance from American jingoism. Challenging or undermining the traditional Western's claims regarding masculinity, land, horses and Americanism, the Spaghetti Western was an ideal fit for a Shakespearean comedy. The Spaghetti Western genre facilitated an easy adaptation by both Canadian festivals due to its comedic nature; the parody's assimilation into a Canadian context promoted an irreverent interpretation that resonated strongly with Bard on the Beach's outdoor summer atmosphere and artistic

freedom. After examining the history of the Spaghetti Western, this chapter will anatomize both productions in detail to determine the cause of differences in the festivals' theatre reviews.

2.1 Understanding the Spaghetti Western: Motifs and Themes

The Spaghetti Western genre is described by Bert Fridlund in *The Spaghetti Western: A Thematic Analysis* as historically falling into one of three categories: “an inferior imitation of the American Western . . . a counter genre expressing criticism of the American Western, or an entirely separate genre with only superficial resemblances to the American one” (3). For strict definition purposes one can classify the Spaghetti Western as a Western themed film produced between 1964-1973 and either financed by Italians or featuring Italians behind or on screen (directors, actors, designers) (4,7). With a basic definition of the Spaghetti Western genre in place, one can now turn to the elements and themes commonly expressed in the film style.

In *West of Everything*, Jane Tompkins examines setting, props, and character as the three main aspects of the Western genre. Western films open with rolling landscapes, scorching deserts, lone cacti and/or tumbleweed: “The typical Western movie [begins] with a landscape shot” and establishes the terrain as vital to the Western narrative of survival (Tompkins 69). Western stories are tales of endurance against the elements, the limitations of recently settled towns, the lawless uncharted west, and the threat of the changeable and potentially villainous human heart (Miles “The Missing” par. 2). Tompkins observes that hostile environments “[force] the characters to endure and survive” (71). The hero attains his

ideal status and desired masculine identity through suffering and pain, embracing the land's hardships as an exercise in training and self-discipline:

[N]o shelter, no water, no rest, no comfort . . . be brave, be strong enough to endure this . . . and you will become like this—hard, austere, sublime. The code of asceticism founds our experience of Western stories. The landscape challenges the body to endure hardship. (71)

As Louis L'Amour wrote in *Heller with a Gun* “it was a hard land and it bred hard men to hard ways” (qtd. in Tompkins 71).

Linked with the harsh landscape, the horse is an iconic image associated with the Western genre. The horse is vital to Westerns as part of the film landscape and as a working prop. For Tompkins, the horse is both object and symbol, necessary for the hero's movement while simultaneously rousing the innate human desire to connect with nature, “the wild [, and] . . . life” (93-94). The horse becomes both “helpmeet and companion” and infuses the Western with virile, potential energy expressed in action sequences where the hero “chas[es] the bandits at breakneck speed . . . bridles clanking, saddles creaking, hooves churning the sand; the fleeing villains sto[p] at a lookout point . . . then tur[n] and gallo[p] off again in a cloud of dust” (96, 89-90). Unlike ten-gallon hats, chaps, guns, and saloons, the horse is “the heart and soul of a Western,” surpassed in value only by the essential male protagonist (89-90). Linked with wild nature, a steed possesses energy that is both “destructive and creative,” and, as a companion to the hero, enables him to engage in actions associated with masculinity: physical strength, rough travel, and even violence (95).

2.2 The Suffering Western Male: Moral and Heroic Action

Tompkins agrees that masculinity in Westerns is linked to stereotypical masculine gender identities (16-17). The hero must embody physical prowess and strength, unquestionable courage, and present himself as a viable challenger to the villain: environmental or human. Tompkins argues that the Western genre idealizes both physical strength and brash action (50, 11). The harsh conditions of the West create heroes of physical, assertive action as “their ability to endure the West’s challenges actually moulds them into heroes” (Miles “The Missing” par. 2). Thus, the setting of a dangerous wilderness coupled with a persistent hero and faithful steed that “[carries] him across unfriendly terrain, provide a working basis on which to compare texts and the roles of characters” (“The Missing” par. 2).

Western films traditionally involve a male focused, male driven story that dwells on the male body in motion. As Lee Clark Mitchell notes in *Westerns-Making the Man in Fiction and Film*, “[Westerns] oscillate between sex and gender, between an essentialism that requires the display of the male body and a constructivism that grants manhood to men not by virtue of their bodies but of their behavior” (155). Masculinity is determined by action: specific behaviour married to physical presence. Thus, the Western hero is constantly the subject of a director’s gaze, with the ocular focus on his body and the moral focus on his actions. Masculinity is twofold in the Western: corporeal in bodily form and physical in ethical action.

The audience must become a willing participant in focusing on the physicality of the hero, since Westerns are filled with scenes of bathing, shaving, saloon brawls, and injury, for the male must “be beaten, distorted, and pressed out of shape so that [he] can paradoxically

becomes what [he] already is. The American West is thus associated with crucial transformations to an untransformed body” (Mitchell 160). Through a celebration of the masculine physique, male identity becomes associated with the gendered body itself. The Western appears to present masculinity as innate to all males. However, the film genre also presents versions of manhood where the hero is identified by specific masculine characteristics that differentiate him from other male characters. In this crafted ideal, the protagonist is constantly striving to better himself as he moves towards a desired static identity, whether that is sheriff, hero or sacrificial outlaw.

Western heroes also adopt a strong and strict male-focused moral code. Western heroes often adhere to the code of “a man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do”, or as stated in the film *Winchester* “Some things a man has to do, so he does ’em” (Tompkins 50). Violence and powerful physical action are strongly interwoven in the identification of what is masculine and what is honourable. The moral code of doing what one must forms the basis of the Western motif of justified revenge and the high noon shoot out (M. Blake 49). Films such as *High Noon*, *Shane* and *The Searchers* all present a hero engaging in violent action, often vengeful, to correct past events and protect his future (M. Blake xv, 221; Tompkins 41). As Tompkins observes, the Western film justifies violence and limits the female voice which advocates for peace and tolerance: “[T]ime after time, the Western hero commits murder in the name of making his town/ranch/mining claim safe for woman and children. But the discourse of love and peace which women articulate is never listened to” (Tompkins 41). Thus, the male voice is given precedence over the female voice, as the male voice is associated with physical action.

2.3 The Western Female: Linguist and Pacifist?

In Western films and novels, the woman is generally presented as acting in contrast to the male hero's embodied masculinity, set moral code, and desire for action. The female voice is permitted into the narrative solely to be countered, corrected or ignored (Heba and Murphy 313). In Westerns, women represent the antithesis of the active, heroic male (French 14-15, 17). While the male is "the restless wanderer and figure of action," women symbolize "the values of civilization," forgiveness and often passivity (French 21-22; L. Blake 303). As seen in *High Noon*, it is the male who actively seeks out assistance and engages in a gunfight, while for the majority of the film Amy, Kane's wife, remains indoors. Her sudden change of heart, eschewing her pacifist ideals, grows from a desire to protect and save her husband. As Pam Cook notes in *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, any action assigned to the female character is permitted only to forward the hero's own agenda: "If she is allowed to be active, it is in the hero's cause rather than her own; in *High Noon* (1952), the young Quaker wife puts aside her pacifist principles to support her husband's heroic stand" (44).

For Tompkins, the role of the female in the Western is limited to the following few dramatis personae: "victim; extension of man; motive for man's action; essential [domestic role], and controll[er] of the power of language" (Heba and Murphy 313; Tompkins 40-41, 44, 50).⁶⁶ The settler or Western woman was expected to embody the ideals of society as related to the family, thereby reflecting "traditional cultural values regarding family, community, and faith" (Heba and Murphy 313). Foreign female speech was often interpreted,

⁶⁶ While Westerns can present women in seductive, anti-domestic roles (saloon girls, prostitutes etc.) these characters are never fully accepted as a true equal to the Western hero. If the "whore with a heart of gold" cannot be redeemed through marriage, she invariably has a tragic ending: abandoned, chased from town as in *Stagecoach*, or killed (Indick 62-63; French 17).

and therefore altered by a male translator. When a female character was permitted dialogue in the hero's tongue, she was limited to asking for assistance from the male protagonist, an act which promoted the Western hero's significance (Beyer 20-21; Heba and Murphy 313).

As Peter French observes in *Cowboy Metaphysics: Ethics and Death in Westerns*, the Western female is restricted in her purpose, representing "the virtues of conversation, discussion and compromise" (32). In the essay "Go West, Young Woman! Hegel's Dialectic and Women's Identities in Western Films," Gary Heba and Robin Murphy note that in Westerns the female voice is trampled by male action preventing her words from having any purpose, aside from a comparative value to the male character: "the female character's opinion [...] and thereby her influence on the narrative is moot" (Heba and Murphy 317).⁶⁷ Female advice and warnings are ignored or deliberately countered when the Western woman argues against violence: "In literally hundreds of Westerns, the female lead begs the hero, or another lesser male character, to forswear resentment for an injury that has been done to him" (French 20, 22). The female voice speaks for peace, forgiveness, and community, while the Western hero adheres to moral action. Ironically, both voices argue for a moral responsibility, but as Jeffrie Murphy observes, "forgiveness may indeed restore relationship but to seek restoration at all cost—even at the cost of one's very human dignity—can hardly be a virtue" (qtd. in French 22).⁶⁸ For French, the female voice of the West recedes into the whine of desperation and passivity: a death knoll for any Western hero. For French, the

⁶⁷ Heba and Murphy's use of the word 'moot' implies the meaning 'insignificant' as opposed to the official OED definition of "open to argument, debatable; uncertain, doubtful; unable to be firmly resolved" ("moot, adj." OED Online).

⁶⁸ French highlights *The Searchers* as an ideal example of the female voice of peace versus the male hero's need for moral justice. In the film, John Wayne's character Ethan Edwards chastises a murdered son's mother who pleads for peace and forgiveness: "Have you no self-respect? Do you want your son to grow up without self-respect?" (22).

requests of peace are mere “jabber[ing] . . . pathetic whining and pleading” (32). Tompkins agrees, noting that, “As is the case of women in Westerns generally . . . there’s nothing *to* them. They may seem strong and resilient, fiery and resourceful at first, but when push comes to shove . . . they crumble . . . When the crunch comes, women shatter into words” (61-62). The Wild West is a land of survival, and a message of peace or passivity will only result in the death of the Western hero. Action must be taken if the Western hero is to be both moral and a survivor.

According to Laura Mulvey in her article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” women in Western films become a signifier of their male counterparts and are used to present meaning instead of create meaning: “Women are bound by a symbolic role in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (313).

While the Western film genre gives full range and freedom to male protagonists who embody an androcentric and patriarchal perspective, it constrains and forces the female characters to adhere to a limited gender identity.⁶⁹ In Western films, the male protagonist possesses a perspective that is considered superior to that of the female. Western heroes act according to a moral code of “self respect” and “dignity” doing what is just and necessary to ensure security from any threat (French 20). While the hero follows a moral compass through action, the female speaks against the hero’s actions. For French, language is “the last resort

⁶⁹ It is important to note that some films attempt to break the stereotype of the verbally controlled and/or ignored female voice. In the John Wayne film *McLintock* (1973), the female character Katherine has a very outspoken nature, yet she is generally ignored or chastised by the male characters. Thus, while she has a voice to speak (verbally) she still lacks a voice powerful enough to bring about change and be validated.

of women” and the sign of “cowardly and dishonourable men” (32). In the Western, a verbose nature is to be distrusted: language is as dangerous as it is fluid and uncertain. In contrast, physical action is real, visible, and, therefore, trustworthy. The protesting, pacifist Western woman by encouraging cowardice prevents, albeit temporarily, the male hero from embodying his masculine identity. She argues that he should not resort to violence but instead try to live a peaceful, calm life with her (32). For the traditional Western hero, pacifism is not an option. Action is the only logical and moral response. Thus, he must reject her offer and act accordingly.

In the Western, physical action, specifically acts of violence, is associated with masculinity and heroism, while verbose speech or loquaciousness is attributed to loose morality, weakness, and limited self control. The ability to act without explanation is seen as proof of a position of power, for those who do not need to explain their actions are viewed as automatically justified in their choices (21). As Tompkins observes, silence is associated with male authority and dominance:

The western man’s silence functions as a script for behavior; it expresses and authorizes a power relation that reaches into the furthest corners of domestic and social life. The impassivity of male silence suggests the inadequacy of female verbalization, establishes male superiority, and silences the one who would engage in conversation. (Tompkins 59)

Thus, the ideal Western hero is physical, violent, controlled by a strong moral code, and silent. These characteristics play into and create the traditional stereotype of the male as a strong, silent type. In contrast, the ideal female heroine is domestically focused, a voice for

peace (which is ignored by the hero), socially responsible, verbally controlled or silent, and provisional (Cook 295; French 14, 22). These characteristics lead to the stereotype of the female as “silent, chaste and obedient” (Jenstad 5). With a clear awareness of the stock elements, characters, and preconceived labels found in a typical Western film, we can now turn to Stratford and Bard’s *The Taming of the Shrew* to analyze the gender themes and Western interpretations on the Canadian stage.

2.4 Stratford Festival and Bard on the Beach: Embracing and Questioning Western Stereotypes

2.4.1 Similarities in Stratford’s and Bard’s Spaghetti Western *Shrew*

The Stratford Festival and Bard on the Beach use language and character representation in *Shrew* to move beyond the stereotypes and preconceived notions of gender identity and sexual politics associated with Western films. Both productions inverted the Western stereotype of a silent hero and a verbose but passive female, producing instead a loquacious Petruchio and an equally verbal yet violent Katherine. Potter’s productions of *Shrew* re-worked the traditional gender and sexual tropes of the Spaghetti Western, permitting the hero fluid elocution while the heroine, both loquacious and physical, adopted the Western hero’s self-imposed moral code.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, not all critics appreciated Potter’s Western vision of *Shrew*. By examining the similarities in design and acting between Stratford’s and Bard’s *Shrews* one sees not only how Potter used Western tropes to engage with *Shrew*’s themes of sexual politics but also possible reasons for the divergent reviews. The first area to be examined for production comparisons is design, which includes props,

⁷⁰ Unlike traditional Western heroes, Stratford’s Petruchio was a competent speaker who utilized language to express his concerns, plans, and emotions. Katherine challenged the Western female stereotype by adhering to a strong moral code of self-preservation and autonomy. Unlike traditional Western females, she was active not passive.

sound/music cues, costumes and set design.

As Tompkins observed, a location focus and vast pan of scenery establishes the setting at the beginning of typical Western films (69).⁷¹ In Stratford's and Bard's *Shrews* the audience was continually reminded of their Western location through props and sound or visual cues. Simple items such as lassos, hats, revolvers, and whiskey bottles highlighted the play's relatively modern setting. The production opened with two traditional Western scenes: a country dance and the arrival of strangers at the local train station.⁷² The country dance, complete with five couples in traditional Western costumes of cowboy boots and ten-gallon hats or simple print dresses, presented the audience with the expected costume nuances of a Western film. As designer Patrick Clark noted, the costumes reflected a realistic, lived in feel from a historical time in the American West (11). Sound cues including Western inspired music between scene changes, the 'clip-clop' of horses' hooves, and the sudden sound of gunshots brought to life the world of the Western. While the production was set in the late 1880's "inspired by [S]paghetti [W]esterns, Clint Eastwood and the dusty, natural setting of those films" it still aimed to balance a film stereotype with a grounded realism (Clark 11). The production was filled with realistic, lived-in costumes: "duster coats, cowboy boots and hats, and broken-down, dirty clothing. The women [were] in cotton print dresses and reflect[ed] the Spanish influence found along the Texan-Mexican border" (Clark 11).

The stage design permitted easy scene transitions between Minola's estate, the local saloon, the local train station and Petruchio's rugged ranch. The set reflected the Western

⁷¹ The following films open with location pan shots: *Stagecoach*, *Texas*, *My Darling Clementine*, *Red River*, *Rio Grande*, *The Searchers*, *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, *Lonely Are the Brave*, and *High Plains Drifter* (Tompkins 69-70).

⁷² While Tranio and Lucentio were the first to arrive by train, it was the later, mysterious arrival of Petruchio by horse that reflected the Western stranger stereotype.

theme with an added “barn-board floor and . . . swinging saloon doors” (Clark 11).

Petruchio’s proposal in Baptista Minola’s estate occurred in a rugged outdoor villa complete with hanging laundry and a standing wooden washer. The opening of act five provided the best example of Western influence and design coupled with a joking tribute to the Spaghetti Western genre. Katherine and Petruchio entered the stage where an old, iron pump, a simple wooden bucket and dipper sat centre stage, along with a bleached cow skull. A horse neighed in the background while tumbleweeds rolled by to the delight of the audience. These overtly stereotypical images from Western films reminded the audience of the setting while also encouraging both the actors and the audience not to take the production too seriously.

While a Spaghetti Western approach presents stereotypes, memes and motifs specific to the original film style, does the genre tone down the gender identity and sexual politics issues or simply reinvent them? In Stratford’s and Bard’s revisions of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Western approach to storytelling forced the main characters, those whom the audience focuses on the most, to adhere to strict traditional gender typing. The first dialogue scene at the train station introduced Tranio and Lucentio to the audience amid multiple stereotypical signals. A cloud of white smoke, representative of the steam train, billowed from stage right as the strangers emerged like ghosts onto the Moiseiwitsch stage. Lucentio entered wearing a large tan cowboy hat and carrying a lasso. While the costume choice presented the proper markings of a Western character (hat and lasso) Lucentio’s colours of white and pale beige coupled with a bowtie and a gold pocket watch indicated that he was not the protagonist of the production. This role was saved for Petruchio and his Clint Eastwood inspired reveal in act one, scene two.

The acting and character representation (musical cue and costumes) of Petruchio were very similar in Stratford's and Bard's *Shrews*. When Graham Abbey entered the Festival stage and Bob Frazer stepped onto the Bard Mainstage for the first time, a traditional, foreboding, and recognizable Western leitmotif reminiscent of Ennio Morricone's music for Sergio Leone's "Fistful of Dollars" announced their arrival (Hoile "Review 2003"). Both Petruchios elicited fear and trepidation from the stunned observers who witnessed the arrival of this unannounced stranger. When Petruchio pulled back his jacket to reveal his revolver the cast ran off stage in terror. Director Miles Porter was clearly presenting Petruchio as the traditional Western hero. Petruchio's demeanour was rugged (he had visible stubble) and his gait was strong and determined; he smoked a cigarette, which he extinguished underfoot, and was cloaked in a full length, leather duster jacket. The wardrobe attendant's notes for Abbey's costume, identified as Costume One and used in multiple scenes, stated that he must have dust on his coat and hat, along with a neck scarf and gun belt with holster. The dust identified Petruchio as a weary but persistent traveller who had seen the word and survived the Wild West. Graham Abbey also carried a saddle with him, immediately identifying Petruchio as a trained rider as opposed to Lucentio who arrived by the civilized method of train. Beneath Petruchio's duster he was clothed in blue/black cotton denim trousers, a denim shirt, dark brown suede vest, and brown leather belt (Fig 2.1). The costume was a mixture of natural fibers (cotton and leather) and traditional Western apparel.



Figure 2.1 Stratford Festival of Canada. Graham Abbey as Petruchio and Wayne Best as Grumio. *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2003. Director: Miles Potter. Designer: Patrick Clark. Photographer: Michael Cooper.⁷³



Figure 2.2 Bard. Bob Frazer as Petruchio in *Shrew*. (“UVic Internet Shakespeare Edition”).⁷⁴

The costume design for Bard’s Petruchio (Bob Frazer) was nearly identical to Abbey’s costume (Fig 2.2). Like Abbey, Frazer’s costume consisted of a brown duster, tan leather vest, denim shirt and jeans, cowboy hat and boots. Both actors entered onstage with an intimidating gait and silent stare, and utilized cigarettes or cigars as props.

Petruchio also adhered to the stereotypical Western hero as a man of action and violence as displayed through Abbey’s and Frazer’s acting choices. In his first moment on stage in both productions, Petruchio calmly revealed his revolver, informing the audience

⁷³ Please note that for all images from the Stratford Festival production of *Shrew* credit is given as follows: *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2003. Director: Miles Potter. Designer: Patrick Clark. Photographer: Michael Cooper

⁷⁴ Please note that for all images from Bard on the Beach’s production of *Shrew* credit is given as follows: *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2007. Director: Miles Potter. Photographer: David Blue. Photo Source: University of Victoria, Internet Shakespeare Editions.

that he was willing to defend himself at all costs. Petruchio's overbearing and potentially threatening presence was highlighted in act one scene two when he entered the saloon and everyone stopped to stare: the pianist, the saloon girls, and the customers. The fear and uncertainty surrounding Petruchio was partially caused by his silent, foreboding demeanour, and partially by his background. When Petruchio announced that he was "old Antonio's son" both *Shrew* casts responded with gasps of fear and shock. His continued speech, in which he stated, "my father [is] dead. . . ." resulted in a collective sigh of relief from all the observing characters (Shakespeare *Shrew* 1.2.185-186). While Potter's dalliance with these lines served a comedic purpose, it also showed that Petruchio's family held power and authority. In the act one, scene one dialogue between Petruchio and Hortensio, Potter gave Petruchio's father a hanging death indicated by the following added conversation and stage business:

Petruchio.	--my father is deceas'd
Hortensio.	Aww.
Grumio.	(Does a hanging gesture behind Petruchio's back.)
Hortensio.	Oh! (1.2.51)

Thus, the audience was aware that Petruchio came from a family that was either in trouble with the law, or has a questionable past. Petruchio's quick willingness to resort to violence occurred frequently in conversations with Grumio, his servant. In act one scene two, when Grumio would not "knock [him] here soundly," Petruchio shot at his manservant three times, causing Grumio to dance across the stage (1.2.8).⁷⁵ In both productions their argument came to blows and Hortensio was forced to break up the fight to save Grumio's life. Also in act

⁷⁵ In the Stratford production Petruchio shot at Grumio causing him to dance. In the Bard production he only took out his gun and cocked it, before Hortensio intervened.

one scene two, within a few minutes of entering the saloon, Petruchio challenged Tranio to a shoot out. The two men had a standoff, each with their revolver ready, while the saloon customers hid. Petruchio's threat of "Sir, sir, the first's for me; let her go by . . . Sir understand you this of me, . . . and not before" was staccatoed with chimes while the men circled each other (1.2.252, 255, 260). In stereotypical Western style, and hinting at the Mexican musical undertones, both productions had a lone trumpeter play on the balcony until he was signalled by Hortensio to stop. In both productions the scene ended as Petruchio struck a match and lit either a cigar or a cigarette as Western music and singing filled the auditorium.⁷⁶

The violence of Petruchio continued in his wooing of Katherine. However, it is important to note that he never struck Katherine. Such an action would go against the code of honour of the Western hero and therefore, when Katherine attacked Petruchio his response was to turn the other cheek but warn her, "I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again" (2.1.216).

Both Abbey's and Frazer's Petruchios approached Katherine in a calm manner utilizing violence only when necessary. Despite a tough and aloof appearance, both Petruchios were reluctant to defend themselves physically against her attacks. While Abbey and Frazer did respond to Katherine's violence, they didn't retaliate. The wooing scene played out as a slapstick comedy with Petruchio and Katherine wrestling on the floor and crawling over tables as Katherine tried to choke Petruchio and even steal his gun. While Petruchio's physical approach to wooing was more of an attempt to corner Katherine and

⁷⁶ With the Stratford video filmed from the back of the Festival theatre it was difficult to make out small details such as determining if Petruchio was smoking a cigar or a cigarette. The Stratford scene ended with a single spotlight on Petruchio before transitioning to a full black out. In contrast, the Bard production didn't have a blackout due to the outdoor nature of the festival.

subdue her (he attempted to restrain her by wrapping his arms around her in an act reminiscent of a bear hug), Katherine was more violent in her responses to Petruchio. She elbowed him, tripped him, choked him, sat upon him and nearly shot him.

Although Petruchio curbed his physical violence towards Katherine, he remained a threat to his male servants. In act four scene one, when Petruchio returned home with his bride, his presence so threatened his servants that they all dropped their guns and put their hands up in surrender. In the Stratford production Petruchio shot one of his men, although this was done off stage and mainly for comedic effect as the man was only superficially wounded. In the Bard production the shooting was performed onstage as Frazer threatened Grumio in an action repetitive of their fight in act one scene two. Potter's rearranged dialogue for Petruchio was utilized in both productions, presenting him as an able master who could sneak up on his limited and incompetent servants:

Petruchio.	Where is Nathaniel?
Nathaniel.	Here sir. (Drops gun and puts up hands)
Petruchio.	Gregory?
Gregory.	Here sir (Drops gun and raises his hands.)
Petruchio.	Philips? (Silence). Here sir, here sir. (Petruchio shoots).
Philips.	(Shot by Petruchio.) Here sir. (4.1.102)

Petruchio's violence continued when he disapproved of the food and threw the meat into the cook's face. He also beat the servant who did not remove his boots properly and was constantly pulling Grumio by the ear or cuffing him. While much of this violence was his

humorous way of taming Katherine, the opening actions of Petruchio before he met Katherine indicated he was quick to violence.

While through costume design and violent action both Petruchios adhered to the stereotypes of the Spaghetti Western, Abbey's and Frazer's acting choices moved away from these stereotypes where silence and speech were concerned. Tompkins notes that masculine silence is associated with authority and dominance in a Western. Both Stratford and Bard provided Petruchio with moments of silence during stage entrances and exits. The silent moments coupled with musical cues and images of stereotypical masculinity (holding a gun, lighting a cigarette) did briefly depict the Western ideal but they were not continual. As a Shakespearean character, Petruchio must speak, and speak he did in 586 lines of dialogue, a generous amount of text for a character who was only on stage for eight scenes (1.2, 2.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2) ("Open Source Shakespeare").⁷⁷ Petruchio must be vocal as a result of his role and communicate with both his fellow characters and the audience. His famous "he that knows better how to tame a shrew,/ Now let him speak" monologue invited the audience into a dialogue over his humorous shrew taming (4.1.190-191). Petruchio could never be the silent, brooding Western hero for he was written as a Shakespearean comedic character and it is through puns, double entendres and witty dialogue that Petruchio is comedic. In a 2003 review Christopher Hoile argued that Petruchio's loquaciousness clashed with the Western ideal and helped to make a poor production even worse. He argued that Petruchio's character was not silent or a loner and, thus, he was a poor fit for a Western hero:

⁷⁷ According to the Open Source Shakespeare website Petruchio has 158 speeches, amounting to 586 lines of dialogue or monologue. He has the most lines of any character in the play.

Why doesn't this work? The main characteristic of Clint Eastwood's character, the "Man with No Name", is his silence; Petruchio's main characteristic is his love of speaking. A garrulous Clint Eastwood?--I don't think so. Besides this, Clint Eastwood's character is a loner while Petruchio has a servant. Potter transforms Grumio into Petruchio's sidekick, but, switching sub-genres, forces Wayne Best to imitate Walter Brennan. This alone makes nonsense of the [S]paghetti [W]estern set-up. (Hoile "Review 2003")

Hoile may be too quick to judge Petruchio's garrulous nature. While Petruchio is loquacious, his verbal tendencies do not negate the Western setting, sound cues, costumes, and designs. Both Abbey and Potter were able to embrace specific elements of the stereotypical Spaghetti Western while also questioning and challenging its essence.⁷⁸ The fact that Petruchio could speak while also presenting an overbearing silhouette in a saloon doorway added to his character instead of diminishing it. Stratford's and Bard's *Shrews* were productions that didn't take themselves too seriously. Potter wished to celebrate the Spaghetti Western but also poke fun at the genre and question the stereotypes. If a loquacious Petruchio breaking the traditional Western form posed a problem for some reviewers, a violent Katherine and a shrewish Bianca blatantly going against the Western female ideal might possibly cause a Western traditionalist a myocardial infarction.

⁷⁸ It is possible that Potter selected the Spaghetti Western genre because he, as a North American director, wished to participate in a genre that parodies North American gender stereotypes. One could propose that Potter's vision failed at Stratford as the Spaghetti Western style was viewed as "low-brow" by Eastern Canadian theatre patrons.

Given her nickname, “Katherine the curst” and her violent tendencies, Katherine directly violates the set expectations of the good Western women (1.2.122). While Seana McKenna, Stratford’s Katherine, and Colleen Wheeler, Bard’s Katherine, were costumed in the expected Western dress and even forced to carry out traditional female roles, such as wash and hang the laundry, both Katherines refused to adhere to the stereotypical Western female role.⁷⁹ Beyer notes that women in Westerns “[symbolize] the force of civilization, peace and forgiveness” (20). However, Katherine symbolizes dissent, protestation, and verbal abuse to all those around her. Through acting choices, especially violent tendencies and an overbearing physicality, both Wheeler and McKenna challenged the traditional Western female stereotype. In the opening country dance scene Katherine disrupted the festivities with her violent and verbally abusive tendencies. In the Stratford production she attacked Gremio and a second unnamed character with Gremio’s walking stick. In the Bard production she chased characters across the stage interrupting the dance and, in act one scene three, she punched a hole through Hortensio’s top hat. Katherine’s attacks caused most characters to run for safety and avoid her if possible.

Further examples of Katherine’s violence occurred in her early interactions with Bianca and Petruchio. In the interrogation scene with Bianca, Katherine tied up her sister using the laundry she was supposed to wash and fold (Fig 2.3). She then proceeded to spank Bianca with the rug beater. Likewise, when Petruchio came to woo her he met his equal in terms of stubborn temperament. Katherine, more violent than Petruchio, dumped the laundry on him, tried to choke him and even attempted to shoot him (Fig 2.4). When Katherine was advised

⁷⁹ McKenna wore a cotton print dress while Wheeler wore a brown/mahogany coloured dress. Both costumes adhered to the dress style of the time.

to stay behind by Baptista in act one scene one, and was blocked from entering the house by two cowboys in a defensive stance, she punched them both in the gut and entered against her father’s orders.



Figure 2.3 Stratford. Paul Soles as Baptista Minola, Deborah Hay as Bianca and Seana McKenna as Katherine.



Figure 2.4 Stratford. Seana McKenna as Katherine and Graham Abbey as Petruchio

As noted above, ideal Western female characters are associated with limited speech and requests for a hero’s assistance. In contrast, Katherine was known for speaking her mind and disrespecting the male characters around her, including her father. Katherine chastised her father in the wedding scene with McKenna screaming “father be quiet” while Wheeler chose to growl her lines (3.3.88).⁸⁰

While Katherine was able to verbally insult and control Bianca, Baptista, and other acquaintances, her verbal threats did not work on Petruchio. In fact, he seemed to enjoy

⁸⁰ The Stratford version added the additional word “now” for Baptista to interrupt Kate before she chastised him in an irate and vicious manner (3.3.87).

Katherine.		What hast thou to do?
Baptista.	Now—	
Katherine.		FATHER be quiet! (3.3.87-88)

sparring with her as was seen in the wooing scene wordplay. Petruchio began a game of word manipulation and puns on the terms “buzzard”, “turtle”, “herald”, “tail,” “glass” and “arms” in his first encounter with Katherine and continued it until she finally agreed to play along in the sun versus moon scene (2.1.1056, 1074, 1062, 1083, 1071).⁸¹ As mentioned earlier, Petruchio invited Katherine to join him in a game of wordplay that was separate from the world and a direct reflection of his comedic wooing comment that “’Tis bargained 'twixt us twain, being alone,/ That she shall still be curst in company” (2.1.296-297). When Katherine agreed to his game, putting aside frustration and anger for partnership and companionship, the joke was turned on the audience and the rest of the play’s characters. Ironically, in this moment of inversion, Katherine embodied a few of the Western female ideals (promoting domestic unity and no longer fighting with her husband) while broadening the definition of the ideal woman (being autonomous and authoritative without being shrewish). As director Potter noted in an interview, Katherine learned to accept a balanced relationship of compromise. For Potter the ideal metaphor to depict the relationship of Katherine and Petruchio was a dance: “When we dance somebody leads. It doesn’t mean one person is better than the other. But if I asked you to dance and we stand up to waltz. You’d expect me to step off first” (“Potter Interview”). For Potter, Katherine’s attitude change stemmed from a realization of her freedom of choice and freedom of identity: “[W]e don’t have to be what other people say we are. It is what we think that makes us as we are . . . [S]he can do what she wants and she doesn’t have to act the way others expect her to act . . . [S]he suddenly has

⁸¹ The lines referring to glass and arms are spoken by Kate, however Petruchio plays along with the witty banter.

a choice and she chooses him” (“Potter Interview”).⁸² In contrast Bianca, who will be examined next, became the true shrew in Western traditional fashion.

An analysis of the costume and acting choices for Bianca’s character demonstrates the similarities in the treatment of her character in the Bard’s and Stratford’s *Shrews*. Established as the favourite and idealized sister, Bianca Minola was dressed in costumes that accented her supposed innocence, gentility, patience and maiden modesty. In the Stratford lesson scene with the disguised suitors, Bianca wore a blue, patterned cotton dress with pink bow detailing on the bodice and a lace collar (Fig 2.5). While Katherine was dressed in burgundy, brown, grey and off-whites, Bianca was costumed in bright pastels, lace, ribbons and frills. Bianca had a similar costume design for the Bard production: she wore a cream, peach colour dress with ribbon detailing while Katherine wore a plain brown/burgundy dress over a white shift (Fig 2.16).

Likewise, Bianca’s dress for Katherine’s wedding was bright purple with lace detailing that stood out against the black suits, brown leather, and dark coloured clothing of other wedding guests (Fig 2.6). Stratford’s costumes presented Bianca as one who desires the attention of those around her, including the audience, and one may assume that she was well aware of her status as next to be wed. Baptista even permitted Bianca to play the role of bride at Katherine’s wedding feast:

Baptista. Lucentio, you shall supply the bridegroom’s place;

 And let Bianca take her sister’s room.

Tranio. Shall sweet Bianca practise how to bride it?

⁸² For Potter, Kate realized she could choose her own identity. Thus, she didn’t have to be a “shrew” simply because others placed that identifier on her. Kate’s moment of choice, that Potter references, was the “Kiss me Kate” scene in act five (“Potter Interview”).

Baptista.

That she shall. (3.2.120- 123)



Figure 2.5 Stratford Festival. Donald Carrier as Hortensio, Deborah Hay as Bianca and Kyle Blair as Lucentio



Figure 2.6 Stratford Festival. Back row (l-r): Kyle Blair as Lucentio, Brad Rudy as Gremio and Paul Dunn as Biondello. Middle row (l-r): Donald Carrier as Hortensio, Deborah Hay as Bianca, Seana McKenna as Katherina and Wayne Best as Grumio. Front row (l-r): Lally Cadeau as the Widow, Jonathan Goad as Tranio, Paul Soles as Baptista Minola and Graham Abbey as Petruchio

Yet, one must question if Bianca is marriageable considering her flirtation with multiple suitors, her deception of her father, and her flagrant disrespect for appearances.⁸³ In act four scene two Hortensio renounced beautiful women when he came across Bianca in an amorous embrace with Lucentio:

Hortensio. I firmly vow

⁸³ By “appearances” I am referring to social expectations, rules for decorum, and proper behaviour.

Never to woo her more, but do forswear her

As one unworthy all the former favours

That I have fondly flattered her withal. (4.2.28-31)

In addition to deceiving her wooers, Bianca willingly deceived her father. The deception regarding Lucentio/Cambio and the false father that Lucentio and Tranio provide for Baptista's reassurance resulted in the near-hanging of the true Vincentio. In both Stratford's and Bard's *Shrews*, the villagers took justice into their own hands and put a hangman's noose around Vincentio's neck. The citizens nearly hanged him thinking he was a false Vincentio and a villain. It was only the timely arrival of Grumio, who discharged his gun, and Lucentio, who could correctly identify his father, that rectified the mistake. The resulting scene continued with an irate Vincentio, and the two angry fathers exiting amid promises for revenge. It was certainly not a positive beginning to Lucentio and Bianca's wedded life.

While Katherine learned to tame her tongue, and speak from a place of both authority and knowledge, Bianca spiralled into embarrassing speeches and outspoken comments. In the final Stratford and Bard scenes, when Katherine chastised Bianca and the widow, both actresses presented Bianca as severely drunk. At Stratford her snide comments to Petruchio were voiced in a slurred manner indicating that a Bianca without self-control was an ugly creature. She insulted Petruchio by calling him a cuckold: "An hasty-witted body,/ Would say your head and butt were head and horn," before withdrawing from the party (5.2.41-242). Similarly, in the Bard production Bianca gave a drunken speech before bursting into tears and then becoming ill offstage. These hasty exits, without letting Petruchio defend himself, came across as doubly insulting, and Bianca's depreciating worth was reflected in

Petruchio's immediate response, "She hath prevented me here, Signor Tranio/ This bird you aimed at, though you hit her not./ Therefore a health to all that shot and missed" (5.2.50-52). The end of each production indicated that Katherine was the more virtuous, valuable, and worthy of the two sisters for she fulfilled the ideal Western values of expanding her husband's worth, defending his honour, and showing obedience, yet she also questioned the Western stereotypical moulds by speaking her mind, having a strong will of her own, and using physical action for the better of society.⁸⁴ Potter was able to present a Katherine who appealed modern sensibilities and did not insult the audience's expected gender equality, while also remaining true to the original gender politics of Shakespeare's work. Katherine was a smart, intelligent, strong willed woman whose story could work in the gender politics rich world of the Spaghetti Western genre. Katherine was a bit of a paradox while Bianca received the title of shrew for her outspoken, brash, dishonouring actions and words. It was clear that Katherine and Petruchio would have a long and happy wedded life, while Bianca and Lucentio were doomed before they even began.

Analyzing the Stratford and Bard productions of *Shrew* reveals many similarities between the design (costume, props, sound cues/music) and acting choices by McKenna, Wheeler, Abbey, Frazer, Hay and Wright. If the productions were so similar in design and acting choice, why did one receive glowing reviews while the other received mostly critical ones? It is possible that the Canadian festivals themselves shape audience expectations and that, while the productions were indeed similar, the critical reviews reflect the different

⁸⁴ Katherine was permitted to lay violent hands upon Bianca and the Widow. She was to "swinge them soundly forth" if they would not come (Shakespeare, *Shrew* 5.2.108).

assumptions of those who attend each venue. By analyzing the terminology utilized in the festival reviews one sees that they suggest differing expectations governing each theatre.

Most reviews of Stratford's *Shrew* were negative, including those published in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, and the *Shakespeare Bulletin*. Reviews that condemned the "schtick" – the physical humour and playful nature of Potter's Western *Shrew* – presented Stratford as a dignified festival, elevated above base physical humour.⁸⁵ Christopher Holie's *Stagedoor Review* gave the production one out of five stars, citing slapstick humour and forced comedy as detracting from the plot. Both Holie and Justin Shaltz, the reviewer for the *Shakespeare Bulletin*, claimed that Stratford's *Shrew* had too much schtick: "[*Shrew* was a]n overblown disappointment, with talented performers overshadowed by schtick [sic]" (Shaltz par. 1). Similarly, Gary Smith of the *Hamilton Spectator* observed that the "corny double takes and . . . choreographed, slapstick buffoonery [was] sometimes stretched to the limit" ("Shootout").⁸⁶ Richard Ouzounian of the *Toronto Star* gave the production one star, blaming slapstick humour, clichés, schtick and horrible accents for the production's demise. For Ouzounian, *Shrew* was "long, loud and stridently unfunny" using "every cliché in the genre . . . [to] attempt to amuse" ("Pistol Packing" pars. 3, 9). He also observed that the secondary

⁸⁵ While most Stratford reviews criticized Potter's choice of schtick and failed humour, two reviewers claimed that there were some redeeming qualities to Potter's vision, hinting that festival expectations shaped the schtick critique. *National Post* reviewer Robert Cushman providing a less damning opinion, stated that *Shrew*, while neither continually fun nor illuminating, was "enough of both to be worth anybody's while" and "satisfying . . . at the denouement" (Cushman "How Kate" pars. 1,10). Kate Taylor of *The Globe and Mail* graciously claimed that while the production was "occasionally overblown and less than funny . . . [it] worked" (K. Taylor "Critic's Choice" par. 2).

⁸⁶ In a private interview, director Miles Potter stated that there wasn't any slapstick humour in the production; however, Hoile claimed "all the would-be humour in the show [was] generated by pratfalls, slapstick violence, crowd reactions to the sight of guns or spitting or to the sound of hoof beats or theme music on Jim Neil's soundtrack--in short anything but what occurs in Shakespeare's play" ("Reviews 2003" par. 3). It is possible that Hoile counted the taming scenes between Kate and Petruchio as examples of excessive physical humour, but even with this allowance, his claim doesn't account for positive reviewers criticizing the slapstick.

characters became “cartoons of various shapes and sizes” resulting in an “embarrassing evening, full of surface performances and badly executed comedy” (Ouzounian par. 15).

In comparison, all of Bard’s 2007 *Shrew* reviews praised Potter’s genius, the cast’s comedic timing, and the Western approach. The reviewers perceived the production as both hilarious and avant-garde, valuing the forward thinking production design over a traditional, Shakespearean style. *Vancouver Sun* theatre critic Peter Birnie described Potter’s Western as “a hoot” with “finely attuned” costumes, soundscapes and a “snappy barn-dance” (pars. 11, 3). While the production was a “knee-slapping . . . good time” and the script “fairly dance[d] to its new tune” amid “roars of laughter” for the “utterly audacious [performance],” Birnie’s highest praise was saved for the comedic balance, character development, and intelligence behind the roles (pars. 11, 4). Michael Harris of *The Globe and Mail* described Bard’s *Shrew* as an “outstanding performance” and gave full credit to “the excellence of Wheeler’s performance, bolstered by Potter’s brave vision and Frazer’s likable gumption” (“The Shrew is Tamed” pars. 2, 7). Similarly, the Vancouver Plays website praised Potter’s Western vision as “a fast-paced and hilarious love story” that “make[s] sense” (Wasserman par. 2).

An analysis of reviewers’ complaints revealed a deeper dissatisfaction with the expectations surrounding Stratford’s *Shrew*. The critics associated the Stratford Festival with an elevated, classical, and elite cultural experience. Potter’s reinvention of *Shrew* failed to meet the critics’ anticipation for high quality theatre in a traditional sense. For the reviewers, *Shrew* presented a plethora of theatrical clichés coupled with base physical humour while it stripped the production of the richness and artistic tapestry normally associated with the Stratford Festival. Many reviewers felt the ideals of the festival were being violated by

Shrew's shtick and lowbrow humour. As Holie observes, Potter's interpretation "insults both the play and the audience" (par. 9). Herbert Simpson of the *Rochester City Newspaper* claimed Potter's *Shrew* was an "ill-conceived mess [that] pand[er]ed to the lowest level of entertainment without being amusing or entertaining" ("Mixed Bill" par. 5). In an explanatory response to the negative reviews, Smith of the *Spectator* warned, "Potter's [S]paghetti Western imagery will no doubt send off alarm bells for all those Shakespearean purists who hate any sort of displacement" ("Shootout"). From these comments it is clear that Stratford critics expected a production with well developed character performances and high quality, classic entertainment. One could even propose that the sense of a high-brow Canadian culture promoted by the Stratford Festival experience, including the festival location, activities, and history, cultivated the negative response to Potter's light-hearted, comedic Spaghetti Western *Shrew*.⁸⁷ The festival itself encouraged an expectation of elevated, cultured productions and when *Shrew* failed to meet critics' expectations the reviews were harsh.⁸⁸

Gary Taylor revealed one possible reason for Potter's slapstick approach: misplaced artistic excess. Stratford frequently plays with excess, and thus the comedy, like the costumes and set design, was stretched to the limit. As Taylor explained, "[h]ere at Stratford, where a theatre of excess rules, Potter's instinct is to pile on those details and the comic business" ("Lusty Shrew" par. 2). However, what Potter provided was an excess of base comedy and

⁸⁷ The most stinging review came from Holie, who claimed that Potter's *Shrew* was "one of the worst productions of the play in the festival's history. The Wild West setting is . . . misused. Add to that sloppy direction and poor acting, and the show becomes one actively to avoid" ("Review 2003" par. 1).

⁸⁸ By analyzing the different reviews and festival approaches, chapter two raises the question of how festival identity is connection with production, audience acceptance, and is a factor in the following case studies of chapters three to five: *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry V*, and *Harlem Duet*.

shtick instead of crackling Shakespearean wit, excellent comedic timing or elevated entertainment.⁸⁹ His Western *Shrew* failed to meet the critics' expectations for a high cultured, traditional production in accordance with the Festival's reputation.

In a private interview, Potter voiced his agreement that expectations presented a problem for the critics. Responding to negative reviews, Potter observed that many Stratford critics weren't ready for a comedic, modern approach to *Shrew*:

[A] certain element of people . . . were not ready for a Spaghetti Western. I don't know why. I thought the production was beautifully spoken. I thought [with] Seana and Graham . . . the text was delivered. I've seen many productions that were marred with too much physicality and too much design, and the text went for nothing. That whole production was text built but I do think that the fact that it was a kind of dusty, earthy very earthy, very earth bound . . . people just weren't ready for that. They just didn't get it.

Audiences got it. You know they loved it. ("Potter Interview")⁹⁰

Potter explained that on opening night the audience, filled with theatre reviewers, politicians, and media, were unresponsive to the production, ("the audience [was] dead"), while later general audiences appeared to enjoy the play ("Potter Interview"). Potter echoed the words of the academic Gary Taylor regarding Stratford's cultural expectation and audience disappointment, noting that the stigma associated with Stratford made it difficult to break the Shakespeare elite expectation:

⁸⁹ According to Potter the reviewers were unhappy with *Shrew* while the average Stratford audience member appeared to enjoy the production ("Potter Interview").

⁹⁰ If one accepts Potter's claim that the audience understood and appreciated *Shrew's* design then, it is only the critics' comments and concerns that are an issue.

Potter: I think it was the fact that it was here [at Stratford]. [*Shrew*] wasn't . . . elegant . . . I just think [the reviewers] were wrong. . . . [T]hey weren't ready [for *Shrew*]. . . my job is to interpret [*Shrew*] in a way that speaks currently to an audience that is exciting . . . [and] reflects the playwright . . . [S]ometimes that does put you in danger of putting yourself slightly out ahead of what is expected of you. And that can result in . . . divided opinion . . . in terms of critical reception . . . I think again we were a little ahead.

Shoemaker: But that's good. You were challenging the ideal of Stratford.

Potter: And you have to be prepared to . . . [be] slammed for that.

Taylor addressed a similar critical response to Stratford's 1998 production of *Much Ado*, noting there was a clear divide between reviewer response and patron reaction ("Theatrical" 339). Taylor referenced Bakhtin, claiming that "the people are not stupid; they just have an ideology different from that of the ruling cultural elites" or the Canadian literati in Ontario ("Theatrical" 339).⁹¹ For *Much Ado*, as with Potter's *Shrew*, Taylor observed that the reviewers disapproved of slapstick: "the cultural authorities of the quality newspapers (and academic journals) . . . have never approved of farce; they do not want 'classics' stuffed with 'monkey business' or 'slapstick'; they insist on the 'overall concept' and 'a unifying sensibility'" ("Theatrical" 339). For Potter, *Shrew* was a re-envisioning that challenged the traditional, Stratford Shakespeare norm with comedy, physical humour, and Western themes. Possibly due to the cultivation of an elite audience expectation, the overall reviewer response to *Shrew* was negative.

In contrast, when Potter re-staged *Shrew* at Vancouver's Bard on the Beach the audience response was altogether different, with the highest ticket sales for a Bard show and positive theatre reviews that praised both the humour and the Spaghetti Western approach

⁹¹ Taylor referenced Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* trans. Hélèn Iswolsky but did not directly quote from the text.

(“Potter Interview”).⁹² The summer, carnival style of Bard’s open back tent cultivated a relaxed, even ‘low-brow,’ audience expectation that encouraged and embraced a Western style *Shrew*. Peter Birnie from *The Vancouver Sun* argues that Bard evokes an experimental approach by deliberately not “pander[ing] to the masses the way that Stratford does” and encouraging an artistically challenging atmosphere (par. 12). Thus, the positive reviews of Bard were affected by the preconceived expectations associated with the festival. In his review, Harris highlighted Bard’s trademark view and location, observing that the sea and sky backdrop is a gorgeous distraction that attracts all types of patrons: “If a Bard on the Beach play was painfully boring, you could stare out the back of the open-air tent and lose yourself in mountains and ocean. Like a Bistro on the shore, Bard has always had the view to rely on . . . [but y]ou won’t want to take your eyes off Miles Potter’s outstanding production of . . . *Shrew*” (“The Shrew is Tamed” par. 1). The outdoor, beach festival style of Bard attracted an audience open to modern interpretations of Shakespeare and thus, the theatre reviews reflected the altered audience expectation.⁹³ Bard’s festival approach cultivated an

⁹² As Potter observed, the Bard production of *Shrew* was embraced by the audience and resulted in excellent revenue: “[*Shrew*] certainly broke every [ticket sales] record at Bard on the Beach” (“Potter Interview”).

⁹³ It is possible that the Bard outdoor festival with its location, laid back approach to theatre, pre-show picnics, plywood boardwalks and summer mentality, attracted an audience that was open to comedic flux, unique humour, and a wild Shakespearean Spaghetti Western. The Stratford reviews implied that festival viewers were disappointed with the odd comedy and non-traditional approach. Awkward acting choices for accents and character quirks distracted from the story and became irritating. In comparison, Bard’s production was hailed as an audacious comedy that was “tamed triumphantly” and “a good time” (Harris; Birnie par. 10). *The Vancouver Sun* theatre critic Peter Birnie argued that the West coast approach to theatre with a relaxed, accessible method for classical texts, attracted the ideal summer audience for Potter’s Western incarnation: “Effete eastern purists may have been appalled, but out here folks like our [Shakespeare] wild and free. On a crisp opening night with fresh Pacific air flowing through the big tent at Vanier Park, we westerners [sic] were mighty satisfied with what Potter hath wrought” (Birnie par. 2).

Likewise, it is possible that Potter’s second approach to the material resulted in less slapstick, lowbrow comedy (Grumio spitting, and terrible accents) and more fluent, in-character comedy that remained true to the moment, thereby creating two different productions. In a 2014 interview with Bard newcomer John Voth, the actor noted that the Bard cast members were open to improv and aware of acting in the moment. Bard with its tent setting, the open actors, and the shorter festival run time encouraged an environment of lively, current artistic awareness. As Voth explained, with “Shakespeare, I [assumed] . . . you make a choice and you stick to it

anticipation of avant-garde, innovative productions that challenged the traditional Shakespeare approach and encouraged modern storytelling.

However, there is another argument that could account for the drastically different theatre reviews. Despite a similar design (costumes, props) and Spaghetti Western approach, there were significant changes in stage design, acting, and character accent in the Bard production. By focusing on these differences it is possible to argue that the critical reviews simply reflect the fact that the Bard's *Shrew* was superior to the earlier *Shrew* produced and performed at Stratford.

2.4.2 Differences Observed in Bard's and Stratford's Western *Shrews*

By comparing Potter's 2003 Stratford *Shrew* with his later 2007 Bard production, the researcher is given a unique control situation. The production design (set, props, costumes, and music) of Bard's production remained, if not identical, as close as possible to the original Stratford interpretation (Fig 2.8, Fig 2.10, and Fig 2.11). However, there were significant deviations in certain elements of design (set and props), acting and accent usage. The set design and prop changes that did appear in Bard's *Shrew* were often the result of specific festival choices: location, cast size or repertoire practices.

After producing Stratford's 2003 westernized *Shrew*, Potter was approached by Bard director Christopher Gaze and invited to remount the production in Vancouver. As Potter recalled, Gaze gave him a "great compliment. He . . . said, 'It's going to be . . . hard for me to see this play envisioned any other way.' He just thought that I had nailed what he wanted to say about the play" ("Potter Interview"). Gaze was specific that he wanted Potter's original

. . . I was thinking a bit more rigidly towards my approach to Shakespeare but now being around [the Bard cast] and seeing how they handle it . . . the dynamic and the energy between people, they just let whatever's there happen and then they go with it and . . . amazing moment[s] happens" ("Voth Interview").

vision, the Stratford embodiment of a Spaghetti Western, on the Bard stage: “[H]e didn’t say I want you to do *Taming of the Shrew*. Do what you want . He . . . said. I want you to do that [Shrew] (laughs) . . . I’m always happy to remount something that I . . . love” (“Potter Interview”). Thus, Potter worked from his Spaghetti Western framework to reproduce the Stratford vision with the Bard cast. He encouraged the cast to bring their own ideas and concepts to the production. As Potter recalled, “when we started rehearsing in Bard [I said] . . . I want all your input but we’re just going to work with the same framework. This is the period. This is what we’re doing. . . . [D]ifferent design[s] and different costumes” (“Potter Interview”). Despite a collaborative environment with Bard members, Potter’s production presented the same Western style. However, Potter observed that differences occurred in acting: *Shrew* “was able to translate to another place without people [saying] ‘we’re . . . doing the same thing’. Bob and Colleen Wheeler . . . got to create their own versions of Katherine and Petruchio” (“Potter Interview”). A closer look at the festival’s production design and acting will reveal how Bard’s *Shrew* differed from Potter’s original Stratford vision.

Specific design changes were necessary in order to mount Potter’s vision in the Bard Mainstage tent. While the Stratford production came with a large cast, Bard had a limited cast size and a smaller stage. Potter noted that Stratford expected its directors to put as many actors on stage as possible: “you . . . are encouraged to use a lot of people because it’s a big company” (“Potter Interview”). Multiple small chorus roles are easily filled at Stratford as the company boasts over 100 members.⁹⁴ In comparison, Bard relies on fewer actors playing multiple roles. A smaller cast forced Potter to re-evaluate his production and come to the

⁹⁴ The 2015 season had 103 members (Stratford, “2015 Season” 56-7).

textual epiphany that Shakespeare had included duplicate characters. Potter's textual analysis, urged by the need to cut dialogue and secondary characters, revealed that Shakespeare wrote multiple fool characters in *Shrew* (Grumio, Biondello, etc). As Potter observed in an interview, "It's as if Shakespeare had too many clowns and he had to keep them busy . . . There's Petruchio and his sidekick and his servant and another servant and Biondello . . . [I cut a character] and it was never missed" ("Potter Interview"). Realizing that Shakespeare scripted *Shrew* to permit minor character cuts and edits due to the fluctuating, fluid nature of Early Modern casts, Potter felt comfortable altering his script to reflect a succinct storyline with only one fool: Grumio. For Bard, Potter removed the role of Biondello and trimmed the script to his liking: "I made more cuts when I took it [to Bard]. . . . I always find that with a play I . . . wish I had cut more at the end" ("Potter Interview"). Potter estimated that the removal of Biondello saved him "ten [to] fifteen minutes out of the play" ("Potter Interview"). For Potter, Bard offered a second chance to return to the Western *Shrew* and trim the production down to a smoother, more focused theatrical vehicle.

Along with cut lines and characters, Marc Desormeaux's score was also altered to fit the Bard production cues and time limits. Potter felt that the sound motifs of Italian composer Ennio Morricone were imperative to the *Shrew* soundscape and, thus, Stratford's compositions were copied for the Bard production. However, the music was altered to fit Bard's needs and present a fluid production.⁹⁵ Sound effects and cues remained relatively the same as those in the Stratford production.

⁹⁵ For example, music between scene transitions was shortened to permit quick scene changes and to ensure the score worked with the timing of Bard's show.

With the set design, Bard had a unique situation: an open back tent, and a design that needed to work for two separate productions. In the 2007 season the BMO Mainstage hosted both *Shrew* and a modern *Romeo and Juliet* (Fig 2.7 and 2.8).⁹⁶ As Bard's stage remains unaltered between productions, the set design by Kevin McAllister needed to work for both an 1880's Wild West location and a modern Verona, Italy.⁹⁷ The use of classic architecture, arches and columns, allowed the space to double as a Mexican style hacienda and town square, or as an Italian city and estate. The brown and tan earth tones of the stage floor and larger set pieces presented a desert and dirt feel for *Shrew* while also creating an ancient, marble design for the *Romeo and Juliet* set. McAllister's design focused on simplicity and versatility, permitting *Shrew*'s location to change with the use of a laundry line or a welcome sign. Along with a minimal, dual purpose set design the open back tent also posed specific issues for lighting. Depending upon the time of performance, whether a matinee at 2:00 P.M. or an evening show at 8:00 P.M., the production lighting needs differed. In the matinee performances, night scenes of Petruchio returning with Katherine were physically impossible to present with location appropriate lighting. The whole production was presented in the early and late afternoon sunlight. Thus, all scenes were naturally lit which detracted from the ambiances and evening setting of some scenes. In comparison, the Stratford lighting designer had complete control of setting as *Shrew* was presented indoors in the Festival Theatre. Scene specific settings from dim lighting to bright daytime were easily depicted for the

⁹⁶ Please note that for all images from Bard on the Beach's production of *Shrew* credit is given as follows: *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2007. Director: Miles Potter. Photographer: David Blue. Photo Source: University of Victoria, Internet Shakespeare Editions.

⁹⁷ At the Stratford Festival sets are changed between productions with each play given its own unique design.

audience. With Bard, the production was limited in terms of light design for the matinee, with the evening production requiring a new light set up.



Figure 2.7 City of Verona Opening Scene (1.1). Bard on the Beach, *Romeo and Juliet* 2007. Bard Cast.



Figure 2.8 Church Scene (3.2). Bard on the Beach, *Taming of the Shrew* 2007. Bard Cast

Compared to Bard, Stratford used more props and set pieces to create their world. The saloon of Stratford had swinging bar doors, multiple tables, chairs, a piano and a full bar for the bartender. In contrast, Bard's set up was simple, using only the essential props (one table, two chairs, and bottles of whisky) (Fig 2.9).



Figure 2.9 Bard. The Saloon Scene (1.2) with Simple Props. Bard Cast.

The use of limited props was partially due to the cast size (one needs enough people to bring tables on stage and remove them between scenes).⁹⁸ The prop numbers could also be the result of the Bard's prop access and storeroom.⁹⁹ Unlike Stratford, which has an expansive props and costume warehouse, Bard doesn't have access to excessive storage facilities. Thus, housing copious items is a challenge. Traditionally, Bard has presented a clean, Elizabethan style stage with limited props, choosing to rely on key pieces, sound effects and acting to set the scene. While the sets and props present simple and insignificant changes to Bard's *Shrew*, the actors' character interpretations provide more compelling alterations for consideration.

2.5 Character Representation and Acting:

In comparing the actor representation of Katherine in both Stratford and Bard's *Shrews*, the original 2003 Stratford production presented a more physically violent Katherine. Stratford's Katherine was aggressive towards all the characters within the play, willingly punching, ripping, and clawing her way through the production. In contrast,

⁹⁸ At Bard on the Beach members of the cast often bring on props and small set pieces between scene changes.

⁹⁹ In summer 2012, Bard rented space at SFU Woodward's for a costume and props room ("2012 Bard Costumes"). As of 2013 Bard uses a warehouse in East Vancouver to store props and costumes. The separate Playhouse Theatre Collection of props and costumes, which was acquired by Bard in 2013, is housed in another warehouse and made available to local theatre groups by Bard (Bard on the Beach, "Future Assured").



Figure 2.10 Stratford. Back Row (l-r): Kyle Blair as Lucentio, Brad Rudy as Gremio and Paul Dunn as Biondello. Middle Row (l-r): Donald Carrier as Hortensio, Deborah Hay as Bianca, Seana McKenna as Katherina and Wayne Best as Grumio. Front Row (l-r): Lally Cadeau as the Widow, Jonathan Goad as Tranio, Paul Soles as Baptista Minola and Graham Abbey as Petruchio.



Figure 2.11 Bard. Bob Frazer as Petruchio and Colleen Wheeler as Katherina in *Shrew*.

Bard's Katherine was mainly violent towards Petruchio when she felt threatened, and she frequently resorted to verbal intimidation or scare tactics when dealing with other characters.

In the opening country dance scene of the Stratford production Katherine's violent tendencies were displayed as she struck Gremio and a second unnamed character with

Gremio's own walking stick. Katherine's attack caused Gremio to fall over and the second character to run for safety. She then proceeded to beat Gremio with his stick, causing him to fall off the centre stage balcony and onto the main stage below. In comparison, the Bard version had Katherine enter and chase away the waltzing couples with simply a glare. Katherine then walked up to Bianca, tapped her on the shoulder, an act that startled Bianca and resulted in the younger sister running off stage in fear. Clearly, Bard's Katherine was threatening, yet not excessively violent.

While Wheeler balanced verbal and physical threat, McKenna's Katherine relied heavily upon physical action. For her official entrance in act one scene one of the Stratford production, McKenna was forcibly carried on stage by two male characters. She struggled and clearly did not want to be brought to her father. At the end of the scene when two cowboys blocked Katherine's exit, she punched them in the stomach, ensuring her escape. In comparison, Bard's Katherine (Wheeler) walked on stage of her own accord along with other characters in act one scene one (Bianca, Baptista, and the suitors). She was not forcibly brought on stage. Similarly, her exit while expressing anger relied upon scare tactics instead of violence. Wheeler's exit line "what to take and what to leave?" was accented with a shout of "Ha!" directed towards the two suitors who jumped in fear before she stormed offstage (1.1.103-4).

The differences between Stratford's and Bard's acting choices are further displayed through Katherine's aggressive interactions with her manipulative sister Bianca. In her first scene with Bianca, McKenna's Katherine mocked her sister by mimicking Bianca behind her back and echoing her lines "my books and instruments shall be my company, / On them to

look and practice” (1.1. 82-3). Hay’s Bianca was made so irate by Katherine’s teasing that she shouted out “by myself” (her final line) before storming off stage (1.1.83). In contrast, Bard actress Naomi Wright presented Bianca as a gentler, spoiled sister who cried and pouted. On the line “Bianca, get you in,” Wright burst into tears before Baptista produced a handkerchief and assisted her with blowing her nose (1.1.75). Bianca’s request to humbly take her leave which started with a bow to Baptista and the promise to “look and practice by myself” was added before she turned away in tears (1.1.83). The only hint at Bianca’s self-centred nature was a small temper tantrum offered at Baptista’s line, “Go in Bianca!” (1.1.91).

In the Stratford interrogation scene with Bianca, Katherine restrained her sister using the laundry (symbolic of obedience and domestic duty) she was supposed to hang and then fold (Fig 2.4). She then proceeded to spank Bianca with the rug beater, eliciting screams from Hay, which alerted Baptista to his daughter’s abuse. The scene occurred with Bianca in bloomers, a lace detailed camisole, and heels as she attempted to move and escape while tied up to a wooden bench. The Stratford costume choice placed Bianca in a limited and vulnerable position, presenting Katherine in an increasingly negative light. In contrast, the Bard interrogation scene occurred with a fully dressed Bianca who, while upset about her situation, did not appear panicked. The Bianca of Bard did not scream when she was spanked with a rug beater, but gasped in surprise at her sister’s actions (Fig 2.18). The overall scene seemed less violent, with Bianca’s subdued response implying that Wheeler’s Katherine was less physically aggressive than McKenna’s.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Wheeler’s acting choice for Kate involved a cowboy-like gait or strut that made her physically more intimidating and appear larger on stage. In contrast, McKenna relied upon physical attacks, a scrappy nature,

Katherine's use of verbal threats, a raised voice, and angry looks was carried into the wooing scene. Unlike the Stratford production, which involved more physical stunts, the first half of Bard's wooing scene involved only verbal arguments. Wheeler's reaction to Petruchio's wooing was a mix of mocked surprise and disdain. She glanced at him with suspicion during his introduction and her only response to his compliment was to raise an eyebrow in disbelief. She attempted to exit the stage after the line, "They call me Katherine that do talk of me," and only turned to address Petruchio when her honesty was questioned: "You lie, in faith" (2.1.183). Wheeler's delivery of the line "remove you hence" placed significant stress upon the word "hence" when she yelled at Petruchio (2.1.193). The conversation was deliberate and threatening yet there was no physical violence. Petruchio's line "come sit on me" was delivered as he sat in a relaxed posture on a wooden bench (2.1.197). Katherine's response was to walk slowly down the centre stage steps and remain standing in front of Petruchio before responding. Wheeler did yell her line "takes a buzzard" but regained her composure and attempted to leave on "If you talk of tales and so farewell" (2.1.204, 212). Again, her exit from the stage was only halted by Petruchio's rude or threatening phrases, as he responded "with my tongue in your tail" (2.1.213). In fact, Wheeler's Katherine was stationary during most of the wooing scene, moving only in an attempt to leave. Her escape was prevented by Petruchio grabbing her arm, their first moment of physical contact, and an act which provoked Katherine's violence as a method of escape.

and even bellowing some of her lines to intimidate others. McKenna's Katherine even yelled at Baptista during the wedding scene. The Stratford production added the additional word "now" for Baptista to interrupt Kate before she chastised him in an irate and vicious manner (3.3.87).

Katherine. What hast thou to do?
Baptista. Now—
Katherine. FATHER be quiet! (3.3.87-88)

Katherine attempted to punch Petruchio, then upon being confined in a bear hug, she struggled to escape during Petruchio’s compliment of “I find you passing gentle” (2.1.235). The remaining choreography echoed elements of the Stratford fight scene between Graham Abbey and Seana McKenna. Katherine stomped her feet, elbowed, and choked Petruchio all in a desperate attempt to get away from him (Fig 2.12 and Fig 2.13). As with Stratford’s production, Bard also had Katherine pull a gun on Petruchio, attempt to strangle him, and throw a laundry basket on his head. While the wooing scene started out in a milder manner than the Stratford vision, Bard ended on the same note with both Frazer and Wheeler limping away injured. Thus, Wheeler relied upon an internalized anger and verbal threats coupled with limited physical aggression to express Katherine’s character, while McKenna utilized violence as an integral part of Katherine’s constitution.



Figure 2.12 Stratford Festival. The Wooing Scene. Seana McKenna as Katherine and Graham Abbey as Petruchio.



Figure 2.13 Bard. The Wooing Scene. Colleen Wheeler as Katherine and Bob Frazer as Petruchio.

In contrast to Wheeler’s acting choices, which differed from McKenna’s, Frazer’s interpretation of Petruchio remained strikingly similar to Abbey’s original design. The main

change to Frazer’s Petruchio occurred with the violence in the wooing scene. Petruchio and Katherine did not engage in any physical combat until Petruchio restrained her at the line “you scape not so” (2.1.233). Frazer’s Petruchio was slightly less violent than Abbey’s on account of the altered choreography/violence in the wooing scene. Another small change was Frazer’s response to old Antonio’s death. When informing Hortensio of the fatality, Frazer removed his hat and placed it over his heart. While the background hanging gestures by Grumio added comedy to the scene, Frazer’s reaction could be viewed as either a tongue-in-cheek response to the death or as a small act of respect.



Figure 2.14 Bard. Bob Frazer as Petruchio in *Shrew*.



Figure 2.15 Stratford. Graham Abbey as Petruchio in *Shrew*



Figure 2.16 Bard. Bob Frazer as Petruccio and Colleen Wheeler as Katherina .



Figure 2.17 Stratford. Back row (l-r): Deborah Hay as Bianca, Kyle Blair as Lucentio, Brad Rudy as Gremio and Paul Dunn as Biondello. Middle row: Donald Carrier as Hortensio. Front row (l-r): Lally Cadeau as the Widow, Jonathan Goad as Tranio, Paul Soles as Baptista Minola, Seana McKenna as Katherina, Graham Abbey as Petruccio, and Wayne Best as Grumio

Another area of change in Stratford's and Bard's actor interpretation more generally was the use of humorous accents and character quirks. Bard toned down the campy, comedic gestures in *Shrew* and worked with situation based comedy and character humour to enthrall the audience. The strongest example of Bard's and Stratford's differing approaches is the representation of Grumio, Petruccio's manservant. Styling his character after Walter Brennan, Stratford actor Wayne Best traversed the stage with a bowlegged gate and interrupted his dialogue to spit every few moments. While these quirks were comedic at first, they soon become repetitious and distracting, drawing audience attention away from the dialogue (Ouzounian, "Pistol-packing," par.14). For Hoile, misplaced accents made the dialogue difficult to understand and tedious for the audience: "[Y]ou can hardly understand a

word . . . Wayne Best [says]. Walter Brennan you could understand--not Best's imitation which, in any case, soon grows tiresome” (“Review 2003,” par. 6). Shaltz also commented that the eccentricities of Grumio distracted from the production and the main characters: “When Petruchio and Kate finally kiss . . . Grumio [is] a lizard-like distraction right next to them, tongue flicking and eyes bulging” (“The Taming,” par. 11). For Shaltz, Best’s physical comedy was better presented in limited doses: “Grumio, a bow-legged, tobacco-spitting Walter Brennan-type. . . would be amusing if kept minimal” (“The Taming,” par. 6). Taylor of *The Globe and Mail* noted, Best’s portrayal of Grumio was a “tedious bit of hamming [by a] . . . bowleg[ged hayseed] who spits a lot” (“Lusty Shrew,” par. 2).¹⁰¹

In the Bard’s production, the re-invented character of Grumio (Derek Metz) limited his physical comedy to fewer, specific instances and removed the spitting gag altogether. Instead of expectorating after every sentence for comedic effect, Metz played up Grumio’s linguistic ineptitude leading to humorous moments of mispronunciation or tongue twisters (1.2.17). One such moment occurred in act one scene two when Grumio repeated Petruchio’s speech, to the annoyance of Petruchio, and ended up stumbling over the long and unknown names “Florentius” and “Socrates’ Xanthippe” (1.2.70-71). In Bard’s production the two servant roles in Tranio and Grumio were portrayed with authenticity and clear comedic timing: “Scholar (Tranio) commands a fine feel for the comedic subtleties of not only a strong accent but the attendant arrogant attitude as well” and a “knee-slapping [Grumio] does . . . [not] descend into idiotic caricature” (Birnie par. 4). While Taylor of *The Globe and Mail*

¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that while Taylor from *The Globe and Mail* condemned Best’s interpretation of Grumio, fellow *Post* theatre critic Robert Cushman was one of the few to praise Best’s comic performance claiming, “Wayne Best successfully reinvents Grumio as a bowlegged cowpoke’s sidekick, as Gabby Hayes”. Cushman did admit that *Shrew*’s gags often fall short and the humour is routine.

criticized Stratford's Grumio, Harris who reviewed Bard's *Shrew* in 2007 had only glowing things to note about the production.

Bard's reduction of camp and forced physical comedy was carried through the whole production. The accents were controlled, clear, and used minimally for character development or comedic purpose, as was displayed by Gaze's appropriate and character driven Spanish accent for the Man from Mantua (Birnie). Even the elements of Katherine's physical aggression were mirrored, or perhaps balanced, with her verbal anger. While the Western motif and the costume designs in Stratford and Bard's *Shrews* were similar, Bard's different acting choices result in a humorous, less slapstick production (Fig 2.14 and Fig 2.15; Fig 2.16 and 2.17; Fig 2.18 and Fig.2.5). By refusing to take itself too seriously and not chasing after multiple comedic gags, Bard's *Shrew* provided moments of comic genius. The stereotypes that were embraced, like a strong Spanish accent and sombrero for Gaze's 'Man from Mantua', worked with the production's humour and added to the comedic flow instead of distracting or drawing away from the plot as Stratford's spitting Grumio did.



Figure 2.18 Bard. Naomi Wright as Bianca, Duncan Fraser as Baptista and Colleen Wheeler as Katherine.



Figure 2.19 Stratford. Graham Abbey as Petruchio and Wayne Best as Grumio.

2.6 Conclusion

By presenting Shakespeare's *Shrew* as a Spaghetti Western, director Miles Potter provided an ideal setting for a play fraught with tense sexual politics. A difficult production to sell to all modern audiences as it is often tagged as anti-feminist or misogynistic, Shakespeare's text flourished in the Western setting.¹⁰² Potter was able to challenge many of the Spaghetti Western stereotypes by presenting Petruchio, the lone hero, as a gregarious, articulate individual, and permitting Katherine, the female heroine, both verbal and physical strength. While both productions succeeded in making use of select elements of the Spaghetti Western, only to reinvent them, the critics' reviews differed drastically from Bard to Stratford.

If one accepts that the productions are largely similar (in elements of concepts and stylized design), then the differing reviews can be attributed to expectations tied to each festival. One could solve the problem by arguing that Stratford and Bard present disparate festival experiences, resulting in different patron expectation and, by extension, reception. The differing expectations reflect Canadian theatre as a realm that is malleable, diverse and multifaceted, permitting multiple interpretations of similar productions. The Bard festival,

¹⁰² *Shrew* has a history of eliciting strong negative audience response and the desire of critics to "fix" the gender problems. As Lynda Boose notes in "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds," *Shrew* has a reception history of audience uncertainty, for "from the play's inception its sexual politics have inspired controversy" (179): "The critical history of *Shrew* reflects a tradition in which . . . revisionism has become a kind of orthodoxy. For . . . directors, players, audiences and literary critics of both sexes . . . [wish] to save Kate from her abjection or Petruchio from the embarrassment of having coerced it" (181). According to Tarloff of *The New York Times*, "Since the advent of second-wave feminism in the 70's, though, a sort of odium has come to surround the play. Regardless of its ribald atmosphere and ostensible high spirits, it incontestably portrays a woman subjected to a variety of tortures practiced more recently by the K.G.B. -- incarceration, enforced starvation, sleeplessness -- and thereby browbeaten and brainwashed into submission; and implicitly invites us to approve of the process and to find its outcome amusing" (par. 2). Potter himself observed in an interview with *The Georgia Straight*, "The play is famous for having people hiss or boo during its final scene, and I think that's great . . . Theatre can have such a lack of effect in the world that sometimes you kind of wonder why you're doing it. So to do something that can actually arouse passions in people? I love it" (Varty). Despite the play's apparent chauvinistic curse, Cushman of *The National Post* argues that "*Shrew* has an unusually consistent history of being damnably entertaining" ("Stratford's year").

due to location (sea, sky and mountains) and building (open back tent with wooden walkways), cultivates a beach, summer mentality with the relaxed atmosphere of the ocean. Thus, audience members and reviewers may be open to alternative, non-traditional Shakespeare productions. In comparison, according to Potter and Taylor, Stratford's reviewers and patrons are less accepting of artistic experimentation and desire a traditional approach to classic texts. They protest the destruction of Shakespeare's "classics," cling to their "self-importance," and insist on an "overall concept [and] . . . unifying sensibility" (Taylor "Theatrical" 339). One could argue that audience and critic expectations colour the production experience, permitting Bard a more open-minded and forgiving audience that appreciates a wide range of approaches to producing Shakespeare, while Stratford establishes a set expectation of classically focused Shakespeare void of antics, campy humour and eccentricities.

An alternative explanation of different critical responses to the two productions of Shakespeare's comedy is to view the differences between the *Shrews* as vital to each production, while attributing the opposing critical reviews to these changes. By accepting this explanation, one would argue for the significant differences in design, acting, and limited camp/accent usage discussed above. In prioritizing the differences over the similarities, one could state that Stratford and Bard presented two significantly dissimilar productions. The differences in production could also be linked to the multifaceted approaches of Canadian identity that can be expressed on stage through production design choices.

Taking into account both studies (similarities and differences in the two productions) of *Shrew*, we can see that both explanatory approaches are reasonable and valid. This

complex explanatory approach in interpreting the production and reception of Shakespearean drama in Canada will continue to make itself felt throughout the forthcoming chapters, reflecting the malleable and multifaceted manifestation of Canadian identity in the theatre. In the following chapter studies of Bard's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Stratford's *Henry V* and *Harlem Duet*, we will see how each festival's treatment of Shakespeare and patron response has encouraged festival diversity and artistic growth in a Canadian context. This chapter's examination of the differences between Bard and Stratford, and how these differences affect festival productions and receptions, raises the question of how festival identity might be vital in the forthcoming chapters. The following chapters will provide an analysis of Canadian imagery or national identity as presented on the stage through a production's specific vision, revealing how Stratford and Bard engage with and interpret Canadian imagery and symbolism for a global audience. Whether through costume design (*Henry V*), props and nostalgia (*Wives*), or production choice and casting (*Harlem Duet*), one sees how Canadian imagery is interpreted, presented and interrogated on stage, reflecting the multifaceted aspects of and opinions towards Canadian identity.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ By the phrase "production choice" I mean the production selected for the Stratford season. By choosing to produce *Harlem Duet* Stratford was making a statement about Canadian identity and current Canadian culture.

Chapter 3 Bard on the Beach's *Merry Wives of Windsor*: Nostalgia, Humour and Canadian Identity

In her introduction to *Staging Nationalism: Essays on Theatre and National Identity* Kiki Gounaridou argues that cultural memory is a vital contributor to modern national identity. For Gounaridou, any nation concerned with “reconnect[ing] with a sense of national identity” will turn to nostalgic high points in its history for an inspired or re-imagined cultural narrative (1). Nostalgic re-imaginings of past events found in cultural celebrations, specifically theatre productions, help to give shape to national identity (Gounaridou 1).¹⁰⁴ Likewise, in *Theatre and Nation*, Nadine Holdsworth describes theatre as a nation-building aspect of culture, noting that the theatre is “intrinsically connected to the nation because it enhances ‘nation’ life by providing a space for shared civil discourse, entertainment, creativity, pleasure and intellectual stimulation” (6). Holdsworth further argues that theatre “explore[s] national histories, behaviours, events and preoccupations in a creative, communal realm that opens up potential for reflection and debate” (6). Theatre’s ability to present, question, and encourage discussions about national identity is unique to its art form; by working in a fictional realm the theatre is able to examine an existing nation through audience interaction with art and the self. Bard’s 2012 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* provided an excellent example of Gounaridou’s and Holdsworth’s concepts, utilizing cultural memory and nostalgic references to engage with Canadian identity on the Bard stage.

¹⁰⁴ Gounaridou warns that reinterpretations of the past often lack accuracy: a “neo-classical” re-interpretation of one’s national identity is often limited, stereotypical, or one-dimensional, for while “cultural ‘neo-classicism’ seeks to create an overall feeling of . . . national identity, rarely is the classical culture presented in all its complexities” (Gounaridou 1).¹⁰⁴ Despite possible lapses in cultural representation, theatre still provides a medium in which to construct, question and examine past and current concepts of national identity.

In Bard's production of *Wives* director Johnna Wright utilized 1960's nostalgia and cultural themes to examine the social structure of small Canadian towns, defining Canadian identity as expressed by an accepting, multicultural, pluralistic community that values collective unity and national identity. Through nostalgia, costume design, language, props, music and humour, *Wives* presented the eclectic elements of Canadian national identity, allowing audience members to compare current Canadian culture and community structure with Canada of the 1960s past. Bard also utilized cultural themes to dissect Canadian identity and the effect British and American influences have on pluralism in Canadian culture. *Wives'* examination of Canadian stereotypes, American pop-culture, Canadian humour, and nostalgic community representation revealed the pluralistic and heteroglossic elements of Canadian identity on the West Coast stage.¹⁰⁵

Bard's willingness to play with Shakespeare, add modern elements, splice the text with recognizable past pop-culture songs, and integrate items of Canadiana created a sense of community for the patrons which was rewarded with audience delight and artistic community approval. By re-imagining the setting and selecting a novel production design, *Wives'* director Wright engaged the audience's curiosity and kept the material fresh. In an interview with Urban Rush: Shaw TV, Gaze cited *Wives* as an ideal example of the festival modernizing Shakespeare and "shak[ing] things up" ("Christopher Gaze Artistic Director"). Moving *Wives'* setting from 1500s England to 1968 Windsor Ontario, Bard abandoned the

¹⁰⁵ Heteroglossic as defined by Bakhtin. According to the *Oxford Literary Dictionary* heteroglossia is defined as "[t]he existence of conflicting discourses within any field of linguistic activity, such as a national language, a novel, or a specific conversation . . . In Bakhtin's works, this term addresses linguistic variety as an aspect of social conflict, as in tensions between central and marginal uses of the same national language; these may be echoed in, for example, the difference between the narrative voice and the voices of the characters in a novel. Adjectives: heteroglot, heteroglossic" (Baldick 153).

traditionalist perspective, which according to Gaze some audience members still adhere to, and left the Elizabethan collars in the costume wardrobe. Dressed in A-line skirts, leather jackets, and tweed suits the actors of Bard invited the audience into a world of 1960s Canadianized utopia. The idealized, nostalgic setting welcomed the audience by evoking a sense of familiarity and association. Once the audience was settled in the comfort of nostalgic normalcy, Bard could present its own concepts of national identity, belonging, and community.

As Wright observed in the Bard program, “the play is built around an idea of community” and the production probed Canadian society by comically examining and interrogating the fictional Windsor community and, by extension, the audience (“Director’s Notes” 31).¹⁰⁶ As a reflection of small-town Canada, *Wives* dealt with “The many ‘outsiders’ – which include Falstaff – [who] are an integral part of that community and are lovingly mocked along with those born and raised there” (31). In a comedy of classes and communities, small-town Windsor provided many colourful characters to ridicule while Bard slyly held up the mirror to the laughing audience and whispered “see yourself there”? Wright herself noted in a private interview that if theatre is to be effective and “connect with [an] audience[,] [the production] must . . . reflect the diversity of the culture in which it’s produced” (“Wright Interview”). Wright is aware that Shakespeare’s comedy is a Horatian, or gentle, satire of society, and she extends the gentle mockery, noting that “no one is

¹⁰⁶ Aware of the limitations of Canadian culture and the loopholes that permit individuals to either disappear through the cracks or become the perpetual outsider, Wright used humour to gently mock Canadian culture and evoke reflections on national identity.

exempt, yet in the end, everyone is accepted” (“Director’s Notes” 31).¹⁰⁷ Her statement is the idealistic perspective of Canadian community, that everyone has a place in the welcoming, friendly country of Canada. Wright is aware of the holes in her utopian perspective, noting that “the idea of a community drawn together by its very diversity is immensely appealing, and reflects, if not the reality of Canadian culture, at least the way I think we’d like it to be” (31). While *Wives* reflected an idealized 1960s, the production still aimed to engage with the audience through a comedic lens: “we presented a community that, for the most part, enjoyed racial and cultural harmony . . . we were . . . exploring one of the happier versions of a remembered era” (“Wright Interview”).

Holdsworth believes that theatre engages with concepts of nationalism and identity to initiate a conversation about moments of crisis and uncertainty. She argues that theatre of a nation “often deploys its content, formal properties and aesthetic pleasure to generate a creative dialogue with tensions in the national fabric” (6-7). As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, theatre communities have continually questioned and negotiated Canadian identity in relation to the larger theatrical public sphere. By examining the citizens’ concerns, the American influences, and the eclectic Canadian identity found within a small town, *Wives* revealed the importance of community and national awareness in a multicultural, pluralistic Canada. *Wives* determined what a microcosmic slice of Canada can reveal about the macrocosm of a country fighting for identity in a world of American and British cultural influences. How does Canada negotiate its own identity within an international framework?

¹⁰⁷ Wright’s gentle mockery was meant to elicit joy through self-deprecating humour and potentially encourage a post show discussion of Canadian culture. As Gaze observed, Shakespeare encourages a new awareness of the self where “people [gain an] insight into who [they] are” (“Christopher Gaze Artistic Director”).

Interestingly enough, through nostalgia and humour. Small communities are often the basis for nostalgic remembrances and idealistic settings, as well as the subject of Canadian comedy and self-deprecating humour. According to Margaret Atwood and Gerald Noonan, both Canadian comedy and nostalgia are connected as vital elements in Canada's awareness of identity and the country's negotiation of an independent global voice. (Atwood qtd. in Andrews para. 11; Noonan 916, 918) In *Wives* nostalgia was used to connect Canada of the 1960s with concepts of an ideal community, strength in unity, and Canadian identity as negotiated between American culture and global influences.

3.1 Nostalgia and the Concept of Canadian Community

Nostalgia, as a word and concept, has invaded current culture and become a part of both "popular and academic discourse" in the last half of the century (Sprengler 11). Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as an "acute longing for familiar surroundings, esp. regarded as a medical condition; homesickness," this specific definition of the term was coined by medical student Johannes Hofer in 1668 ("nostalgia, n."; Illbruck 5). In his 1688 *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia* Hofer united the Greek words *nostos*, "return to the native land", and *algos*, "signifies suffering or grief" to provide a scientific name for the vernacular terms *das Heimweh*, and *la Maladie du Pays* (qtd. in Illbruck 11, 5). Hofer attributed nostalgia to an "afflicted imagination" with symptoms including: "disturbed sleep . . . decrease of strength, hunger, thirst sense diminished, and care or even palpitations of the heart, frequent sighs, also stupidity of the mind" (qtd. in Sprengler 12).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Hofer was not the first individual to observe the symptoms associated with displacement as a result of war or enlistment; however, he was the first to give the medical condition a name and the following definition: "a condition rooted in antiquity with the potential to explain both personal and collective responses to wars,

With the expansion of medical and scientific knowledge, nostalgia's definition was changed from a medical condition with biological symptoms to an intellectual and emotional response to "absence from an idyllic and esteemed homeland" (14). Endowed with a strong ideological connection to the nation state, the term was eagerly adopted by countries that desired to utilize its political potential.¹⁰⁹ By the nineteenth century, industrial capitalism and its temporal obsession filtered into the concept of nostalgia, expanding the term to include a desire to save or experience the collective and personal, even one's childhood memories (15-16). Nostalgia became an attempt to reclaim a past that was idealized in the mind of the pursuer.

Within theatre, the ability to induce nostalgia through costumes, sets, props, music and design has often been valued as a laudable asset (23, 25). Reviews as early as 1931 (*Wall Street Journal*) praised productions like *Camille* for being "tinged with nostalgia" (qtd. in Sprengler 23). Visual cues and music credited with evoking nostalgia and sentiment were valued in the theatre from the early 1930s onward. While the general consensus on the worth and importance of sentiment and nostalgia in the arts has wavered over the years, it is undeniable that visual and auditory cues are strongly associated with invoking positive memories.¹¹⁰ Current research has discovered that nostalgic emotions can be triggered by a "familiar smell, sound, or keepsake, by engaging in conversation, or by feeling lonely" ("What Nostalgia Is" para. 1).

political upheavals, social transformations and mass migrations of the eighteenth through to the twenty-first century" (12).

¹⁰⁹ Linguistically specific terms were coined, including *Heimweh* (German), *mal de Corazon* (Galician/Spanish), or *Maladie du Pays* (French) (14).

¹¹⁰ Will Hays commented that films of the 1940s "over[did] the hearts-and-flower [and] revert[ed] to . . . tear-jerking" (qtd. in Sprengler 24).

In recent decades, differing opinions of nostalgia in the academic and medical community have encouraged a “change in attitude towards nostalgia in cultural criticism” (Sprengler 33). Leaving behind previous claims of nostalgia as “falsifying the past . . . fostering disillusionment . . . commodifying history and exploiting emotions for profit,” current academics are re-evaluating the benefits of nostalgia (31).¹¹¹ Research conducted by Dr. Sedikides at the University of Southampton revealed that nostalgic experiences result in increased self-esteem, a close connection between past and present life experiences, clarity of identity, and a positive mood (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” paras. 7, 22, 24; Routledge et al. 638).¹¹² In a *New York Times* interview Dr. Sedikides observed that while nostalgia can be painful it is a tool used to cope with life in its multitude of emotions: “[Nostalgia] . . . [is] a bittersweet emotion — but the net effect is to make life seem more meaningful and death less frightening. When people speak wistfully of the past, they typically become more optimistic and inspired about the future” (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” para. 7). Nostalgia lends itself to the promotion of community and inclusion or unity within a group. As Dr. Routledge states,

¹¹¹ The research and experiments carried out by Dr. Constantine Sedikides and other academics in the social and human sciences department at the University of Southampton have challenged previous concepts of nostalgia and provided positive re-interpretations of it to demonstrate the importance of nostalgia (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” para. 5). Sedikides pioneered research into the psychology of nostalgia after he himself began to exhibit symptoms of nostalgia after moving from North Carolina to Southampton (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” para. 1). Though a colleague misdiagnosed Sedikides as being depressed, Sedikides insisted he was not unwell:

I told him I did live my life forward, but sometimes I couldn’t help thinking about the past, and it was rewarding . . . Nostalgia made me feel that my life had roots and continuity. It made me feel good about myself and my relationships. It provided a texture to my life and gave me strength to move forward. (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” para. 4)

Sedikides insistence that his nostalgia was not harmful led him to research the causes, effects, and purpose of nostalgia in conjunction with other researches worldwide. After a decade of studies, the grant-supported research has yielded unexpected but hopeful results. Sedikides’ discovered that nostalgia has measurable, psychological benefits. Those who practice nostalgic reflection reported “a stronger sense of [belonging], affiliation, or sociality” (“What Nostalgia is” para. 2).

¹¹² Sedikides’ lab studies found that in general recollections of past events, even those that were upsetting, generally ended with feelings of hope (Tierney “Science of Nostalgia.”).

“[nostalgia] brings to mind cherished experiences that assure us we are valued people who have meaningful lives,” and, therefore, are vital to society and our community (Tierney “What is Nostalgia” para. 25).

By engaging in a nostalgic collective theatrical experience, an audience member can self-identify with the national, cultural, or regional past. Audience members attending Bard’s production of a 1960s *Wives* were thus connected with the Canadian history represented on stage and an awareness of their own identity. Sprengler notes that the experiences of nostalgia can “generate an awareness of the relationship between past and present or an awareness of personal and collective desires” (32). It is possible that while watching *Wives* audience members experienced a heightened sense of their own personal and communal connection to a Canada of the past. For Sprengler, nostalgia as associated with memory offers “alternative ways of engaging with the past,” “contribut[ing] to the continuity of individual identity [which has] therapeutic potential” (32).

When nostalgia is linked with a distinct place in North American literature, it often involves a generic “‘small-town America’ construct . . . situated in a specific moment in time as communicated through a series of visual clues” (Sprengler 34). In Bard’s production of *Wives*, nostalgia of the 1960s was presented through a generic, “small-town” Canadian “construct” that borrowed location clues from Canadiana. Before setting foot in the Bard tent, the audience was already prepped for a concentrated dose of “Canadiana” by way of the Bard program. The setting of the play, Windsor, Ontario, was clearly identified in the first line of the play summary: “It’s 1968 in Windsor, Ontario” (Bard “The Story” 29). The summary highlighted Canada’s political placement in the late 1960s and used the adverb

“here” to immediately identify the play’s setting as a Canada under strong British influence: “here in the colonies” (29). The phrase “here in the colonies” identified the reader and the reader’s temporal locations with a pre-1982 Canada, establishing a fictional, collective audience experience of a Canada still strongly associated with the British commonwealth.¹¹³ Character identities and names were also altered to reflect a 1960s Canada: Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page dialogued with Pastor Evans, a laundry cart was substituted for a “buck basket,” Herne’s Oak became the abandoned “Herne’s Oak Curling Club,” and the characters gathered at the “Garter Inn” for open mic night. In the director notes, Wright expressed her enjoyment in “translating Shakespeare’s archetypes” into 1960s equivalents using “lava lamps for lanterns, cardigans [for] cloaks, and [hippies] instead of menacing fairies” (“Director’s Notes” 31).

The production also drew on shared themes from American pop-culture and small-town America. These crossovers in themes and imagery reflected the reality of Canadian identity in a national and global theatrescape. Canadian identity exists in relation to other surrounding identities, most strongly British identity (Canada as part of the commonwealth) and American identity (the neighbour to the South). *Wives*’ use of nostalgic setting and imagery painted an ideal setting of small-town Canada attempting to balance outside cultural influences, immigrant citizens, and national pride. Canadian identity is a continual search for balance as Noonan observes in “Canadian Duality and the Colonization of Humour”:

“Canada is not British and it is not America—but it is partly both and always struggling to be

¹¹³ In 1982 British parliament passed the Canada Act, granting Canada legal autonomy from the British parliamentary system: “Canada’s basic constitutional laws could be legally amended without action by the British Parliament, but it also declared that no British law passed thereafter would apply to Canada” (Heard).

something distinctively other. Hence . . . we find a strange sense of a tightrope walker” in Canadians (913).

Through an analysis of Bard’s nostalgic, idealized view of Windsor one can see Canadian community presented through the filter of an idealized past. One must question if Bard’s setting and production design effectively depict a true representation of Canadian community -- or, if not, what purpose a nostalgic perspective of Ontario serves to a modern audience. In a private interview, director Johnna Wright discussed nostalgia and the importance of a small-town feel to *Wives*, noting that the Windsor of Shakespeare’s time was down-river from the larger, bustling London city (“Wright Interview”). In the late seventeenth century Windsor’s population was estimated at 2,000, a small sized town in comparison to London, which by the 1660s, had 350,000 inhabitants and “dwarfed all other English cities” (Robinson “London”; Lambert “A Brief History”). For Wright and her vision, the sense of community and connection in *Wives* was strongly associated with the small-town feel of Shakespeare’s Windsor. *Wives*, Shakespeare’s only play set in England that focused singularly on common life, provided Shakespeare with the opportunity to present a world he observed and inhabited. As opposed to the opulence of his royal histories and the exotic locales of his comedies, *Wives* presented a miniature study of everyday, small-town England.¹¹⁴ As Wright noted, “the reflection of community is in the text. Shakespeare was talking to his neighbours, friends and fellow Britons about their own lives and social circles—their own community” (“Wright Interview”). If *Wives* of Shakespeare’s time was

¹¹⁴ Just as Jane Austen was credited with presenting a small canvas, a microcosm of everyday life in Regency England, Shakespeare’s *Wives* similarly provides a glimpse into early modern domestic existence.

commenting on the early modern, small-town community, Bard's *Wives* sought to comment on modern, small-town Canada.

Wright specifically selected Windsor as she felt the location and era would aid in presenting a community of unity and connected citizens: "I wanted the play to happen in a time where the people down the street were still a big part of one another's social circles . . . I wanted Falstaff to be entering a . . . tight-knit community" ("Wright Interview"). Wright felt that moving the setting to Canada provided a contemporary appropriation of Shakespeare's themes while also establishing a "sense of oneness" by creating a production in Canada for Canadians ("Wright Interview"). The play is an homage to the strength of small-town communities. Falstaff is unaware that by attempting to manipulate Mistress Ford and Mistress Page into his "East and West Indies," he has affronted the entire town (Shakespeare *Wives* 1.3.61). In his endeavour to "dupe these small-town, Canadian housewives" Falstaff is tricked and made a fool by the whole community ("Wright Interview"). As Wright explains, "Falstaff went [to Windsor] because people wouldn't know of his slightly unsavoury reputation, and . . . would be impressed by his title . . . and experience at Court. He thought he could lord it over these small-town 'bumpkins,' and they turned the tables on him" ("Wright Interview"). Throughout the production, moments of communal unity were presented using two main methods: actor choices and set/prop design. The production was placed in an ideal time of community connection and involvement ("Wright Interview"). The set design was created with a specific focus on small-town gatherings with settings that encouraged public meetings: the local pub, the grounds outside Herne's Oak Curling Club, and the connected front yards of both the Pages and the Fords.

The opening scene of *Wives* welcomed the audience into a safe, celebratory environment through the Pub's open mic night. Presented in a stylized Western theme with the host wearing a Stetson, leather jacket and jeans, the karaoke night embodied a collective community celebration with food, drinks, and entertainment. At the pub the audience was first introduced to Meg Page and Alice Ford, who giddily ran up to the band stage to sing "These Boots are Made for Walking" (Bauslaugh). Gary Bauslaugh, author of *Travels With Shakespeare*, commented on Bard's production of *Wives*, describing Alice Ford and Meg Page as "shy and awkward 50's housewives, with charmingly geeky dance moves [who] . . . sang with increasing gusto" (7). The song choice not only reflected Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page's characters but foreshadowed the false adultery claims against Alice Ford and the tricking of Falstaff. The lyrics of the song seemed directly aimed at Falstaff, warning that the wives would "stomp all over [him]" for his lies and deception (Bauslaugh 7):

You keep saying you've got something for me.

Something you call love, but confess.

You've been messin' where you shouldn't have been a messin'

and now someone else is gettin' all your best.

These boots are made for walking, and that's just what they'll do

one of these days these boots are gonna walk all over you. (Hazlewood)

While the two women appeared extremely conservative in dress and action, their decision to participate in community karaoke night revealed that Meg Page (Katey Wright) and Alice Ford (Amber Lewis) were open-minded, fun-loving wives. Within a warm community scenario, surrounded by family and friends who encourage with clapping and

cheering, they were willing to run on stage and show off their decent singing and dance moves. These were characters who would easily out-master, out-think, and out-trick Falstaff. They function as best friends, practically joined at the hip on entrances and exits, and were connected to a protective, small community. The women also had a strong sense of humour and fun, displayed through their hilarious dance moves, reminiscent of teenage excitement, and their later choice of humorous, musical revenge on Falstaff complete with a “pinky swear promise.”¹¹⁵ Together, Alice Ford and Meg Page had a female friendship to be reckoned with, and their fierce loyalty to each other provided the backdrop to Falstaff’s torment.

While Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford embodied the community ideal of friendship, the host of the garter and his employee Bardolph presented an ideal of community protection. As Falstaff revealed his plan to use Alice Ford and Meg Page to supplement his waning income, the Host and Bardolph listened quietly, silently seeming to agree with Falstaff; however, the moment he exited upstage right, both men displayed vehement displeasure. Unwilling to let an outsider abuse members of the community, the host and Bardolph agreed to inform Mr. Ford and Mr. Page of Falstaff’s intentions. While it may be the mark of a small-town that everyone knows everyone’s business, the involvement by the host and Bardolph was intended to thwart Falstaff’s plans, not spread malicious gossip.¹¹⁶ In *Bard*’s production, it was clear that neither character approved of Falstaff’s plan and both proactively decided to

¹¹⁵ In a meeting scene between Falstaff and Meg Ford, Mrs. Ford pretends to apologize for any misunderstanding through a hilariously overly-acted version of Patsy Cline’s *Crazy*: “Amber Lewis was a hoot . . . pretending to make up to Falstaff” as she lounged across furniture, pushed Falstaff into a chair, and flirted mercilessly (Bauslaugh).

¹¹⁶ Unlike small-town character Rachel Lynde who is described in *Anne of Green Gables* as a “meddlesome old gossip,” the host and Bardolff are small-town aides? and enablers who protect the town unity and its citizens (Montgomery 99).

help prevent the deception. Thus the Garter Pub, the heart of the Windsor community, was manned by a host who acted as community facilitator, informant and protector.

The pub also provided a gathering place for citizens to gossip and connect, while new characters are presented to the audience. It was in the Garter that Sir Hugh, Slender, and Shallow discussed Anne Page's dowry and the prospect of marriage. It was also in the pub that Anne and Slender had their first awkward conversation where Slender failed to woo her. With the majority of the play's action taking place in the Garter Pub (excluding Herne's Oak, and the Ford domestic scenes), it is clear that the gastro gathering place lay at the heart of the community.

Similar set designs that evoked both community connection and elements of nostalgia included Ford's front yard complete with a white picket fence and the Herne's Oak Curling Club sign. The Pages' white picket fence was carried on stage for act two scene one, indicating the borderline for an imaginary sidewalk and road. The picket fence is strongly associated with idealistic images of domestic life, societal expectations, and the boundaries of social acceptance (Dancyger and Rush 42). The scene opened as a Canada Post mail carrier arrived with Page's letter. The act of mail being delivered by hand reminded us of a past time when both mail and milk were delivered to the door by a worker known on a first name basis in the neighbourhood. This nostalgic association of past jobs, an image of innocent times and community connection, was evoked through the use of a Canada Post uniform (Fig 3.1).

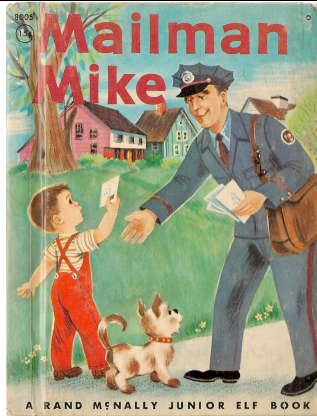


Figure 3.1 Elf Books Vintage Children’s Book. © United Trademark Holdings Inc



Figure 3.2 *Leave it to Beaver* Family Home 485 Maple © Universal Studios Home Entertainment. All rights reserved

The conversation between Meg Page and Alice Ford in act two scene one about Falstaff’s love letters was carried out over the white picket fence with the stage directions presenting both the traditional, ideal domestic life, and also the stereotype of neighbours gossiping over the backyard fence. The dialogue, exquisitely performed by Wright and Lewis, gave the impression that the audience was eavesdropping on a private conversation between two close friends. The fence also served as a divider between those suitors that Mr. Page deemed acceptable for Anne and those he did not. Fenton was prevented from entering the house by an angry Page who proclaimed from inside the fence, “You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house./I told you, sir, my daughter is disposed of” (3.4.65-66). Meg reiterated her husband’s perspective adding, “come not to my child” (3.4.68). In contrast to Fenton, Slender was invited in and, while the gate was open, he chose to step over the fence, an act that signalled both his awkward nature and his ill fit for Anne Page.

The second scene in Page’s yard was both a small action montage and also the final scene before intermission. It was an added scene that began with a montage of small

character actions.¹¹⁷ Caius and Sir Hugh both entered the stage and crossed at different times, one carrying fencing gear, the other a sword. This apparently insignificant action gave the scene movement, as though Page's house was built on a main street that the citizens of Windsor used regularly. Following Caius and Hugh, the Garter host entered and knocked on the picket fence gate. He was welcomed into Page's house downstage right, just before Shallow entered on a moped. The multiple layered moments of characters crossing the stage gave a sense of busyness to the small-town. The final moment of the scene involved Meg Page and Anne Ford entering the backyard with drinks in their hand. They sang "Wine, Women and Song" while Page sat on a late 1950s/early 1960s style vinyl webbed lawn chair. The relaxed moment of friendship led to the women dancing to the song centre stage as Falstaff entered downstage left. He was wet and had a fake fish sticking out of his belt, which he knocked dead against his knee in time to the music. The women laughed at Falstaff and ran through the open gate, giggling as they exited offstage right. This movement montage contributed to the play's small-town setting and established, once again, the connected nature of the Windsor citizens.

The last location to evoke community unity, small-town identity, and Canadian life was the Herne's Oak Curling Club. The curling club was alluded to throughout the production as Meg Page and Alice Ford entered the pub carrying their curling brooms and escorted by other members of their curling team. This entrance established the curling club as a unifying part of the community with a particularly Canadian flavour. The curling club members entered wearing heavy vintage style sweaters and toting corn straw brooms, fondly referred to as "beaver tales" in Canada (Russell, "Introduction"). In *Open House: Canada*

¹¹⁷ The non-speaking scene is not in Shakespeare's original text and was added by the director.

and the Magic of Curling, Scott Russell presents curling as a sport that has connections, even if they are distant, to all Canadians. He argues that while not every Canadian curls “most, if not all of us, know what curling is and probably a large majority of people who grew up in this country . . . have some sort of distant connection to the sport” (“Introduction”). Vic Rauter, the voice of curling on TSN, recognizes the close connection between Canada as a nation and curling, arguing, “I don’t think that there is another game that actually represents the country as a whole like [curling]” (“Introduction”). While one might argue for hockey as the universal Canadian sport, curling, an inclusive sport, can be played by individuals of all ages and skill levels, and does not require a skating ability or copious equipment. Rauter has stated, “I love the people who [curl]. I love the people who watch it. . . . They are honest-to-goodness-down-to-earth folks. They’re folks who are hardworking and salt-of-the-earth kind of people. It covers all the demographics and I love that about the sport” (“Introduction”). Curling is therefore promoted as ideal for a small-town team of varying ages, skills, and abilities, and fits perfectly into *Wives*’ small-town, Canadiana vibe.

Representative of Canadian identity and the Windsor community in *Wives*, Herne’s Oak Curling Club was a natural choice for the final location where Meg Page and Alice Ford ultimately dupe and humiliate Falstaff, with the help of the entire community. As a place of connection and teamwork, the club symbolized Windsor loyalty and unity. While Falstaff was chastised and punished for his attacks upon the citizens, he was also, following sufficient embarrassment, encouraged to leave his devious ways and join the community. As director Wright noted, the production focused upon the theme of local and social inclusion:

The location of this warm, informal and inclusive comedy in a Canadian setting implied that the same warmth, informality and inclusiveness exist in Canada. That is how I like to think of our country, and based upon the response we received, it seems that at least we were painting a picture of Canada that many Canadians liked. (“Wright Interview”)

Through location, set design, and actor choices, the small-town community feel of *Wives* promoted a nostalgic, idealistic remembrance of 1960s Canada.

One common concern with period specific productions is a lack of depth due to overemphasizing setting and time. Sprengler describes the problem as a “‘depthless’ recreation of past styles at the expense of meaningful engagement with history” (68). Wright addressed this concern noting that Bard did not set out to create a nostalgic personal experience, nor to comment on Canada of the 1960s: “I can see that a sense of nostalgia was created in our show, and that was part of its appeal, but the choice to set the play in 1960s Ontario was not about commenting on the 1960s or nostalgia. I was looking for a way to do what I thought the playwright was trying to do, but for a contemporary audience” (“Wright Interview”). Bard focused on the production story and acting with Wright noting that the 1960s worked for the tale Bard wished to tell: “It was not so much what we might say about the 1960s that we were concerned with, but how we might illuminate the play in the most theatrical and effective way for [a] modern audience” (“Wright Interview”). Wright was focused on telling an excellent story and using the props, set design, costumes, and play setting to strengthen their presentation. As Wright insisted, “the story and characters came first, and elements of 1960s Canadian culture were included when they supported the story

and made sense for the characters and the world we were creating” (“Wright Interview”).

Bard “re-imagined the play in [the 1960s] with a great deal of affection for the world [they] were creating” (“Wright Interview”).

While Wright claimed that she had no desire to focus on personal nostalgia in the production design, audience members and reviewers noticed the strong nostalgic tone. As Jerry Wasserman observed in his *Bard* review, nostalgic props were a comedic goldmine as “[o]ne of the big laughs of the evening [came] when the bartender [set] down a lava lamp. For Vancouver audiences nostalgia seems its own reward, and this *Merry Wives* provides it a-plenty” (para. 8). Likewise another reviewer, who wishes to remain anonymous, noted that the Western bar “was . . . similar to pubs in my home town” (E-mail anonymous). The plethora of 1960s props, costumes and set designs continued *Wives*’ nostalgic, self-reflective theme, providing perspective on recent history which audience members responded to through laughter and applause. Despite Wright’s insistence that *Wives* used a 1960s design solely to enhance the production, audience members connected with the play’s strong nostalgia and recognized community values and Canadian imagery as they reflected on the changes in current Canadian culture. Whether *Wives* encouraged an idealistic, humorous remembrance of the past or inspired a comparison with current Canadian values was ultimately uncertain. However, Wright’s production did succeed in presenting small-town communities as ultimately eclectic, accommodating and shrewd.¹¹⁸ The use of Horatian satire and comedy promoted a Canadian identity that combined a mocking, self-deprecating

¹¹⁸ While ridiculous at times (Ford’s Beatnik disguise, Simple and Slender’s obsession with comic books) the community was able to outwit and confuse Sir Falstaff, portraying small-town Canadians as resourceful and intelligent while also fun loving.

humour with an eventual acceptance of 'the other'. The humorous and comedic antics of the Windsor community reflected concepts of small-town Canadian culture that encouraged audience comparison and reflection.

3.2 Nostalgia and Costume Design

According to Kristin Burke, a costume designer for film and television, the language of clothing is “[a] specific, persuasive, impactful and . . . silent” way of communicating with the audience (“From Clothing”). A costume is, for Burke, “clothing plus intent,” providing visual clues about setting and character development to the audience (“From Clothing”). Before an actor opens his/her mouth to speak, the costume and accessories selected for his/her character provide vital information to the audience. The popular belief that first impressions are vital is echoed in Malcolm Gladwell’s book *Blink* which analyzes rapid cognition and explains the mind’s ability to make snap decisions in the blink of an eye. Burke and Gladwell both observe that clothing can alter how one is perceived in mere seconds (“From Clothing”). The costume designs in *Wives* produced a certain image of each character that encouraged the audience to make broad, instantaneous decisions about them. As Burke noted in her lecture, “[costume designers] take actors and turn them into characters. We use every visual clue that we can find to help the audience know how to feel about [the characters]” (“From Clothing”). Coupled with the need to inform and tell a story, the 1960s period clothing of *Wives* also contributed to the nostalgic feel of the play and alluded to American pop-culture themes. As Noonan observes, American culture has infiltrated and affected Canadian culture: “There is . . . in Canada visible and invisible American propinquity. A Canadian’s choice of television, movies, magazines, and books, not to

mention cars and cereal, is heavily weighted, numerically, economically, and nutritionally, by the nearness of the U.S. and the undefended, unstoppered border” (912). Through 1960s nostalgia and allusions to American culture, *Wives* costume designs represented the tightrope existence that is Canadian identity by subtly alluding to American cultural influences that shape Canadians’ self-awareness and concepts of normalcy. Bard showed that Canada, while integrating American cultural icons and references, still maintained its own distinctive, independent identity.

The costumes of *Wives* served multiple purposes. First, they established the setting and time of the piece, easily inviting the audience to enter a world of the late 1960s. Second, they amplified characters’ personalities, presenting characteristics and identity to the audience through the medium of costume design. Last, Mistress Quickly’s American pop-culture themed costume alluded to both a nostalgic memory of *The Brady Bunch* and the negotiation for Canadian identity in a country with strong American influence. According to Burke, the costume designer is a translator, with the ultimate goal of helping the audience to “understand the characters and how to feel about them” (“From Clothing”). In *Wives*, set in Windsor 1960, the costume design was a mix of 1950s and 1960s style. According to the director, including 1950s costumes was a deliberate choice for the character of Alice Ford, Meg Page, Mr. Ford and Mr. Page. With the production placed in a small Canadian town, “fashions would be a little bit ‘behind the curve’ . . . with these two . . . conservative couples” (“Wright Interview”). For Wright, the lagging fashion style indicated that Alice and Meg were “not sophisticated or adventurous women,” and thus were an easy target for Falstaff (“Wright Interview”).

In the first scene, Meg Page entered the pub wearing a red, floral print A-line skirt, matching red blouse, white cardigan, and red pumps. Her hair was curled under in a traditional 1950s bob. She was accompanied by Alice Ford dressed in a multi-coloured, pastel, floral print dress, complete with white cardigan, white heels and cat-eye glasses (Fig 3.3).¹¹⁹ Red reappeared as Meg's signature colour throughout the show, while Alice was dressed in cooler tones: blues and greens. Transitioning from a public to a private location (the Garter Pub to the home) both women appeared in more relaxed attire. Page rushed to tell Ford her news, so eager and excited that she appeared with blue curlers still in her hair. Likewise, Page wore her signature colour red on the collar of a polka dot shirt and striped pants (Fig 3.4). While the costumes adhered to the conservative style of the 1950s, their bright colour patterns coupled with the enthusiastic acting of Wright and Lewis presented the wives as active, fun-loving women and not restrained or serious. The Western styled costumes from act five scene five hinted towards their carefree, trickster nature and their humorous treatment of Falstaff, thereby identifying Canada of the 1960s as a time of harmless fun.

¹¹⁹ It is interesting to note that while Ford's dress is cut in a 1950s style her fabric pattern is a paisley, which was common in the 1960s (Bleikorn 26).



Figure 3.3 Bard on the Beach *Wives*. Mrs. Ford (Amber Lewis) and Mrs. Page (Kate Wright) Photo by David Blue.



Figure 3.4 Bard on the Beach *Wives*. Mrs. Ford (Amber Lewis) and Mrs. Page (Kate Wright). Photo by David Blue.



Figure 3.5 Bard on the Beach, *Wives*. Mrs. Page, Falstaff (Ashley Wright) and Mrs. Ford. Photo by David Blue.

While Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford's 1950s style dresses did invoke nostalgia in those audience members familiar with American shows such as *Leave it to Beaver*, it was the costume of Mistress Quickly that held the strongest nostalgic power. Presented as a replica of Alice from *The Brady Bunch*, Quickly's costume coupled with Patti Allen's mannerisms had some audience members doing a double take. (Fig 3.6 and 3.7) The fact that patrons and reviewers immediately recognized the costume reference indicated that American pop-culture was still a strong part of the Canadian psyche. In a review in *The*



Figure 3.6 Mistress Quickly (Patti Allen)



**Figure 3.7 Alice from *The Brady Bunch*
Photo: Paramount**

Georgia Straight, Kathleen Oliver describes the costumes of *Wives* as “a sea of bright plaids, polka dots, and pop-culture allusions [with] . . . Mistress Quickly . . . a dead ringer for Alice on *The Brady Bunch*” (Para 6). Costume designer Drew Facey added to the American pop-culture references of *The Brady Bunch* and *Leave it to Beaver*, by giving Anne and her admirer Fenton a style reminiscent of popular 1960s American cinema. Anne wore a fitted pale yellow dress with matching belt similar to Sandy in *Grease* (Fig 3.9). The dress was cut to a straight line according to the mod culture mini-dress (Bleikorn 45). Her hair was left down in ringlets, displaying a more relaxed attitude as opposed to the over styled bob of Meg Page. Fenton’s costume evoked nostalgic memories of the rocker style from films like *Grease* and *To Sir With Love* (Bleikorn 50). Fenton possessed a strong “bad-boy” image with his leather jacket, dark wash jeans, slicked back hair, and white t-shirt. As Wright notes, “Fenton is the boy the Pages don’t want their daughter to marry;” thus, his costume depicted an edgy feel, reflecting the rocker style of the time and nostalgic echoes from films of the 1960s (“Wright Interview” 5).

Other characters with strong nostalgic, cultural associated costumes included “Shallow [as] a scooter-riding Shriner; and Ford disguise[d] . . . as a beatnik, complete with black turtleneck, beret, and medallion” (Para 6). When asked about the beatnik



disguise Wright explained that Ford needed to separate himself from the western bar (Fig 3.8). The choice of beatnik provided Ford with a completely different identity: “[T]here was an element of fantasy involved for Ford in going ‘under cover,’ so he’d choose something that held some mystery for him. He would be imitating a subculture that he did not know much about” (“Wright Interview” 6). The resulting costume garnered chuckles from the audience while the beat poetry of Shakespeare was both entrancing and hilarious. Rebekah Gusway of *Vancouver Weekly* praised the beatnik scene as “fantastic” and “amazing,” noting that “[Bellis’] syncopation of the Shakespearean prose accompanied by live drums and [guitar] was delightful” (Para 8).

The final nostalgic clothing culture presented on stage was the early 1970s hippie

style. When the Windsor citizens appeared disguised as fairies to pinch Falstaff for his villainy, they wore flowing, flower child and hippie inspired costumes. Wright explained that Bard wanted to find a parallel to the Elizabethan's true fear of fairies: "[W]hat were middle-class people afraid of in 1968 . . . the most theatrically interesting answer—and the one with the best comic potential—was 'drug crazed hippies' ("Wright Interview"). The flower children were something "exotic, mysterious and somewhat threatening" to Windsor, and by extension to Falstaff ("Wright Interview"). From, this short scene of 1970s style, the production returned to the Garter Pub, where Meg Page and Alice Ford wore Western inspired skirts, blouses with frill, and cowboy boots (Fig 3.5).

In analyzing the different costumes styles and subcultures, one can see that Bard strove to present an engaging and idealistic representation of 1960s Canadian culture while paying homage to American pop-cultural influences within Canada. The American references through costume design highlighted the pluralistic nature of Canada as a country with mixed foreign influences; thereby, displaying Canada's ability to integrate while maintaining its own independence and diversity. Earlier film- and television-inspired costumes and stereotypical 1960s costume designs presented *Wives* as an idealized version of domestic, small-town Canada in the 1960. Bard utilized different style sub-cultures (hippie, 1950s conservative, Western, and beatnik) to promote character development and comedic moments, while encouraging a nostalgic response and a willingness to laugh at one's fear of the threatening 'other'. The beatnik and hippie costumes represented culture groups foreign or potentially feared by members of the community; however, their embodiment on stage resulted in moments of comedy and Horatian satire allowing the audience to laugh at 1960s

period appropriate fears of alterity. The comedic representation of and response to the 'other' through the hippie scene and Ford's beatnik performance encouraged the audience to evaluate their own irrational fears of alterity. While the theme of community presented small-town Canada as inclusive and welcoming, the comedic moments associated with the feared or misunderstood 'other' revealed the foolishness behind irrational concerns and the importance of unity within society.

As costume designer Kristin Burke notes, "language of clothing is highly specific and culturally specific . . . language of clothing is contextual to the individual and it needs to be translated" ("From Clothing"). Bard utilized its 1960s costume designs to communicate and translate the world of Windsor, Ontario and Canadian identity into the mind of the audience. The costumes were vital to the production, evoking a 1960s nostalgic feel and creating the world of small-town Ontario with only a few stitches and a pair of cat eye glasses.¹²⁰ Through these costumes Wright subtly commented upon the eclectic nature of Canadian community and the need to abandon a fear of the other. A lesson that, while very Canadian, is still applicable in modern times.

3.3 Canadian Humour, Nostalgia and Song

In addition to channelling community unity through the nostalgia and eclectic nature of costume design, Bard's *Wives* also used nostalgic 1960s country and popular music joined with comedic moments to highlight a pluralistic Canadian identity and to unite the viewing audience through a collective appreciation for music whether new or nostalgic. According to an article by John Tierney of the *New York Times*, music is a quick and effective way to

¹²⁰ Costume designer Drew Facey won a Jessie Award for outstanding costume design for a large theatre on *Wives*.

introduce elements of nostalgia: “[Music] has become a favorite tool of researchers. In an experiment in the Netherlands, Dr. Ad Vingerhoets of Tilburg University and colleagues found that listening to songs made people feel not only nostalgic but also warmer physically” (Tierney para. 16).¹²¹ The songs in *Wives* such as “These Boots Are Made For Walking,” “Your Cheating Heart,” “Crazy,” and “Stand By Your Man” connected with the audience on an emotional, narrative, and personal level while also displaying how Canada has integrated American music culture into its pluralistic society.¹²² Individuals who grew up with 1960s country music were immersed in the nostalgic remembrance of the past, while younger audience members enjoyed the collective, universal delight of “toe-tapping country music” (Program 31). In her director program notes, Wright commented upon the power of music to “unite a diverse group of people,” and the rousing applause and laughter at Scott Bellis’ drunk version of “Your Cheating Heart” attested to both the audience’s appreciation and its love of *Wives*’ musical moments (Program 31; *Merry Wives*). By having multiple members of the Windsor community participate in the concert scenes through performance or observation, Bard highlighted the pluralistic and eclectic nature of Canadian identity. Just as the music presented community unity for the characters in *Wives* (many songs were sung at the community Garter Pub), it also united the audience into a theatre community that collectively appreciated and enjoyed the production. Reviews in West Coast newspapers and online blogs all drew attention to the musical elements of *Wives*, noting that the collective

¹²¹ The *New York Times* online article even provided a link to a “nostalgia playlist” that encouraged readers to revisit music from past decades (Griggs and Ingber).

¹²² At the 2012 performance of *Wives* that I attended audience members smiled and even mouthed the words to songs by familiar American country and pop music stars (Tammy Wynette, Nancy Sinatra, Mac Davis).

musical experience was both rewarding and uniting for the audience (*Vancouver Weekly, Georgia Straight, Vancouverscape.com*).¹²³

While memories associated with familiar songs encouraged nostalgic reminiscing and created a collective unity among the audience, it was the comedic and audience interactive use of “Baby, Don’t Get Hooked on Me” that brought the world of fictional Windsor and real Vancouver together to highlighting Canadian humour and pluralism.¹²⁴ In the opening scene following intermission, Falstaff (Ashley Wright) started the Mac Davis song and quickly selected a lady from the audience to serenade.¹²⁵ The choice to pick an audience member was actor Ashley Wright’s idea and resulted in the audience chortling with laughter. The moment of actor/audience interaction, centre stage in the Garter Pub, used comedy to display to the audience just how much they were a reflection of the fictional Windsor community. The random audience member selection also provided a real life enactment of Canada’s pluralistic nature as any patron regardless of race, ethnicity or religion could be invited to step on stage and become a part of Windsor’s Canadian community. Through musical humour, Falstaff showed that to be a part of Windsor, the audience must also become a

¹²³ The Vancouver theatre community acknowledged the excellence of *Wives* by awarding Bard a number of Jessie Theatre nominations (Lederman para. 1). *Wives* received a total of four nominations at the 31st Jessie Richard Theatre Awards, winning in the large-theatre category for “outstanding production, . . . direction (Johanna Wright) . . . costume design (Drew Facey), and significance artistic achievement, for Benjamin Elliott’s musical direction” (Lederman). A Jessie is a coveted award symbolizing recognition by the West-Coast artistic community. The award ceremony singles out theatre companies who engage in excellence and “outstanding achievements [in] the Vancouver Professional Theatre community” (“The Jessies”).

¹²⁴ Bard continued to use music to highlight moments of comedy and invoke remembrances of the past. Honkey Tonk style songs were played when characters entered the Western pub, and Bardolph played the first few phrases of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” on the violin when Ford passed out under the HBC blanket. The host also introduced a Western, high noon motif when Sir Hugh was given his fencing challenge. Between nostalgic songs such as “You Are My Sunshine” to transition between scenes and familiar musical phrases to highlight comedic moments, Bard utilized music to its advantage. A review in the *Georgia Straight*, praised Bard’s musical ingenuity noting that “Benjamin Elliott’s musical direction pay[ed] affectionate tribute to the period” (Oliver para. 7).

¹²⁵ As Wright notes, “Mr. Ford, Mrs. Page and Falstaff all have soliloquies. So we were developing an existing convention in the text” through song (“Wright Interview”).

source of humour and have a sense of humour too. As Wright noted, “We wanted people to feel that they’d walked into the local Legion on open mic night, and this took that idea one step further” (“Wright Interview”). The solo highlighted a key element of Canadian humour: our ability to laugh at ourselves. While the audience laughed at the audacity and narcissism of Falstaff, they were likewise laughing at themselves through the representative, selected audience member and thereby acknowledging and embracing the eclectic nature of Canadian community.

3.4 Props: Sidestepping Stereotypes and Invoking Canadian Humour

While *Wives* used certain set and costume designs to present the good natured small-town community of Windsor, Ontario, the production also aptly utilized props to invoke elements of Canadian identity. While Canadian identity was smoothly presented through stage setting, Bard also used Canadiana as props, objects linked to our national history; these often appeared during comic moments, when characters were using self-deprecating humour.¹²⁶ Local Canadian beers, HBC blankets and the Ontario provincial flag were only a few of the Canadianized props used for both comic purpose and historical recovery.

At first glance, the props served the simple purpose of aiding in the production's setting. A mounted deer head hung in the Garter Pub, and Canadian liquor was displayed on the tables: Crown royal and other small “stubby beer bottles” (“Wright Interview”). Justice Shallow rode a red scooter that sported red and white streamers on the handles and an Ontario provincial flag. When Fenton bribed Mistress Quickly to “[g]ive my sweet Nan this ring” he paid her in Canadian money (3.4.97). However, upon closer inspection, one sees that

¹²⁶ One moment of self-deprecating humour involved Mr. Ford falling asleep at the Garter Pub and being covered with a HBC blanket by the host.

the props were keenly used to signify national identity, highlight characters' association with and integration into the community, and to comically poke fun at the idiosyncrasies of community identity. By serving as more than random Canadiana props the selected items avoided becoming simple Canadian stereotype markers and instead highlighted the nuances of small-town Canada. Bard was well aware of the dangers of stereotype and wished to present Canadian identity through humour but without resorting to insulting caricatures. Through comedic uses of Canadian themed props, such as Shallow's over the top red scooter decked out in Canadian themed decorations or Fenton being forced to overpay Mistress Quickly for her assistance, *Wives* highlighted humorous aspects of communal unity, individual characterization, and pluralism as expressed in Windsor.

Wives used prop-related comedy to encourage patrons to embrace a self-reflective humour and to question their own cultural identity.¹²⁷ Littered throughout the production were small items, props, references, and characters all connected with Canadian identity or imagery. Viewers with citizenship awareness or icon savvy Canadian knowledge would have immediately identified and appreciated Bard's comedic nods to Canadiana. A Hudson's Bay blanket, Ontario provincial flags, and curling brooms all pointed towards the production as distinctly Canadian. Audience members could collectively express their Canadian knowledge by laughing at the inside jokes and references to Canadiana while partaking in the communal experience. As Shakespeare's plays provided insights into the self, Bard's production took it one step further by planting Canadian props, all meant to elicit a recognition and a respectful

¹²⁷ Instances of prop related comedy included Shallow with his Canadian bedazzled scooter, the Host's use of a HBC blanket in the pub, Ford's drunk scene in front of a bar displaying Canadian beer bottles, and the arrival of a team Canadian curlers in full traditional uniforms.

questioning of Canadian identity. As Wright noted, the production strove for integrity and honesty in its humour:

If we had just stuck some Canadian flags and hockey sticks up there, the play might still have been funny, but the feeling wouldn't have been the same. It wasn't a show about gimmicks. The story and characters came first . . . I feel we brought a lot of integrity to those choices, and that's why it worked. We weren't just trying to manipulate our audience with kitschy set dressing; we were invested in the characters and their story, so the audience invested too, and the result was a richer experience on both sides. ("Wright Interview" 8)

Wright approached the text "not assuming it should be rewritten" and added to the text modern songs that were related to an action within the play (Bauslaugh 6-7). For Bauslaugh, Wright's "imagination, feeling [and sensitivity] to the text . . . made it come alive" (9, 6).

The acting had "subtly, grace, and good humour" as *Wives* was "a production that understood the text and illustrated it brilliantly" (9). The 1960s setting, the Canadian props, and music choices all brought "Shakespeare's work to life" by remaining "faithful to the spirit of the work" (9).

Bard's production was able to use comedy to both amuse the audience and comment upon Canadian culture without offence. According to Noonan, Canadian humour is based upon "making careful and sensitive juxtapositions. A balanced duality . . . generates the essence of Canadian humour . . . [while t]he precariousness of Canada's position . . . enforces a careful strain of double-think and self-restraint" (913).¹²⁸ *Wives*' best example of poking

¹²⁸ According to Walters and Noonan, Canadian humour focuses on exaggeration while English humour is "literal and fact orientated" (Noonan 914). In contrast, Canadian humour is a balancing act. It is a "humour in

fun at Canadian stereotype, embracing self-mockery, and presenting perfect comedy timing was the HBC blanket incident. After learning in act two scene two of Falstaff's plans to seduce Alice Ford, her husband, Ford, gave a heart-rending version of "Your Cheating Heart" while drowning his sorrows in drink. He eventually passed out on the pub chairs and was covered, to the glee of the audience, with a HBC blanket by the host of the Garter. While the action of tucking in Ford like an exhausted child itself was hilarious to the audience, the action was more humorous because of the Canadian prop. The moment allowed the cast to make a strong statement about Canadian history and identity, while also laughing at the hilarity of the moment.

With the HBC blanket, one is reminded that Canadian history and the trials that created Canada as a nation directly affected our current national reality. Canadian history is never far from the present. *Wives'* uses a nostalgic lens to view Canada, depicting an idealized present where all individuals live in relative peace; however, the HBC blanket does evoke a complicated history. Tied to Canada's birth as a nation through trade negotiation with the First Nations, the HBC blanket is also a reminder of the battles, deceit and violent force used to obtain and settle First Nation's lands. This chapter of Canada's history is not addressed during the brief presentation of the blanket in *Wives*. Instead, the blanket is used to connect the current Windsor with its historical past through the character of Ford. The presence of the HBC blanket, an image with ties to Canada's birth as a nation and long history in the fur trade, references Canada's rugged past, the endurance of the first settlers,

which one sees himself as others see him but without any admission that the outer man is a truer portrait than the inner—a humor [sic] based on the incongruity between the real and the ideal, in which the ideal is repeatedly thwarted by the real but never quite annihilated. Such humor [sic] is Canadian" (Noonan 914, Walter qtd. in Noonan 915).

and the birth of a new nation, while also highlighting a nostalgic view of the negotiations and community creation between Native, French, and English inhabitants.¹²⁹ While Ford is clearly not enduring the harsh realities of the first settlers and trappers in early Canada, since he sleeps in the comfort of a warm pub, the HBC blanket references the many indigenous and immigrant fur trappers and traders who wore the same blanket, traded for it, and used it during the creation of Canada as a nation, the nation that Ford now enjoys. A prop so strongly steeped in Canadian history inevitably draws the focus to Canada's beginnings and its rich national history.

A Canadian symbol, the Hudson Bay point blanket was first introduced in the fur trade in 1780 and became a regular staple of the trade system with local Native Americans ("Our History"). While blankets were used for trade earlier than 1780, it was only after the HBC blanket was introduced that they became a high demand product, "shipped to the post on a regular basis" ("Our History"). By 1846 they were the main currency used in potlatches, First Nations' ceremonial feasts (Lutz 81). Used for warmth and to indicate status, the blankets were also turned into coats (Fig 3.10 and 3.11). Both the Plains Indians and the Métis crafted the HBC blankets into outerwear ("Our History"). The Métis used the blanket to create a wrap coat complete with fringing, termed a capote ("Our History"). During the war of 1812, when British commander Captain Charles Roberts was unable to obtain greatcoats for his men, he had HBC point blankets made into coats for his men ("Our History").¹³⁰ Thus, the HBC blanket became a symbol of wealth among the First Nations and was also adopted by the settlers as a valuable outer garment. By the mid 18th century, the

¹²⁹ If Ford's character had been presented as First Nations it would have altered the scene drastically.

¹³⁰ Captain Roberts was inspired by the Mackinaws who wore coats sewn from point blankets ("Our History").

HBC blanket and the blanket coat transitioned from First Nation’s status symbol and survival gear, to an icon and fashion symbol found among Canada’s settler society.



The Canadian tradition of wearing blanket coats is recorded in *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective*, a volume edited by Alexandra Palmer. The book dedicates a full chapter to the blanket coat, noting that the garment became accepted by the Canadian elite and was also adopted by the Montreal Snow Shoe Club (1877) (Stack 22).¹³¹ The association of the blanket coat with Canadian nationality and the Canadian wild was also reflected in popular male portraits of the time as “the garment [was] use[d] as an image making device” and “portrayed a specifically Canadian identity . . . for the privileged classes” (24, 25). The coat was associated with the idea of the “hero-hunter” in a “snow bound wildernesses, endowed

¹³¹ In Jan 1873 at a reception by the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, Lady Duffrin, the Canadian Governor general Lord Duffrin’s wife, praised the coat as a national icon writing of the reception that, “[The men] wore white blanket coats, tight leggings, and red caps, and the sight was really very picturesque and very Canadian” (qtd. in Stack 22).

with enormous natural bounty” (24, 25).¹³² The adoption by Canadian settlers of a First-Nations and French-Canadian clothing item and design was an attempt to establish connection “to Canadian territory” and thereby, a right to identity as “a Canadian” (33). Stack notes that the adoption of the blanket coat by Canadian society reflected a “desire to . . . belong in the New World . . . [and] have a relationship with the country” (33).

The history of the HBC point blanket, and by association the blanket coat, is a Canadian connection that would be recognized by any audience member aware of the trademark coloured stripes on the HBC blanket. While the Host covering Ford is humorous, the use of an easily recognized Canadian artifact adds both mirth and meaning to the prop choice, reminding the audience of Canada’s birth as a nation of varied people groups and cultures, European immigrants and Aboriginal groups, that transitioned into the current eclectic, multiracial Canada of the 21st century. The prop also indirectly implies that Ford’s existence in Windsor is the result of the blanket coat wearing men who came before him to establish, inhabit, and defend the country of Canada.

3.5 *Wives’ Linguistic and Accent Humour: A Reflection of Canada’s Pluralism*

While Bard relied upon props such as the HBC point blanket to invoke moments of historical remembrance and Canadiana humour, the production also used language and accents to reveal moments of mirth and highlight the pluralistic element of Canadian identity. According to Noonan and Northrop Frye, Canadian humour is defined by its multicultural and pluralistic themes and reflects both “the integration of society . . . [and] a catharsis of the . . . comic emotions, which are sympathy and ridicule” (917, Frye qtd. in Noonan 917).

¹³² Portrait advertisements in 1867 offered “Portraits in winter costume” and by the late 1870’s women were also appearing in blanket coats in photographs (Stack 25).

Canadians find humour in the multicultural aspects of the country and the tightrope balance required to be Canadian. Noonan describes Canada's identity as a "duality" which forms the basis of all Canadian humour for,

duality compressed to brevity is the soul of humour, duality being central to the pun, to irony, to ambiguity, to incongruity, and to an unlabelled number of juxtapositions of tangential stances . . . because of Canada's particular historical development and geographical location—(as well as the existence of that mosaic culture that a focus on Anglo literature necessarily ignores)—the place is rampant with duality. (Noonan 913)

Wives presented the audience with Canada's unique blend of humour, which Wright described as "an inside joke between the actors and the audience," by laughing at the cultural and lingual differences before embracing the individual ("Wright Interview").

When asked in a personal interview about what makes Canadian humour unique, Dora and Gemini award winning actor/writer/comedian Rick Miller of *MacHomer* observed that Canadians have a multi-cultural perspective that lends itself to scope. For Miller, Canadians "have the advantage of seeing things from the outside, and that gives [them] a unique perspective and . . . sense of humour: a bit British, a bit French, a bit First-Nation, a bit of everything" ("Miller Interview"). For Miller, the vastness of the country allows Canadians to take everything in stride and laugh at ourselves: "Canadians must have a sense of humour about ourselves, because our country is ridiculous huge and we live in such a ridiculously small slice of it!" ("Miller Interview"). Canadian national identity is composed of many collective cultural parts; it is the history of an immigrant people and of Canada's

Indigenous peoples. It is impossible to separate oneself from the other within the borders of Canada for “[t]he presence of the ‘other,’ linguistically, culturally, is a facet of life in virtually every section of the country” (Noonan 913). Canadian humour utilizes the duality of identity in different regions across the country for comedic fodder. As Wright noted in a private interview, the humour of Canada is a gentle self-mocking and inclusive humour (“Wright Interview”). *Wives* itself embraced this style of comedy by laughing both at and with the audience: “[T]he audience is part of the joke, as well as the subject of the joke, especially if we are mocking ‘outsiders’, since we are a country in which immigrants outnumber indigenous people: everyone is an outsider in one way or another” (“Wright Interview”).

To reflect a collective and eclectic Canadian humour, *Wives* established Sir Hugh as an South Asian yogi complete with staccatoed speech patterns and a white kurta with churidar pants. In a cultural contrast, Dr. Caius possessed a strong French accent and extreme mannerisms that made the audience laugh (*Merry Wives*). Desiring to remain true to the original text, Wright explained that Bard simply updated the cultural commentary for a modern audience: “I was working with the idea that Shakespeare had created a ‘multicultural community’ by Elizabethan standards, in having the Welsh priest and the French doctor” (“Wright Interview”). It is the cross cultural confusion of language that provides the most humour in *Wives* by highlighting miscommunication, misunderstanding, and deliberate misdirection.

The comedic fencing match between Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh was fuelled through the mischievous plot of the Host of the Garter, coupled with the language barrier of both Caius

and Hugh. Dr. Caius and his limited English language made him the source of the Host's jokes:

Doctor Caius. Mock-vater! vat is dat?

Host. Mock-water, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

Doctor Caius. By gar, den, I have as mush mock-vater as de Englishman. Scurvy
jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill cut his ears (2.3. 52-56).

While Caius was being mocked for his speech and limited English understanding, Sir Hugh is also laughed at for his culture and language. His telling traditional South Asian speech patterns would be recognizable to any audience members familiar with the South Asian community in Vancouver, British Columbia.¹³³ While awaiting Caius, Hugh adopted a few yoga poses and attempted to find his calming zen, much to the delight of the audience:

'Pless my soul, how full of cholers I am, and
trempling of mind! I shall be glad if he have
deceived me. How melancholies I am! I will knog
his urinals about his knave's costard when I have
good opportunities for the 'ork. Pless my soul!— (3.1.8-12).

Wright's choice to make Sir Hugh South Asian reflected on the multicultural community of Shakespeare's time as well as the current Vancouver culture. Wright felt that the speech patterns of English, spoken with a Welsh accent had "some similarities to English spoken with an East Indian accent," and thus she updated Sir Hugh by making him South Asian

¹³³ Vancouver, Surrey and other surrounding cities have a strong South Asian population in British Columbia. However, many audience members would also be familiar with the accent from film or television. Eg. The Simpsons, or The Big Bang Theory. While the accent has a unique cadence it is often depicted in a stereotypical or derogatory manner.

(“Wright Interview”).

While Bard’s *Wives* gently poked fun at the differing accents and language barriers expressed by Caius and Hugh, it also used dialect to highlight the pluralism of Canada and the important role linguistic humour serves in inclusive communities. At the end of the play, Evans was recognized as an important member of the Windsor community for he, “although subject to mockery[,] . . . help[ed] to arrange the marriage of Ann Page, and [tried] to mend fences between Falstaff and Shallow” (“Wright Interview”). Dr. Caius was also a vital part of the community as the local doctor. While the host teased both men, he ultimately prevented them from fighting by recalling their importance to the town:

Shall I lose my doctor?

No, he gives me the potions, and the motions. Shall I lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? No, he gives me the proverbs and the No-verbs. [To CAIUS] Give me thy hand, terrestrial—so.

[To EVANS] Give me thy hand, celestial—so. Boys of art, I have deceived you both, I have directed you to wrong places. Your hearts are mighty, your skins are whole, and let burnt sack be the issue.

[To SHALLOW and PAGE] Come, lay their swords to pawn. [To CAIUS and EVANS] Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

(3.1.85-94)

Bard also added its own unique Canadian dialect into the mix by giving the Host a Newfoundland accent. This addition showed that although the host teased Caius and Hugh, he also had a unique accent which made him an eclectic part of the Windsor community. As

Wright observed “one of the main thematic and comedic lines in the original play is the diversity of language . . . which . . . made the Canadian setting a good fit” (“Wright Interview”). By using language, accents, and pronunciation as the basis for humour, Bard’s version of *Wives* highlighted the eclectic linguistic nature of current Canadian community: it was a hodgepodge of linguistic colours, tones and accents. Through this comedic treatment of a diverse Canadian culture the audience was able to laugh at both the characters and at themselves.

Conclusion:

Bard’s 2012 *Merry Wives of Windsor* set in Windsor, Ontario in the 1960s presented Canada as an accommodating and eclectic nation with a pluralism affected by Canada’s close connection to British and American influences. *Wives* highlighted Canadian identity by inviting audience members to both embrace nostalgically and laugh self-deprecatingly at elements of our diverse Canadian community. Through set design, music, language, props, and costumes, the production showcased an aesthetically appealing and nostalgically reinforcing spectacle of 1960s Canada. The production permitted the audience to laugh with the comedic characters of Windsor and, by extension, at themselves, since they recognized that each character reflected elements of the Bard patrons. Through Horatian satire, *Wives* encouraged audience members to interrogate Canadian history and identity, particularly nostalgic concepts of the past and recognize the concerns surround a fear of alterity. Wright wanted the audience to observe the merry wives and perceive how Canadian culture and communities have changed. How a patron responded would depend on whether he/she believed *Wives* was an idealized fantasy or a realistic goal, an ideal community or a

ridiculous society. Ironically, the focus on community and unity in *Wives* reflected Bard's own production goal for the company to "feel . . . like family—a place where people looked out for each other and helped each other out" ("Crazy in Calgary"). While it may present an idealized perspective of Canada, both Bard and director Johnna Wright hoped that *Wives*' 1960s small-town Windsor accurately reflected some elements of Canadian history and identity: "[Warm, informal and inclusive]. That's how I like to think of our country . . . [W]e were painting a picture of Canada that many Canadians liked" ("Wright Interview" 1). And perhaps Wright was also encouraging patrons to learn from *Wives* and adopt the inclusive, pluralistic Canadian community model while rejecting judgement or fear of "the other". To those who were concerned that Bard's *Wives* was too rosy and nostalgic to be true, Wright offered the following comment: "If those [positive] qualities don't exist across the board [in Canada] . . . identify[ing the problem] is a start [to correcting it]" ("Wright Interview").

Chapter 4 Canadian Identity in Stratford's *Henry V*

Searching for elements of Canadian national identity on the stage is often like looking for the elusive needle in a proverbial haystack. Add to the challenge the ever-expanding and changing definition of Canadian identity and the search becomes haphazard at best. While Canadian theatre companies such as the Stratford Festival and Bard on the Beach focus on producing high quality plays, questions of national identity rarely enter the conversation. Rehearsal discussions are often devoted to staging, actor interpretation, and safely navigating the vomitoria with weapon in hand. If Stratford's mostly Canadian cast ever ruminate on questions of Canadian identity those queries are secondary, for example, to memorizing blocking and dialogue, or so it appears at first glance. Yet, an examination of Des McNuff's Canadian-inflected *Henry V* reveals a Stratford production that engages with matters of Canadian nationality, the festival's distinctive placement in the global theatrescape, and the fluid nature of Canadian identity. McNuff's *Henry V* celebrates Canadian nationality through symbolic costume and prop design, reminding the audience of Stratford's importance as both a national theatre and a global representative of Canada, and demonstrating that McNuff remains loyal to his Canadian roots despite American influences (for example, American members of his cast).¹³⁴ Transitioning from a Canadian thematic pre-show and prologue that presents Canadian identity as unified, peaceful and inclusive to a final scene of questions and uncertainty, McNuff's *Henry V* encourages patrons to examine the play in light of the Canadian identity pre-show and ending scene. By opening the play with a clear

¹³⁴ While *Henry V* deals with issues of nationality, specifically between France and England, I have chosen to focus only on examples of Canadian identity or nationality as expressed on the Stratford stage through production and performance. While Shakespeare's text deals with multiple national and political issues, I feel that these themes are best left to a dissertation dedicated solely to the text.

idea of Canadian identity as diverse and inclusive, McAnuff's directorial decisions elicit inevitable queries at the end of the production, as Shakespeare's play is ambivalent, filled with examples of imperialism, invasion, and hostility. While McAnuff points the patron towards ideal images and concepts of Canadian identity, he ultimately leaves the conclusion of the play open to interpretation, asking the audience if the final scene promotes or rejects the opening image of a unified, diverse Canada. The concepts of *Henry V* are in conflict with McAnuff's ideal projection of Canadian identity and the audience is left to question the production's national idealism and ponder over Canada's possible implication in imperialism and hostility.

The theatre, as an actor's world, is characterized by sound cues, quick scene changes, correct line delivery, and other technical matters. Amid backstage traffic and opening night nerves one would assume there is little time for citizenship study. However, lowering a backdrop that features the Canadian flag from the rafters of the Festival Theatre is a blatant declaration that Stratford is willing to play the national identity game. The fact that this theatrical statement was devised by Des McAnuff, a director fresh from Broadway success in New York and with dual citizenship (Canadian and American), made the national declaration all the more powerful. In fact, Stratford has a history of commenting upon Canadian identity and national issues both directly and indirectly via the stage. A 1968 production of *Romeo and Juliet* placed the Festival at the centre of an off-stage French/English language dispute. The production's reviews caused a media frenzy in which the French-Canadian actress Louise Marleau was described, among other things, as "a mistake" and "a disappointment" (qtd. in McGee 15; Bellamy 45; Verdun 4). Reviewer Bob Verdun dared to label Montréal

born Marleau as ‘other’ or not Canadian, noting Stratford should have cast “an English or Canadian girl” (“Juliet: A Disappointment”). The 1990 Stratford production of *As You Like It* starring Lucy Peacock also delved into Canadian nationality and history. Set in Québec City and Ile d’Orléans during the autumn of 1758, one year before the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the production showcased select Canadian symbols including large maple trees, Scottish kilts, “*coureurs du bois*, Hudson’s Bay-blanketed pioneers and befeathered Indians” (Crook par. 7).¹³⁵ These production choices accord with the Stratford mandate, which, “[f]or more than half a century . . . has evolved to address the ever-changing, ever-challenging Canadian cultural landscape” (Stratford Festival “Our Mandate”).¹³⁶ Throughout its history, therefore, Stratford has engaged with and presented specific stories of the Canadian identity.

Despite this reality, there is a lack of certainty regarding Canadian identity at the Stratford Festival. When asked what makes Stratford uniquely Canadian or a production on the Stratford stage a reflection of national identity, both Miles Potter, a veteran director at Stratford, and Lezlie Wade, a director and lyricist, hinted that there was no one particular way in which Stratford could be identified as “Canadian”. As Potter explained, “I couldn’t give you a short sound bite or a glib answer to what, is . . . a Canadian way or an identifiable kind of Shakespeare or even a kind of theatre” (“Potter Interview”). Wade echoed this sentiment, posing a question of her own: “I guess the question really is does anyone in Canada ever feel that they are uniquely Canadian and what does that mean to be uniquely

¹³⁵ In 1961-1962 The *Canadian Players* toured a version of *King Lear* set in the Inuit Northwest Territories with William Hutt in the lead role. According to Ted McGee in *Shakespeare in Canada: A World Elsewhere*, American audience members perceived the production of Inuit Lear as set in Alaska, automatically assimilating the play into their own national identity (Brydon and Makaryk 158).

¹³⁶ The mandate is from the 2014 Stratford website. The current website has been altered and no longer contains this information in the “About us” section.

Canadian” (“Wade Interview”). Thus, while Stratford identifies itself as distinctly Canadian, a national theatre of Canada that is willing to stage the works of Canadian playwrights and produce plays within Canada, key individuals associated with the Festival find it difficult to express a specific, distinct quality that contributes to the “Canadian” essence of the festival.

4.1 Canadian by Nature and the “Other” Mentality

One of the many concerns and difficulties in defining Canadian identity for Stratford directors, and Canadians more generally, involves the parameters of an awareness and understanding of self in relation to an awareness and understanding of those outside the group. Within the realm of theatre, Canadians walk the fine line between celebrating national triumphs in response to others in the global theatrespace and engaging in modest self-promotion that is often disregarded by the non-Canadian ‘other.’¹³⁷ In his book *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture*, R. Bruce Elder analyzes the question of Canadian identity as expressed in artistic culture, arguing that like Oedipus, Canadians are forever faced with the unanswerable question of their identity. Drawing on the work of communication theorist Anthony Wilden, Elder states that Canada’s self-understanding always involves differentiating itself from a stereotyped, misrepresented, and vilified other: “[W]e take for our identity everything we believe the ‘other’ not to be” (10). One must, writes Elder, move beyond “defining ourselves in terms of the Others . . . [and] discover what we are in our history, in the traditions we possess” (14). Instead of relying on a comparison mentality to uncover “identity in difference,” Canadians must pursue identity by analyzing

¹³⁷ The non-Canadian ‘other’ refers to individuals who do not live within Canada, are not native to Canada and are therefore, citizens of another country. It also includes those who live within Canada yet refuse to be associated with Canadian identity or do not possess Canadian citizenship.

the story of our “becoming” (15). The theatre provides a viable method to present and examine stories of Canadian identity on the stage.

Comparison of the self and other/Other and a global awareness of the “other” form a key aspect of Canadian culture as expressed on the stage. Canadian identity does not define the self by negating the other but rather by forming identity in comparison to and collaboration with the other.¹³⁸ Canadians, as a direct result of the country’s vast and diverse populace, are keenly aware of our identity in relation to others, which includes both subgroups within Canada and other countries. It is not so much that Canada is obsessed with comparing itself with the United States or other countries, but rather that Canadians are now increasingly aware of Canada’s role in a global and collective cultural community. Canadian culture’s multifaceted, global awareness is openly expressed and celebrated on the theatrical stage. While it is clear that an American presence dominates the small and large screens in Canada, the stage is still contested ground. Established on Canadian soil and the procurer of local Canadian talent, the Stratford Festival and other Canadian theatres provide an area for art that reflects the local community and is directly in touch with the nation’s changing identity.

In the realm of film and theatre, the United States can be both admired for its copious development and censured for its limited time and respect for the Canadian arts. Often the American response to Canadian theatre is perceived as disrespectful or uninformed. Stratford directors Potter and Wade, who both speak from a space of experience and knowledge since

¹³⁸ Canadian identity relies on identifying the other as “different,” separate from the self, while creating a place of acceptance for that difference within the parameters of Canadian national identity. The ‘inclusion mentality’ of Canadian identity formation provides the possibility that the other, who differs from us, can become one with the nation through citizenship. Those who refuse to be associated with Canada are “other” but not monstrous.

Potter is a dual citizen of Canada and the United States and Wade was trained in the arts south of the border, both criticized American artisans for a lack of awareness of and respect towards Canadian theatre culture. When I interviewed Potter, the Stratford director noted that both the United States and Britain bring an assumed entitlement to their theatre: a sense of a distinct national identity. Potter attributes the narcissistic attitude of these two nations to a history of authoritative and military power, explaining, “[T]he United States and Great Britain, [due to] . . . decades of confiden[ce] in their imperial power . . . don’t question their identity . . . [T]hey rarely consider another [point of view], to the [point]... that they are virtually unaware of our existence up here” (“Potter Interview”). Wade echoed this view of perceived American bias. Recalling her recent experience taking Stratford’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* to Broadway, she observed that “[p]eople were . . . genuinely surprised that the show was so good. . . [They didn’t] expect Canadian theatre to be good” (“Wade Interview”). Potter told a similar story about Bard on the Beach, noting that Christopher Gaze, Bard’s artistic director, enjoys attending American Shakespeare theatre conferences and surprising individuals in theatre as many of the American theatres are shocked to learn of Bard’s size and financial statistics: “[Gaze] shows up at these places . . . and their jaws drop because Bard on the Beach is huge . . . Bard’s bigger than all of them. They’ve never heard of it for the most part. [Americans are] not aware of what happens outside of their particular point of view and I think [Canadians] are very aware” (“Potter Interview”).

The presumed American lack of awareness of theatre beyond their borders exists in direct opposition to Canada’s heightened awareness of the arts outside Canada. Wade described Canada’s self-awareness as characterized by an “underlying tension” and noted

that her identity as a Canadian artist is a personal struggle (“Wade Interview”). Similarly, Potter observed that the question of Canadian identity is not necessarily one of anxiousness but one of hyper-awareness: “We are aware of a lack of identity in the sense or the fact that identity exists, that it is in question, [and] how easily it can shift” (“Potter Interview”). Potter described the American approach to theatre as rooted in assurance and entitlement while the Canadian approach is defined by a hyper-awareness of global community and interconnectedness. As Potter observed,

You could describe [Canada] as anxious . . . maybe we are. Some people would describe it as insecure, [but] I think it’s a rather strong place from which to view identity and culture . . . Canada is a really good place from which to look at those issues. (“Potter Interview”)

Potter also alluded to the fact that Canada has been juggling matters of multiculturalism and fractured, multiple sub-identities for centuries. Thus, the country’s social fabric is able to withstand the strain and pull of many cultural groups and various voices of identity.

The Canadian theatrical landscape presents a continual desire to promote and encourage a global stamp of identity. Artistic director, Des McAnuff¹³⁹ promoted a Canadian identity for the Festival while striving for global awareness, deeming Stratford a theatre for the world, not just Canada. Paradoxically, he thereby created a stronger Canadian identity for Stratford by encouraging a broader global awareness and presenting Canadian identity (especially the multicultural element) and global relations as consistent with each other. Canadian identity by being diverse and eclectic encourages a global mindset.

Stratford’s Canadian identity promoted a global identity, allowing the Festival to speak to the

¹³⁹ McAnuff (assistant director from 2009-2015) was Stratford’s co-director for 2008.

world about Canada and intersect the festival's national identity with its larger global branding. Stratford also encouraged an expansive desire to express multicultural identities and broader cultural groups onstage, a practice that has continued into Stratford's current 2015 season permitting actors of multiple cultures and backgrounds to represent their identity on the Canadian stage.

McAnuff turned to Canadian identity and recognizable national symbols in his 2012 production of *Henry V*. While elements of Canadian identity are continually in flux, and the definition of national identity changes from provinces to province, even from city to town, there is one symbol of Canadian identity that is recognizable and stable: the Canadian flag. Adopted by the nation February 15, 1965, under the Right Honourable Lester B Pearson, the flag was deemed "a vehicle to promote national unity" and represent Canadian identity (Canada par. 10). It is the good will ambassador of the great white north and a symbol of Canada that is proudly displayed at Olympic ceremonies, government meetings, local parades, and even on travellers' luggage. It was the dropping of the Canadian flag, with its striking red maple leaf, in front of the British and French flags that expressed McAnuff's questions about Canadian identity and nationalism. The flag, when juxtaposed with the Beatles' song "Revolution," prompted queries regarding Canadian identity and McAnuff's ambiguous ending to *Henry V*.

4.2 Canadian by Design Choice

Through colour, costume design, and nationally symbolic props Stratford's *Henry V* presented the Festival as participating in a global theatrescape, establishing Canadian theatre

as a space that integrates ‘other’ identities into its national identity.¹⁴⁰ By bookending the production with Canadian iconography and imagery, McAnuff ensured that the production spoke to the question of Canadian global identity and Canada’s awareness of its American neighbours, while subsuming the ‘other’ into an overarching Canadian identity. The production was utilized as a vehicle to both present and question Canadian identity and cultural awareness by first presenting an idealized concept of an inclusive Canada before asking the audience to weigh the validity of this notion.

In the first moments of McAnuff’s *Henry V* prologue, the audience was introduced to an explicitly metatheatrical stage design which utilized the pre-show and prologue to establish a contemporary rehearsal setting. The unorthodox scene invited the audience to contemplate the import of each actor separate from his/her role while also permitting patrons a stylized behind-the-scenes look. The setting highlighted the fact that Stratford’s production was a director-created entity, commenting upon the current global theatrescape and populated with actors who were inhabiting the same cultural and national space as the audience. The official run of the show began while audience members were still taking their seats. Production Memo One states that the “company will be doing staggered entrances for the top of the show, starting at five minutes before the curtain” (Stratford Festival Archives, “Production Memo One”). While audience members negotiated the stairs, some finding assigned seating with the assistance of theatre staff while others returned back to the lobby,

¹⁴⁰ McAnuff was not afraid to challenge the assumed style of the Stratford Festival by using both contemporary and period costumes together. He cast actors from both Canada and the United States, and sought out actors from all ethnic backgrounds. Putting an American in the lead at a Canadian world renowned festival seemed to be the wrong decision, almost a betrayal of Canadian sensibilities. As Wade recalls, McAnuff knew the response would be critical yet he cast Aaron Krohn as Henry anyway: “[W]e all knew [Aaron] would be more critically looked at than anyone . . . [Des selected him because] Aaron is a . . . good actor and he had done some excellent work at the Festival. . . He could handle the task” (“Wade Interview”).

members of the cast slowly entered on stage.¹⁴¹ The stage was dimly lit, placing the raised platform in clear view while the vomitoria and rear side entrances to the stage were dim and dark. The actors moved casually, some carrying props such as a bench, while others found their assigned location and sat down on the wooden floorboards. A few chatted with each other as seen on the Festival DVD recording.

As the preshow transitioned into the prologue, the audience continued to observe the cast out of period costume, setting, place and role. Dan Chameroy was not yet Lord Scroop, and Timothy Stickney was not costumed as the Duke of Exeter. The scene was designed to evoke the feeling that audience members had stumbled upon a rehearsal, a moment of vulnerability and truthful reality where the actors had not yet embodied their history laden characters.¹⁴² The assistant stage manager's memo states that the actor portraying Henry V, Mr. Krohn, did "not appear in the Preshow or Scene 1.0 'O For a Muse'" (Stratford Festival Archives, "Memo Two"). While no reason is given for this cut, it is probable the decision was made due to Krohn's layered and heavy costume for Scene 1.1 as a quick change would not be possible. Thus, excluding the lead, the full cast populated the stage, trickling in slowly until the stage was so full it appeared a sea of bodies and faces.

While the staggered entrance provided a smooth transition into the play experience, the actors' modern costumes expressed both a strong rehearsal feel and clear Canadian imagery. McAnuff's choice of modern clothing provided two messages to the audience. First,

¹⁴¹ One patron is clearly seen pointing out her seat on the Festival DVD.

¹⁴² In a second production memo, it is noted "add small leather-bound book of Henry V for Mr. Savage. He will appear to be reading it onstage during Preshow" (Stratford Festival Archives, "Production Memo Two"). For Savage to carry either a bound script of *Henry V* or a book on *Henry V* speaks of research, rehearsal and practice. However, a later production memo notes that Krohn had been removed from the preshow and prologue scene.

it presented a contemporary environment of conformity and comfort where the audience felt at home. The costume design reflected and mimicked the clothing of modern day Canada (or most modern countries): jeans, sweaters, t-shirts and zipped up hoodies.¹⁴³ This was not the *Henry V* of past Stratford productions. There were no period costumes, swords, or powdered wigs but rather t-shirts that reflected pop-culture.¹⁴⁴ The modern clothing presented an immediate link between actor and audience. Secondly, the wardrobe tones and colours were selected to place focus on the red costume pieces. The whole cast was dressed in tones of black, charcoal, grey, and dark blue. Sweaters, jeans, pants and t-shirts were all selected to either blend into the dimly lit, dark backgrounds of the stage, or to stand out as bright red beacons. Red wardrobe items varied from scarves to detailed shoes, plaid shirts, and even a Canadian hockey jersey. Many of the items were official ROOTS merchandise, loosely connecting Stratford with the Canadian company, while other red clothing items echoed the ROOTS colours.¹⁴⁵ Jobber Shawn De Souza was dressed in a bright red ROOTS t-shirt, while Grahame Hargrove also wore a red ROOTS t-shirt, and Brennan Connolly a grey shirt with a Canadian flag (Table 4.1). Dan Chameroy donned a red and white graphic tee from Winners, while Michael Blake wore a ROOTS grey t-shirt and a bright red ROOTS Canada logo print hoodie (Table 4.2). Thirty-three percent of the cast were dressed in a red costume item and twenty three percent were attired in ROOTS Canada wear (Table 4.1). For Canadian

¹⁴³ While many of the modern costume options reflected current modern global fashion, specific Canadian themed clothing items gave the production a Canadian feel. Declan Kelly from *The Stratford Beacon Herald* described the production as “set in present day urban Canada” (par. 4). The modern clothing would be recognized by Canadian audience members and seen as Canadian when coupled with fabric prints of national symbols.

¹⁴⁴ Gareth Potter (Lewis the Dauphin) wore a 1970’s CBC logo t-shirt as seen in the film “Scott Pilgrim vs. The World” (Stratford Festival Archives, “Henry V Wardrobe Bible”).

¹⁴⁵ ROOTS was the official clothing of the Canadian Olympic team for seven years (1998-2005). It also provided clothing for the USA team but ended its contract with the Olympic committee in 2008 citing political issues associated with the games as the main reason (McQuigge pars 1,4, 14, 12, 11)

symbolism, Keith Dinicol wore a blue ROOTS shirt with a white maple leaf, Gareth Potter a shirt with the CBC logo, and Richard Binsley (King Charles VI of France) a shirt with a print of the Acadian flag. In total, forty six percent of the actors on stage for the preshow and prologue were in red, Canadian symbols or ROOTS wardrobe items (Table 4.1). Therefore, a large percentage of the cast, nearly half the actors on stage, were ‘Canadianized’ through clothing and this design decision was made not only to capture the audience’s gaze and attention but for political ends.

McAnuff’s use of bright red drew the audience’s gaze towards the Canadian nationalist symbol with its implied military association and patriotism. Scientifically, red provides a visual advantage by drawing the eye’s focus and creating a false sense of location immediacy:

Red is perhaps the most dominant and dynamic of all colours. It grabs the attention and overrules all other hues. The lens of the eye has to adjust to focus the red light wavelength; their natural focal point lies behind the retina. Thus, red advances, creating the illusion that red objects are closer than they are. (Mahnke 61)

The red costume choice was deliberately selected for maximum physical and emotional response in association with Canadian imagery and nationalism. Frank Mahnke warns that “designers are . . . responsible for the ‘sights’ of external stimuli” and, indirectly its effect upon the viewer (47). In the theatre, the designer’s responsibility over colour stimuli is multiplied tenfold as the artist must create a specific mood and project the director’s vision. The set, lighting, and costume designers working on *Henry V* were vitally involved in

presenting a specific colour environment to promote Canadian national themes for the preshow and prologue.

As Mahnke notes in his book *Color, Environment, and Human Response* the colour red has a strong link with military history, national pride, and country association (61). McAnuff utilized the costume colours and national symbols to associate *Henry V*'s themes of nationalism with Canadian pride and relevance. The bright red tones worked perfectly with the themes of war and patriotism as expressed in Shakespeare's text.¹⁴⁶ Traditionally connected with war, "linked with combat, dominance, and rebellion," the red colour scheme worked with the prologue, preparing the audience for powerful scenes of nationality and the passion of war, but also for the vitality of a young rebel king, willing to march on France.¹⁴⁷ McAnuff's preshow raised a battle cry not in honour of war but to privilege Canadian national identity and to feature a production rich in patriotic themes. McAnuff's modern costume selection adhered to a contemporary vision of Canada and utilized that cultural lens to depict Shakespeare's history of war, armies, bloodshed, power and honour as relevant to modern day Canada.

Using contemporary Canadian attire to open a period costumed production was a bold move but it left reviewers divided regarding McAnuff's intended purpose.¹⁴⁸ Many felt that the jump from a modern to a "stylized version" of historical costuming was unnecessary and

¹⁴⁶ Red is associated with the "sun, masculinity, fire, passion, energy, blood and war," all themes connected with nationality and war as expressed in *Henry V* (Stevens 148). The opening prologue lines, "Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,/ Assume the port of Mars" are ideal with the red costumes as "the symbolic colour for Mars [the god of war] . . . is red" (Prologue lines; Mahnke 61).

¹⁴⁷ Historically, the colour red was utilized to declare battle and raise troop spirits. The Roman legions raised a red flag, called a blood flag, to signal an attack, and "red military uniforms were meant to charge the spirit, with the added bonus that red blood didn't show" (Mahnke 61).

¹⁴⁸ McAnuff is known for his bold choices in directing and production design: "His staging is bloody, bold and resolute." (Sullivan par. 1).

disrupted the play (Ouzounian “Henry V Review” par. 9). The reviewer for *The Stratford Beacon Herald* called McAnuff’s modern costume choice and Canadian nuances “brash,” describing the production as “incohesive” and containing “a few curious sops to Canadian nationalism, starting with the opening Chorus scene . . . in present day urban Canada” (Kelly par. 4). *The Globe and Mail*’s reviewer found the Canadian costumes striking enough that a national laundry list was included with the review: “One actor is in a Team Canada jersey, while another is in a hipster T-shirt emblazoned with the classic CBC logo” (Nestruck par. 9). Nestruck further observed in this review that the encompassing areas of Canadian nationalism (from hipster to hockey fan and beyond) netted the entire audience, preventing anyone from escaping the call to nationalism: “With these nods to two different styles of Canadian nationalism, McAnuff implicates any audience member who thinks himself above such patriotic cries such as, ‘God for Harry, England, and Saint George!’ (Nestruck par. 9).¹⁴⁹ While reviewers did not agree on the end purpose of McAnuff’s nationalist design approach, they each found the preshow production choices highlighted Canadian nationalism and unity.

In conjunction with the costumes for the production, McAnuff utilized the Chorus’ speech to highlight the concept of Canada as a nation of multiple voices unified through a collective purpose. When the stage was fully populated with grey and red clad, modern characters, Tom Rooney entered upstage centre with a lit torch and began the famous “O for

¹⁴⁹ Nestruck only mentions two identities, however the difference in style implies that Canadian identity is eclectic. By presenting two specific identities, a sports fandom and a contemporary subculture, McAnuff is promoting Canadian identity as diverse and encompassing.

a Muse of fire” speech. Rooney then passed the speech to other members of the cast.¹⁵⁰ McAnuff split the Chorus between twelve or thirteen¹⁵¹ actors, presenting a verbal tennis match on the stage. Each new volley partner took the speech and offered his or her interpretation of the text. McAnuff’s decision to assign fragments of Shakespeare’s choric material to different actors could be viewed as reflecting the piecemeal, eclectic unity of Canada as a nation. There is no one person who dictates to the people, but rather many voices that speak and contribute to the Canadian story. By sharing the Chorus speech, the production also presented a united front.¹⁵² Ironically, by dividing the prologue, McAnuff presented the cast as a collective whole, a body politic where Pistol, Exeter, and Mistress Quickly could all contribute to the collective message.¹⁵³ The preshow and prologue strove to present a glimpse into Canadian national identity with a focus on the importance of multiple voices within the framework of a collective whole of Canadian identity.

The broken Chorus speech wooed the audience to participate in the production by accepting the Canadian identity presented on stage. The audience, by viewing McAnuff’s vision, engaged in the communal act of theatrical performance and the concept that Canadian unity was expressed through diversity. McAnuff used the cast’s collective voices for the line,

¹⁵⁰ Rooney delivers the famous prologue from “O for a Muse” to “Monarchs to behold the swelling scene” after which he passes the speech to another actor.

¹⁵¹ While watching the Stratford Archive video of Henry V it was difficult to determine if the lines “For the which” were spoken by a new actor or the same actor delivering the lines “For tis your thoughts . . . into an hourglass.” Thus, the prologue is divided between either twelve or thirteen actors.

¹⁵² Unlike the traditional Greek chorus composed of a number of individuals (15-50), a single actor generally speaks a Shakespearean chorus or prologue (Osnes 12: Hirsh 199). By splitting the speech among multiple actors, McAnuff referred back to the Greek method while also presenting a dynamic group unification among the cast.

¹⁵³ As James Hirsh observes in *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, “Unlike an ancient Greek chorus, a Shakespeare Chorus is a single character. Also in contrast to ancient Greek choruses, no Shakespeare Chorus ever interacts with the characters who are engaged in the fiction action” (199).

“Gently to hear, kindly to judge, *our play*” (Shakespeare, *Henry V* 1.Prologue.34).¹⁵⁴ The phrase “our play” spoken by the full cast further solidified the concept that McAnuff was presenting a Stratford, Canadianized version of *Henry V*. Shakespeare had been integrated into the Canadian mindset of McAnuff and his cast, and thus would be presented through a specific national lens. The production as “our play” was claimed by each actor to be his/her own work, and associated with his/her identity. There was ownership in the production, ownership that was clearly Canadian as expressed through the costumes. The “our play” moment was an invitation to partake in the Canadian perspective on *Henry V*, while also highlighting the unified nature of the cast as each actor participated as Chorus, the storyteller.

According to Leslie Wade, the contemporary Canadian preshow and collective cast prologue reflected McAnuff’s desire to present his Canadian self and conception of contemporary Canada on stage along with an attempt to remedy the past. McAnuff has always been intrigued with the concept of merging the past and the present (Bartow 224). His childhood experiences at Stratford did not permit him to identify the self with the performance on the Festival stage: “[W]hen he came [to Stratford] as a kid it was very hard to see people on stage that reflected the environment that [Des] was involved in” (“Wade Interview”). McAnuff wished to present cast members in costumes that the average Canadian, regardless of age or race, would recognize. If Wade’s observations are correct, McAnuff’s *Henry V* was an attempt to hold up a mirror to the audience, initiated first with the Canadian contemporary clothing, and hinted at throughout the whole English/French conflict resolution, ending with the dropping of a Canadian flag during the curtain call and

¹⁵⁴ Italics is mine however, strong emphasis was place on the phrase “our play” by cast members as the phrase was spoken in unison, with strong hand gestures before a stage black out.

the ambiguous use of the Beatles' "Revolution" while patrons exited the theatre. McAnuff saw Canadian identity themes as connected to the play's themes and wished to present them on the stage through specific directorial choices as expressed through the pre-show design, Canadian imagery, and an ambiguous production ending.¹⁵⁵

Despite McAnuff using the prologue to present a reflection of Canada's eclectic culture with multiple voices, a few reviewers (*Stratford Beacon Herald*, James Wegg) were critical of the split Chorus, complaining that the divided approach left the speech in disunity. The "James Wegg Review" described the Chorus as "an uneven quilt" and lamented the lack of a single "sage narrator" or an "ensemble of performers reciting the text in union a la Greek tragedies" (par. 3).¹⁵⁶ In contrast, others felt the fast-paced delivery from actor to actor provided a sense of urgency as the scene transitioned from a modern rehearsal to a historic production.¹⁵⁷ Cushman of *The National Post* praised the rousing sentiment the enthusiastic Chorus evoked, stating, "it's undeniably stirring to see the company distributing themselves around the stage in their civvies and to hear them, to mounting drumroll accompaniment, sharing out the prologue, with its exhortations to the audience to use our imaginations and think about horses" (par. 2).

¹⁵⁵ As Wade noted, McAnuff designed the production to ask questions and presented aspects of national identity. He identified with the story and wished to engage with questions of identity. McAnuff was saying, "[t]his is how I can identify with this piece. This is how this piece resonates with me and being Canadian and hopefully with you as an audience as well" ("Wade Interview").

¹⁵⁶ It is important to note that the Chorus of McAnuff's *Henry V* does speak in unison as a Greek chorus would for the phrase "our play". The desperate desire for a traditional adherence to the Greek or customary Shakespeare chorus is the very reason McAnuff's edgy production was misunderstood. With modern costumes McAnuff was looking forward and promoting a currently applicable reading of the text, not reverting back to traditional practices.

¹⁵⁷ By the end of the Chorus speech, drums were sounding. Rooney stood centre stage, torch still lit, before he ran off stage, transitioning the scene from a blackout to England 1415.

While each reviewer focused on different Canadian or national aspects of the production, all the reviews did agree that McAnuff's production praised Canada's cultural and national story. There was a division in the interpretation of McAnuff's Canadian national themes and prologue choices, yet each reviewer recognized the symbolism and pageantry. Surprisingly, *The Chicago Tribune*, an American news source, dedicated a full review to the themes of Canadian identity in the production. Entitled "National Pride, Unexpectedly, in 'Henry V' at Stratford Shakespeare Festival," the article by Chris Jones analyzed the festival's Canadian interpretation and queries, proclaiming McAnuff's work a "fascinating production, ideal to shake up an Olympic summer of apparent global content" (Jones par. 9).¹⁵⁸ A second American review by "The American Conservative," applauded the split Chorus in the opening prologue, noting the connective and collective narratives of McAnuff's take on unity and national identity:¹⁵⁹

[T]he narrator role [is] passed from hand to hand across the cast. The message: this is a story we are telling you, a story of our community, and how it came to be. And so you must listen. I was excited by this opening, and looked forward to the freedom the cast would have to address the audience to bring the play home to us. (Millman pars. 7-8)

While Millman and Jones, two American reviewers, focused on national themes and Canadian references, it was Vatican priest and blogger Daniel Gallagher who tapped into

¹⁵⁸ It is possible that Ontario reviewers were too close to home to fairly assess the play.

¹⁵⁹ Millman did express frustration that *Henry V* slipped into what he termed "parade" or pageantry, describing Krohn's performance as a "distant portrayal of the king [that] didn't mesh well [with] . . . the stately pageantry" (par. 18). In comparison, *The Stratford Beacon Herald* described Krohn's performance as "stirring" while other reviews, such as that in *The Guelph Mercury*, praised the pageantry and stage effects, especially of the English armada of ships (Kelly par. 5, Millman par. 9, Reid par. 18).

McAnuff's attempt to comment on modern Canadian nationalism through theatre.¹⁶⁰

Gallagher identified the contemporary costumes and the split Chorus as a mimetic device, extolling McAnuff for his probing engagement with Canadian identity and production significance:

The contemporary relevance of this historical play is immediately evident as the actors saunter onto the stage one by one, milling around in [Canadian themed] street clothes, alternately reciting the Prologue as if lost in a desultory search for the meaning of life. Seeing them out of costume, we imagine that they are no different from ourselves just as they and we are no different from the characters they will represent. (Gallagher par. 2)

As Gallagher recognized, McAnuff was attempting to provide the Stratford audience with a reflection of themselves: a type of Canadian identity upon the stage. The directorial decision and preshow costume designs encouraged the audience to become a participatory member of the cast by evoking self-reflection and encouraging self-awareness. As Gallagher observes, the contemporary clothing forced a reaction from the audience and permitted the actors to be both Shakespearean and current, bridging the past and the present: "the street clothes disarm us, they also raise the bar for the actors even before they put on their costumes . . . they must come across as heroic but human, noble but deficient, unique but stereotypical" (par. 2). The actors of *Henry V* presented a historic tale on a modern stage, using the costume, designs, and concepts of McAnuff's preshow to inform the audience of the relevance of "the vasty

¹⁶⁰ The 'about the author' website section states, "Daniel Gallagher has taught philosophy and theology and is the author of numerous articles in metaphysics and aesthetics. He is particularly interested in the overlapping issues of classical, medieval, and modern theories of beauty and art. A catholic priest, Monsignor Gallagher is currently stationed at the Vatican" (Gallagher).

fields of France” to modern Canada (Prologue 1.13). In telling a traditional English/French story, McAnuff reflects upon two countries responsible for contributing to the creation of Canada via immigration, and touches upon the current national French/English status within Canada. By flanking the production with scenes filled with Canadian symbolism McAnuff encouraged the viewer to observe the play’s themes of English and French identity and national creation in relation to modern Canada and Canadian identity. For McAnuff, the England of *Henry V* spoke to the Canada of 2012.

McAnuff’s final act to present Canadian identity upon the Stratford stage was, as referenced earlier, the unfurling of a large stage sized Canadian flag during the curtain call. It was the bookend to his Canadian costumed prologue, and reminded the audience that though the Festival stage represented the “fields of France,” they were sitting in the wooden O of Stratford, Ontario, Canada (Prologue 1.13). On the Stratford archive video the Canadian flag was displayed during the curtain call as the smiling cast took their cue to bow (Fig. 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Cast of *Henry V*

Fig. 4.1 Row 1 (Front L-R): Wayne Best as Captain Gower, Graham Hargrove as Musician, Juan Chioran as Montjoy, Xuan Fraser as Duke of Burgundy, Steve McDade as Musician. Row 2 (L-R): Keith Dinicol as Captain MacMorris, Robin Hutton as an Attendant, Barb Barsky as an Attendant, Ben Carlson as Captain Fluellen, Stephen Gartner as Captain Jamy. Row 3 (L-R): Tom Rooney as Ensign Pistol, Sophia Walker as Boy. Row 4 (L-R): Lucy Peacock as Hostess, Bethany Jillard as Catherine, Deborah Hay as Alice. Row 5 (Centre): Aaron Krohn as King Henry V. Row 6 (L-R): Randy Hughson as Lieutenant Bardolph, Christopher Prentice as Corporal Nim, Claire Lautier as Queen Isabel, Richard Binsley as King Charles VI. Row 7 (L-R): David Collins as John Bates, Ryan Field as Duke of Bedford, Tyrone Savage as Duke of Gloucester, Timothy D. Stickney as Duke of Exeter, Stephen Russell as Earl of Westmorland, James Blendick as Archbishop of Canterbury. Row 8 (L-R): Roy Lewis as Alexander Court, Luke Humphrey as Michael Williams, Victor Ertmanis as Lord Grandpré, Gareth Potter as Louis the Dauphin, Michael Blake as Constable, Dan Chameroy as Lord Rambures.

Larger than the previous English and French flags of the production, the maple leaf dwarfed all other banners or national statements in the show, yet despite presenting a patriotic message the flag elicited an ambiguous response. McAnuff's choice to display a

Canadian flag stirred up uncertainty among theatre reviewers and, when coupled with the closing Beatles' song "Revolution," McAnuff's message seemed to question the ideal, Canadian unity of the pre-show and opening Chorus. *The Guelph Mercury* was undecided about the patriotic meaning, questioning if McAnuff meant to elicit thoughts of Afghanistan or the Anglo/Francophone existence: "Is the red maple leaf meant as a symbol of Anglo and Francophone co-existing peacefully? Or is it an ironic reminder that Canada sent troops to Afghanistan under questionable motives?" (par. 24). Noah Millman himself was drawn to reminisce about the Bush administration and the war in Iraq (par. 16). *The Globe and Mail* described the dropping of the Canadian flag as a return to the Canadian present with "a delicious moment of uneasy ambiguity" (Nestruck par. 20). Jones of *The Chicago Tribune* offered two possible insights, jumping from a Canada of utopian French and English unity, to the potential of hidden Francophone dissent: "Is McAnuff positing Canada as the peaceful manifestation of what the defeated French king was talking about, a country where the French and English live in relative peace? . . . [or] Perhaps McAnuff is arguing that the old enmity . . . has merely moved across the Atlantic to bubble on through time" (pars. 5-6). *The National Post* posited that the Canadian flag was a "pious hope that [the] French and English could finally get along" and an "homage to Michael Langham's legendary bicultural production of 1956 (whose star, Christopher Plummer, was in the 2012 opening night audience)" (Cushman par. 12). From multiple reviews, both American and Canadian, it is clear that the Canadian flag evoked strong national and political responses that were interpreted by the audience in light of current events, concepts of nationalism, remembrances of war, and the French/English cultural and language barrier.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ It is interesting to note that McAnuff kept the English lesson scene between Alice and Kate in complete

McAnuff offered a Canadianized Shakespeare, opening the production with strong national imagery, yet encouraged the audience to choose how to interpret Canadian identity. Perhaps McAnuff was commenting upon the ambiguous and fluid nature of national identity, showing that like Canadian identity, the production meaning was fluid and open to interpretation. McAnuff left the resulting conclusion to the audience, encouraging them to engage with and question the performance.¹⁶² Reviewers agreed on the “ambiguous and up to date” aspect of *Henry V* (Gallagher par. 7). McAnuff was not shoving a moral message down theatergoer’s throats. Ambiguity and uncertainty fill the reviews. *The Guelph Mercury* noted that the audience was subdued and hypothesized that the restrained response was due to the shocking images of war: “playgoers were left contemplating the profoundly troubling image of war presented by McAnuff which [did] not lend [itself] to enthusiastic flag-waving” (par. 26). McAnuff’s production left the audience with much to contemplate. He refused to provide easy answers in a play equally pro-war and pro-peace.

Following the curtain call, patrons exited the theatre to the suitably ambiguous Beatle’s song “Revolution”. However, “Revolution” was not McAnuff’s original choice. He first selected “Everybody Wants to Rule the World” by the British Band *Tears for Fears* (“Wade Interview”). Recorded in 1985, “Everybody Wants to Rule the World” was originally titled “Everyone Wants to go to War” but songwriter and band vocalist Roland

French, as it was originally written.

¹⁶² As McAnuff noted in an interview, he enjoys pursuing ambiguity within productions and encouraging the audience to wrestle with concepts instead of providing a complete answer: “Over the last few years, I’ve come to believe that theatre is there to make people think, and sometimes the best way to do that is to express opposing ideological points of view, without necessarily trying to wrap everything up and sort it out for the audience . . . It’s only when you have that real complexity onstage that larger truths can start to emerge. Any time you get into blanket prejudices or easy answers, then you get into trouble” (Bartow 222).

Orzabal suggested the name be changed (Orzabal and Curt, “Tears for Fears”). The song focuses on a lust for power and the resulting damage associated with warfare.¹⁶³ A few weeks before *Henry V*'s opening night McAnuff changed the closing song to the Beatles' “Revolution,” written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. While the reason for the switch is uncertain, the second song not only provides a strong Canadian historical link but also further promotes McAnuff's ambiguous ending to the production. Songwriter John Lennon had strong ties to Canada, staging his second bed-in protest against the Vietnam War with wife Yoko Ono in Montreal, Quebec on May 26, 1969. The resulting song from the protest, “Give Peace a Chance,” was inspired by a comment made to Lennon by Canadian Rabbi Feinberg (Graham par. 6). McAnuff's selection “Revolution” is a song of peace, an interesting choice for a play about war, and has an ambiguous lyric history. The original lyrics to “Revolution,” recorded as a single and released August 1968, included the lines “We all want to change the world/ But when you talk about destruction/ Don't you know you can count me out” (The Beatles 104). However, the lyrics to “Revolution I” on *The White Album* were changed to the non-committal version, “Don't you know that you can count me out, in” (Womack 149). The alteration in the lyrics reflected Lennon's own uncertainty regarding war (Wenner 110-111). The fact that McAnuff selected a song about war and peace with a history of lyrical uncertainty could indicate that he, like Lennon, was unsure regarding the overarching meaning of his production. McAnuff was either undecided regarding the final meaning behind his Canadianized *Henry V*, or he deliberately desired the play to be ambiguous.

¹⁶³ According to Curt Smith, “[t]he concept is quite serious – it's about everybody wanting power, about warfare and the misery it causes” (“1985 - Tears For Fears”).

While McAnuff's production ended on a note of equivocation it did incite responses. Most theatre reviews offered a moderately positive response, finding problems solely with either McAnuff's excess or Krohn's calmness. *The Stratford Beacon Herald* review by Declan Kelly observed that McAnuff, known for his spectacle, always provoked a response: "Stratford audiences are rarely indifferent to his productions" (Kelly par. 3). Indifference, it seems, is the kiss of death in the realm of theatre. Productions are presented to create a reaction; they are mounted for a response. As the Player King observes in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, theatre cannot exist without an interactive, viewing audience: "the single assumption which makes our existence viable [is]—that somebody is *watching*" (Stoppard 63).¹⁶⁴ Reaction, one way or another, indicates that the audience is responding and interacting with the work. As Wade noted in her interview, "Des . . . wants people to leave the theatre talking about the show. Whether you liked it or you didn't like it, whether you agreed with it or you didn't agree with it, to him I don't think is as important as you leave the show talking about it" (8-9). The modern clothing preshow and prologue, the chopped up Chorus lines, and the dropping of a large Canadian flag before audience members exited to the Beatles' "Revolution" were all directorial choices deliberately made to engage the audience in contemplating Canadian identity and questioning whether McAnuff's representation of an accepting, diverse Canada worked with the play's themes of imperialism, invasion and hostility.

Described as "ambiguous" (*Globe and Mail*), "typical [McAnuff] fashion" (*James Wegg Review*), "jingoistic" (*totaltheatre.com*) and lacking "cohesion" (*Stratford Beacon Herald*), *Henry V* challenged both reviewers and audience members (Nestruck par.5, Wegg

¹⁶⁴ Line numbers were not provided in the Grove Press edition of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

par.1, Simpson par. 2, Kelly par. 11). Gallagher valued the ambiguity of McAnuff's presentation, noting that in war, as in all of life, answers and truth are always grey. One review even cited Henry as the villain and Pistol as the hero, noting that the "moral fog of war" which McAnuff wished to bring to the stage was clearly displayed, giving audience members a chance to leave the theatres with multiple questions about nationality, war, authority, and identity (Cushman par. 7; McAnuff 6). For Cushman of *The National Post* "the best parts of . . . *Henry V* . . . are the beginning and the end" (par. 1). These are the moments of Canadian nationality, of Canadian identity as global and inclusive, and the questioning of one's role in one's country. As Gallagher says at the end of his review, Lennon's "Revolution" and the Canadian flag "[threw] us back to where the Prologue began—in today's world with today's question and today's wars. . . [It is] raw Shakespeare: intelligent, reflective, and oh so frustratingly ambiguous and up-to-date" (2). McAnuff's interpretation of Canadian identity provoked poignant responses and divided opinions. Ambiguous and applicable to modern Canada, the history play, peppered with Canadian iconography and symbolism, encouraged self-reflection and the probing of national identity. The play opened with the proposal of a global, inclusive Canadian identity and left the audience with an ambiguous ending, presenting in its elusiveness the fluid and flexible nature of Canadian identity.

4.3 Conclusion

McAnuff's *Henry V* attempted to present a mirror to the audience, initiated with Canadian contemporary clothing, hinted at through the whole English/French conflict resolution, and ending with the dropping of a Canadian flag during the curtain call.

Rebellious and daring, McAnuff embedded the ambivalent *Henry V* text within an opening of strong Canadian imagery and a final scene that elicited questions regarding the pre-show's ideal representation of a unified Canada void of conflict. The diverse identity ideal provoked questions: Does Canada reflect McAnuff's pre-show and prologue ideal? Is a play that challenges the inclusive and peaceful Canadian identity an adequate vehicle to examine the Canadian experience? How does one reconcile an eclectic, diverse nation with the French/English conflict? Bookending the production in Canadian themed fabrics from ROOTS sweaters, CBC graphic tees, and a Team Canada jersey to an enormous Canadian flag, McAnuff adequately draped his vision in the Canadian colours. Part an investigation of Canadian identity, part national statement, the production trumpeted a bold Canadian style that was clearly intended to reflect Canadian national identity to a watching and perceptive audience. Ending the production with questions and encouraging audience interpretation, McAnuff left Stratford patrons puzzling over his opening concept of Canadian identity and its global, inclusive, and fluid elements.

Table 4.1 Stratford Shakespeare Festival: *Henry V* 2012 Wardrobe Bible

Table 4.1 Stratford Shakespeare Festival: <i>Henry V</i> 2012 Wardrobe Bible						
Colour Legend	Red Costumes	Roots Clothing	Costume With Canadian Imagery		Actor in Period Costume or Absent	
Cast Member	Role(s)	Contemporary Costume: Scene 1.0 "O For a Muse"	Roots Clothing (Y/N)	Red Costume (Y/N)	Item in Festival Warehouse (Y/N)	Photo No.
Barbara Barsky	Monk, Wench, Attendant.	Black jersey dress, Grey cardigan, Red scarf.	N	Y	N	NA
Wayne Best		Grey t-shirt, Red t-shirt over grey t-shirt, denim jacket, grey jeans, tan boots with zip.	N	Y	Y	1
Richard Binsley		Arcadia flag t-shirt etsy.com, grey button up shirt, grey trousers, black socks and black Paddock boots.	N (Arcadia shirt)	N	N	NA
Michael Blake	Constable of France	Zara jeans, T-shirt by ROOTS , light grey with long sleeves, crew neck with printed Canada logo, Bright Red ROOTS hoodie with Canada on the front in white lettering, black running shoes.	Y (x2)	Y	N	NA
James Blendick	Arch. Of Canterbury	No Contemporary costume. Cardinal robes	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ben Carlson	Fluellen	White cotton t-shirt, grey shirt with hood (3 buttons), navy blue jacket, blue jeans, shoes 2 tone (blue and cream).	N	N	N	NA
Dan Chameroy	Monk, Henry Lord Scroop, Fr.	Red T-shirt (winners), blue jeans, brown boots suede, socks black.	N	Y	Y	2

	Governor, Rambures Fr. Lord, Fr. Soldier					
Juan Chioran	Montjoy Fr. Herald	Grey dress shirt (H&M) over a white cotton t-shirt, dark grey trousers, black belt, black socks and black Oxford footwear.	N	N	N	NA
David Collins	Bishop of Ely, Bates Eng. Soldier, Archer	No contemporary costume. Red outfit for Bishop	NA	NA	NA	NA
Keith Dinicol	Monk, Executioner, Monsieur La Fer, Eng. Officer MacMorris	Jeans (winners) blue/black, T-shirt blue with maple leaf ROOTS , jacket grey suit, black socks, tan shoes.	Y	N	Y	3
Victor Ertmanis	Monk, Earl of Cambridge, Grave digger, Harfleur citizen, Grandpre, Fr. Lord.	Black wicking shirt, black long sleeve shirt, Red sweater vest (Point Zero), grey dress pants (sears), black oxford shoes and socks.	N	Y	Y	4
Ryan Field	Duke of Bedford, Archer	Black wicking shirt, white t-shirt, Grey knit cardigan, blue jeans, cap/hat grey plaid, black socks, grey shoes with Velcro.	N	N	Y	5
Xuan Fraser	British page, Eng. Soldier, Executioner, Duke of York, Duke of	Black wicking shirt underneath, T-shirt ROOTS grey with red accents , pants black stretch pull on, black socks, black weaved slip on shoes	Y	Y	Y	6

	Burgundy, Archer					
Stephen Gartner	Duke of Orleans, Jamy Engl. Officer	Black wicking shirt, blue jeans (winners), black long sleeve undershirt, blue short sleeve overshirt (H&M), Red sweater long sleeves tied around waist (winners), dark purple boots with turned up toe, black socks.	N	Y	Y	7
Deborah Hay	Alice Fr. Attendant	Black leggings (H &M) rolled up mid calf to expose grey lining, black cami, red knit sweater , running shoes black with red stripes on the side.	N	Y	Y	8
Randy Hughson	Bardolph-Lieutenant, Sir Thomas Erpingham	Red T-shirt (Nevada), Red plaid short sleeves , grey jeans, black leather belt, black socks, Grey Paddock boots. * It should be noted that the wardrobe bible recorded Mr. Hughson as wearing a black t-shirt however the warehouse had a red-shirt with his name tag inside. See photos for details.	N	Y (x2)	Y	9
Luke Humphrey	Falstaff, Grave digger, Williams Eng. Office, Archer	Polo shirt, grey with white stripes, jeans dark charcoal, red webbing belt , socks black, grey/brown running shoes with white cap toe.	N	Y	N	NA
Robin Hutton	Monk, Wench, Attendant, Messenger,	Black knee length dress, long drape grey sweater, black sandals gladiator style).	N	N	N	NA

	dresser, Fr. soldier)					
Bethany Jillard	Katherine	Grey, long t-shirt with 3/4 length sleeve, black jeans, brown ballet flats with grey accent	N	N	N	NA
Aaron Krohn	Henry	*Not on stage for Scene 1.1 "O For a Muse"				
Claire Lautier	Monk, Francis Server, Archer, Isabel Queen of Fr., Dresser	Grey pull over hoodie with Canadian Maple Leaf badge (Roots?), black yoga pants capri length, black socks, grey converse shoes	?	N	N	NA
Roy Lewis	Sir Thomas Grey, Alexander Court Eng., Archer	Grey t-shirt with thin horizontal stripes, dark grey hoodie zip up, black loose fit pants, black slip on shoes and black socks.	N	N	N	NA
Lucy Peacock	Quickly Hostess	Black tank top, black long, open vest with elbow length sleeves, Blue skinny jeans, scarf (TBA) grey or floral, Brown leather belt with gold. *Note: There was a black long open style sweater vest labelled for Lucy Peacock for Henry V but the character listed on the tag was Mistress Quickly. It is uncertain if she used this vest for both the contemporary scene and the historical scenes. Thus, I did not take a photo.	N	N	N	NA
Gareth Potter	Lewis the Dauphin	Charcoal ringer tee with CBC 70's logo as seen in "Scott Pilgrim vs. The World", Dark blue jeans, black socks, short grey	CBC	N	N *see website picture	10





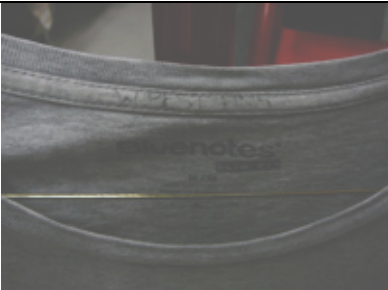

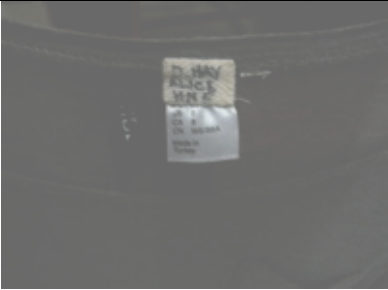

		boots.				
Christopher Prentice	Earl of Salisbury, Nym Corporal, archer	Black wicking, Black and grey plaid shirt, grey drill trousers, grey/black sweater over top shirt, black socks and black slip on shoes	N	N	N	NA
Tom Rooney	Pistol	Polo shirt blue with black stripes, black trousers, black leather belt, black socks and grey shoes with lacing.	N	N	Y	11
Stephen Russell	Earl of Westmoreland, Archer	Black wicking, grey wool turtleneck, charcoal pants/dress pants, black belt, black socks, slip on black shoes.	N	N	N	NA
Tyrone Savage	Duke or Gloucester	Black wicking, long sleeve t-shirt dark blue with grey tree print, grey stretch jeans, grey button up shirt worn open, sleeves pushed up so black t-shirt sleeves are shown. Pants are rust brown leather at the seat and top/breeches, grey running shoes worn loose, black socks.	N	N	N	NA
Timothy Stickney	Duke of Exeter	Levi jeans blue (?), black wicking, oatmeal white Henley 3 buttons shirt, shirt grey/dark with hood, front left open. Socks black, black boots/Frye boots, hat (?)	N	N	N	NA
Sophia Walker	Monk, boy	T-shirt grey with centre fold gathering, grey capri length pants, grey hat, grey converse style running shoes.	N	N	Y	12
Jobbers:						

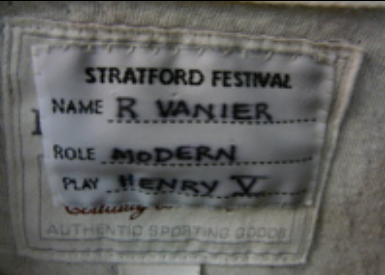







Michael Neal	Jobber 3	Grey and black graphic print t-shirt, grey knit cotton sweater, black cargo pants, black boots with lacing.	N	N	Y	13
Steve McDade	Musician, trumpet	Khaki and grey stripe t-shirt, shirt denim worn open long sleeves, black Fanfare pants, shoes Fanfare black	N	N	Y	14
Kate Stone	Musician, brass	Blue jeans, grey dress worn over jeans, black jacket with short sleeves over dress. Black fedora type hat	N	N	N	NA
Mary Jay	Musician, brass	Red short sleeved blouse, jacket long sleeve denim, black scarf, black trousers, black shoes and stockings	N	Y	N	NA
Rob Stone	Musician, brass	Green t-shirt, grey hoodie, black Fanfare trousers, black socks and shoes	N	N	Y	15
Grahame Hargrove	Musician, drum	Red ROOTS t-shirt , dark cranberry red with blue circle, blue button up denim (open), black trousers, socks and shoes.	Y	Y	N	NA
Brennan Connolly	Musician, drum	Grey T-shirt with Canadian flag print in the centre, Bright red athletic jacket , brown belt, black cargo pants	N (Canadian flag)	Y	N	NA
Shawn De Souza-Coelho	Jobber 7	Red ROOTS t-shirt, black button up overtop, with sleeves rolled up, black sports pants ROOTS , black jacket, running shoes.	Y (x2)	Y	N	NA
Christopher Manousos	Jobber 8	Light grey sweatshirt, grey t-shirt, khaki brown pants, black boots with lacing.	N	N	N	NA



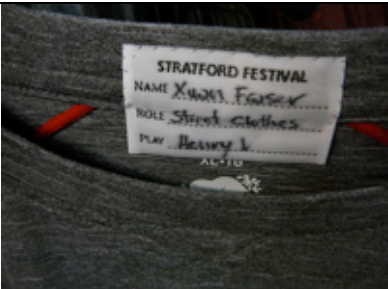





Reid Vanier	Jobber 9	Black long sleeve t-shirt, grey ROOTS hoodie, black stretch jeans, boots.	Y	N	Y	
CAST TOTAL = 42 Minus 3 actors (Krohn is missing from the prologue. As Henry he must be in a heavy, period costume ready for the next scene. Blendick and Collins are in period costume, waiting offstage for Scene 1.1). PROLOGUE, ON STAGE ACTOR TOTAL = 39			Wearing ROOTS 6/39 (15%)		Wearing Red 13/39 (33%)	
Duplicates (actors who were both in ROOTS AND red wardrobe)			4/39 or (10%)			
Canadians: Actors wearing CANADIAN Symbols/clothing showcasing Canadiana/or Canadian made clothing. (CBC, Flag prints, and ROOTS)			9/39 or (23%)			
PROLOGUE/ PRESHOW ACTOR TOTAL = 39			23% of cast in ROOTS/Canadian symbolism		33% of cast in red	
Number of Actors in Red, Canadian Symbolic or Roots Wardrobe			18 (18/39= 0.4615 or 46%) 46 % of the cast is in wardrobe connected with Canadian symbolism, identity and history.			
* It should be noted that duplicates in an actor's individual category occurred only 3 times (Michael Blake (#6 ROOTS), Randy Hughson (# 18 Red), Shawn De Souza-Coelho (#41 ROOTS)). These instances are indicated by (x2).						

Table 4.2 Costumes from *Henry V* Preshow/Prologue

Table 4.2 Costumes from <i>Henry V</i> Preshow/Prologue		
Actor	Costume ID Tag	Costume Item *=Roots item (Please note: Not all modern costumes were stored in the Stratford costume warehouse)
H. Edison *		
Dan Chameroy		
Victor Ertmanis		

<p>R. Hughson</p>		
<p>Stephen Gartner</p>		
<p>W. Best</p>		
<p>D. Hay</p>		

<p>R. Vanier *</p>		
<p>R. Vanier (not Roots)</p>		
<p>Michael Neale</p>		
<p>Tom Rooney</p>		

Robin Hutton	 <p>STRATFORD FESTIVAL NAME <u>Robin Hutton</u> ROLE <u>Asst. Dir.</u> PLAY <u>Henry V</u> 40540 76</p>			
Xuan Fraser *	 <p>STRATFORD FESTIVAL NAME <u>Xuan Fraser</u> ROLE <u>Street clothes</u> PLAY <u>Henry V</u> AL-10</p>			
S. Walker	 <p>STRATFORD FESTIVAL NAME <u>S. Walker</u> ROLE PLAY <u>Henry V</u></p>			
R. Field	 <p>STRATFORD FESTIVAL NAME <u>R. FIELD</u> ROLE <u>BEDEFORD (modern)</u> PLAY <u>HENRY V</u></p>			

<p>Rob Stone</p>		
<p>Keith Dinicol *</p>		
<p>T. Duff *</p>		
<p>Steve McDade</p>		

<p>M. Machan</p>		
<p>No Label *</p>		

Chapter 5 *Harlem Duet* at the Stratford Festival: Separation, Integration, and Canadian Identity

The 2006 staging of *Harlem Duet* at the Stratford Festival of Canada set a historical precedent. The production, staged in the smaller Studio Theatre, showcased a number of firsts for the world renowned festival: the first African-Canadian playwright on the Stratford playbill, the first work produced by a black female director, and the first all black cast in the festival's history (Kidnie 71). Produced by playwright Djanet Sears, the Governor-General's-award-winning work was part of the festival's new approach to broaden its program and reflect the reality of the Canadian story. In a 2006 interview, the then general director Antoni Cimolino informed CBC news that *Harlem Duet* was not a token production chosen to fulfil Stratford's multicultural requirements, but rather a permanent shift in the festival's artistic purpose: "The goal ultimately is not to have a diverse show here or there. The goal is . . . [for people to] com[e] here . . . look around the audience . . . see a wide spectrum of humanity seated . . . [and then to] look on the stage and . . . see a wide spectrum of humanity in all the parts" ("Bard Inspired Harlem"). *Harlem Duet* comments upon and engages with Canadian identity in three ways: through the original text, through the creation and execution of the Stratford production, and also through critical responses. While Stratford selected *Harlem Duet* to imbue the festival with a more diverse reflection of the Canadian story, the implementation of and reaction to the new play reinforced the multifaceted and complex nature of Canadian identity by connecting Canadian identity with issues of race, location and personal identity.¹⁶⁵ By examining the different embodiments of *Harlem Duet* (text,

¹⁶⁵ In the essay "Othello in Three Times," Ric Knowles argues that *Harlem Duet* focuses on race and gender, as opposed to nationalism: "*Harlem Duet* is not concerned with Canada or Canadian cultural nationalism as such, although the play does take pains . . . to insist on there being a Black history in this country" (151). However,

performance and response) we will determine how Sears' work speaks to modern Canadian audiences and how Stratford's production engaged with the multilayered aspects of Canadian identity.

5.1 *Harlem Duet*: Separation versus Integration and the Question of Racial Identity

Hailed as a prominent Canadian text that engages with themes of race, black history, and national identity, *Harlem Duet* examines the options of integration versus separation open to African Americans living in New York by focusing on race as interconnected with location and identity. In *Harlem Duet* Othello rejects a cultural balancing act when he leaves his wife Billie to assimilate into white culture and marry the fair skinned Mona. Billie similarly rejects the dream of an ideal balanced life, "the perfect black family" co-existing in America, when she clings to her black culture to the exclusion of all other races and identities (1.3).

The argument of cultural separation versus integration expressed by Billie and Othello is a debate connected to personal, racial, and cultural identity. It is the question of belonging in a bicultural existence and of negotiating one's place in society. For Othello, belonging to the academic community and identifying with the "human race," as opposed to a black race, is the result of years of conditioning and internal struggles (1.4). As he observes, accepting his own racial heritage was a personal struggle originally associated with embarrassment and aversion:

When I was growing up . . . in a time of Black pride—it was something to say you

Knowles fails to note that the text places emphasis on location, idealizing Canada and linking location with the themes of identity, culture and race. Just as Harlem is Billie's dream utopia Canada is also a past and present utopia to other characters in the play. When Billie's utopia crumbles, Canada, the character, remains as a voice of hope and reassurance. Throughout the whole text, and by extension Stratford's production, Canada (both character and country) exists as a consistent undercurrent connecting themes of identity, location and race.

were Black. Before that . . . My family would say we're Cuban . . . It takes a long time to work through some of those things. I am a member of the human race. (1.4)

Othello desires to see others as a part of "colour-neutral 'common humanity'" as opposed to specific races: "[A]t a deeper level we're all the same. . . . White respect, Black respect, it's all the same to me" (1.4). He wishes to adhere to an idealist perspective of integration, tailoring Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech to his theory of a modern, inclusionist society, claiming, "Liberation has no colour" (Kidnie 74; Sears 1.4).

In comparison to Othello's hopeful outlook on cultural integration, Billie presents a jaded, almost racist perspective that, while founded on her observations and personal experiences, is eventually "rejected as racist by her family and close friends" (Kidnie 75).¹⁶⁶ Applying her academic training in psychology, she diagnoses America with a disorder, a fear of other races, stating, "this race shit is classic behavioural disorder. Obsessions. Phobias. Delusions. Notions of persecution . . . [T]his kind of dysfunction is systemically supported by the larger society" (1.3). While Othello tries to distance himself from black as his coded identity, Billie insists, "We are Black. Whatever we do is Black" and life consists of "constantly trying to prove you're as good, no, better than White people . . . Progress is going to White schools . . . proving we're as good as Whites" (1.4; 1.3). In a way Billie's claim is correct, as Othello himself admits to the struggles of being from a minority, African-American race. Reflecting on his academic career, he observes that he's not treated the same as his white colleagues:

¹⁶⁶ Magi warns Billie that her comments and opinions are racist: "Is everything about White people with you? Is every living moment of your life is eaten up with thinking about them [sic] . . . Do you know who you are anymore? What about right and wrong. Racism is a disease my friend, and your test just came back positive" (Sears 2.7).

No one at school tells me I don't know how to do my job . . . it's implied. I'll be at a faculty meeting, I'll make a suggestion and it'll be ignored. Not five minutes later, someone else will make the exact same suggestion and everyone will agree to it . . . They think I'm only there because I'm Black. (1.3)

In the scene following Othello's confession, Billie relates her own story of racial stereotyping, explaining that she is treated differently and often identified as a potential criminal because of her race:

When I go into a store, I always know when I'm being watched. I can feel it. They want to see if I'm gonna slip some of their stuff into my pockets. When someone doesn't serve me, I think it's because I'm Black. When a clerk won't put the change into my held-out hand, I think it's because I'm Black. When I hear about a crime, any crime, I pray to God the person who they think did it isn't Black. (1.4)

Billie's anger stems from unjust personal experiences and observations of racism against people of African-American descent.

Despite experiencing similar moments of racism and stereotyping, Othello and Billie have opposing responses to their mistreatment. Othello still dreams of belonging to American society, a society of colour blindness where race is unimportant. He views himself as a middle class, educated man, and wants to know and be a part of a culture that is severed from the pain, difficulty, and complications of black culture. As Othello informs Billie, "I am a very single, very intelligent, very employed Black man. And with White women it's good. It's nice" (1.7). Othello is drawn to white culture and Mona as a white woman because she represents a world without the strain and difficulty of black history: "I prefer White women .

. . They weren't filled with hostility about the unequal treatment they were getting at their jobs . . . The White woman I loved saw me—could see me” (1.7). Othello desires to be seen as a man first, a human being of worth and value, and not a reflection of his colour or his race. While Billie clings to her heritage and the knowledge it provides her, Othello wishes to cast off his past.

In his monologue in act two scene nine, Othello explains that he identifies with American culture and its way of life: “My culture is not my mother's culture--- the culture of my ancestors. My culture is Wordsworth, Shaw, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Dirty Harry*” (1.9). He has rejected the history of his ancestors, and desires to be fully assimilated into white society: “I am not a minority. I used to be a minority when I was a kid . . . Things change Billie. I am not my skin. My skin is not me” (1.9). For Othello, to cling to “mother Africa,” as Billie does, is to lie to himself. He is the embodiment of a new generation, an America that has no ties to Africa. As Othello explains, “What does Africa have to do with me. We struttin' around professing some imaginary connection for a land we don't know . . . We lie to ourselves” (1.9). Othello is unable to live a lie, to be part of a society with which he cannot identify. Thus, he leaves Billie for Mona and her white world, a world where he believes he belongs.

While Othello turns away from his race and culture, rejecting his past and reinventing himself, Billie refuses to ignore racism and declines any possibility of inclusion or acculturation in favour of race awareness and pride. Billie cannot separate herself from her race and colour, even while she laments the false identity of the term ‘black’.¹⁶⁷ As she notes,

¹⁶⁷While she valiantly flails against a racial hierarchy, Billie notes that even her adoption of the term “black” is an acceptance of another culture's terminology of herself: “I'm even suspicious of the word Black. Who called

“the skin holds everything in. . . .Slash the skin by my belly and my intestines fall out” (1.3). Her skin, the colour of her skin, is vital to how she views herself. Sadly, Billie has absorbed the racist concepts and perceptions engendered by a generation of exposure to white condescension of the “other”. After Othello’s betrayal, she easily slips into hatred and hopelessness, adopting a “separationist position . . . [which] shades into obsession with skin colour, that is in turn rejected as racist by her family and closest friends” (Kidnie 75). Billie’s loss of racial identity and validation following the abandonment of Othello pushes her towards cultural essentialism, extreme isolation, and revenge: “I’m returning the handkerchief . . . [Othello] gave to me when we first agreed to be together . . . I’ve concocted . . . A potion . . . A plague of sorts . . . I’ve soaked the handkerchief” (2.7). Billie’s landlady Magi notices the drastic change in Billie’s response to white people and she warns against losing oneself to hate:

Is everything about White people with you? Is every living moment of your life is [sic] eaten up with thinking about them. Do you know where you are? Do you know who you are anymore? What about right and wrong. Racism is a disease my friend, and your test just came back positive. You’re so busy reacting, you don’t even know yourself. (2.7)

Ironically, instead of gaining a stronger awareness of identity and self-worth, Billie’s separatist mentality and racism strips her of her own awareness and eventually her sanity.

Billie’s dream of black solidarity and personal validation crumbles when Othello abandons her. His desire for white inclusion triggers the end of his fidelity to Billie and a

us Black anyway? It’s not a country, it’s not a racial category, it’s not even the colour of my skin” (1.4).

rejection of her beloved black culture. Her hope of a life with Othello and acceptance within her own race is shattered, as Billie tells Othello, “don’t give me this content of one’s character B.S . . . I had a dream. A dream that one day a Black man and a Black woman might find . . . Where jumping a broom was a solemn eternal vow” (1.4). In response to her loss, Billie rejects the Harlem dream, informing Magi, “I lived all my life believing in lies . . . I don’t want anything, believe in anything . . . I don’t even believe in Harlem anymore . . . It’s all an illusion. All some imagined idealis[m]” (1.7). Billie’s awareness of who Othello is, his nature, is challenged along with her own identity and racial worth when he adopts white culture.¹⁶⁸ To deal with Othello’s betrayal Billie diagnoses him with a psychological disease, “corporeal malediction . . . a Black man afflicted with Negrophobia” (1.7) Kidnie observes that Billie sees Othello’s actions as a “misguided search for white respect . . . [as] another educated Black man who tries to ‘White wash’ his life” (74-75). Magi also describes Othello as “a white [mind] parading around inside of [a] Black [body]” (1.7). Both Billie and Magi interpret Othello as an individual pretending to be something he is not. What for Othello is an embodiment of his true identity, is for Billie and Magi a rejection of his true self. At the heart of the integration/separation issue is the resounding question of racial identity: who am I?

¹⁶⁸ For Billie, her self-awareness and identity is tied to her physical contact with Othello and her personal connection with black history. It is a connection that he cannot understand. Unlike Othello who wishes to integrate into white culture, Billie cannot divide herself from her race and historic past. She is connected with her people and their history both genetically and genealogically. Even her moments of lovemaking with Othello are somehow entangled with her race as Billie observes:

“Sometimes when we make love . . . every moment lines up into one moment. And I’m holding you. And I can’t tell where I end, or you being. I see everything. All my ancestors lined up below me . . . like a Makonde statue, or something. It’s like . . . I know I’m supposed to be here. Everything is here” (1.5).

Othello uses humour to avoid a meaningful conversation about identity and race, flippantly responding, “sounds crowded” to her comment about the Makonde statue (1.5). Yet, the more Othello pulls away from Billie to integrate into the white world, the more Billie adheres to separation, identifying whites as ‘the other’, and becoming obsessed with tokens of the African past.

How do I know myself or another? And whom will I identify with? These questions of personal, cultural and national identity resonate with the theme of race presented in *Harlem Duet*.

5.2 Modern Canadian Culture and *Harlem Duet's* Thematics

The balancing act between dual or multiple cultural identities is an issue experienced by many Canadians, whether new immigrants or individuals possessing a long family history within Canada. Billie's struggle to find and defend her identity, and thus her perceived value, within the debate about integration versus separation is a labour numerous Canadians have experienced and/or observed (McDonald and Quell 36). Likewise, her queries and concerns regarding race, culture and acceptance are all questions that have echoed in the minds of many Canadians (37-38, Brooks 77-78). Thus, the identity struggles associated with location and culture expressed in *Harlem Duet* will be familiar and applicable to multiple individuals within a Canadian audience.

Concerns surrounding personal race and cultural diversity are common among the multicultural population of Canada. A study by Richard Lalonde and Benjamin Giguere entitled "When Might the Two Cultural Worlds of Second Generation Biculturals Collide?" observes that cultural conflict often occurs for Canadians when "heritage and Canadian norms offer incompatible behavioral prescriptions" (58). Described as "feeling torn between two cultures," bicultural Canadians inhabit a space of cultural collision, though cultural conflict is not a guaranteed experience for second generation Canadians (58). A second Canadian study by Mark McDonald and Carsten Quell, "Bridging the Common Divide: The Importance of Both 'Cohesion' and 'Inclusion,'" examines concerns about cultural

integration similar to those examined in Sears' work and experienced in Canadian society.¹⁶⁹

McDonald and Quell highlight the importance of identity within Canadian society: "in a pluralistic society a focus on identity is as important as socioeconomic inclusion [for] . . . Canadians" (35).¹⁷⁰ The study also discusses the risks of isolation, noting that "the consequence of not belonging creates a deep sense of alienation, resulting in projections and introjections of the self through imagined and fantasized notions of culture, religion and identity [which can give] rise to cultural[ism] essentialism, religious fundamentalism and the institution of terror through violence" (37). It is precisely this lack of identity and belonging highlighted by a race-initiated betrayal that pushes Billie into depression and eventually psychosis.

The feeling of exclusion on account of culture or race is a notion not entirely alien to Canadians. Individuals of Aboriginal, Afro-Canadian, Indo-Canadian, and Asian-Canadian descent are often targets of racial discrimination. In the article "Imagining Canada, Negotiating Belonging," Meghan Brooks analyzes the response of second generation Canadians to incidents of racism. Her research shows that there are "countless forms of

¹⁶⁹ Citing J.W. Berry, the study looks at differing aspects of acculturation, the cultural change that occurs when "two (or more) cultural groups come into contact as well as the psychological changes that individuals experience" (36). According to Berry's research, acculturation results in two responses: "preservation of one's heritage," Billie's attempted approach, and "adaptation to the host society," Othello's chosen method (36).
¹⁷⁰ The two questions that McDonald and Quell attribute to all immigrants partaking in acculturation and that Billie must answer herself are, "'Is it . . . of value to maintain one's cultural heritage?' and 'Is it . . . of value to develop relationship with the larger society?'" (36). McDonald and Quell believe that these questions manifest themselves throughout all Canadian generations. They petition for a *via media* involving "integration": a balance of both freely chosen culture inclusions ("the removal of barriers for full participation") and equal cohesion ("the capacity for reciprocal attachment to and identification with the host society [and non-dominant society]"). For McDonald and Quell, cohesion is defined as "the quality of relationship between the various individual and groups constituting a given society" and must "include the openness of a host society to welcoming and accommodating a diversity of cultures" (36). Thus, Billie would view American society as lacking cohesion with Black culture. McDonald and Quell also argue that Canada as a "nation of many cultures and people . . . involves numerous, complex relationships. The challenge for Canada is to derive benefit from its pluralism by working towards inclusion, while not neglecting civic cohesion" (36).

inequality facing people of colour in Canada” and that racism is most “commonly associated with . . . negative stereotypes . . . governed by historical context, socio-political climate and current events” (76).¹⁷¹ Canadians in the study who felt ostracized expressed a desire to “resist this classification that distinguishes them from pan-Canadian identity and further reinforces their racial exclusion” (76). Theatre critic Kamal Al-Solaylee from *The Globe and Mail* mentions cultural exclusion and stereotyping in her review of *Harlem Duet*, observing that the concerns of African-American people are shared by many other cultures: “[T]hese questions have passed on to another group in North America, its Arab and Muslim populations, who collectively find themselves the latest addition to a long list of dangerous and suspicious racial others” (“Stratford Finally” para. 12).

By addressing the problems that arise from strained racial and cultural identity, *Harlem Duet* examines issues of African-American identity while also contributing to the ongoing discussion of Canadian identity. The questions of identity associated with Billie’s journey in *Harlem Duet* speak to many individuals in a Canadian audience and their cultural experience. To those who feel they are a part of a cultural majority, *Harlem Duet* raises the concerns of the minority voice, and draws attention to the common themes of acceptance, self-identity, and cultural association. To the minority, *Harlem Duet* offers the opportunity to voice one’s position, along with a reminder that the minority concerns, just like majority concerns, can be taken to extremes (McKinnon 310). Just as Shakespeare’s *Othello* would have disrupted the audience’s perspective on race and ethnicity, Sears uses *Duet* to speak to the race issues and culture concerns experienced by modern Canadians. The Afro-American

¹⁷¹ The individuals in Brooks’ study were not identified by name or gender. One study example included an individual who felt targeted in Canadian society post 9/11 as a result of his/her race (76). A second example included an individual who was looked down upon as soon as he/she identified him/herself as Spanish (76).

experience of immigration, acculturation, and habitation in America echoes similar concerns, events, and challenges experienced by Canadians. Thus, Sears' text perfectly addresses racial and identity concerns as experienced or examined by Canadians

5.3 *Harlem Duet*: Location, Canadian Identity, and Billie's Struggle with Identity

While Sears' text tells a story specific to her own race and cultural experience, *Duet's* characters can speak to all Canadians by evoking the connection of cultural and personal identity with location. The underlying rupture in Billie and Othello's relationship, a disagreement in cultural philosophies, is reflected through the characters' chosen places of habitation and location loyalty. Billie embraces race isolation. She desires to separate herself from white people to protect and promote her black heritage, and thus clings to Harlem, her black neighbourhood, with tenacious ferocity. In contrast, Othello adheres to integration by joining white culture and abandoning Harlem to become "an American" (Kidnie 73). *Duet* resurrects an age-old conflict at the heart of the "African-American sociocultural debate[:] Afrocentric versus the integrationist" by connecting the question of identity with place (Morrow para. 9). In *Harlem Duet*, the question of personal identity and cultural identity is first presented through location, and placement as Canada is painted as a nation of idealism and freedom.

Land and location are strongly connected with identity, value and hope in *Harlem Duet*. The first example occurs in act one, scene two where slave and land ownership is turned into a romantic gesture between the characters 'Him' and 'Her'. In the first historical moment of the play, set in Harlem 1860, 'He', a blacksmith, lays claim to 'Her' by kissing her body and comparing her skin to locations across the United States. Translating slave

ownership of the body into a romantic ownership of the lover's body, the text presents 'Her' as land to be claimed by the lover, 'Him'. Interlinking the corporal with the terrestrial, 'Her' awareness of identity is connected with 'Him', and his claim over her body and heart. 'Her' is even identified physically by the term "my heart" while she refers to as 'Him' as "My ancient love" (1.2). The moment of intimacy is described by 'Her' as "prospecting," as though she possesses corporeal value, worthy of physical exploration and possession. In the scene, the United States embodies future worth, value and ownership:

HIM: I'm exploring the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania

(Him kisses Her)

HIM: The curvaceous slopes of California

(Him kisses Her)

HIM: The red hills of Georgia, the mighty mountains of New York

(Him kisses Her again)

I'm staking my claim. (1.3)

By contrast, his reference to Canada is in relation to an impending war ("There's a war already brewing in the south") and the desire for freedom (1.2). 'Him' invites 'Her' to escape with him to Canada: a land of autonomy and hope. The north is "Canada freedom come," and he shares his dream for paid employment, land ownership, and property: "People will come to me and pay me for my work . . . Can we have us a heap of children? . . . And a big white house . . . a white house, on an emerald hill, in Canada" (1.2). Likewise, 'Her' observes that Canada is a place of independence and connection to the past: "Up in Canada, we won't have to please no White folks no how. I hear they got sailing ships leaving for

Africa every day” (1.6). These images of freedom involve reflections of Western ideals, with the image of a white house on an emerald hill evoking both the nostalgic “white picket fence” concept of domestic bliss and also a modern lexical link with the White House. ‘Him’ desires to remove his identity as a slave, associated with his location in Harlem 1860 as he hammers out shackles, and to adopt the identity of a free man, associated with Canada.¹⁷²

References to Canada are dropped through the play in both historic and modern scenes, providing a strong personal resonance for Canadian readers to muse over. In all situations, Canada becomes a place of refuge to anyone of black heritage and the phrase “Canada freedom come” is recycled as a motto throughout the script (1.2, 1.6). Billie’s father and Amah both mention that Nova Scotia was a refuge for slaves and Billie even spent a few years of her childhood in Nova Scotia (1.3). Billie recalls that father “hailed us all the way back to Nova Scotia . . . when grandma died,” identifying Canada as the final resting place for her grandmother (1.3). Billie’s negative childhood memory of being displaced in a strange country is countered by Amah’s praise of Canada: “I love that Nova Scotia was a haven for slaves way before the underground railroad. I love that” (1.3). The continued reference to Canada as a place of hope and freedom will resonate with any Canadian, but especially those with a family history of leaving their home country to immigrate to Canada for social, economic, political or even religious reasons. The text speaks to minority Canadians regarding the hopes of a new immigrant and to citizens adjusting to a bicultural identity in a new location.

While Canada is mentioned in dialogue it is never part of the setting. Instead, Billie

¹⁷² Full emancipation occurred for all slaves in New York on July 4, 1827; however, Sears’ text states that the characters living in 1860 are still slaves: “Let her send it to town, or get some other slave to do that” (1.6).

builds her dream in another land of opportunity: America. Living in an apartment at the corner of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X Boulevard in Harlem, New York, Billie attempts to create her dream home and ideal family. Throughout Sears' work, one sees that Billie's dream soon becomes a fractured nightmare. Her home, built on the junction between two great but opposing speakers for black culture and black rights, soon embodies the diverse opinions of racial separation versus integration.¹⁷³ Ultimately, the identity that Billie attempts to create through her home and its location in Harlem, her black "sanctuary," are torn apart by differing philosophies and the betrayal of her partner, Othello (1.7).

In Sears' text Billie's father, Canada, represents hope and security, embodying ideals associated with the nation as he helps Billie reconnect with her personhood. Through *Harlem Duet* Canada confirms and affirms Billie's identity while providing a safe haven in which she may exist as her true self. Although he is flawed, Canada brings hope and acceptance into Billie's life, indirectly reflecting Sears' view of the country as a welcoming and affirmative nation. When Canada arrives he reminds Billie of her true identity by offering memories, mementos, and stories of her childhood and validating her personhood. He embodies the cultural and racial unity that Othello has broken, and stands in opposition to Othello's betrayal.

Bearing the name of a country associated with freedom, Canada enters *Harlem Duet* in the second act not as a solution to Billie's problems but as a source of hope and an emotional haven for her during and after her breakdown. As Sears explained in an interview with Mat Buntin regarding Canada's dramatic and symbolic importance, the character "is in a

¹⁷³ Sears makes use of famous quotes from Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Louis Farrakhan and other orators during scene transitions. The text indicates that specific audio recordings are to be played in conjunction with the live blues music during scene transitions.

way a reflection of Canadian identity. Historically, Canada was known as a place of hope for escaping African slaves and freed Africans in the Americas” (“Sears Interview”).

Eponymously connected to the nation’s qualities of freedom and safety, the character of Canada also represents hope for relationships present and future: “relationships between men and women, fathers and daughters . . . the relationship is still flawed. It’s not this ideal father coming to save the day” but there is hope (“Sears Interview”).

Canada arrives as a foil to Othello, entering Billie’s life as a support and reminding her of her true identity instead of calling it into question. While Canada was an absentee father for part of Billie’s life, in the second half of the play it is Othello who abandons Billie, ironically embodying his own critique of tumultuous black relationships: “To a Black woman, I represent every Black man she has ever been with and with whom there was so much to work out. . . . I don’t need more than one lover to prove my manhood” (1.7).¹⁷⁴ In deserting Billie, he becomes “every Black man” and has traded in his first choice, his “ancient love” for, in Billie’s mind, a white upgrade (1.7; 1.2). Billie inevitably compares herself to Mona in a bitter rant, stating:

I have nothing to say to him. What could I say? Othello, how is the fairer sexed one you love to dangle from your arm the one you love for herself and preferred to the deeper sexed one is she softer does she smell of tea roses and baby powder . . . I am not curious just want to know. (1.3)

Othello’s change of affection provokes an upheaval of insecurities and infuriates Billie as she tries to determine the difference between herself and Mona: “my fingernails are white three

¹⁷⁴ Othello’s infidelity negates his statement that he requires only one lover as he is still sexually active with Billie while engaged to Mona.

hairs on my head are white the whites of my eyes are white too the palms of my hands and my feet are white” (1.8). When Othello defends himself by outlining the problem with black relationships, he ends with a personal comment aimed at Billie’s family history: “I did not leave you [and] your mother” (1.3). The reality is that Canada, Billie’s father, did leave his family in Nova Scotia, but unlike Othello, Canada did not replace Billie and he has returned. Thus, while Othello embodies abandonment and racial rejection, Canada, though an absent father, returns at her moment of need to represent acceptance, forgiveness, and family belonging.

As Othello exits Billie’s life, leaving questions and uncertainty, Canada enters with an offer of renewal, affirmation and future growth. Before Billie and Canada even meet, *Harlem Duet* plants seeds of hope for reparation and reconciliation between father and daughter. In act one, scene three, when Billie is avoiding answering the phone, Amah observes that it could be Othello or Canada. Billie offers the same response to both options – “what would I say” – but her continued dialogue suggests her underlying meaning is different. At the suggestion of Othello she rants about Mona and her whiteness, while the mention of Canada merits only “It’s been so long” (1.3). Billie’s response is a lament of missed opportunity and lost connection, implying that Billie is desperate for identity affirmation through familial restoration.¹⁷⁵

Similarly, when Canada arrives he has two desires: to make things right between

¹⁷⁵ The character of Canada is further redeemed by Amah observing, “He’s been trying to get in touch with you. Says he doesn’t know if you’re dead or alive. He was calling Drew even up to this morning . . . he’s been in the hospital you know” (1.3).

himself and his daughter and to reaffirm her identity (family, race and personhood).¹⁷⁶ Canada's recollection of Billie's childhood and his touching memories of her mother establish that he knows Billie's identity regardless of her colour, physicality, or chosen name.¹⁷⁷ He exposes the history of her name, explaining that it is linked with her genealogy: "I gave you that name. It's a good name. It was your Grandmother's name. It means prophetess" (2.1). Ironically, when Billie begins to lose a sense of her personhood and sanity, she adopts her given name "Sybil," denoting a prophetess from ancient times, perhaps for a rooted connection to her past. Canada also gives Billie a ring that belonged to her mother, an antique token parallel to Othello's handkerchief (2.1). However, this token belongs solely to Billie and cannot be reclaimed by another. It is a gift, as Canada explains: "I brought something for you . . . The box is a bit too big, but . . . It's your mother's ring. I figured she'd want you to have it" (2.1). Unlike Othello, who makes promises and offers tokens only to leave, Canada returns to Billie, a reminder of the solidarity of familial, genealogical, and cultural ties.

As a father and protector, Canada offers an awareness of identity to Billie and reminds her of who she is. He recollects her existence from birth, providing an overarching perspective on her life:

I know you—we don't see eye to eye. I know you haven't wanted to see very much anything of me lately. But I've known you all your life. I carried you in my arms and

¹⁷⁶ Allegorically, one could propose that Billie previously lost her hope in Canada; however, with the return of her father the chance for hope has also returned.

¹⁷⁷ In act one scene two when 'Her' worries about forgetting her identity, "And when I can't remember my own name?", 'Him' offers to remind her by calling it out "a thousand times a day" (1.2). However, 'Him' abandons 'Her' for Miss Dessy. All of the Othellos abandon Billie. It is only Canada who remains to remind Billie of who she truly is.

on my back, kissed and spanked you when you needed, and I watched you start to talk, and learn to walk, and read and I just wanted to come . . . I just wanted to come.

(2.5)

Despite the fracture in her identity, Billie eventually accepts Canada, admitting “I am glad you came . . . Maybe this can be . . . a beginning of something” (2.5). Canada’s renewed fidelity is reflected in his desire to be near Billie and reconnect with her. He reveals that he has tried to contact Billie in the past, establishing the theme that familial ties are never truly severed: “I nearly came before . . . two or three times” (2.5). Canada also promotes the value of family, defending his unannounced visit and desire to help with the rhetorical question: “Nothing wrong with seeing family is there?” (2.1). Through memory and familial ties Canada re-connects Billie to her race and culture, providing a grounded sense of identity amid the uncertainty of acculturation, abandonment, and her changing self-awareness.

In *Harlem Duet* questions of race and identity are entangled with self-awareness and cultural association. Billie’s struggle to find and defend her identity, and thus her value, within the debate of inclusion versus separation is a labour that fractures her personhood. Unable to cope with the betrayal by Othello of herself and her race, she slips into insanity.¹⁷⁸ The final scene of the play depicts Billie at Harlem Psychiatric hospital, trapped by her own hatred. Amah as a voice of wisdom observes that the ties of bondage are often of our own making, noting, “Some of us spend our entire lives making our own shackles” (2.10). While

¹⁷⁸ Her madness begins with the loss of her name (she switches from the chosen name Billie to her given name Sybil) “Sybil. I’m Sybil” and continues as she attempts to endow the handkerchief with a poison: “I’ve concocted something . . . A potion . . . I’ve soaked the handkerchief . . . anyone who touches it . . . will come to harm” (2.7). Act two, scene seven ends with Billie having a complete breakdown, babbling about blue, green, white roaches and melding lines from the Bible with Martin Luther King’s speech while she is comforted by Magi (2.7)

Billie desires freedom, even quoting “Canada freedom come,” she struggles with forgiveness: “I despise . . . I forgive him now. I hate—I love him so—I forgive him now” (2.10).¹⁷⁹ She is wounded by racial rejection and cultural abandonment as figured by Othello’s marriage to Mona.

It is only Canada and his promise to remain that provide hope for Billie and her future. While Canada is not the solution to Billie’s problems, he does offer help and encouragement; as Sears observes, “Canada, comes to Harlem, but he's unable to change her situation . . . [or immediately] make things better for her. However, he does remain a strong symbol of hope in the play” (“Sears Interview”). The last line of the play is given to Canada who instead of relocating to Nova Scotia, as Amah expects, remains with Billie as a sign of loyalty and fidelity.¹⁸⁰

AMAH: We’ll really miss you when you go—back to Nova Scotia.

CANADA: Oh, I don’t think I’m going anywhere just yet—least if I can help it. Way too much leaving going on for more than one lifetime already. (1.10)

Like the country of Canada, Billie’s father embodies optimism even during dark times. Though a flawed character, he offers Billie the promise of a better future, a place of belonging and, what Othello could not, the reassurance of familial identity (“Sears Interview”).

¹⁷⁹ Billie refers to Canada the nation, not the character, as her comment is in response to Amah’s mention of shackles, and the implied connection between Canada and abolition.

¹⁸⁰ During the play Canada states “What’s that them old slaves used to say? ‘I can’t take it no more, I moving to Nova Scotia’” (Sears *Harlem Duet* 2.1)

5.4 Stratford's *Harlem Duet*: Commenting on Canadian Identity and the Character of Canada

Stratford's production of *Harlem Duet* offered an enriched experience to all audience members, whether new Canadians, multi-generational Canadians, or those whose families founded the country.¹⁸¹ The production dealt with the themes of displacement, the issue of "home versus away," racial and cultural identity—all aspects at the heart of Canadian citizenship (Tompkins "The Politics" 270). Billie's and Othello's differing beliefs on inclusion, and the problem of finding one's identity while living a bi-cultural existence, reflect the reality of many Canadians. By expressing that reality on stage with an all black cast, Stratford openly commented on Canadian identity, acknowledging the struggle of acculturation in Canadian society amid the changing face of modern Canada. In contrast to Billie's and Othello's two opposing philosophies, Canada, as a pluralistic country, desires to find a medium, a *via media* to multi-cultural co-existence. Stratford's production of *Harlem Duet*, simply by being presented at the world-renowned festival, a centre point for Canadian culture, spoke to a wider Canadian audience on issues of acculturation, acceptance, modern Canadian culture, and inclusion.¹⁸² The production also elicited personal responses as viewers interpreted and perceived their opinions of Canadian identity, race issues, immigration, and national identity on stage. The play encouraged artists and patrons to question and voice opinions regarding Canadian identity, Afro-Canadian identity and

¹⁸¹ The phrase "founded the country" refers to the early explorers and settlers who surveyed and homesteaded the land that became Canada, thereby contributing to the creation of Canada as a country and legal nation. I am using the verb 'founded' in the following sense: to create, establish, or bring to being.

¹⁸² The prestige associated with the Stratford Festival of Canada presented Sears with a unique platform to present her work while also highlighting Stratford's support of minority stories and multicultural inclusion. Stratford is a unique centre point connected to multiple aspects of Canadian culture and as such provides exposure to productions and playwrights that one might not receive elsewhere. Its patron size and cultural history coupled with Sears' text gave *Harlem Duet* a distinctive reach and experience quite different from that of the Tarragon.

national awareness. Through both actor choice and audience response, Stratford's production strove to comment on the eclectic nature of Canadian identity and the challenges of a multicultural society. The production began its analysis of Canadian identity through the character and representation of Canada: both country and person. Despite Billie's fall from cultural idealism into depression and insanity, the show offered hope through Canada by connecting the nation's namesake with optimism and perseverance.

The production built upon Canada's role by allowing both the production and actor Walter Borden to connect Sears' themes of hope, family, and identity with patrons' perceptions of the nation of Canada. A strong reference to Canada would resonate with Stratford patrons, many of whom were Canadians, as they viewed the production from Ontario, Canada.¹⁸³ Stratford's decision to present Canada, both nation and character, in a positive light reflected the festival's love and respect for its home country as well as the playwright's affection for her nation. Within *Harlem Duet* Canada, as a country, represents freedom, acceptance and the promise of a bright future while Billie's father, Canada, is a foil to Othello's abandonment and betrayal. The Stratford production offered positive representations of Canada as both country and person, connecting them with themes of security and hope.

Throughout the production, the country of Canada was always presented as a utopia: a solace from slavery, the loss of Billie's grandmother, and even the modern day concerns of Harlem. The production idealized Canada as the characters praised the nation with cheerful smiles and faces full of expectation. In act one scene two, the 1860 Harlem slavery scene, the discussion of Canada was wrapped up in a proposal and the thrill of future plans. Nigel Shaw

¹⁸³ Information regarding audience data was not accessible at the Stratford archives.

Williams (Him) and Karen Robinson (Her) delivered their Canada lines with barely restrained excitement as Robinson responding in a teasing, soldier-like manner on “Yes sir, Mr. Blacksmith, sir” (1.2). The dialogue delivery expressed the thrill of a new life and an escape from persecution to an ideal land. Similarly, as Amah, Sophie Walker’s comments regarding Canada were tinged with hope and joy as she happily spurted facts about Canada’s role in the underground railroad (1.3). The positivity surrounding Canada the nation was carried through to the character of Canada in the second act.

Actor Walter Borden’s aim for openness, vulnerability and kindness in his depiction of Canada encouraged a positive response towards his character. Ouzounian described Borden’s portrayal as one of “riveting complexity” that brought to life “a lifetime of compassion and experience onto the stage” (para. 9). The warmth of Borden’s interpretation immediately won the audience’s affection: as Mandry observed, “Borden’s endearing portrayal of Billie’s father Canada evoke[d] a fierce protectiveness from the audience; so much so, that when Billie verbally attack[ed] him, she momentarily los[t] the audience’s sympathy” (para. 4). Borden’s gentle approach to the character infused his and Billie’s scenes with a mildness and a calmness that was in direct contrast to Othello’s defensive aggression. Borden’s interpretation through physical gestures (a hand on Billie’s shoulder or arm, a hug) and vocal tone embodied paternal protection and reassurance. He delivered Canada’s lines recalling Billie’s childhood with a humorous but tender tone, and at the end of act two, scene five he embraced her in a hug displaying his concern.

Borden’s interpretation presented a hopeful, yet uncertain father figure who relied upon honesty and warmth to re-connect with Billie before ultimately becoming her source of

reassurance and constancy. When his unannounced arrival was unwelcome he inched towards the apartment door, signalling his willingness to leave. Borden's use of humour, smiles and gift giving towards a rather emotionally withdrawn Billie warmed the audience to his character and depicted him as sincere. His nostalgic recollections of Billie's childhood, verbalized in an attempt to repair his relationship with an estranged daughter, were spliced with energetic laughs, making the character warm and relatable as he shared memories: "you can't take milk. Never could. When your mother stopped feeding you from her milk, that cow's milk just gave you colic" (2.1). Even with Billie admitted to a psychiatric hospital Stratford chose to end the play with a note of optimism. It was Borden's sincerity in the role that made Canada's support to Billie believable at the end of the play. The final scene of the production focused on the closeness between Billie and Canada by having the actors not only side-by-side as the text notes but also holding hands. Canada has returned to be with her and offer hope (Kidnie 88).

Harlem Duet gave Borden the opportunity to present an empathetic, open and beloved representation of Canada while his character also reflected Sears' respect for her country of citizenship.¹⁸⁴ The nation holds a special meaning for Sears and she reflected her admiration and idealistic perspective of Canada in *Harlem Duet*. Canada is not perfect for Sears, but it is a land of potential and hope: "Canada is not Canaan land, but there is hope here. Even amidst the flaws and the criticisms I have of the country, it's the place where I choose to live; it's the place that has the most hope for me. There's a possibility of something

¹⁸⁴ Sears has four passports: Canadian, British, Guyanese, and Jamaican (*Afrika Solo* 16). Yet, out of four options, Sears chose to live in and identify with Canada. The production, as with Sears' text, chose to idealize the nation of Canada as a haven for all people. While there are brief references to problems, Canada as the drunk of Dartmouth, Billie's negative memories of visiting family in Canada, the country is generally presented in a positive light.

here for me” (“Sears Interview”).¹⁸⁵ Clearly Stratford wished to promote Sears’ positive and hopeful depiction of Canada for all and to all.

5.5 *Harlem Duet*: Reviews and Production Response

While Stratford presented a positive, hopeful image of Canada on stage, it also worked to present a renewed and positive image of the festival off stage. Stratford desired to shed its identity as a middle class, white Canadian “conservative . . . exclusionist” Shakespeare festival and expand its audience pool by producing a work that focused on issues of African-American race, identity and culture (Kidnie 71). The decision to present *Harlem Duet* highlighted Stratford’s desire for a diverse and eclectic representation of Canadian identity along with an awareness that minority stories speak not only to other minorities but to all cultures. One does not need to be of a black culture to respond to, empathise with, and understand a story of black identity. By staging *Harlem Duet* Stratford opened the festival to a wider audience, reflecting the eclectic nature of Canada through an expanded company and patron diversity by acknowledging Canada’s multiethnicity on stage: “All those present . . . were witness to a public performance, whereby Stratford (and through it, Shakespeare) was publicly claimed by a community that had previously avoided or been excluded from it” (McKinnon “Playing the Race” 311). As Robinson observed, “I think there’s a commitment to broadening the scope of the stories that Stratford tells” (Morrow para. 4). *Duet*’s underlying themes of racial awareness, personal identity through location, and separation from or association with a cultural group are universal, and a large part of Canadian identity. As reviewer Martin Kohn observes, “issues of race dominate the play . .

¹⁸⁵ Stratford chose to present a hopeful and redemptive Canada. Both the play and the production idealize Canada as a haven for slaves. Even the character of Canada, referred to as the drunk of Dartmouth, was forgiven his past errors in light of his change.

[and o]bviously these matters are important in Canada” (Kohn para. 10). For Sears, *Harlem Duet* expands beyond race, as the human story is applicable to all: ““Race is only one part of the play,” notes Sears. She ultimately hopes Stratford audiences will enjoy it regardless of their skin tone. ‘The [racial] stuff is good, it engages the intellect, but it’s also a good love story [and] . . . it’s the human experience’” (Sears qtd. in Morrow para. 15, McKinnon “Playing the Race” 306). Stratford’s performance spoke to Canadian identity through a study of cultural inclusion and racial diversity. The production also provided the unique chance to examine Stratford’s first creation of an African-Canadian work along with the concerns connected with Stratford’s new vision.

Stratford’s *Henry V* director Des McAnuff and *Harlem Duet* director Djanet Sears both expressed a desire for the Stratford stage to reflect the multicultural reality of modern Canada.¹⁸⁶ In the foreword to *Harlem Duet*, “nOTES oF a cOLOURED gIRL,” Sears explains that she desires to rewrite modern theatre to reflect her own story and identity. She wishes to “find at least one play that is filled with people who look like me, telling stories about me, my family, my friends, my community. For most people of European descent, this is a privilege they take for granted” (Sears 14). M.J. Kidnie touches on this theme of exclusion and exclusivity in *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*, observing that a close association with British culture has created a “conservative and limiting image of a middle class, white Canada . . . a public Canadian face of the sort of exclusionist profession” (71). By being invited to participate in the Stratford Festival lineup of Shakespeare, classics, musicals, and modern Canadian works, Sears was breaking the white tradition at the festival and becoming part of an exclusive club whose members include Shakespeare, Wilde, Brecht

¹⁸⁶ McAnuff’s comments were cited in chapter 4 of the dissertation.

and more. Stratford, a festival where only the ‘finest’ modern plays are considered for the playbill, provided Sears with the prestige and clout of the Stratford name: “[*Harlem Duet*’s] sudden institutional association with a powerful, mainstream, well-subsidized, and previously almost exclusively white tradition of Shakespeare in performance—gave it a new celebrity” (Kidnie 72). While Stratford lent Sears its name, Sears offered a challenge to the festival through her complex, modern, African-American story. Sears even praised Stratford for tackling *Harlem Duet*, admitting that “it’s not an easy play . . . we’re not singing and dancing and having a great time . . . This isn’t the story of happy negros, happy to be here. This is difficult text” (Sears Interview).¹⁸⁷

Stratford relied upon *Harlem Duet* to bring out new audience members and thus utilized it to highlight a positive change at Stratford (McKinnon 296-297).¹⁸⁸ It appeared that patrons and critics saw, in the staging of *Harlem Duet*, an image of Canada and the possibility for change that they desired. The excitement surrounding the first African-Canadian, all black production at Stratford encouraged an idealistic viewing. As Nigel Shaw William, the actor who played Othello, optimistically observed, “I think this year there’s

¹⁸⁷ The harsh reality of Sears’ work sat uneasily with some individuals. In an interview by Mat Buntin for the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project, Sears recalls a negative review of *Duet*, noting that, ironically, one reviewer was uncomfortable and unaccepting of a play where white was a minority. Sears explained that her text “isn’t about white people” and that this revelation can cause strange responses (“Sears Interview”). Speaking of the negative review, Sears hypothesized that it reflected “[the writer’s] own discomfort with seeing herself as other, or not central to this story” and even sympathized with the position of ostracized minority: “[I]t must have been hard for [the author of the negative review] to relate to the protagonist, who was Black. Until recently, a lot of Canadian plays didn’t really have Black people as the central or principal characters, so I think a lot of discomfort is reflected there” (Interview). Sears also added that *Harlem Duet* asks deeply personal questions about race, identity, and human interaction (Interview). The text is meant to be reactive and unsettling. As Sears explains, the production has “conscious thematic choices that . . . encourage people to look at their own ideas on race [and] . . . their own contradictions” (Interview). Thus, Sears’ work will undoubtedly evoke differing and passionate responses from audience members.

¹⁸⁸ As theatre critic Gary Smith notes, Stratford succeeded in attracting a new African-American audience: “There is little doubt the play is attracting black people to Stratford. The day I saw it the theatre was almost full and there were far more people of colour than us pale-faced whites” (para. 8).

going to be thousands of new audience members, and they're going to be of colour, because this is a play that's telling a story that speaks to them" (Morrow para. 8). William's premonition resonated with Evelyn Myrie's viewing of *Harlem Duet*. She experienced Stratford uniquely as a woman of African-American descent and chose to attend on account of Sears' play:

For the past few summers, I have made numerous unkept promises to myself to go to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. It was Djanet Sears' new and exciting play *Harlem Duet* that finally got me there . . . As we walked through downtown Stratford . . . we came across three local black women who observed us with curiosity . . . 'Hello, Hello,' they said. 'It's good to see you all . . . we don't see many of us around here.' We chuckled as we walked along to be a part of Stratford history. (qtd. in McKinnon 308)

As Kidnie writes, producing *Duet* "constituted . . . a theatrical and cultural event that drew to the theatres new audiences" (72). The media response to the play reflected Stratford's change and a tone of hope for multiracial, multiethnic stories in the future. In *The Canadian Review of Books*, Martin Morrow hypothesized that the revival of *Duet* at Stratford would start a "Black renaissance" in Canadian theatre (qtd. in Kidnie 72). Likewise, Gary Smith in *The Hamilton Spectator* praised the production as "iconoclastic," breaking away to present a "country that is no longer a replica of white Europe" (para. 1).

While Stratford promoted an eclectic, diverse identity through the headlining of *Harlem Duet*, race remained an issue with the production response and not every critic was convinced the festival promoted multiculturalism. In "Playing the Race Bard': How

Shakespeare and *Harlem Duet* Sold (at) the 2006 Stratford Shakespeare Festival,” James McKinnon, an academic invited by Sears to view *Duet’s* rehearsal and artistic development, provided personal insights into the problems that Stratford encountered in presenting an eclectic Canadian identity on the stage (314 note.18). McKinnon’s most startling observations included the suggestion that Stratford’s *Harlem Duet* was more biased than eclectic, as the rehearsals created moments of tension between the black cast and non-black Stratford representatives, and inevitably raised questions regarding Stratford’s declared multiculturalism and equality. For McKinnon, the rehearsals had an “acute awareness of racial differences in the creative environment . . . [with the cast being] supervised by a triad of white stage managers” (304). While McKinnon saw these racial issues as demonstrative of Stratford’s multicultural limitations, almost prejudices, the *Toronto Sun* theatre critic John Coulbourn adopted a less radical response. He simply reprimanded Stratford for “clinging too tenaciously to its lily-white roots” and lamented the fact that Stratford’s first black production didn’t occur until 2006: “[*Harlem Duet*] has finally made it to Stratford. . . . but let us be content with celebrating the fact that it opened at all” (Coulbourn ‘Harlem Duet’ para. 1; Coulbourn “Awkward Staging” para. 4).

Despite critics’ concerns, which included issues with blocking, lighting, and Sears’ inability to successfully negotiate the Studio stage design,¹⁸⁹ *Harlem Duet* successfully spoke to many patrons regarding Canadian identity, ethnicity and equality by evoking strong responses among theatre critics, patrons and the general media. The reviews of *Harlem Duet*

¹⁸⁹ Reviewers from *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Sun*, *National Post* and *Can West News Service* were slightly pessimistic, highlighting problems with Stratford’s highly anticipated production and hinting at poor casting choices on Stratford’s part.

by the *Toronto Sun*, *Stanford Report* and personal online review websites¹⁹⁰ all focused on the novelty of Stratford's first Afro-Canadian work, trumpeting the praise of a unique minority theatrical voice that lifted character concepts from Shakespeare and responded to race issues.¹⁹¹ They provide insight into the production as a novelty and a "must see" on account of its status as a historic Stratford first. In spite of difficulties with set design and staging, the production succeeded in drawing attention to Stratford's projection of modern Canadian identity by embracing "ethnic diversity, both on its stages and in its audience" (McKinnon 311). *Harlem Duet* attracted "significant numbers of black spectators to Stratford" and in doing so took a step towards Stratford's vision of diversity and Sears' dream of a world where "black spectators . . . [could find] a play that [spoke] to them, and white spectators realize[d] that not everyone can take this privilege for granted" (McKinnon 311-12).

Despite floundering on the Stratford stage, then, *Harlem Duet* did succeed in challenging a festival that according to Smith has a dire need to reflect the inclusively and diversity of "a country that is no longer a replica of white Europe" ("Stratford's Harlem" para. 1). As a pioneer at Stratford, Sears' work fulfilled its purpose by opening the doors for ethnic playwrights, highlighting areas for future improvement (ethnicity and racial equality among Festival staff, increased access to rehearsal time, and proper cast and stage selection) while setting a precedent for future multiracial, ethnic productions. Whether embraced with

¹⁹⁰ While there are reviews of *Harlem Duet* available on different website, only a few deal with the 2006 Stratford production. Stage-door.com offers an in depth review of Stratford's production (Holie).

¹⁹¹ Shakespeare has a strong presence in Sears' work through the Shakespearean reflection on matters of race / difference / ethnicity / alterity as expressed in Sears' prequel *Othello*. Sears uses these aspects as found in Shakespeare's work as a springboard to examine her own concerns and modern experiences.

hope or met with skepticism, the presentation of *Harlem Duet* at North America's world-renowned Shakespeare festival indicated a shift in Canadian theatre and patron thought. Sears' play continues to alter the mosaic of Stratford right down to the cast photo guide, introducing faces and races that were not as common in past seasons.¹⁹² Whether one credits artistic directorial decisions, audience feedback, or a shift in theatre culture, the Stratford Festival is adopting a more multicultural cast approach and will continue to change due to the demands of modern Canadian society. If Stratford wishes to reflect and speak to Canadian identity it must move away from solely Eurocentric plays and all white casting. If Sears has her way, Stratford will become a multicultural mosaic of races, cultures and languages. Her vision for Stratford is that the festival will truly express the reality of the Canadian people, the "diverse people who live in this country": "[T]his theatre will reflect . . . Canada — in terms of language, in terms of ethnicity, in terms of race — in that like a garden, all kinds of flowers can grow here" (Morrow para. 3, Interview).

To many Canadians, *Harlem Duet* speaks of a changing nation; it is a Canada that desires to promote and protect the minority voice by offering a place to engage with questions of belonging, identity and citizenship both on stage and off. With *Harlem Duet* Stratford took its first stumbling steps towards this reality. While it did not succeed in its first attempt at a multiracial, diverse production, it also did not fail. In *Harlem Duet* Sears comments on race by creating a niche for her own voice and thereby reflecting the pluralistic

¹⁹² It wasn't until 1987 that Stratford cast a black actor, Howard Rollins, as Othello. Earlier productions of the play relied on British actors and an Israeli actor in the titular role including Douglas Campbell (1959), Israeli actor Nachum Buchman (1973) and Alan Scarfe (1979). Up until 1987 any African American actors were scarce and only found in minor roles. However, following Rollins Stratford, Stratford continued the tradition casting black actors Ron O'Neal (1994), Phillip Akin (2007), and Dion Johnstone (2013). In 2006, Sears introduced a drastic change to Stratford by presenting an all black cast in *Harlem Duet*. For 2016, every one of Stratford's thirteen productions has a multi-racial cast (Nestruck "Our Town" para. 15)

nature of her home country of Canada. *Duet* is the beginning of a national dialogue that has moved out of the shadows and into the spotlight of the Stratford Festival. For this reason *Duet*, divided reviews and poor staging aside, has opened the door to future productions that will engage in the ongoing conversation and encourage all Canadians (immigrant, new citizen, multi-generational individuals, and First Nations) to discuss and debate. *Harlem Duet* signals the beginning of a new generation of multiracial, diverse Canadian storytelling starting with the Stratford Festival.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

My dissertation project started with a personal interest in the intangible nature of identity and how Canadian identity was manifest and interpreted on the stage, with a specific focus on the Stratford Festival of Canada and Bard on the Beach. Having experienced productions at both festivals I was intrigued by the varied representation of Canadian identity within the realm of theatre, and wanted to study how nationalism was framed and translated at two well-known Canadian festivals. To facilitate the study, I selected a number of productions from each festival to examine for Canadian imagery and representation. The analysis of each festival's history and specific productions revealed that just as Canadian identity was growing and changing over time, so the festivals also altered and changed from conception, putting their own personal stamp on Canadian identity, adopting a hybrid of multiple cultures, and showing the interconnectedness of national and global awareness. The dissertation's second chapter, which examines the similarities and differences between Miles Potter's original Stratford Festival *Taming of the Shrew* and his re-staged Bard on the Beach production, raises an overarching question that applies to the dissertation as a whole: how might a festival's identity overshadow and alter a production? While the results of chapter two were inconclusive in determining the degree of resemblance between the two productions of *Shrew*, the chapter did raise the idea of connecting Canadian identity with festival identity and interpretation, posing the question of how festival identity might factor in to the rest of the chapter studies.

Following the questions of chapter two, one must ask if the productions of *Merry Wives*, *Henry V*, and *Harlem Duet* are tied in some way to festival identity and if so why. An

overarching review and interpretation of the dissertation chapters on *Wives*, *Henry V*, and *Harlem Duet* promotes a minimum of three possible answers to the question of differences in production. One conclusion is that the festivals' identities have no effect on the productions because Stratford and Bard both depict a positive, idealistic perspective of Canada and Canadian identity. In terms of Canadian identity and how it is performed, understood, and represented, both festivals embody and promote idealistic views, diversity and difference.

Bard's 1960's themed *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Ontario provides the clearest example of an ideally inclusive Canadian perspective. The production, which included the use of nostalgia and stereotypes to examine Canadian identity, Canada's multiethnic diversity, and the role of American cultural references, presented a happy acceptance of difference and diversity. The production defined Canadian identity as encompassing an accepting, multicultural, pluralistic attitude that values collective unity and national identity. *Wives* promoted Canada's diverse and eclectic nature by re-casting Sir Hugh as South Asian and the tavern owner as a Newfoundlander.¹⁹³ Director Johnna Wright wanted to present different cultural groups through accents, reflecting the diverse communities found within Canada.

Wives' interpretation of Canadian stereotypes, American pop culture, Canadian humour, and nostalgic small town representations revealed a pluralistic and heteroglossic perspective of Canadian identity. The nostalgic 1960s production, while aiming for an ideal recollection of Canada's past, also clearly presented the challenges of a multicultural community (there is rivalry and disagreement regarding the courtship of Anne Page, and also

¹⁹³ Dr. Caius was French but the accent was indicated in Shakespeare's text. Bard audiences could have viewed Caius as representation of the Québécois even though his accent was more French than French Canadian.

disunity between Sir Hugh and Dr. Caius exacerbated by the meddling host of the Garter). *Wives* used humour to reveal the strain and difficulties associated with a multicultural community, highlighting issues of miscommunication due to different dialects, and deriving humour from the nuances of unique individuals cohabitating in a small town. The production ultimately revealed the importance of community unity and acceptance within a group that promotes diversity. The production eventually solved community issues through collective citizen cooperation, an idealistic solution to all wrongs. Bard's presentation of Canada depicted a nostalgic, nearly idyllic community, while also encouraging audience members to compare and contrast Bard's Windsor with their own experiences of modern Canada.

Likewise, Stratford's *Henry V* and *Harlem Duet* have similar, yet more muted moments of idealistic Canadian identity. Des McNuff's Stratford presentation of *Henry V* used modern Canadian themed costumes and symbolic imagery to inject Canadian identity into the British history play. The production's opening metatheatrical scene, presenting the pre-show and prologue as a live, contemporary rehearsal, could be seen as re-writing Shakespeare's classics in Canadian imagery and thereby idealizing Canadian imagery as vital to McNuff's vision, and by extension to Shakespeare's work. Clothing the actors in modern Canadian themed "rehearsal" costumes that included ROOTS sweaters, CBC graphic tees, and a Team Canada jersey, the unorthodox behind-the-scenes approach encouraged the audience to view the actors separately from their roles and to contemplate the director choices and artistic design as a reflection of modern Canada. The bold Canadian imagery, projected to an audience already exposed to Canada's 2012 summer Olympic fever, coupled with a uniting prologue speech promoted a Canadian vision of unity, inclusion, and collective

purpose that, while not removing the play's themes of division, assimilation, and nationalistic right, certainly muted them. Ending the production with the dropping of an enormous Canadian flag, Stratford's production assimilated Shakespeare, his play, and both French and English national identities into Canadian nationalism. The conflation of the play's strong national identities into one flag along with the fanfare and applause at the production's curtain call presented an idealized portrayal of Canadian identity. One could argue that Stratford depicted the King of France's hope for peace as a prediction of Canada's future multicultural existence.

While McAnuff's work left many queries about the meaning behind his artistic choices and the purpose of Canadian imagery in a Shakespearean history, the production did present a brazen style that encouraged an investigation of Canadian identity and reflected a collective national identity to the viewing public. Part an analysis of Canadian identity, part national statement, the production encouraged debate among theatre critics and patrons alike as they puzzled over McAnuff's opening scene and his use of a global, inclusive, and dynamic Canadian identity. Through two small scenes, McAnuff presented Canadian identity, as inclusive through the costume design, global through the Canadian flag drop, and fluid through the end production use of the song "Revolution." While there was no consensus on McAnuff's meaning, his production did promote a generally positive discussion about Canadian identity, iconography, and meaning.

Stratford's presentation of *Harlem Duet* can also be perceived as presenting an idealized perspective of Canadian identity while the festival embraces difference and diversity. By presenting the first African-Canadian play, the first work directed by a black

woman, and the first all black cast at Stratford, the festival took a huge step towards increased diversity both on and off the stage. In presenting Sears' work Stratford addressed many issues associated with diversity in modern day multicultural Canada. Debates regarding cultural separation versus integration, personal identity, personal association with location, and race found in *Harlem Duet* are applicable to most Canadian citizens and landed immigrants. The continual reference to Canada as a haven and an ideal place of escape, and the introduction of Billie's father, Canada, as a support and voice of reason, painted Canada as a source of protection and rescue. While Sears observed that Canada is not perfect, her work and Stratford's production presented Canada in a positive light while also challenging audience members to respond to and encourage community acceptance and diversity. By bringing *Harlem Duet* to the Studio Stage, Stratford embodied the positive change it desired to see within its own company and community. *Duet* was a step towards increased diversity and reflecting a true and multicultural Canadian identity on stage.

The second possible conclusion that could be drawn from this dissertation is that Stratford's and Bard's mandates lead to differing approaches to productions and produce different audience expectations. The festival differences are reflected in the productions, resulting in differing depictions of Canadian identity. Stratford's national identity and history as a central Canadian theatre imbues the company with a need to adopt an agonistic view of Canada's national identity and to seek to reconcile cultural, racial, and other national differences on its stage. One could argue that the festival is held to a more exacting standard as all works are scrutinized on a local, provincial, national, and international level. Consequently, the festival must strive to reflect the cultural diversity of all Canadians. In a

contrasting perspective, one would then view Bard as a smaller, regional festival, untroubled by the difficulties of reflecting the cultural and racial diversity of our nation on the stage. Bard's company motto focuses on presenting affordable, accessible Shakespeare, and the beachside summer atmosphere encourages an easygoing mentality unlike the challenging, nationally focused Stratford method.

The festivals' different approaches would explain Bard's ability to present an idealistic Canadian perspective and the differing reactions to *Shrew*, while also clarifying Stratford's inability to present an "idealistic" reading of Stratford's *Henry V* and *Harlem Duet*. In contrast to Bard's eclectic and idealized *Merry Wives*, Stratford's *Henry V* and *Harlem Duet* dealt with citizenship, nationality, identity and inclusivity in settings of war and domestic turmoil. While both festivals support an eclectic, modern Canada that embraced all races and cultures by highlighting Canadian cultural issues on the stage, Stratford's depiction of Canadian identity and community was more realistic than Bard's nostalgic re-envisioning. Stratford's *Henry V* utilized Canadian stereotypes and iconography to initiate a discussion regarding Canada's history and identity and to allude to the English/French cultural division.¹⁹⁴ McAnuff encouraged audience members to probe Canada's national identity when he selected a play with a central French/English conflict,¹⁹⁵ and by the end of the production, when a large Canadian flag was unfurled followed by the Beatles' "Revolution,"

¹⁹⁴ Bard's *Wives* also referenced Canada's history and stereotypes through Canadian props (HBC blanket, provincial flags, Canadian beer bottles etc.). However, these references were often used for comedic purposes and promoted the story and humour in the production.

¹⁹⁵ Stratford's *Henry V* presented an inclusive and eclectic Canada through modern colour themed costumes while also questioning Canadian inclusivity through the eerily familiar and difficult final scene (5.2) depicting the joining of France with England under national law.

one felt the idealized Canada of the prologue was being called into question, or at the very least studied more closely.

Similarly, *Harlem Duet* balanced idealism with realism. A Canadian play that focuses upon issues of race, *Duet* highlighted a specific race and culture group that was previously excluded or minimally represented at Stratford. The production received divided reviews with individuals critiquing everything from casting and lighting to the amount of rehearsal time and support provided for the production. Despite split opinions on the production, Stratford's decision to address its own history of limited diversity highlights an awareness of current issues. While representing and condemning racism onstage, the production also commented upon Canadian identity and national purpose, depicting Canada as an idealized place of sanctuary while challenging its diversity and inclusion. Ironically, the production that questioned Canada's eclectic status caused a spike in Stratford's diversity both on stage and among patrons. Through *Harlem Duet* Stratford highlighted multiple issues of race and diversity, culture and national identity, provoking discussions in the lobby and beyond. While the production provided no final answer to Canada's issues of racism, diversity, and inclusion, it opened many doors for future works simply by being presented at Stratford.

The third possible conclusion is that the differing representations of Canadian identity in *Wives*, *Henry V*, and *Harlem Duet* reflect the different genres of the plays. *Wives*, being a comedy, wouldn't deal with inclusivity, diversity or racism in the same heavy handed and serious manner as Stratford's semi-tragic *Harlem Duet*. In *Wives*, inclusivity and difference is presented in a comedic way with the production ending by praising the town's collective

diversity. In comparison, Stratford's *Henry V*, belonging to the histories, would examine nationality with a more serious perspective and tone than Bard's comedic *Wives*. Similarly, *Harlem Duet*, a domestic piece that borders on tragedy, paints racism and diversity with a realism that is dark and serious. It is a bit of a disservice to both festivals to compare Bard's treatment of a comedy with Stratford's interpretation of a history and a semi-tragedy. Clearly, the festivals' approaches will differ depending on the genre of the play. It would be advisable in a future study to expand the Canadian themed production samples to including Stratford's new 2016 season Newfoundland themed *As You Like It* for comedy comparison in addition to any future Bard history and tragedy productions with Canadian undertones.

Of these three conclusions I feel that the second is the most viable and easily supported by my dissertation findings. The productions can be interpreted as supporting different festival approaches. Stratford and Bard have distinct productions due to their unique mandate requirements and associated public expectation which foster different festival experiences and depictions of Canadian identity. While the festivals may differ in certain design and artistic aspects, both desire to present excellent theatre and accurately reflect the human story on stage. Their interpretation of artistic truth and response to what is needed on stage, coupled with festival expectations and mandates, accounts for these differences.

By reviewing Bard's and Stratford's productions one sees that while the festivals use different methods to engage with Canadian identity (depending on the festival mandate, the play selected, the director, and artistic vision) they both highlight diversity and present Canadian identity as an ever shifting and growing entity that needs to be questioned, improved and held to an exacting standard. By utilizing multiple methods in each production

to reference Canadian stereotypes and/or focus on issues of diversity both festivals highlighted Canada's changing identity and the country's current desire to foster an eclectic, inclusive culture. The fact that Bard's and Stratford's productions had diverse, different elements reinforces each festival's unique approach to Shakespeare and Canadian identity. Further study of both festivals and their future Canadian themed productions will help to validate and explain the different festival approaches and their implications.

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